

# Michigan Veterans

Population, Employment, and Earnings

November 2025



MICHIGAN  
Center for Data  
and Analytics

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Population, Employment,  
and Earnings

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## Executive Summary

- Veterans make up over **5 percent** of the Michigan population, with most living in the Detroit Metro Prosperity Region.
- Annually, veterans in Michigan earn roughly **\$10,000 more** than nonveterans.
- The poverty rate among veterans (7.9 percent) is **notably lower** than the statewide average (12.2 percent).
- About **one-third** of Michigan's veteran population has a disability, more than double the share of nonveterans.
- A majority (55 percent) of Michigan veterans are in their retirement years, **age 65 or older**.
- Nearly 8 percent of veterans work in **Public administration**, more than double the rate of nonveterans (3.4 percent).
- Veterans are less likely to have obtained a **bachelor's degree or higher** compared to the nonveteran population.
- The number of new veteran registered apprentices increased by roughly **20 percent** over the year.

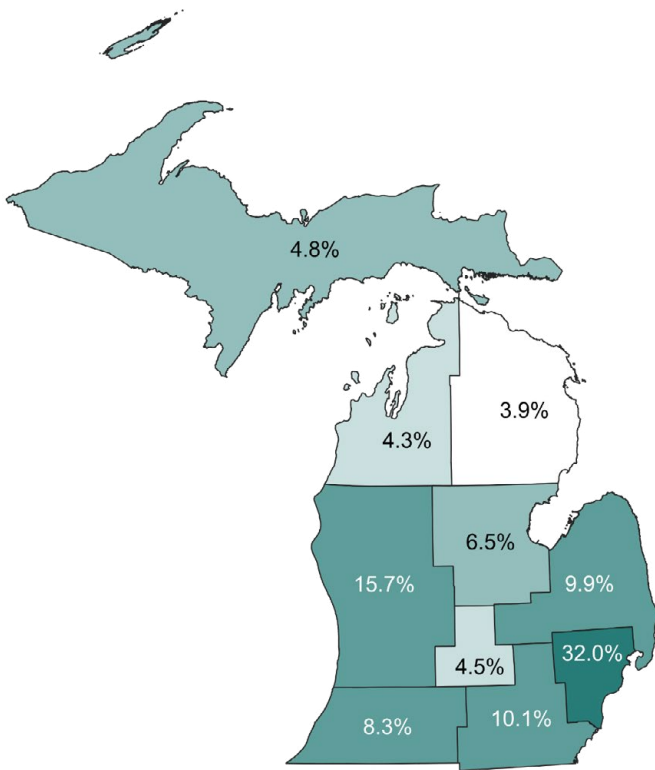
# Michigan's Veteran Population

Michigan is home to approximately 435,500 veterans, which represents 5.4 percent of the state's civilian population over the age of 18. This is the 13th largest population of veterans across the U.S.

Rural areas have a higher percentage of veterans than urban regions. In Northeast Michigan, the smallest region in the state, more than one in 10 residents are veterans. Comparatively, about one in 20 individuals in the Detroit Metro region, the largest region in the state, are veterans.

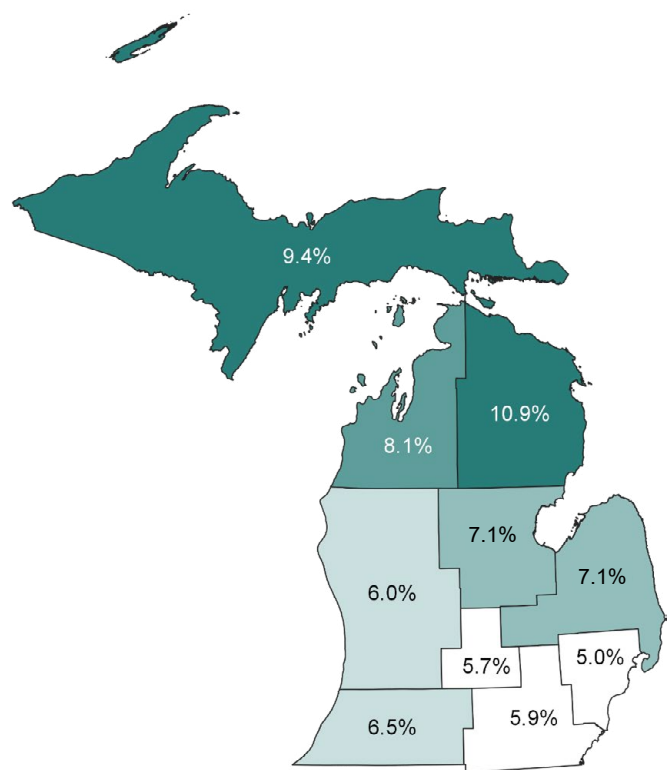
## Nearly one in three veterans live in the Detroit Metro area.

