Memorial Day, originally called *Decoration Day*, is a day of remembrance for those who died in service to their country. The holiday was officially proclaimed in 1868 to honor Union and Confederate soldiers and was expanded after World War I to honor those who died in all wars. Over one million men and women have been killed in military service since the Civil War, highlighting the magnitude of our heroes' sacrifice.

Many people confuse Memorial Day and *Veterans Day*. Memorial Day is a day for remembering and honoring military personnel who died in the service of their country, particularly those who died in battle or as a result of wounds sustained in battle. Veterans Day is the day set aside to thank and honor all those who served honorably in the military — wartime or peacetime. Veterans Day is intended to thank living veterans for their service, to acknowledge their contributions to our national security, and to underscore the fact that all those who served — not only those who died — have sacrificed and done their duty.

Regardless of the way we remember the fallen and cherish the living, the staggering numbers of American soldiers who died while fighting in major conflicts should give all of us a greater appreciation of our freedom. It is essential to recognize those who served -- whether it is with parades, ceremonies, social media posts, or simply thanking them for their service. When you thank a veteran for their service, ask them what they did. Each of them, in their own unique way, carved out their own chapter in American history.

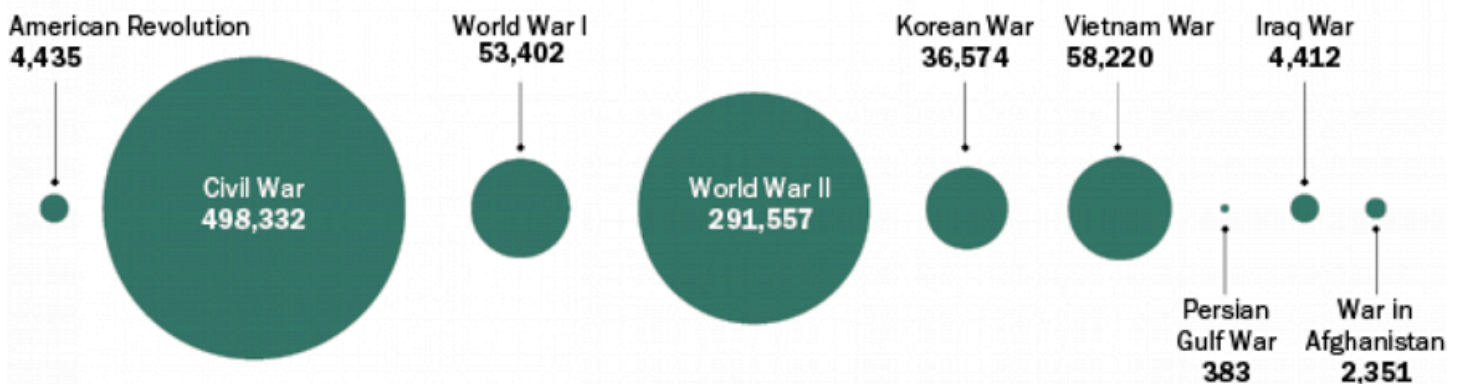Please review the chart below and the table on the next page.

> **Next Memorial Day:**
> Monday, May 27, 2024
>
> **Next Veterans Day:**
> Saturday, November 11, 2023

Military Deaths in America's Major Wars

Number of American soldiers who died while fighting in major conflicts...

War	Deaths
American Revolution	4,435
Civil War	498,332
World War I	53,402
World War II	291,557
Korean War	36,574
Vietnam War	58,220
Iraq War	4,412
Persian Gulf War	383
War in Afghanistan	2,351

Note: Figures do not include deaths outside theaters of conflict. Civil War deaths are based on incomplete returns due to estimates of Confederate deaths. Figures as of May 2015.
Source: Congressional Research Service, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; U.S. Department of Defense.

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America's Wars and Casualties

American Revolution (1775-1783)

Total U.S. Servicemembers[1]	217,000
Battle Deaths	4,435
Non-mortal Woundings	6,188

War of 1812 (1812-1815)

Total U.S. Servicemembers	286,730
Battle Deaths	2,260
Non-mortal Woundings	4,505

Indian Wars (approx. 1817-1898)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (VA estimate)	106,000
Battle Deaths (VA estimate)	1,000

Mexican War (1846-1848)

Total U.S. Servicemembers	78,718
Battle Deaths	1,733
Other Deaths (In Theater)	11,550
Non-mortal Woundings	4,152

Civil War (1861-1865)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Union)	2,213,363
Battle Deaths (Union)	140,414
Other Deaths (In Theater) (Union)	224,097
Non-mortal Woundings (Union)	281,881
Total Servicemembers (Conf.) [2]	1,050,000
Battle Deaths (Confederate) [3]	74,524
Other Deaths (In Theater) (Confederate) [3,4]	59,297
Non-mortal Woundings (Confederate)	Unknown

Spanish-American War (1898-1902)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Worldwide)	306,760
Battle Deaths	385
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater)	2,061
Non-mortal Woundings	1,662

World War I (1917-1918)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Worldwide)	4,734,991
Battle Deaths	53,402
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater)	63,114
Non-mortal Woundings	204,002

World War II (1941 –1945)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Worldwide)	16,112,566
Battle Deaths	291,557
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater)	113,842
Non-mortal Woundings	670,846
Living Veterans [10]	696,000

Korean War (1950-1953)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Worldwide)	5,720,000
Total Serving (In Theater)	1,789,000
Battle Deaths	33,739
Other Deaths (In Theater)	2,835
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater)	17,672
Non-mortal Woundings	103,284
Living Veterans [10]	1,592,000

Vietnam War (1964-1975)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Worldwide) [6]	8,744,000
Deployed to Southeast Asia [7]	3,403,000
Battle Deaths [8]	47,434
Other Deaths (In Theater) [8]	10,786
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater) [8]	32,000
Non-mortal Woundings [9]	153,303
Living Veterans [10]	6,953,000

Desert Shield/Desert Storm (1990-1991)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Worldwide)	2,322,000
Deployed to Gulf	694,550
Battle Deaths	148
Other Deaths (In Theater)	235
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater)	1,565
Non-mortal Woundings	467
Living Veterans [10]	4,483,000

America's Wars Total (1775 -1991)

U.S. Military Service during Wartime	41,892,128
Battle Deaths	651,031
Other Deaths (In Theater)	308,800
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater)	230,254
Non-mortal Woundings	1,430,290
Living War Veterans	16,104,000
Living Veterans (Periods of War & Peace)	21,368,000

Global War on Terror (Oct 2001 -)

The Global War on Terror (GWOT), including Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), are ongoing conflicts. For the most current GWOT statistics visit the following Department of Defense Website:
https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/pages/casualties.xhtml

Living Veterans [10]	4,398,000

Discussion Review - Questions Related to this Article

1. When and why do we celebrate Memorial Day?_____ _____ _____

2. When and why do we celebrate Veterans Day?_____ _____ _____

3. What was the original name of "Memorial Day?" _____

4. Which war had the most American casualties? _____ How many? _____

5. How many American battle deaths in the Spanish-American War? _____

6. Which war had more American casualties, World War I or World War II? _____

7. Did the American Revolution have *more* or *less* casualties than the Korean War? _____