



VETERAN EMPLOYMENT IN SAN DIEGO

A look at military veterans in San
Diego's labor force



in partnership with



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I. Executive Summary

San Diego has the largest concentration of military presence in the world with 110,000 active duty personnel. The region has long been largely defined by this military presence, however the connection extends past active duty service, resulting in military veterans accounting for 9.0 percent of the entire San Diego population, and 6.8 percent of the total local civilian labor force. The San Diego regional economy is linked to both the military's presence and the veteran presence here. This report focuses on understanding veterans in the workforce as an existing strength and on the ways that we can leverage that strength by concentrating on demographics, barriers and resources.

Veterans in San Diego: San Diego veterans stand out in terms of age and service era. The younger veteran population (between 18 and 34) is approximately double that of national figures and San Diego veterans served primarily after 2000. In addition to being young, San Diego veterans are also comparatively well-educated. In San Diego County, 80 percent of veterans have some college education, while only 67 percent of non-veterans have some college education or higher.

Veterans in the Workforce: If you compare San Diego County to our competitor metropolitan areas, San Diego ranks highest in veterans in the workforce. Yet, San Diego also faces the second highest veteran unemployment rate. Having the largest percentage of veterans in our workforce does not translate to lower unemployment levels for veterans in San Diego. While the unemployment gap between veterans and nonveterans has closed considerably in recent years, younger veterans have experienced greater unemployment than their non-veteran counterparts.

Barriers and Resources: While veterans face barriers to reintegrating into the civilian workforce, San Diego offers an array of veteran employment resources to support veterans, such as San Diego City Programs and Veteran Entrepreneur Services.

An update to the 2013 Chamber study "Military Employment in San Diego," this report is designed to serve as a tool for San Diego business leaders as we work as a business community to leverage the veteran workforce. San Diego has much to be proud of, both as one of our nation's leading military cities and as a place where veterans enjoy strong employment and opportunity to succeed. However, our community must remain vigilant in maintaining and expanding veteran workforce opportunity, especially with a demographically young veteran population susceptible to high unemployment. In addition to services and resources offered by the public sector and private groups, San Diego's business leaders – many of them veterans themselves – have done great work in empowering older veterans as well as a new generation of future leaders.

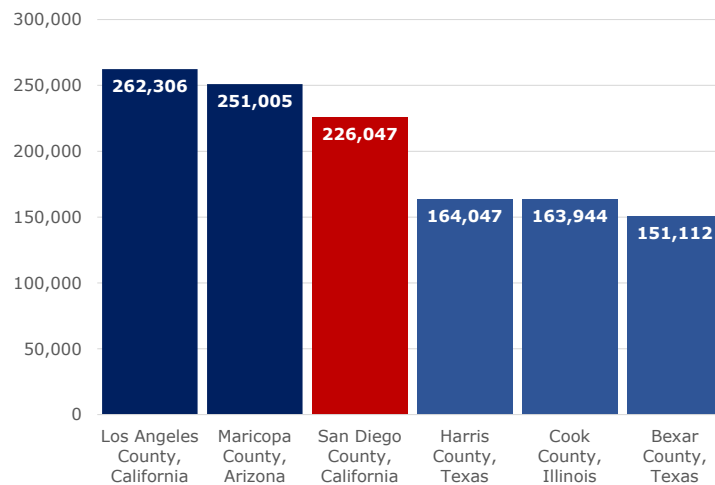


II. San Diego County Veteran Demographic Overview

There are 18.5 million veterans in the United States, 1.6 million of which reside in California.¹ In San Diego County, military veterans make up 9.0 percent of the entire population. According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, San Diego County claims 226,047 veteran residents as of 2016, which is the second-largest county in terms of veteran residents in the state (after Los Angeles) and the third-largest in the nation.² According to the 2017 San Diego Military Economic Impact Study, San Diego has the largest concentration of military in the world. The San Diego area has 110,000 active duty personnel.³ The Military sector generated more than 340,000 of region's total jobs in 2017.⁴

Approximately 40 percent of the county's veteran population lives in San Diego city and a substantial portion live in the Oceanside-Escondido area. These numbers do not reflect veterans who commute to San Diego County for work. Temecula has a high number of commuters to local counties, 74.3 percent commute to other places.⁵ In fact, 12.3 percent of Temecula workers commute to San Diego County for work, which is not reflected in the demographics of San Diego County veterans.

Figure 1: Top 6 Counties in the US by Number of Military Veterans Residents



Source: Census 2016 American Community Survey

¹ US Census Bureau. [2016 American Community Survey](#).

² Ibid.

³ "[San Diego Military Economic Impact Study 2017](#)." PLNU Fermanian Business & Economic Institute. October 2017.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "[Profile of the City of Temecula](#)." Southern California Association of Governments Regional Council. 2017.