Figure 1: Percent Share of the Veteran Population by Michigan Prosperity Region (Age 18+)



## Veterans make up more than one in 10 residents in Northeast Michigan.

Figure 2: Percent of the Population that is a Veteran by Michigan Prosperity Region (Age 18+)



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



**In every prosperity region, more than half the veterans are above the age of 65 compared to less than half of nonveterans.**

Figure 3: Populations by Veteran Status and Michigan Prosperity Region (Age 18+)

Prosperity Region	Total Population	Veteran Population	Share of Veterans Below Age 65	Share of Nonveterans Below Age 65
Upper Peninsula	247,900	23,200	42.7%	74.6%
Northwest	253,100	20,500	42.7%	72.6%
Northeast	169,000	18,500	38.1%	68.8%
West	1,257,900	75,300	47.0%	80.4%
East Central	441,300	31,100	43.8%	77.2%
East	664,800	47,400	45.8%	77.4%
South Central	374,800	21,500	48.7%	81.4%
Southwest	607,500	39,800	47.7%	78.4%
Southeast	817,900	48,500	46.7%	79.7%
Detroit Metro	3,057,200	153,300	45.2%	79.8%

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

Less than half of Michigan’s veteran population (45 percent) is within typical working age, ages 18 to 64, compared to most nonveterans (77 percent). This is true in all of the state’s prosperity regions as well. In Northeast Michigan, for example, only 38 percent of veterans are below the age of 65. Nationally, more than half of veterans and nonveterans are below retirement age at 51 and 79 percent, respectively.

# Labor Force and Unemployment

Fewer veterans (42 percent) participate in Michigan's labor force than nonveterans (64 percent). This corresponds with what is seen at the national level where 48 percent of veterans participate in the labor force versus 65 percent of nonveterans. Lower participation among veterans is likely due to a high proportion being over the age of 65, as well as other contributing factors such as disabilities.

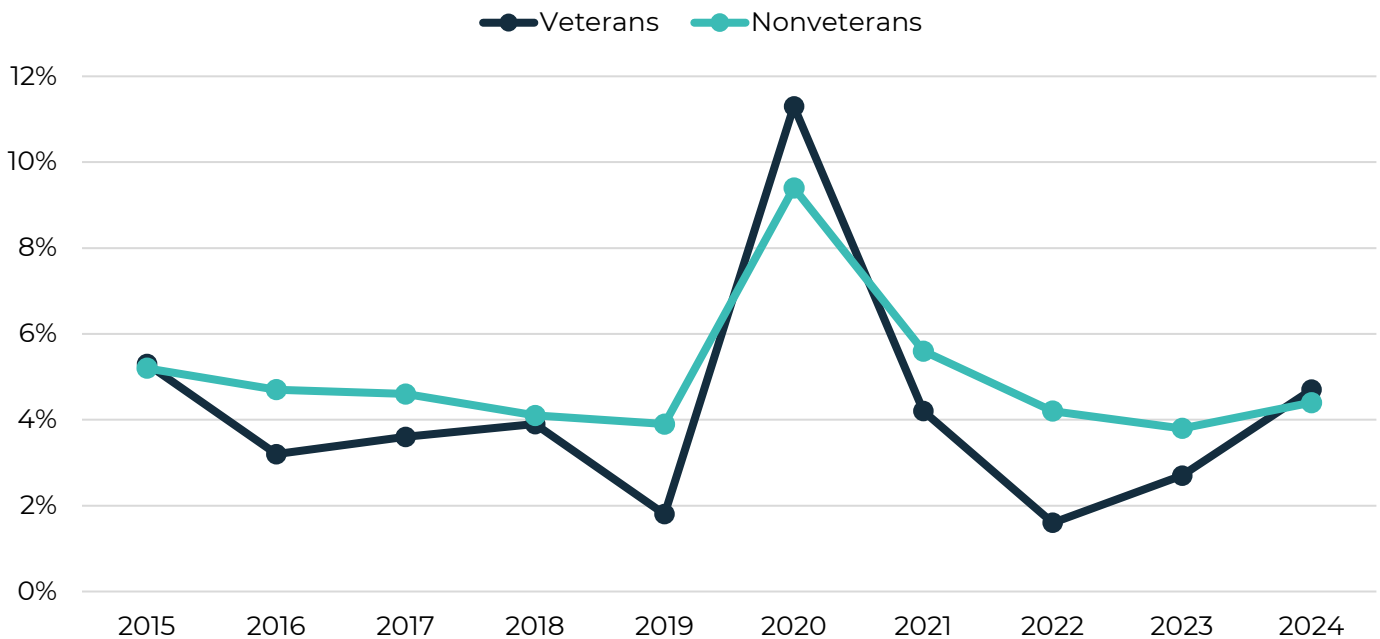
The unemployment rate for veterans (4.7 percent) is slightly higher than the nonveteran rate (4.4 percent). This is the first time that veterans have had a greater unemployment rate

