



**Montana Legislative Services Division**  
**Office of Research and Policy Analysis**

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## RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

February 5, 2014

TO: State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee

FROM: Sheri Scurr, Legislative Research Analyst

RE: Veteran Population in Montana

This memorandum responds to the State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee (SAVA) request for information about Montana's veteran population to be presented to SAVA at the February 6 meeting. The committee was interested in general demographic information as well as information related to the number of veterans involved in the criminal justice system.

The following is a bullet-point list highlighting some of the data collected from various sources.

### General data from the VA on Montana veterans

- Total number of veterans: 102,986
- Number receiving disability compensation: 17,027
- Number receiving VA pension benefits: 1,609
- Number using GI Bill education benefits: 1,795
- Number of home loans backed by the VA: 1,682
- Number participating in VA vocational rehabilitation: 526
- Number of inpatient admissions to VA health-care facilities in 2009: 2,177
- Number of headstone markers provided in 2009: 1,263<sup>1</sup>

### Montana Department of Labor and Industry data

- Of the 37,000 working-age veterans, 9.4% (3,479) are unemployed
- Fewer Montana veterans are employed compared to Montana nonveterans
- Veterans comprise about 12.5% of Montana's total population
- Montana veterans as a whole or older than nonveterans

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, State Summary for Montana, November 2010.

- Montana veterans are slightly less educated than non-veterans
- Montana veterans who are employed earn slightly more compared to non-veterans<sup>2</sup>

#### Veterans involved in the criminal justice system - national data

- About 10% of those incarcerated in state and federal prisons are veterans.<sup>3</sup>
- The vast majority of incarcerated veterans are male and most (65%) were 55 years of age or older, while only 17% of nonveteran males were older than 55 years.<sup>4</sup>
- Veterans in prison are more likely to have committed a violent crime and to serve a longer sentence than civilians, but less likely to have a criminal history prior to the offense that resulted in prison.<sup>5</sup>
- A study of incarcerated and homeless veterans who were contacted by outreach workers found that:
  - one in five incarcerated veterans were experiencing long-term homelessness prior to being admitted to jail; and
  - three in four incarcerated were unemployed prior to incarceration.<sup>6</sup>
- Veterans in state prisons reported higher levels of alcohol abuse, but lower levels of drug abuse, than other prisoners.
- Nearly 60% of veterans in state prisons reported having driven drunk in the past, compared to 45% of other inmates.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Aaron McNay, "Military Veterans in Montana: What Do We Know?", Montana Department of Labor and Industry, Montana Economy at a Glance, December 2011.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Special Report, "Veterans in State and Federal Prison", May 2007, NCJ 217199.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "Veterans in Contact with the Justice System", webpage accessed February 3, 2014.  
<http://www.samhsa.gov/co-occurring/topics/military-justice/veterans-justice-system.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, Veterans in Prison or Jail, January 2000, NCJ 178888.

## Montana veterans involved in the criminal justice system

- More than 10% of WATCh participants are veterans. WATCh is a 13-month Department of Corrections secure residential treatment program for felony DUI offenders.<sup>8</sup>
- About 30% of the probation officer DUI workload in Yellowstone County consists of probationers who are veterans.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Mary Jane Knisely, District Judge, Judicial District 13, Yellowstone County, "Demonstrating Honor Through Accountability: Montana Veterans Courts", Traffic Safety Standard, Montana Department of Transportation, Issue 3, Winter 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.