Veterans form a sizable component of today's older population in Massachusetts. An estimated 451,000 Massachusetts residents are veterans; of these, more than three-quarters are men over the age of 50. For older Massachusetts men, having served in the military is a far more common experience than it is for their sons. More than half of older men in the Commonwealth are veterans, far higher than the rate of service reported by men under the age of 50 (see Figure 1). Although women continue to play significant roles in the military, fewer than 5% of Massachusetts women in any age group are veterans.

Due to cohort differences in service experience, the veteran population is far older than the adult population in general (see Figure 2). Among the non-veteran male population age 30 and over (right), nearly three-quarters are under age 50 and 2% are age 80 and over. In contrast, within the male veteran population (left), only 18% is under age 50 and nearly 16% are age 80 and over.
As a group, veterans in Massachusetts share many similarities with individuals of the same age and gender who did not serve in the military. One point of divergence is their geographic distribution: veterans are more highly clustered in communities outside of the city of Boston (see Figure 3). Whereas approximately 36% of the age 65 and over male population living in Boston has served in the military, in communities outside of Boston fully 60% of the age 65 and older male population reports veteran status.

![Figure 3: Percentage of the Population Reporting Military Service in Massachusetts](image)

Calculated by the Gerontology Institute, University of Massachusetts Boston, using microdata from the 2005-2007 American Community Survey

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