since 2020. Over the last decade, veterans have typically observed lower unemployment rates than nonveterans.

Underemployment remains a significant issue in the workforce, affecting individuals who are involuntarily employed part-time or working in positions that do not align with their qualifications and expertise. Although there is no detailed data on veterans and nonveterans who are underemployed, it is worth noting. The transition from military to civilian life can be challenging and may lead to veterans being affected by underemployment.

## Over the past decade, Michigan veterans have typically held lower annual unemployment rates than nonveterans.

Figure 4: Unemployment Rates by Veteran Status in Michigan (Age 18+)



Source: Employment Situation of Veterans, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



## Earnings and Poverty

Michigan veterans have favorable earnings and poverty rates. The annual median income for veterans in Michigan (\$49,300) is greater than nonveterans (\$39,400) by nearly \$10,000. Nationally, the gap is slightly larger with veterans (\$55,100) earning almost \$13,400 more than nonveterans per year.

The poverty rate for veterans (7.9 percent) is lower than the Michigan rate (12.2 percent). Similarly, just over 11 percent of the national population is at or below the poverty level while the nation's veterans show a poverty rate of 7.4 percent.

Several factors may contribute to veterans' higher earnings and lower poverty rates. Apart from work experience and educational attainment, those with disabilities may receive compensation from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. These earnings are included as income by the U.S. Census Bureau and can help offset the likelihood of poverty.

# Employment by Industries and Occupations

## Industries

Over half of the veterans in the Michigan labor force are employed within *Manufacturing; Trade, transportation, and utilities; or Educational and health services*. These same industries also employ most nonveterans.

Although it is a smaller industry, a larger share of veterans (7.8 percent) work in *Public administration* than nonveterans (3.4 percent). Examples of specific areas within the sector include *Justice, public order, and safety activities; Administration of housing programs and community development; and National security and international affairs*.

## Occupations

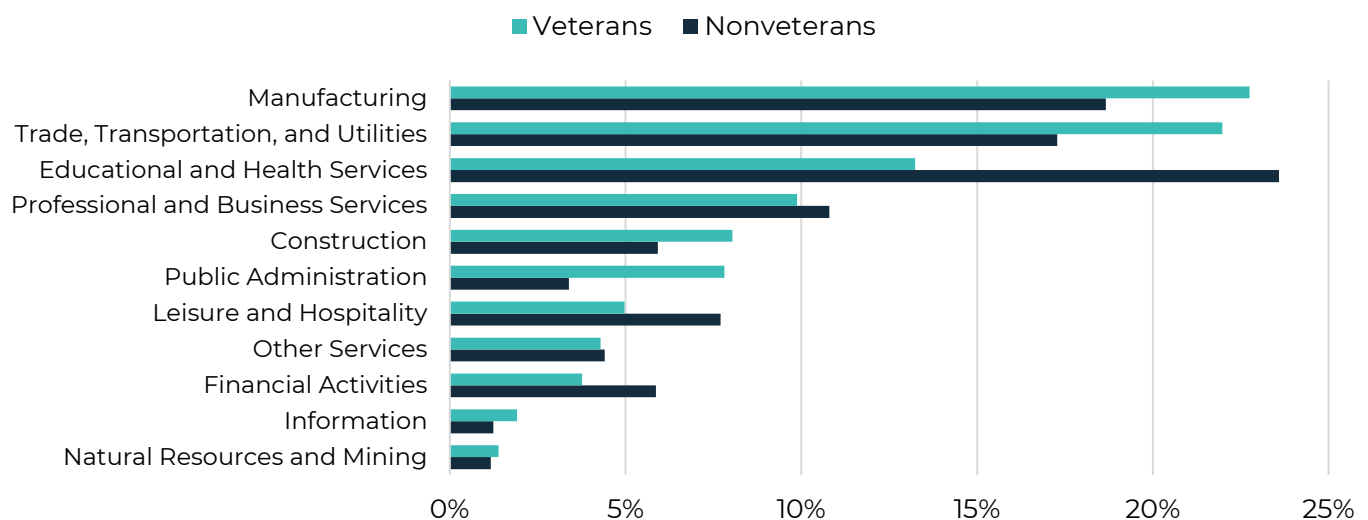
Michigan veterans and nonveterans alike have about 11 percent of their employment in *Management* occupations, greater than all other occupational groups. Workers within management typically plan, direct policies, and