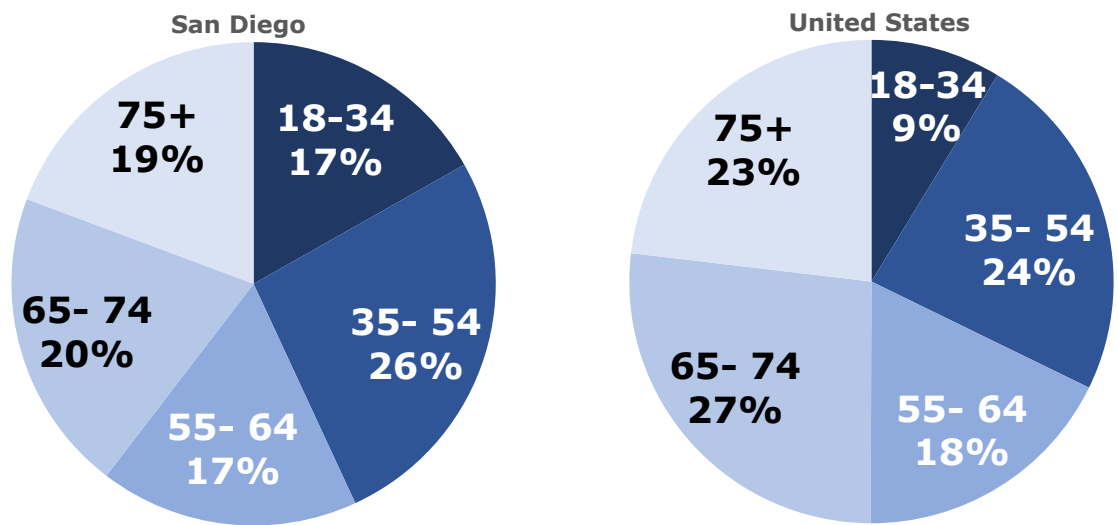


Nationally, males make up 91.4 percent of the veteran population. San Diego County’s gender ratio is slightly more balanced with 88.5 percent males and 11.5 percent females, but not substantially different.

However, San Diego County’s veterans stand out in terms of age and service era. In addition to being one of the largest counties with veteran residents, San Diego is the number one destination in the nation for newly returning veterans.⁶ Currently, the VA has 71,431 Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans enrolled at the VA San Diego.

The population between 18 and 34 years old is approximately double that of national figures. In the United States, only nine percent of veterans are between the ages of 18 and 34, while 17 percent of San Diego’s veterans are in this age group.⁷

Figure 2: Veteran Age Group



Source: Census 2016 American Community Survey

Gulf War era II veterans, service from 2001 or later era, make up the largest proportion (32.4%) of veteran residents in San Diego County, with the second most from the Vietnam era.⁸ In the United States, the plurality of veterans are from the Vietnam era, at 36.1 percent. Nationally, only 18.0 percent of veterans

⁶ [“San Diego Military Economic Impact Study 2016.”](#) San Diego Military Advisory Council. November 2016.

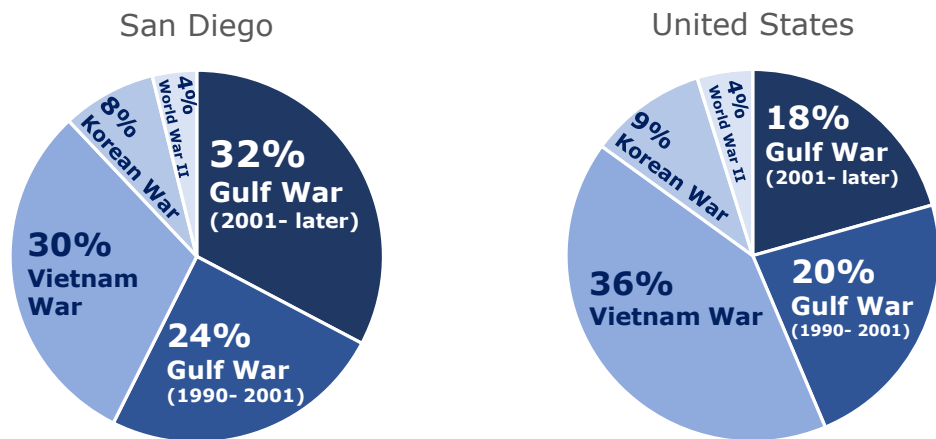
⁷ US Census Bureau. 2016 American Community Survey. [Table B21005.](#)

⁸ US Census Bureau. 2016 American Community Survey. [Table S2101.](#)



are from the Gulf War or later era. San Diego continues to grow as a place for young veteran residents to inhabit after war.

Figure 3: Veteran Service Era (County & Nation)



Source: Census 2016 American Community Survey

In addition to being young, San Diego area veterans are also comparatively well-educated. In the last decade, there has been an increase in veterans who have attained Bachelor’s and advanced degrees.⁹ Currently, 37.3 percent of U.S. veterans aged 25 years or over have attained some college or an Associate’s Degree and 28.3 percent of US Veterans have attained a Bachelor’s Degree or higher, which is slightly lower than national non-veteran population (31.3 percent).¹⁰ However, San Diego veterans hold a significantly higher level of education: 42.4 percent of San Diego Veterans have some college experience or an Associate’s degree, and 38.0 percent hold a Bachelor’s or higher. In total, 80.4 percent of San Diego’s veterans have some college/ associates degree or higher, which is significantly higher than Diego’s non-veteran average of 67.8 percent.¹¹

In both categories, these figures are higher than national averages as well as the education levels of their San Diego non-Veteran counterparts.

Service members, as a group, are arguably more workforce ready upon entering military service than many of their nonveteran peers due to the military’s basic entrance standards for education, morals and ethics, and physical and mental

⁹ Department of Veterans Affairs. National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. “[Educational Attainment of Veterans: 2000 – 2009](#).” January 2011.

