RACIAL DISPARITIES AMONG VETERANS

INCARCERATION

Black veterans comprised 27% of the incarcerated veteran population between 2011 and 2012 but made up just 12% of the overall veteran population over the same period.

ARREST AND BOOKING

Among White veterans, 31% said they had been arrested and booked into jail between 2002 and 2019; for Black veterans the number was 37%.

MILITARY JUSTICE

Black service members are much more likely to face disciplinary and military justice action. Black airmen were 1.7 times more likely to face court-martial or non-judicial punishment than White airmen between 2006 and 2015. Black Marines were 2.6 times more likely to receive a guilty finding at a general court-martial than White Marines over the same period.

DISCHARGE CHARACTERIZATION

Black veterans were approximately 1.5 times more likely to receive an other-than-honorable discharge than White veterans in 2018. This type of discharge generally results in a lifetime denial of services and benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and is associated with an increased risk of suicide and criminal justice system involvement.

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

Between 2019 and 2020, Black and Hispanic veterans were more likely to experience mental health and substance use disorders than their White counterparts. Approximately 17% of Black veterans and 18% of Hispanic veterans screened positive for post-traumatic stress disorder, compared to 11% of White veterans. During the same period, Black veterans were also more likely than White veterans to be diagnosed with a substance use disorder (13% vs. 9%).

HOMELESSNESS

Roughly 43% of veterans experiencing homelessness are people of color, with Black veterans comprising 33% of all homeless veterans. White veterans comprise just over half (57%) of the homeless veteran population, but White people make up more than 80% of all veterans.


Source: National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2018). People of color make up a disproportionate share of the homeless population.