oversee people, products, or services. The median wage in Michigan for *Management* occupations is over \$52 per hour. Examples of specific occupation titles within the group include *Computer and information systems managers; Farmers and other agricultural managers; and Postsecondary education administrators*.

*Production and Transportation and material moving* occupations are the next largest groups that employ veterans. *Production* occupations have a median hourly wage of roughly \$22 and specific titles can include *Bakers, Machinists, and Woodworkers*. *Transportation and material moving* occupations have a median wage of just over \$19 per hour. Individual occupations within this group cover a wide range of median wages and employment levels and include titles such as *Aircraft pilots and flight engineers; Hand laborers and material movers; and Railroad workers*. All other occupational groups each hold less than 10 percent of the veteran workers.

## Veterans are more likely than nonveterans to work in several industries, including *Manufacturing, Trade, transportation, and utilities, and Public Administration*.

Figure 5: Employment Shares in Michigan Industries by Veteran Status



Source: 2023 One-Year Public Use Microdata Samples, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

# Demographics

Veterans in Michigan and the U.S. are predominantly male at 91 and 89 percent, respectively. This is a stark contrast to the total Michigan population which is nearly equivalent between male and female populations. Gender differences in the veteran population are not surprising, given that women were historically excluded from military service. Additionally, while military drafts have been used in the past to fill vacancies, only men are required to register for the Selective Service. Most notably, the Vietnam war was the last time a draft was used, which is the era that the greatest portion (35.8 percent) of Michigan's current veterans served.

The Vietnam era, which lasted from 1955 to 1975, helps explain the age range commonly seen among veterans in the state. The largest share of the state's veterans are over the age of 75 (33 percent). Less than half (45 percent) are below the age of 65. Comparatively, over three-quarters

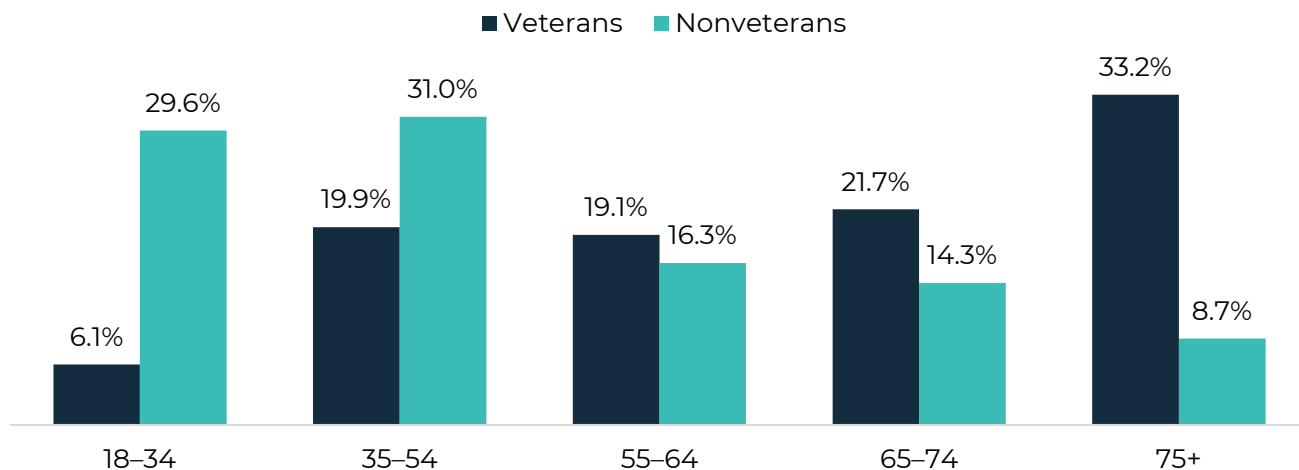
of the nonveteran population in Michigan is below age 65.

