

WOMEN VETERANS

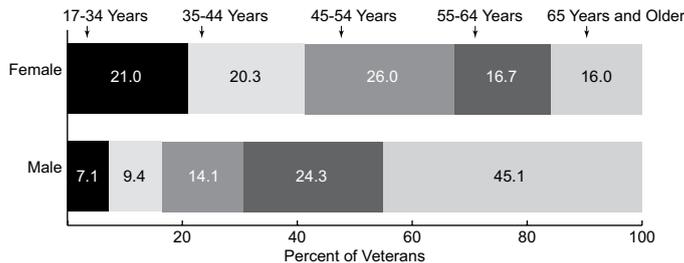
As of September 2013, women were estimated to comprise 2.5 million, or 10.3 percent, of all living veterans.¹⁸ By 2030, women are projected to make up 15 percent of all veterans—similar to the current proportion of active duty military personnel that are female.^{18,19} About half of living women veterans today are from the Gulf War Era and the most recent conflicts, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation New Dawn (OND).²⁰ The continually changing military roles of women, multiple deployments, and the blurring of combat and non-combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan suggest that the needs of these women veterans may differ greatly from the needs of women veterans from previous eras.

Due to the more recent increase in military enrollment and opportunities for women, female veterans are much younger than their male counterparts. In 2011, 21.0 percent of female veterans were aged 17–34 compared to only 7.1 percent of male veterans. Conversely, 45.1 percent of male veterans were aged 65 and older compared to only 16.0 percent of female veterans. Veteran women were slightly older than non-veteran women on average (49 versus 47 years, respectively; data not shown). While women veterans were less likely to be living in poverty than their non-veteran counterparts (10.0 versus 15.6 percent, respectively), their poverty rate was still higher than male veterans (6.6 percent).

Among OEF/OIF veterans using the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care in FY 2002–2007, 15.1 percent of women and 0.7 percent of men reported experiencing military sexual trauma—defined as sexual assault and/or severe and threatening sexual harassment that occurred during military service.²¹ Deployment to war zones, combat exposure, and military sexual trauma all raise the risk of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and substance abuse. The VA is improving services to make sure women who are eligible for VA health care can access services tailored to their needs and has expanded research on the impacts of trauma and combat exposure for women, mental health outcomes of civilian reintegration, and overall health care needs of women veterans.

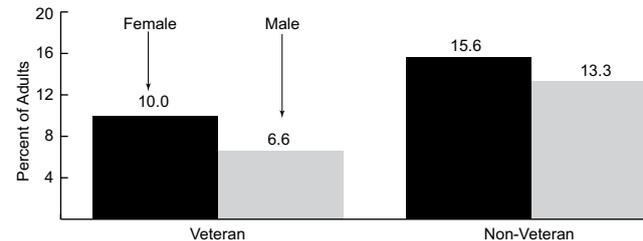
Veteran Population, by Sex and Age, 2011

Source I.12: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



Adults Aged 17 and Older Living Below the Poverty Level,* by Veteran Status and Sex, 2011

Source I.12: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



*Poverty level, defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, was \$23,021 for a family of four in 2011.