¹⁰ US Census Bureau. 2016 American Community Survey. [Table S2101](#).

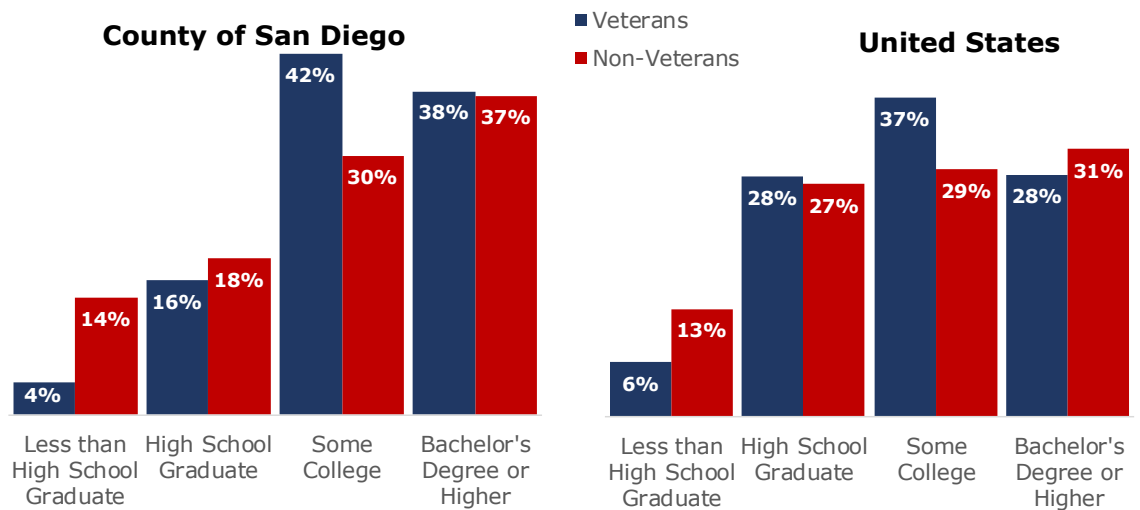
¹¹ Ibid.



health.¹² It is evident the military values education and ensures success for veterans by funding education.

Military service offers a tremendous array of education benefits that can be used while you are on active duty or after you leave the service. The Department of Defense offers college tuition assistance to soldiers up to a maximum of \$4,500 a year¹³. The Post 9/11 GI Bill provides up to 36 months of education benefits to eligible service members and veterans for college, business technical courses, job training, and others¹⁴. Loan repayment is also an option for some enlisted members. Since the military draft was eliminated after the Vietnam War, the Pentagon has sought a better-educated, better-compensated volunteer force.

Figure 4: Veteran Education Levels (County & Nation)¹⁵



Source: Census 2016 American Community Survey

¹² ["Work After Service: Developing Workforce Readiness and Veteran Talent for the Future."](#) Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families. February 2016

¹³ ["Tuition Assistance and Tuition Assistance Top-Up- What is the Difference?."](#) Clearancejobs.com. June 23, 2017.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ US Census Bureau. 2016 American Community Survey. [Table S2101](#).



III. Workforce Statistics

San Diego veterans make up 6.8 percent of the total local labor force between the ages of 18 and 64. In addition, not only do veterans make up a sizable proportion of the labor force, but also a significant proportion of business owners and job creators.¹⁶ As of 2012, 10.8 percent of San Diego County firms were either veteran-owned or joint veteran/non-veteran-owned.

If you compare San Diego County to our competitor metropolitan areas as defined in the Regional Jobs Strategy,¹⁷ San Diego ranks highest in percentage of veterans in the workforce. In 2016, 6.81 percent of San Diego’s workforce are veterans.

The average proportion of veterans in the workforce for all metropolitan areas compared at 4.2 percent. San Diego’s employment of veterans is a lot higher than the average metro and ranks highest for veteran employment in the workforce.

The U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey places County of San Diego’s unemployment rate at 6.2 percent in 2016. In 2016, San Diego County veterans had an unemployment rate of 5.6 percent which was markedly better than the regional average of 6.2 percent. By age group, veterans ages 18-34 see the highest levels of unemployment at 8.9 percent.

When compared to the same competitor metropolitan areas, San Diego ranks second highest in veteran unemployment. At 5.6 percent, San Diego’s veteran unemployment rate is nearly double that of Austin, TX. Having the largest percentage of veterans in our workforce compared to our competitor metros does not translate to lower unemployment levels for veterans in San Diego.

Veterans - Percent of Workforce		
Metro	Percent	Rank
San Diego, CA	6.81%	1
Seattle, WA	5.73%	2
Raleigh, NC	5.50%	3
Austin, TX	5.22%	4
Portland, OR	4.98%	5
Denver, CO	4.84%	6
Boston, MA	2.87%	7
San Francisco, CA	2.32%	8
Los Angeles, CA	2.09%	9
San Jose, CA	1.79%	10

¹⁶ US Census Bureau. 2016 American Community Survey. [Table B21005](#).

¹⁷ ["Regional Jobs Strategy Final Products."](#) San Diego Regional Chamber Foundation. October 2017.



