Alaska's veteran share ranks first

8 percent of Alaskans, 5 percent nationally have served

By DAN ROBINSON and GUNNAR SCHULTZ

About 8 percent of Alaskans are veterans, a higher concentration than in any other state. Big Army and Air Force bases in Anchorage and Fairbanks and Coast Guard stations in several coastal locations bring large numbers of active-duty personnel to the state, some of whom stay in the state after their service ends.

Another factor in Alaska's No. 1 ranking is that enlistment rates are relatively high here. In 2022, according to USA Facts' analysis of Department of Defense data, Alaska tied with Texas for the seventh highest percentage of young adults who enlist in the military.

Higher enlistment rates for a state likely lead to a higher percentage of veterans, assuming many of the enlistees return to their home state after completing their military careers.

Highest, lowest veteran percentages by state
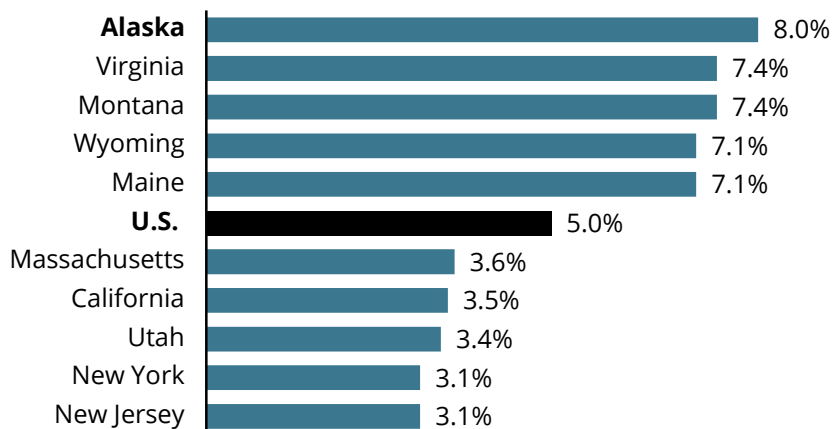

State	Percentage
Alaska	8.0%
Virginia	7.4%
Montana	7.4%
Wyoming	7.1%
Maine	7.1%
U.S.	5.0%
Massachusetts	3.6%
California	3.5%
Utah	3.4%
New York	3.1%
New Jersey	3.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023

Nationwide, about 5 percent of the population are veterans. Other states with high per-capita veteran populations include Montana, Virginia, Maine, and Wyoming. States with relatively low concentrations include New Jersey, New York, Utah, California, and Massachusetts.

Alaska veterans by era served

Veterans in Alaska, 2019-2023	Estimate
Second Gulf War Era (9/2001 or later)	22,406
First Gulf War Era (8/1990 to 8/2001)	18,546
Vietnam War Era (8/1964 to 4/1975)	16,948
Between named periods only*	10,011
Korean War Era (7/1950 to 1/1955)	1,376
World War II Era (12/1941 to 12/1946)	268

*Many Alaska veterans served in multiple wars/eras, but this group served only in periods between those named.

