

VFW Federal Elections Survey Results

Veterans vote and a candidate's military experience matters, significantly

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WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is releasing the results of its Federal Elections Survey that focused on individual voter habits and demographics of the more than 1.2 million members of the nation's oldest and largest major war veterans' organization. The short survey did not ask respondents which candidate or candidates they might support in November.

Nearly 9,200 responses were tallied, with an overwhelming 9,070 respondents (99 percent) saying they were registered to vote, and 8,892 (97 percent) indicating their intent to vote in the upcoming presidential and congressional elections. Only 79 respondents (less than 1 percent) said they would not vote this fall, with 197 veterans (2 percent) still undecided.

Regarding voter history, 93 percent of respondents said they voted in both the 2012 and 2014 federal elections, with 3 percent saying they voted but in just one of the elections, leaving less than 4 percent saying no or they couldn't remember. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, only 65 percent of registered voters actually voted in the 2012 federal election.

When asked if a candidate's veteran's status mattered for the Office of the President, an overwhelming 87 percent of respondents answered either yes (54 percent) or maybe (33 percent), while 13 percent said veterans' status did not matter. For congressional elections, again an overwhelming 89 percent answered either yes (58 percent) or maybe (31 percent) that veterans' status could influence how they might vote. Only 11 percent said veterans' status did not matter.

For demographic purposes, more than 96 percent of respondents were male, the average age of all respondents was between 60 and 69, nearly 80 percent are married, and 60 percent receive care or benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The majority served in the Army (48 percent), followed by the Navy (25 percent), Air Force (21 percent), and Marine Corps (12 percent), with 80 percent of respondents serving in the enlisted

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ranks, 14 percent as officers, and 6 percent were both. Regarding current status, 63 percent identified themselves as veterans, and 40 percent as military retirees. Regarding war or conflict served, the largest cohort were Vietnam veterans at 60 percent, followed by 19 percent as Post-9/11 veterans, and 17 percent serving in Operations Desert Shield or Storm. The survey's demographic questions generally tracked with VFW membership demographics.

The 9,168 respondents represented all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Marianas Islands and Puerto Rico, as well as VFW members stationed or residing abroad.