Metro	Unemployment		Labor Force Participation	
	Rate	Rank	Rate	Rank
San Jose, CA	8.5%	1	79.7%	5
San Diego, CA	5.6%	2	79.1%	7
Los Angeles, CA	5.4%	3	77.9%	9
Portland, OR	4.8%	4	79.0%	8
Denver, CO	4.7%	5	80.2%	4
San Francisco, CA	4.7%	6	76.9%	10
Boston, MA	4.5%	7	81.4%	2
Seattle, WA	4.4%	8	79.2%	6
Raleigh, NC	4.0%	9	84.2%	1
Austin, TX	3.0%	10	80.6%	3

Nationally, the 2016 Census American Community Survey reports veteran unemployment at 4.7 percent compared to the overall national unemployment rate of 5.7 percent. More recently, the Office of Economic Opportunity Veterans Benefits Administration released unemployment rates for September 2017. The national unemployment rate of veterans in September 2017 was 3.0 percent.¹⁸

The unemployment gap between veterans and nonveterans has closed considerably in recent years, due in part to a recovering U.S. economy and more employers making concerted efforts to hire veterans.¹⁹ Over the past decade, specific subgroups of U.S. veterans have experienced greater unemployment than their nonveteran counterparts, particularly in the Great Recession. The gap was most prevalent in younger veterans separating from the military in their 20s, who saw the worst levels in 2011.²⁰ Female veterans also struggled more in the job market than men. Still, unemployment for younger post-9/11 veterans remains high compared to the national average.

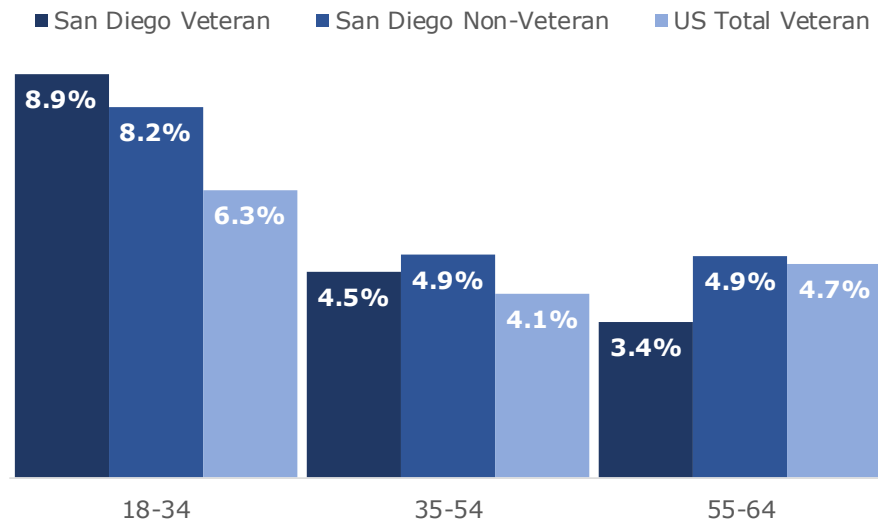
¹⁸ ["Employment Facts and Statistics."](#) Office of Economic Opportunity Veterans Benefits Administration. September 2017.

¹⁹ "Workforce Readiness Alignment: The Relationship between Job Preferences, Retention, and Earnings." [Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families](#).

²⁰ US Census Bureau. 2016 American Community Survey. [Table S2101](#).



Figure 5: Veteran Unemployment by Age Group



Source: Census 2016 American Community Survey

With respect to earnings, veterans tend to out-earn their nonveteran counterparts as a group. National figures put median veteran income at \$39,494 according to the 2016 US Census American Community Survey, more than \$10,000 greater than the median U.S. non-veteran population (\$28,347).²¹ In San Diego County, the difference is even more pronounced. In 2016, San Diego County veterans' median income (\$47,376) was over 50 percent higher than non-veterans' (\$30,471). While this wage discrepancy implies San Diego veterans are securing relatively high-skill high-wage positions, it must be noted that this figure includes social security, retirement pensions, and potentially substantial VA benefit payments that non-veterans do not receive.

²¹ US Census Bureau. 2016 American Community Survey. [Table S2101](#).



IV. Employment Barriers for San Diego Veterans and Resources Available

Veterans are not significantly disadvantaged when competing with non-veterans for jobs. In fact, veterans in the workforce have unemployment rates generally lower than non-veterans.

Most employers report excellent experiences with veteran hires and veterans tend to have a higher rate of retention.²² Through military experience, veterans have developed highly transferable skills utilizing the latest technologies, and possess qualities in leadership, teamwork, and adaptation to dynamic environments that rival or surpass their non-veteran counterparts.²³

However, even with these skills and qualities, thousands of our county's veterans are still out of work. San Diego has the highest rate of veterans in the workforce, at 6.8 percent, when compared to the competitor metros. Yet, San Diego has the second highest rate of veteran unemployment at 5.6 percent. Particularly, young individuals with minimal civilian work experience are the hardest hit. This may be because many struggling veterans face certain barriers in reintegrating to the civilian workforce after military service that non-veterans do not. The following barriers to entry are most common:

- **Translating military experience to civilian work:** While some employers understand the value gained from veteran employees, both veteran job seekers and civilian employers point to a communication gap between the two groups. The Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Policy and Planning has expressed that many veterans have trouble translating military skills/experiences into civilian terms for employers.²⁴ Veterans may not know how to approach human relations managers or effectively match their military skill sets to the specific job qualifications and descriptions.²⁵ Similarly, many employers and human relations managers may not be familiar with military skill-related jargon, Military Service Records, or military occupation descriptions. Most Human Resource professionals and hiring managers lack significant knowledge of the military and its rank and structure. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being extremely familiar and 0 being not familiar at all), more than half (54%) of the 400 interviewed said their familiarity with the military is 5 or lower.²⁶ This leads to a further communication gap that obstructs employer and

²² ["America's Heroes at Work – Veterans Hiring Toolkit."](#) United States Department of Labor.