Note: As some veterans are listed in more than one category, numbers will not sum to the veteran total of about 59,000. See the text on the right for more on who served in multiple wars.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023
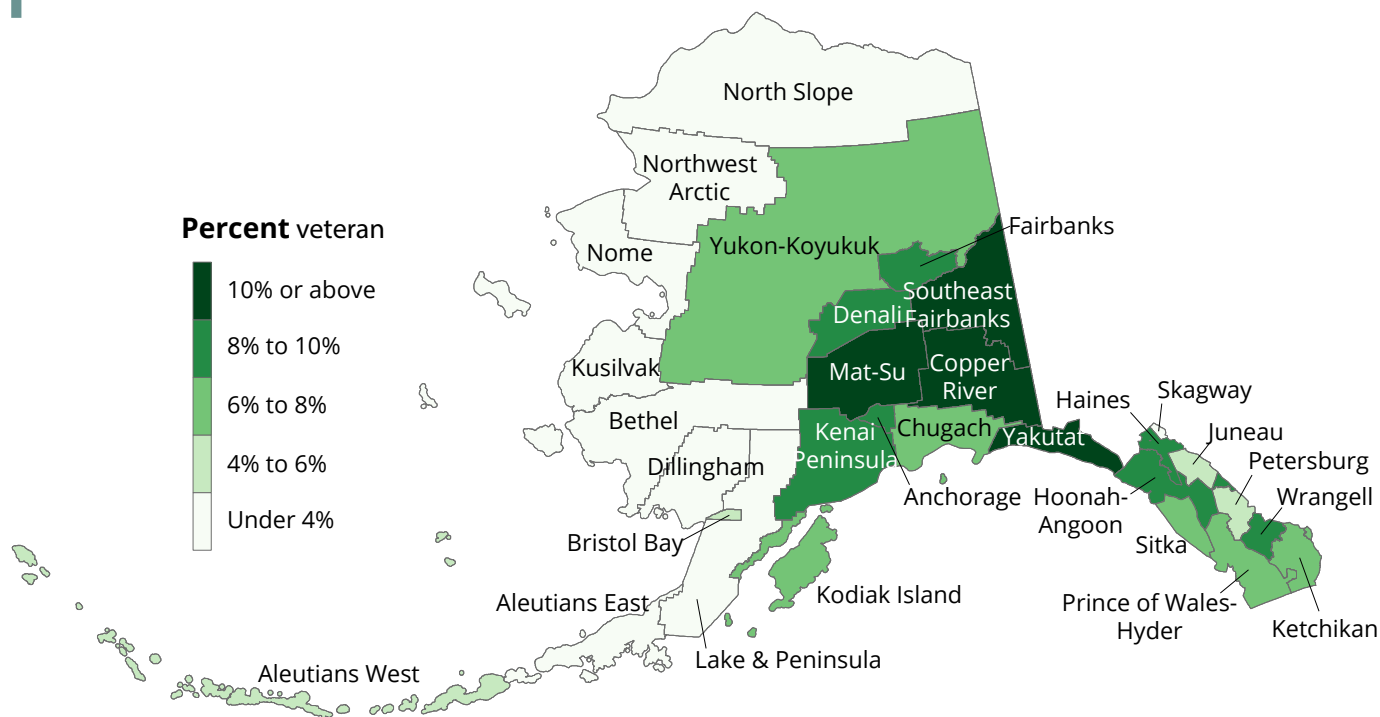
Many served in more than one war

The largest number of Alaska's roughly 59,000 veterans served during one or both Gulf Wars. About 14,000 served after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and another 8,000 served during that period plus the earlier Gulf War that dated back to 1990. About 500 veterans served during those two periods *and* the Vietnam War era.

Roughly 15,000 Alaska veterans served during the Vietnam War era only. The U.S. ended the military draft in 1973, and the military has been an all-volunteer force ever since.

Much smaller numbers of Alaskans served in both the Vietnam era and in one or both of the Gulf War periods (1,700) and in both the Vietnam era and either the Korean War or World War II (300).

Concentration of veterans by Alaska borough or census area

Percent veteran

- 10% or above
- 8% to 10%
- 6% to 8%
- 4% to 6%
- Under 4%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023; and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section
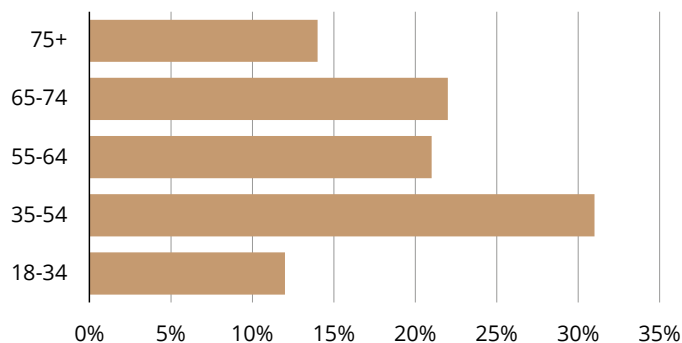
Many settle near the installations

Some patterns emerge when looking at the places in Alaska with large and small concentrations of veterans, although big margins of error are inherent in sample-based data for areas with very small populations, such as Yakutat.

The Southeast Fairbanks Census Area (where Fort Greely, a military launch site, is located), the

Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and the Fairbanks North Star Borough have higher per-capita shares of veterans than the statewide average of 8 percent.

One likely scenario is that veterans in those areas were stationed there or nearby during their service and decided to stay or return when they finished, for reasons that include employment, family connections, and quality of life preferences.

