

Rural Veterans of Color: CJ Kreisel (MPH, CSPH) and TL Spark, Rocky Mountain MIRECC, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Aurora, CO

Research shows that Veterans of color (VOC) and people of color residing in rural areas face socioeconomic and health disparities compared to their non-Hispanic White counterparts. However, little is known about disparities faced by the intersection of these populations - rural VOC. This poster will highlight rural counties with higher populations of VOC and explore differences in socioeconomic factors compared to rural communities with lower percentage VOC.

2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimates provided county-level race and ethnicity population estimates by Veteran status. United States Department of Agriculture 2013 Rural-Urban Commuting Codes were used to identify rural counties. Counties with greater than 20% of the Veteran population being people of color (Hispanic ethnicity or non-White race) were designated as higher proportion VOC counties. ArcGIS Online was used to display counties with high percentages of rural VOC. The 2018 County Health Rankings and 2018 CDC Social Vulnerability Index datasets provide socioeconomic data used to explore sociodemographic differences in rural counties with higher proportion VOC compared to lower proportion counties.

A total of 1976 counties in the US met the criteria for rural with 457 (23%) having a higher proportion VOC. The poster will include a map showing where these populations live and results from the analysis comparing socio-demographic differences between rural counties with higher proportion VOC.

Though rural Veterans tend to be less racially diverse, numerous counties with sizable populations of rural VOC exist. Rural VOC face discrimination, historical trauma, lack of access to culturally appropriate healthcare, and a host of socioeconomic barriers. Future rural Veteran research and intervention/prevention efforts should focus on rural VOC.