²³ ["America's Heroes at Work – Veterans Hiring Toolkit."](#) Top 10 Reasons to Hire Veterans and Wounded Warriors. United States Department of Labor.

²⁴ ["Communication Challenges Can Become Military Veterans' Employment Barriers."](#) Hirsch, Eytan. SHRM.org. June 2012.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ ["Veterans in the Workplace."](#) U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. November 2016.



job-seeker from making optimal choices. More than 80 percent of Human Resource and recruiting professionals say that their companies lack specialized training to help civilian employees and staff relate to veterans.²⁷

- **Lack of Resume, Job Search, and Interview Experience:** One main factor contributing to veterans who may not feel ready to enter the workforce is a need for additional tools/support in the job search. Many veterans have difficulty communicating their skills and military backgrounds in terms that civilian employers can understand.²⁸ A 2012 Prudential Financial Services survey of 2,500 veterans found that 89% of veterans reported they need help with job hunting skills such as resume writing, interview skills, and targeting the companies where they'd like to work.²⁹ High quality resume and cover letters are vital to passing the first stages of human relations evaluations, but developing such writing skills requires time and practice. Young veterans in particular may have minimal experience with these specialized job-search skills, where their young non-veteran counterparts have already had a few years to understand and meet the expectations of human relations managers.
- **Time is needed to "decompress":** Close to half of veterans surveyed stated that they "were not ready" to transition to the civilian workforce. Many expressed concerns that they needed to pursue more education, but the majority answered that they simply needed some time off to "decompress" and "figure out what to do with life." Transitioning to civilian life is difficult for a number of reasons, among them adapting to civilian work culture, employers/co-workers that may have trouble relating to them, or family and social issues not connected to work.³⁰
- **Health issues (physical and mental) from military service:** In 2016, 36% of Gulf War II-era veterans reported having a service-connected disability.³¹ Besides adding general hardship to everyday personal and family life, a physical or mental disability adds difficulty to finding and retaining work, and may even restrict some professions altogether. Of veterans who did not feel ready to enter the workforce, close to half pointed to mental health challenges, and 26% to physical challenges as a factor.³² Additionally, some veterans expressed that employers may be

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "[Why 2016 Is the Year for Veterans in the Workplace.](#)" Industryweek.com. Constantine, Justin. Feb 2016.

²⁹ "[Veterans' Employment Challenges.](#)" Prudential Financial, Inc. May 2012.

³⁰ "[What to Expect When They Come Home.](#)" Military.com. October 2017.

³¹ "[Employment Situation of Veterans Summary.](#)" United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics. March 2017.

³² "[Veterans' Employment Challenges.](#)" Prudential Financial, Inc. May 2012.



avoiding veteran hiring due to a physical disability, or fear that they may bring “too much [mental] baggage.”

V. Veteran Employment Resources

The above barriers to entry speak to a mixture of technical job-search related skill set development needs, service-related disability hardships, as well as less concrete societal reintegration issues. Each issue carries with it pressures that most non-veterans do not experience, and obstructs employers from making optimal hiring decisions that match veteran skillsets with open positions.

While the focus of this section is on available resources for veterans transitioning into the workforce, it is important to recognize that there are other important needs to be met that affect work productivity and success. The success of a veteran’s transition into the workforce can be dependent on their mental wellbeing among other factors.³³ Veteran’s overall wellness, just as for the general population, is dependent on education and jobs, basic needs, physical and mental health, and social/personal connections.

Federal, state, and city governments, as well as NGOs and private organizations are keenly aware of the challenges veterans face in workforce reintegration. The following is a broad-level overview of the programs, services, and tools available to San Diego veterans in assisting job search, attainment, and retention.

- **Military, Federal, and State-Level Services:** The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Labor (DOL) each have offices and programs focused on aiding veterans in finding, securing, and keeping work. Specifically, VA’s Veterans Employment Services Office (VESO) is a strong internal recruitment office that recruits veteran workers for positions at VA locations across the U.S. Its Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program (VR&E) works to rehabilitate and train veterans with service-related disabilities for civilian work. DOL’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS) has offices across the country, including San Diego County that offers career counselors for veteran job seekers. Many veterans may also be familiar with VETS’s Transition Assistance Program (TAP), which conducts 3-day intensive job-search skill development workshops for veterans and active service members at area military bases. In addition to federal/state programs, each of San Diego’s military bases offers a career services center for active duty servicemen and veterans.
- **San Diego City and County-Level Programs and Services:** Government agencies across the county, in conjunction with area colleges