The racial demographics of veterans are like those of nonveterans in the state. Michigan veterans are largely white non-Hispanic (83 percent). Just over 9 percent of veterans are Black or African American and less than 10 percent are from other racial groups, combined.

Roughly one in three veterans are reported to have a disability in the state. Comparatively, less than one in five nonveterans report having a disability. These rates are similar to those seen nationally. The American Community Survey specifically asks about six different types of disabilities. These include hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living difficulty. If a respondent reports having any one of the six types, they are considered to have a disability.

## Roughly one-third of Michigan veterans are over the age of 75.

Figure 6: Population Shares by Age Group and Veteran Status in Michigan

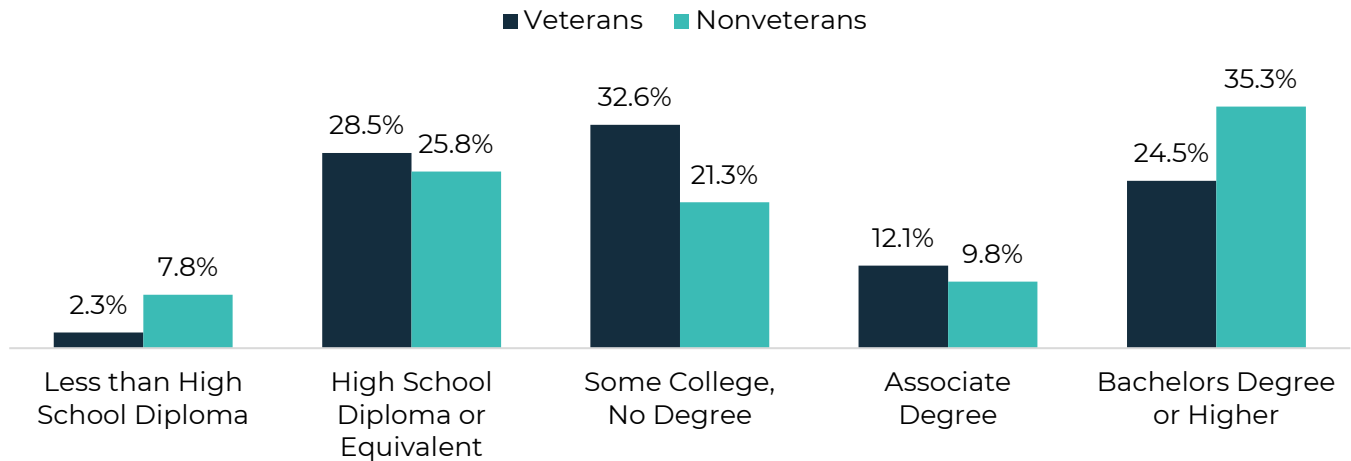


Source: 2024 One-Year Estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

# Education and Training

**Veterans are more likely than nonveterans to have some college or an associate degree as their highest educational attainment.**

Figure 7: Educational Attainment (Age 25–64) by Veteran Status in Michigan



Source: 2023 One-Year Public Use Microdata Samples, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

## Educational Attainment

A high school diploma is a typical requirement to enlist in the military. As such, it is uncommon for a veteran to have less than a high school diploma as their highest level of educational attainment. Compared to nonveterans, some college or an associate degree is more likely to be the highest level of postsecondary education among veterans. Nonveterans are much more likely than veterans to have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

