

## **Veterans Demographics in Texas**

### **Who are Veterans?**

The Veteran Population Projection Model 2014 ("VetPop2014") provides the latest official Veteran population projection from the VA. VetPop2014 is an actuarial projection model developed by the Office of the Actuary ("OACT") for Veteran population projection from fiscal year 2014 to 2043. Using the best available Veteran data by the end of fiscal year 2013, VetPop2014 provides living Veteran counts by key demographic characteristics such as age, gender, period of service, and race/ethnicity at various geographic levels.<sup>1</sup>

VetPop2014 includes not only the living civilian Veterans but accounts for the future Veteran status of those currently serving in the military. Due to the latest data enhancements, the VetPop2014 projected more living Veterans in the future compared to VetPop2011. Overall, while the male Veteran population steadily decreases, woman and minority Veteran population are projected to increase over the next 30 years. Another noticeable trend for the Veteran population is the projected higher growths in the Southern and Western regions for where Veterans reside.<sup>2</sup>

### **Where are Texas Veterans?**

Many Texas Veterans either entered service in Texas or were stationed at one of the 15 active military installations spread throughout the state. Veterans remain in or migrate to Texas for many reasons, including to take advantage of a military-friendly culture and the many services and Veterans benefits the state provides.<sup>3</sup>

This population of Veterans is spread across a huge geographic area. While approximately 70% of Texas Veterans live within one of the largest 25 counties by Veteran population, the remaining 30 percent, which represents approximately 503,000 Veterans, are spread across 229 counties, many of those rural, to very rural, with less than seven persons per square mile.<sup>4</sup>

The breadth of area in which Veterans reside presents significant challenges to providing responsive Veterans services to a diverse population of Veterans, with unique needs, over such a vast geographic area.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United States Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014a.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

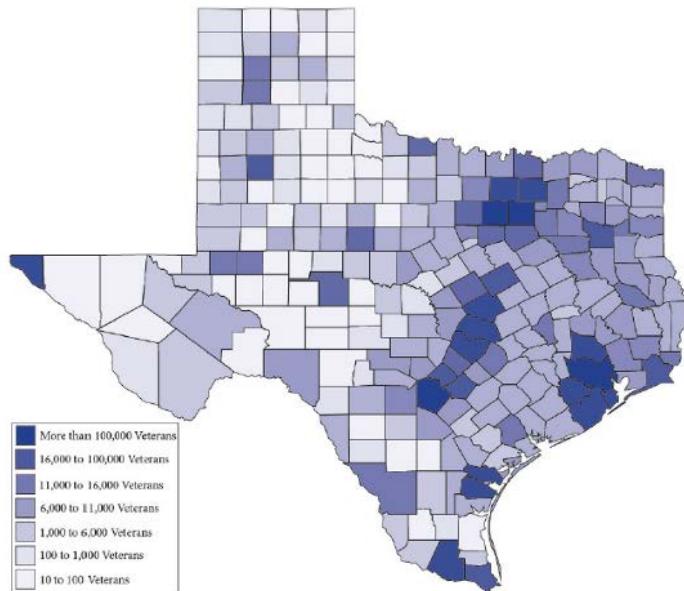
<sup>3</sup> United States Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014b.

<sup>4</sup> Texas Veterans Commission.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## Appendix C: Veterans Demographics in Texas

Map: VetPop 2014 Number of Veterans in Texas by County



### Force Reductions Cause a Surge of Veterans to Texas

As noted previously, VA's near term population projections do not account for the surge of service members departing the military in the near term. The end of combat operations in Iraq, significantly decreased military presence in Afghanistan and force shaping measures, first announced by the U.S. Department of Defense ("DoD") in January 2012, are all expected to increase the number of service members separating from the military, either voluntarily or as a result of force reductions measures.<sup>6</sup>

In February 2014, DoD announced further proposed cuts when it submitted its budget to Congress. The proposed reductions include a sharp nationwide drawdown in the size of the Army, to as low as 440,000 active duty soldiers from the current size of 520,000. As a result, an estimated 4,000 or more Texans, who comprise 10% of the military, could be discharged due to part of a reduction in force.<sup>7</sup> Through attrition and migration, Texas continues to add roughly 35,000 Veterans to the state each year (that's "net" as it takes into consideration more than 41,000 Texas Veteran deaths as well).

Due to more robust transition assistance programs provided by the DoD and other organizations to Veterans, and a greater level of awareness of benefits available, recently separated Veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan seek services at a much higher rate than any previous generation of Veterans. To use the VA disability claims process as an example, not only are Veterans filing claims at a greater rate than Veterans of previous conflicts, but they are also claiming more individual disabilities and more complex disabilities, than the Veterans of prior wars. This is largely due to recently separated Veterans having served multiple combat deployments in a combat theatre for a longer period than Veterans at any time since World War II ("WWII"). In addition, this is attributable to advances in force protection technology, as many wounded service members are

<sup>6</sup> Alexander and Shalal, February 25, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

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surviving incidents that would have been fatal during previous conflicts. As is commonly noted, the signature wounds of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are largely unseen wounds, manifesting themselves in the form of PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury. These conditions require specific and intensive services.<sup>8</sup>

### **Large Aging Population of Veterans**

An external factor that will continue to increase the demand for Veterans services in Texas is an aging population of Texas Veterans, specifically from the WWII, Korea, and Vietnam eras.<sup>9</sup> As these previous generations of Veterans age and their health deteriorate, their need for more intensive healthcare services, in particular, will grow. Their service-connected conditions worsen with age resulting in those Veterans filing for increases in disability compensation, as well as new service-connected conditions “as a direct result” of conditions whose service connection has already been established.<sup>10</sup>

### **Employment**

Another factor that continues to increase demand is the needs of Texas Veterans to find and maintain employment. However, State agency hiring of Veterans is trending up in part as a result of Senate Bill 805 (84th Regular). In 2014, there were 4.93% veterans employed in state agencies; in 2015, there were 7.13% Veterans employed in state agencies.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Kidder, Schafer, Carter, March, 2016, p. 32

<sup>10</sup> Texas Workforce Investment Council.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.