³³ [“The Promise of a New Day: Support for Service Members Transitioning to Civilian Life in San Diego.”](#) The Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research, University of San Diego. May 2016.



and universities, have actively pursued accommodating the transition of veterans into the civilian workforce. For example, the City of San Diego offers a preferential hiring policy on open competitive examinations for municipal jobs. [2-1-1 San Diego](#) is available to the entire region and helps more than 500,000 people each year connect to community, health and disaster services. 2-1-1 is a partner in operating the region's Courage to Call, a partnership with the County of San Diego, Mental Health Systems, Inc., and Veterans Village of San Diego. Courage to Call provides a confidential, veteran-staffed 24/7 helpline dedicated to assisting active duty military personnel, veterans, reservists and guard members. San Diego has also established three Veterans Resource Centers to help veterans and their families find resources and connect to benefits they may be entitled to. Finally, area universities and colleges offer veteran-targeted fast-track programs leading to certificates or specific job fields, and encourage individuals to apply for a number of veteran-specific scholarships.

- **Area NGOs and Private Organizations:** There are a huge number of NGOs and private organizations in San Diego County working tirelessly to promote veteran workforce reintegration and career services. Many organizations have specific purposes, such as focusing on rehabilitation and professional training for area homeless veterans. Additionally, many organizations are veteran-run, and thus give transitioning veterans access to role models who understand the particular hardship of reintegration to civilian society and workforce. Dozens of area NGOs and organizations can be accessed through 2-1-1 San Diego by dialing 2-1-1 or searching their website at www.211sandiego.org.
- **Honor Roll:** The Veterans Honor Roll initiative, which is led by the Chamber's Defense, Veterans and Military Affairs Committee, aims to increase the hiring of veterans throughout the San Diego region. There are over 20,000 active duty based in San Diego leaving the service each year, and a third of them choose to stay local- joining more than 200,000 veterans who currently call San Diego home. It behooves both business and public agencies alike to recognize the immense potential and expertise these former service members offer as an employee. The Chamber encourages interested businesses to consider building their own veteran hiring program, or to inform Chamber staff if they have recently hired a veteran.
- **zero8hundred:** zero8hundred is a community initiative to transform the transition experience for service members and their families. Veterans are assets to our region, but can also face challenges with transitioning to civilian life. zero8hundred uses a Veteran's Wellness Framework with four pillars: Education and Jobs, Basic Needs, Mental and Physical Health, and Personal Connections. The challenges of transition are managed through proactive interaction with Peer Navigators and a comprehensive web



portal. Through a unique partnership with the armed forces, zero8hundred is offered during mandatory transition classes at six military bases in addition to select community venues. Service members and spouses in these classes have the option to sign up for periodic interaction with Peer Navigators. Once they opt-in, they become zero8hundred “VIPs” (veterans or spouses in process), and Peer Navigators proactively call them from 9 months before until 12 months after separation to discuss transition challenges and link them to a broad range of vetted resources to help them succeed. zero8hundred’s [web portal](#) is a valuable one-stop tool for those who prefer to self-navigate to services. More than 26 public and private organizations participated in planning and oversight of zero8hundred. These include the business sector (with the San Diego Regional Chamber representing over 2,500 businesses), well established non-profits (San Diego Veteran’s Coalition, representing over 150 organizations, and 2-1-1 San Diego) government/military (Navy, Marine Corps, City of San Diego, County of San Diego), education and philanthropy. This leadership team recognized that many resources are available to help service members and families, but they are typically unaware of them. At the same time, organizations able to provide support are unable to access military bases or locate veterans once they leave the service. zero8hundred effectively addressed this significant gap.

- **Veteran Entrepreneur Services:** San Diego supports more DoD and Coast Guard personnel than any other metropolitan area in the country, according to the Department of Defense. Many of San Diego’s veterans start companies that function as contractors and suppliers to the military because of their contacts and security clearances.³⁴ The United States Small Business Administration found that veterans are 45 percent more likely to be self-employed than those without active duty military experience.³⁵ San Diego’s start-up community has grown over the past 15 years, and veterans have found homes within it.³⁶ A common struggle for veterans beginning a career in entrepreneurship is no practical knowledge of the business world and no cohort to help them on their journey.³⁷ UC San Diego expanded their entrepreneur programs to include two that are specifically geared toward veterans: a Certificate in Entrepreneurship and Veteran Ventures. As of 2012, 10.8 percent of San Diego County firms were either veteran-owned or joint veteran/non-veteran-owned. San Diego has the fifth highest percentage of veteran-owned businesses compared to the competitor metros.

³⁴ [“Veterans Help Make San Diego a Hub for Start-Ups.”](#) Zimmerman, Eilene. December 2016.

³⁵ [“White Paper: Operation Boots to Business Veteran Entrepreneurship Assessment.”](#) US Small Business Administration. June 2016.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ [“UC San Diego’s Veteran Entrepreneur Initiatives Take Flight.”](#) Franklin, Michelle. UCSD News. May 2017.



For more information and web links to specific programs, resources, and organizations, see the appendix.

VI. Next Steps for San Diego Business Leaders

Between federal, state, local, and public and private organizations, our city's veterans have a vast range of assistance programs to choose from. Most of these services directly address the primary barriers to veteran employment and mix technical job search-related skill development with broader issues of psychological and cultural reintegration into both the work world and civilian life.

