## Data Brief

Missing Perspectives: Women in the Military - From Service to Civilian Life

Women have served in America’s wars and conflicts throughout our history. The contributions made by the women in the military both in and out of service cannot be overstated. Women in the military have used their skills and experiences from their military service to make achievements in their careers and their communities. information and data in this document are from various sources centered on service experience, transition, employment, entrepreneurship, and higher education.

# Current POPULATIOn of Women in the military

## Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve

399,000 + women active duty and select reserve members

*Total Military Force*

* Over 229,000 women active-duty service members
* Over 169,000 women select reserve members

## Veterans

Over 1.9 million women veterans

**Post-9/11 Veterans**

* Over 812,000 – post-9/11 women veteran (which make up about 41% of the female veteran population)

# SERVICE EXPERERIENCES

## Top Motivations for Military Service

* Educational Benefits (62%)
* Opportunity to Pursue New Experiences, Adventures, or Travel (58%)
* Desire to Serve Country (53%)
* Sense of Purpose (39%)
* Career Opportunities (33%)
* History of Service in Family (32%)

## Top 5 Skills & Attributes Strengthened by Military Service

* Work ethic and discipline (85%)
* Teamwork (84%)
* Adaptation to different challenges (81%)
* Mental toughness (79%)
* Leadership and management skills (77%)
* Ability to get things done (74%)
* Perseverance (74%)
* Professionalism (74%)

## Experiences for IAVA Women Veteran Members[[1]](#footnote-1)

7 out of 10 would recommend military service to a family member or friend

75% felt pride from their accomplishments during their military service

85% have matured as a result of their military service

# Transition EXPERiences FOR IAVA Women VETERAN MEMBERS

62% describe their overall transition from active duty to veteran status as difficult, while 38% described it as smooth

* 23% received support/training for transitioning to the civilian workforce before leaving the military
* 27% had a job secured before they left the military
* 44% moved back home after separating, 26% moved or stayed near last duty station, and 30% did neither of these

64% were successful in overcoming the challenges they faced in their transition

## Prepared to Navigate

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Prepared** |  | **Unprepared** |
| 38% | The transition from military to civilian life | 52% |
| 36% | The transition to post-service employment | 52% |
| 48% | Access to post-service education | 36% |
| 22% | The resources available in your local community (e.g., housing assistance, financial counseling, legal services) | 62% |
| 37% | The healthcare and benefits system (e.g., access to medical, physical, and mental health services) | 51% |

## Transition Challenges

51% experience MANY challenges when transitioning out of the military

Top challenges

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Loss of identity / purpose | 44% |
| Relating to non-veteran civilians / reintegrating with community | 41% |
| Health concerns (mental or physical) | 30% |
| Readjusting to social life | 29% |
| Finding / keeping employment as a civilian | 24% |

# CIVIC Engagement FOR IAVA Women VETERAN MEMBERS

97% are registered to vote.

Post-9/11 Women Veterans Perspective

Top 5 National Issues

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Veterans' issues | 46% |
| Women's issues | 30% |
| Healthcare | 28% |
| Economy | 25% |
| Human rights | 20% |

Top 5 Issues for Post-9/11 Veterans

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Mental Health and Suicide Prevention | 67% |
| Employment and Jobs | 31% |
| Toxic Exposures, including Burn Pits | 31% |
| Issues Facing Women Veterans | 31% |
| Military Sexual Assault | 24% |

50% volunteer on a regular basis.

Which issues do you focus your volunteer work on?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Serving veterans, active duty servicemembers, and their families | 57% |
| Youth | 40% |
| Helping older people | 30% |
| Addressing poverty and homelessness | 25% |

# HEALTHCARE ACCESS FOR IAVA Women VETERAN MEMBERS

* 83% are enrolled in VA healthcare.
	+ Of these, 70% use VA as their primary source of care.
	+ 54% had sought healthcare from the VA in the past month.
* 66% are receiving VA benefits other than healthcare.
* 57% rated their overall experience with VA healthcare as good or excellent.

## Military Sexual Assault

* + 59% said they had experienced military sexual assault (this includes things like unwanted touching, someone exposing themselves, or unwanted sexual contact).
	+ 66% believe that Department of Defense is not effectively addressing the problem of military sexual assault, and only 6% believe they are.

