



Among Black Americans, Is Military Service Associated with Better Quality of Life?

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Despite the strong representation of Black Americans in the military, there is little research on the impact of military service on Black people. RAND researchers examined the ways that military service might be correlated with the postmilitary experiences of Black Americans and explored several factors that could be meaningful to their well-being, focusing on physical and behavioral health, economic stability, and interpersonal relationships.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do the social, health, and economic outcomes of Black veterans compare with those of Black civilians?
- How do the outcomes of Black veterans compare with those of White veterans and White civilians?



KEY FINDINGS

Several positive outcomes were found to be associated with military service

- A majority of Black veterans experience improved economic stability compared with Black Americans who have never served, as measured by higher income, improved ability to cover costs of medical and dental care, higher rates of homeownership, and decreased reliance on food assistance programs.
- Black veterans have a substantially lower likelihood of marijuana use disorder than Black civilians and White veterans and civilians.
- Black veterans are more likely to be married, and at younger ages, than Black civilians, which has been shown to be associated with positive economic and mental and physical health outcomes.

However, military service was also associated with some negative outcomes

- Black veterans still struggle to achieve economic equity compared with White civilians and veterans on such indicators as annual income and need for food assistance.
- Black veterans have higher odds than Black civilians of experiencing chronic pain, high-impact pain, hypertension, high cholesterol, Type 2 diabetes, prostate cancer, and work-related limitations.



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