Additionally, many organizations directly target veterans with service-related injuries, making sure that those who have made great sacrifices for their country are given every opportunity possible. From these findings, we can conclude that the County of San Diego and its community members are doing an excellent job of providing veterans with the tools necessary to succeed after service.

However, as our county's troops successfully conclude their military service in Afghanistan and around the world, San Diego's population of young veterans will most likely continue to grow. In order to best utilize the talents of this workforce and ensure returning veterans experience smooth reintegration, there are a number of steps that San Diego business leaders can take. These include:

- **Become familiar with veteran-focused federal and state tax breaks.** In addition to acquiring talented employees, employers can enjoy a variety of federal and state tax breaks resulting from veteran hires. The Returning Heroes Tax Credit now provides incentives of up to \$5,600 for hiring unemployed veterans, and the Wounded Warriors Tax Credit doubles the existing Work Opportunity Tax Credit for long-term unemployed veterans with service-connected disabilities, to up to \$9,600.³⁸ The State of California's New Employment Credit (NEC) allows San Diego businesses an opportunity to capture valuable tax credits intended to reduce their annual state income tax liability. The NEC allows qualifying companies to capture up to \$56,000 in tax credits (per qualified employee) for hiring recently discharged military veterans, ex-offenders, long-term unemployed persons and public assistance recipients.³⁹
- **Make active efforts to engage veterans during recruitment.** There are a number of San Diego area job fairs that cater exclusively to active service members and veterans. Recruit Military has held 36 events in San

³⁸ "[How to Get Tax Credits for Hiring Veterans.](#)" Military.com. October 2017.

³⁹ "[Tax Incentives.](#)" City of San Diego. Economic Development. October 2017.



Diego, drawing 14,121 attendees and 1,470 exhibitors.⁴⁰ Not only can San Diego employers get direct access to the veteran workforce by attending and chairing at specialized job fairs, but they can also make an effort to attract veteran job-seekers at general audience fairs by advertising via a booth or collateral materials with language and positions targeted specifically to veterans. There are also focus groups where veterans can learn about business trends in technology, energy, etc. Employer panels are also a useful tools for veterans transitioning into the workforce.

- **Ensure that current human resources practices are veteran-friendly.** Our county’s business leaders are already making a great effort to hire veterans based on their talents, skills, and character. However, there still may be a communication disconnect between veteran job candidates and human resource representatives. Newly transitioning young veterans may have difficulty projecting their value proposition into the unfamiliar corporate world, and human resource representatives may not understand the meaning of some military-centered specialized skills and qualities. The Department of Labor’s VETS program works directly with employers and offers a toolkit to improve practices for hiring veterans.⁴¹ The toolkit stresses identifying specific skills that many veterans excel at, learning about federal state and government-sponsored tax incentives, becoming familiar with Military Service Records and Military Occupational Classification codes, and drafting job descriptions targeted at veterans.
- **Policy/ Legislation:** The San Diego community has been instrumental in supporting and passing legislation and policy that supports the military and veteran communities. The Employment Transition Act of 2013 was an important piece of legislation that demonstrated San Diego’s commitment to the military community. Representative Scott Peters introduced the Veterans Employment Transition Act which allowed employers to claim a \$2,400 credit when they hire a recently discharged veteran. The Act assists veterans during their transition from military service to civilian life by improving access to services, incentivizing veteran hiring, and establishing program accountability.⁴² Along with this legislation, the San Diego veteran community has been committed to legislation that supports transitioning veteran programs. Assembly Member Voepel introduced AB 353 (Veterans’ Preferences: Voluntary Policy) in April 2017 to establish a voluntary preference for employers to grant a veteran during hiring. The proposed voluntary preference expanded the existing Vietnam War era preference to apply to all veterans, regardless of when they served. San Diego’s veteran community also maximizes veteran compensation and minimizes taxes and

⁴⁰ [“San Diego Veterans Job Fair.”](#) Recruit Military. October 2017.

⁴¹ [“America’s Heroes at Work- Veterans Hiring Toolkit.”](#) U.S. Department of Labor. October 2017.

⁴² [“Congressman Peters Introduces Veterans Employment Transition Act.”](#) May 2013.



fees for veterans, military members, and their families. More recently, AB 172 by Assembly Member Chavez removed barriers to enrolling veterans in educational institutions when it was signed by Governor Brown in August 2017.

- **VCC:** Vets Community Connections (VCC) represents an opportunity for employers, civic organizations and individuals to meet, offer services and introduce opportunities to veterans and their families throughout San Diego County. Launched in 2015, VCC was the result of a study financed by the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce intended to identify the ways in which veterans receive helpful information following separation from service and how they would like to engage with their community. It was revealed that veterans prefer to have an individual to speak to, and did not want to continue being directed toward anonymous websites. Consequently, the VCC system results in a veteran making a request to either receive information about businesses in the area that offer specific services, or be introduced to an individual with knowledge about the community and/or its culture (i.e. recommendations for schools, how to engage with local community groups, etc.) VCC represents an excellent opportunity for employers with an interest in employing veterans and/or engaging with the veteran community more to do so as they prefer or are able to.
- **Further Support the Organized Veteran Community:** Some of the success of San Diego's veterans can be attributed to the community collaboration that supports veterans as evidenced by the growth of the San Diego Veterans Coalition (SDVC) and San Diego Military Family Collaborative (SDMFC), both of which lead collaboration and integration using a collective impact model. Through their monthly convenings and action groups, these two collectives, through their members, have:
 - Engaged over 300 member organizations to join in several resource-rich events and forums
 - Launched zero8hundred, a unique transition support program that has provided case management and referrals to 2,200 transitioning service members and spouses since 2015, lauded as "filling a critical gap" by University of San Diego Reports
 - Founded Veterans Community Connect to provide San Diegans a direct help connection with veterans and military in need
 - Started a student veteran mentor program
 - Sponsored the first ever Women Veterans Forum
 - Envisioned the technology (SDUnited) to provide true seamless integration and structural backbone that better serves military affiliated residents.