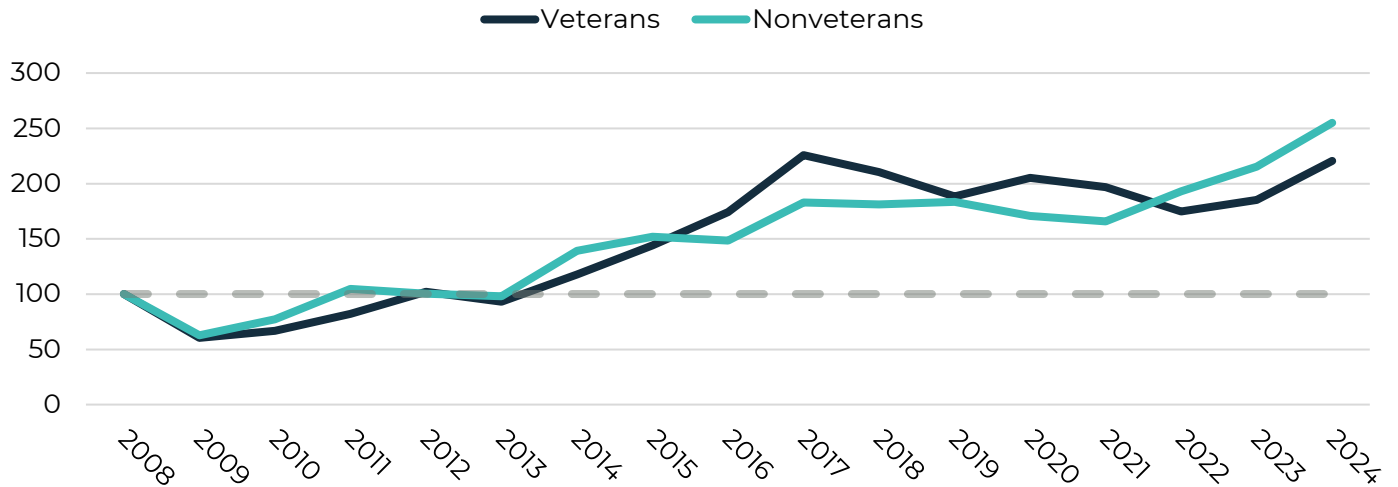
## Education Benefits

Roughly 433,200 students in Michigan received Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits in the 2022–2023 school year. An additional 229,200 students used Department of Defense Tuition Assistance program benefits. The Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit provides tuition, housing allowances, and book stipends for post-service education. This benefit can be used by the service member or be passed on to dependents like a spouse or children. The Tuition Assistance program, however, is tuition only, has an annual cap, and is used by active-duty members.

# Registered Apprenticeship

**The amount of new registered apprentices, regardless of veteran status, has gradually increased over the past decade.**

Figure 8: Index\* of New Registered Apprentices by Veteran Status



Source: Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System, Office of Apprenticeship, U.S. Department of Labor

\* An index year of 2008 means that new registered apprentice numbers were set equal to 100 and percent changes were calculated from there.

The program completion rate among veterans is 40.2 percent, which is slightly behind the statewide average of about 44 percent. Individuals can anticipate positive employment outcomes one year after completing a Registered Apprenticeship program. Veterans are employed at a rate of 92.5 percent and earn a median salary of \$83,720. This is compared to a nonveteran employment rate of roughly 94 percent and a median annual salary of \$81,770.

Most active veteran registered apprentices are in *Construction* and *Manufacturing*. This is not unexpected, since they are also the largest Registered Apprenticeship industries in the state. Over half of all veteran registered apprentices are in *Construction* and just under one-quarter are in *Manufacturing*. The remaining industries each

have less than 10 percent of the veteran registered apprentices.

Approximately one in five veteran active registered apprentices are *Electricians*. The other main occupations for veterans are *Plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters*, and *Carpenters*. These are also the three main occupations for all registered apprentices in the state.



## Conclusion

Veterans make up a small portion of the Michigan population but are present in every region of the state. Many veterans in the state are older and are more likely than nonveterans to have a disability. These two factors likely contribute to lower labor force participation among veterans compared to nonveterans. Veterans that are part of the labor force, however, can experience higher earnings and lower rates of poverty.

For more information on veterans across all states, resources like the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs [open data portal](#) may be useful. For information on the military community, explore the [interactive demographic dashboards](#) by the Department of Defense.

The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity offers a variety of career support opportunities for veterans. Learn more on the [Veterans' Employment Services website](#).



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