Three of the other states with top-five veteran percentages — Montana, Wyoming, and Maine — are similar to Alaska in that they're rural, sparsely populated, and rich in outdoor recreation opportunities, especially hunting and fishing.

Age ranges of Alaska veterans

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023

About a third are ages 35-54

About 7,000 Alaska veterans — 12 percent of the total — are 18 to 34 years old, meaning they have many potential working years ahead of them.

Around 18,000 are from 35 to 54, and that age group combined with the 55-64 age

Who is a veteran

A civilian veteran is 18 or older and served on active duty, even for a short time, in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard, or in the U.S. Merchant Marines during World War II.

People who served in the National Guard or military reserves are only considered veterans if they were ever called or ordered to active duty, not counting the 4-6 months for initial training or yearly summer camps.

group makes up roughly half of Alaska's total veteran population.

As with the general population, the state also has notable percentages of veterans over age 65. Twenty-two percent of Alaska vets are 65 to 74, and 14 percent are 75 or older.

Higher incomes and labor force participation rates

Alaska veterans' median income of $66,000 is substantially higher than the nonveteran median income of $42,000.

Veterans from 18 to 64 are also slightly more likely than others to be either working or actively seeking work. Veterans' labor force participation rate is 80 percent. For nonveterans, it's 76 percent.

Not surprisingly, higher incomes and labor force participation rates lead to lower poverty rates. About 6 percent of Alaska veterans' incomes are below the federal poverty level compared to 10 percent for nonveterans.

Dan Robinson is the chief of Research and Analysis. Reach him in Juneau at (907) 465-6039 or dan.robinson@alaska.gov.

Gunnar Schultz is an economist in Juneau. Reach him at (907) 465-6038 or gunnar.schultz@alaska.gov.

Alaska veterans by borough or census area

Borough or census area	Estimate	Margin of error	Percent veteran	Margin of error
Yakutat City and Borough	80	+/- 36	15.8%	+/- 7.1%
Copper River Census Area	280	+/- 65	10.7%	+/- 2.5%
Southeast Fairbanks CA	726	+/- 144	10.5%	+/- 2.1%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	11,042	+/- 551	10.0%	+/- 0.5%
Haines Borough	204	+/- 68	9.8%	+/- 3.3%
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	221	+/- 48	9.6%	+/- 2.1%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	9,038	+/- 866	9.5%	+/- 0.9%
Wrangell City and Borough	195	+/- 49	9.3%	+/- 2.3%
Denali Borough	175	+/- 80	8.6%	+/- 3.9%
Anchorage, Municipality	23,940	+/- 1,798	8.3%	+/- 0.6%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	4,806	+/- 375	8.0%	+/- 0.6%
Kodiak Island Borough	1,017	+/- 271	7.9%	+/- 2.1%
Chugach Census Area	545	+/- 152	7.8%	+/- 2.2%
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	377	+/- 111	7.2%	+/- 2.1%
Prince of Wales-Hyder CA	393	+/- 50	6.9%	+/- 0.9%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	946	+/- 140	6.8%	+/- 1.0%
Sitka City and Borough	505	+/- 96	6.0%	+/- 1.1%
Bristol Bay Borough	50	+/- 18	5.7%	+/- 2.1%
Juneau City and Borough	1,729	+/- 279	5.4%	+/- 0.9%
Petersburg Borough	174	+/- 44	5.1%	+/- 1.3%
Aleutians West Census Area	239	+/- 141	4.6%	+/- 2.7%
Bethel Census Area	725	+/- 182	3.9%	+/- 1.0%
Skagway, Municipality	50	+/- 38	3.8%	+/- 2.9%
Aleutians East Borough	127	+/- 32	3.7%	+/- 0.9%
Nome Census Area	357	+/- 55	3.6%	+/- 0.6%
Northwest Arctic Borough	258	+/- 144	3.4%	+/- 1.9%
North Slope Borough	362	+/- 125	3.3%	+/- 1.1%
Lake and Peninsula Borough	31	+/- 13	3.1%	+/- 1.3%
Kusilvak Census Area	219	+/- 54	2.6%	+/- 0.7%
Dillingham Census Area	99	+/- 58	2.1%	+/- 1.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023