Both SDVC and SDMFC continue to add 20% of their membership each year. The success of this organized veteran community can be leveraged with further support from the business community.



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Appendix: Examples of Veteran Labor & Career- Service Related Resources

- 1) **America's Heroes at Work Hiring Toolkit:** A toolkit and resource center developed by the Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) for private-sector employers looking to strengthen veteran hiring practices. Website Link: <https://www.dol.gov/vets/ahaw/>.
- 2) **San Diego 2-1-1:** 2-1-1 San Diego serves as a lifeline connecting San Diegans to more than 6,000 community, health and disaster support services, 24-hours a day in more than 200 languages including resources, information and services for our region's military, veterans and their families. Through support from the County of San Diego, Courage to Call is partnership between Mental Health Systems, Inc. Veterans Village of San Diego and 2-1-1 that provides critical support through 2-1-1 veteran navigators to San Diego's extensive military and veteran community. Website Link: <http://211sandiego.org/resources/military-veteran-services/>.
- 3) **San Diego County Website:** The "Service Members, Veterans, and their Families" section provides links to over a hundred services and organizations specializing in career services and development. Website Link: <http://sandiego.networkofcare.org/veterans/services/>.
- 4) **Transition Assistance Program (TAP):** DOL VET program that offers 3-day intensive job search skill development workshops for active service and separating veterans at military bases around the United States. Website Link: <https://www.taonline.com/TAPOffice/>.
- 5) **Veterans Employment Services Office (VESO):** US Department of Veterans Affairs office that oversees targeting, hiring, and retaining military veterans for VA positions around the United States. There is a VESO Regional Veteran Employment Coordinator (RVEC) in San Diego who offers a host of services for veterans interested in pursuing VA careers. VESO Website Link: <https://www.vacareers.va.gov/veterans/employment-coordination.asp>. Link to San Diego RVEC Contact Information: <https://www.vaforvets.va.gov/hr/RVECS/pages/default.asp>
- 6) **Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS):** US Department of Labor (DOL) service that serves America's veterans and separating service members by preparing them for meaningful careers, providing employment resources and expertise, and protecting their employment rights. Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) are located in state employment service local offices to provide a comprehensive range of



counseling and training options for veterans. In addition, they monitor employment openings with federal contractors and federal/state-level government agencies to ensure veterans get priority referrals, as well as sustain connections with private sector employers. There is a DOL VETS office in Oceanside, California.

VETS Website Link: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

VETS Directory and Contact Information:

<https://www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/nationaloffice.htm>

- 7) **Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program (VR&E):** VA program for veterans with service related disabilities to find and retain work in both the government and private sector. Website Link: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/>.
- 8) **zero8hundred:** zero8hundred is a community initiative to transform the transition experience for service members and their families. Veterans are assets to our region, but can also face challenges with transitioning to civilian life. zero8hundred uses a Veteran's Wellness Framework with four pillars: Education and Jobs, Basic Needs, Mental and Physical Health, and Personal Connections. The challenges of transition are managed through proactive interaction with Peer Navigators and a comprehensive web portal. Through a unique partnership with the armed forces, zero8hundred is offered during mandatory transition classes at six military bases in addition to select community venues. Service members and spouses in these classes have the option to sign up for periodic interaction with Peer Navigators. Once they opt-in, they become zero8hundred "VIPs" (veterans or spouses in process), and Peer Navigators proactively call them from 9 months before until 12 months after separation to discuss transition challenges and link them to a broad range of vetted resources to help them succeed. zero8hundred's [web portal](#) is a valuable one-stop tool for those who prefer to self-navigate to services. More than 26 public and private organizations participated in planning and oversight of zero8hundred. These include the business sector (with the San Diego Regional Chamber representing over 2,500 businesses), well established non-profits (San Diego Veteran's Coalition, representing over 150 organizations, and 2-1-1 San Diego) government/military (Navy, Marine Corps, City of San Diego, County of San Diego), education and philanthropy. This leadership team recognized that many resources are available to help service members and families, but they are typically unaware of them. At the same time, organizations able to provide support are unable to access military bases or locate veterans once they leave the service. zero8hundred effectively addressed this significant gap.



About the San Diego Regional Chamber Foundation

The San Diego Regional Chamber Foundation is a 501(c)3 foundation. The Foundation's mission is to create the most business-friendly region in California through investment in research, education, and leadership. The Foundation focuses its research, education, and leadership cultivation around the issues that influence San Diego's business climate: workforce development, cross-border business, veteran's employment, infrastructure, and quality of life.