

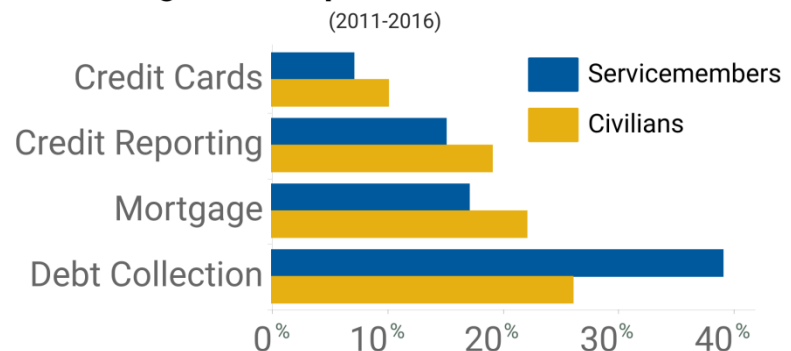
Servicemembers, Veterans, and Debt Collection

A strong rule from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) is needed to protect consumers from abusive debt collection tactics, especially servicemembers and veterans, whose lives and careers are negatively impacted by aggressive debt collection tactics.

Servicemembers and veterans are more likely to file complaints about debt collectors than civilians.

[Two out of every five complaints](#) filed by servicemembers with the CFPB are about debt collection (see chart) and [debt collection is the third most common source of complaints to the Federal Trade Commission](#) from servicemembers, their dependents, military retirees, and veterans.

Percentage of Complaints Filed with the CFPB



Confusion surrounding servicemembers and veterans' medical benefits leads to unexpected medical debt. In 2015, 13% [of servicemember and veteran complaints](#) to the CFPB about debt collection focused on medical debt. Individuals believing their medical care was covered by VA or other health insurance are often surprised to receive debt collection calls following treatment.

Debt collectors put servicemembers' careers at risk. Consumer debt can [negatively impact the careers of military personnel](#), which some debt collectors use to [leverage payments](#). Debt collectors contact a servicemember's commander as a means to coerce payment, threaten punishment under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and pressure family members to pay a servicemember's debt while they are deployed.



Debt and debt collection contribute to high rates of servicemember and veteran suicides. Servicemembers and veterans often experience extreme stress as a result of debt which contributes to servicemembers and veterans taking their own lives at [twice the rate](#) of civilians. [One study](#) found debt and debt collections to be the second leading cause of suicide among Army Reservists.

The CFPB should protect all borrowers from abusive debt collection practices by: stopping telephone harassment, banning collection of time-barred "zombie" debt, and protecting consumer privacy.