

# Veterans and Educational Benefits: An Overview

The Veterans Administration (VA) provides educational benefits for qualifying military service members, including veterans, reservists and dependents. These benefit programs offer the chance to go to college, finish a degree, train for a career and retrain following a disability. Education benefits assist the Armed Forces in recruitment and retention efforts and help veterans readjust to civilian life. This Short Subject gives a summary of the ways in which U.S. and California veterans are using educational benefit programs to pay for their education.

Veterans make up the largest percentage of military service members attending undergraduate programs. Undergraduate programs include certificate programs, associate’s degrees, bachelor’s degrees and other non-degree educational programs. In the 2011-12 academic year, veterans made up 75.5 percent of all military types enrolled in undergraduate programs. Active duty military personnel made up 15.1 percent with reservists at 6.6 percent and military dependents at 2.8 percent.<sup>2</sup>

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in 2011-12, 11.3 percent of all U.S. service members attending undergraduate school were pursuing certificate programs, 42.3 percent were enrolled in associate’s degree programs and 46.4 percent were enrolled in bachelor’s degree programs. Half of all undergraduates (50.5 percent) attended school full time, while 32.3 percent attended part time and 17.2 percent mixed full-time and part-time

enrollment. NCES does not collect data on service members for graduate student enrollment.<sup>2</sup>

## EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT PROGRAMS

In 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the GI Bill, which gave “servicemen and women the opportunity of resuming their education or technical training after discharge, or of taking a refresher or retrainer course, not only without tuition charge up to \$500 per school year, but with the right to receive a monthly living allowance while pursuing their studies.”<sup>1</sup>

Today, there are seven active education programs offered by the VA.<sup>3</sup>

- Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD)
- Montgomery GI Bill – Select Reserve (MGIB-SR)
- Post-9/11 GI Bill
- Post-Vietnam Era Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP)
- Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)
- Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA)
- National Call to Service Program (NCS)

Four of these benefit programs (MGIB-AD, MGIB-SR, Post-9/11 and NCS) are open to both active service members and veterans. When reporting its numbers, the VA does not distinguish between military types. Therefore, there are no exact numbers that can be attributed specifically to veterans. NCS began in 2003

	MGIB-AD	MGIB-SR	Post 9/11	VEAP	REAP	DEA	Total
Educational Benefit Funding (millions)	\$11,391	\$181	\$8,126	\$0.16	\$114	\$689	\$10,501
U.S. Service Member Trainees	185,220	65,216	555,329	112	27,302	90,657	923,836
CA Service Member Trainees	14,279	3,097	63,263	12	650	7,119	88,420
% CA Service Member Trainees	7.7	4.7	11.4	10.7	2.4	7.9	9.6

Source: Veterans Administration Annual Benefits Report FY 2011

and requires a service member to incur an eight-year military service obligation before qualifying for educational benefits; consequently, there are no statistics available yet for NCS.

### USE OF EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

During FY 2011, 923,836 U.S. service members received over \$10 billion in assistance from educational benefit programs, as shown in Table 1. Over half of these service members (555,329) received Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits totaling more than \$8.1 billion. The MGIB-AD provided nearly \$1.4 billion to over 185,000 service members. Over 90,000 dependents received \$689 million in educational assistance through the DEA Fund.<sup>3</sup>

Of the U.S. service members who received educational benefits in 2011, 88,420 lived in California (9.6 percent). Of these, 80,031 were service members and 7,119 were dependents.

### FEMALE VETERANS AND BENEFITS

VA data shows that in 2011, there were approximately 22.7 million veterans in the United States. Of that total, 10.9 percent were female. When broken out by age range, there is a wide disparity in percentages. Table 2 shows that higher percentages of veterans in their twenties and thirties are female, while in the age ranges above 60, the female share drops sharply.

Age	Male	Female	Female (%)
20<	3,835	1,565	40.8
20-24	174,677	48,975	28.0
25-29	597,441	146,155	24.5
30-34	782,957	233,359	29.8
35-39	831,430	257,592	31.0
40-44	1,207,223	321,645	26.6
45-49	1,452,883	303,581	20.9
50-54	1,680,917	266,586	15.9
55-59	1,768,862	208,524	11.8
60-64	2,826,592	131,640	4.7
65-69	2,712,006	79,991	2.9
70-74	1,859,893	54,569	2.9
75-79	1,745,663	46,845	2.7
80-84	1,469,560	35,313	2.4
85+	1,337,575	88,208	6.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,451,602</b>	<b>2,224,547</b>	<b>10.9</b>

Source: Veterans Administration

Table 3 describes education benefits by range and breaks down veteran recipients by sex category. Male veterans receive education benefits in roughly the same proportion as the male-to-female ratio in the veteran population for veterans under age 50. For instance, of the veterans who received education benefits ranging from \$2,100 to \$4,999 in FY 2011, 71.8 percent were male and 28.2 percent were female. The percentages are comparable to the population of female veterans in the younger age ranges. Such younger female veterans are perhaps most likely to sign up for the GI Bill upon entering the military and pursue an education upon leaving service.

Annual education benefit range	Male (%)	Female (%)
\$100-2,099	60.3	39.7
\$2,100-4,999	71.8	28.2
\$5,000-9,999	68.2	31.8
\$10,000 or more	76.9	23.1

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study

### FURTHER READING

National Postsecondary Student Aid Study  
<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/npsas/index.asp>

### ENDNOTES

1. Annual Benefits Report, Veterans Administration, FY 2011  
[http://www.vba.va.gov/REPORTS/abr/2011\\_abr.pdf](http://www.vba.va.gov/REPORTS/abr/2011_abr.pdf)
2. History of the GI Bill  
[http://www.gibill.va.gov/benefits/history\\_timeline/](http://www.gibill.va.gov/benefits/history_timeline/)
3. National Center for Education Statistics  
<http://nces.ed.gov/datalab/quickstats/>

*This short subject was requested by the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls. [www.women.ca.gov](http://www.women.ca.gov)*

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