# Employment FOR Women VETERANS

## Unemployment in 2021

* The unemployment rate for women veterans was 4.2% {this is slightly LOWER than the total veteran unemployment rate which was at 4.4%}
* The unemployment rate for post-9/11 women veterans was 4.9% {this is slightly HIGHER than the post-9/11 veteran unemployment rate which was at 4.6%}

## Employment Experiences for IAVA Women Veteran Members

* 17% experienced an employment status change during the COVID-19 pandemic.
* 79% reported being satisfied with their current job.
* 31% consider themselves to be underemployed, defined as not having enough paid work or not doing enough work that makes full use of your skills or abilities.

## Median Earnings in 2019

**$47,000 earnings for women veterans**

{HIGHER compared to the total population who earn about $42,600 YET LOWER compared to male veteran counterparts who earn about $61,100}

**$45,000 earnings for post 9/11 women veterans**

{HIGHER compared to the total population who earn about $42,600 YET LOWER compared to male post-9/11 veteran counterparts who earn about $62,000}

## Top 5 Industries for Women Veterans in 2019

* Educational, Health and Social Services (35%)
* Public Administration (15%)
* Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services (11%)
* Retail Trade (9%)
* Manufacturing (6%)

## Top 5 Occupations for Women Veterans in 2019

* Office and Administrative Support (18%)
* Healthcare Practitioners and Technical (15%)
* Business and Financial Operations (10%)
* Sales and Related (10%)
* Management (9%)

# Entrepreneurship FOR Women VETERANS

* 60% indicate that entrepreneurship helped them find a purpose after military service

## Community and Network

* 57% consider themselves social entrepreneurs
* 68% feel responsibility for their local community
* 54% have difficulty navigating the resources in their local community
* 36% believe the certification process is difficulty

## Capital

* 55% indicated that the capital they need is not readily available
* 24% applied for funding in 2020
* 43% pay an interest rate of 15% or more on loan/credit card
* 67% state that the financial condition of their business caused them stress



# Education FOR WOMEN VETERANS

## Education Attainment

In 2021, post-9/11 women veterans have achieved:

* Less than a high school diploma = 1%
* High school graduates = 15%
* Some college or Associate degree = 37%
* Bachelor's degree or higher = 46%

## Education Experiences for IAVA Women Veteran Members

* 71% have enrolled in higher education since separating from the military, and 80% have graduated.
* 73% used the post-9/11 GI Bill to support their education, 34% used the Montgomery GI Bill, and 19% used VA Vocational Rehabilitation training.
* 83% said they could not afford school without the GI Bill and another 11% were unsure if they could afford school without it.

# References

*Current Population of Women in the Military*

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The military experiences were analyzed from unpublished data collected for the 2022 IAVA Member Survey where 14% of IAVA member survey, for more information please see Pritchard, A.J.; Powell, S. & Horr, T. (2022). 2022 IAVA Member Survey. Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) & D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF), Syracuse University; please visit  <https://iava.org/survey-2022/>

*Transition Experiences, Healthcare Access, and Military Sexual Assault*

The transition experiences, healthcare access, and military sexual assault sections were analyzed from unpublished data collected for the 2022 IAVA Member Survey, for more information please see Pritchard, A.J.; Powell, S. & Horr, T. (2022). 2022 IAVA Member Survey. Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) & D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF), Syracuse University; please visit  <https://iava.org/survey-2022/>

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*ABOUT IVMF*

Syracuse University’s D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) is the first national institute in higher education singularly focused on advancing the lives of the nation’s military, veterans, and their families. Through its professional staff and experts, and with the support of founding partner JPMorgan Chase Co. as well as U.S. Navy veteran, IVMF Advisory Board Co-Chair, University Life Trustee and Co-Founder & Chairman Emeritus of the Carlyle Group Daniel D’Aniello ’68, H’20 and his wife, Gayle, the IVMF delivers leading programs in career and entrepreneurship education and training, while also conducting actionable research, policy analysis, and program evaluations. The IVMF also supports veterans and their families, once they transition back into civilian life, as they navigate the maze of social services in their communities, enhancing access to this care working side-by-side with local providers across the country. The Institute is committed to advancing the post-service lives of those who have served in America’s armed forces and their families. For more information, visit ivmf.syracuse.edu.

In collaboration with Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)

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1. IAVA stands for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America and this data is from a membership survey; 14% of IAVA member survey participants (n=691) are women (90% are post-9/11 veterans). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)