

# A PROFILE OF WOMEN VETERANS TODAY

## Rethink Veterans: Who is the woman Veteran?

She is returning from war or long deployments overseas. She is bringing home the physical and emotional scars of combat. She is a Veteran once she has been honorably discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces. She is also a Veteran if she has been deployed to a combat zone as a National Guard or Reservist. She may be a Veteran while still actively serving in the Guard or Reserve.

The definition of Veteran hasn't changed but the population has. The newest women Veterans from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are younger, and with different health care needs. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is working tirelessly to enhance women's care, improve services, and change its culture to embrace this growing population. If you know a woman who has served, ask her if she's checked out VA lately.

### Women Veteran Demographics

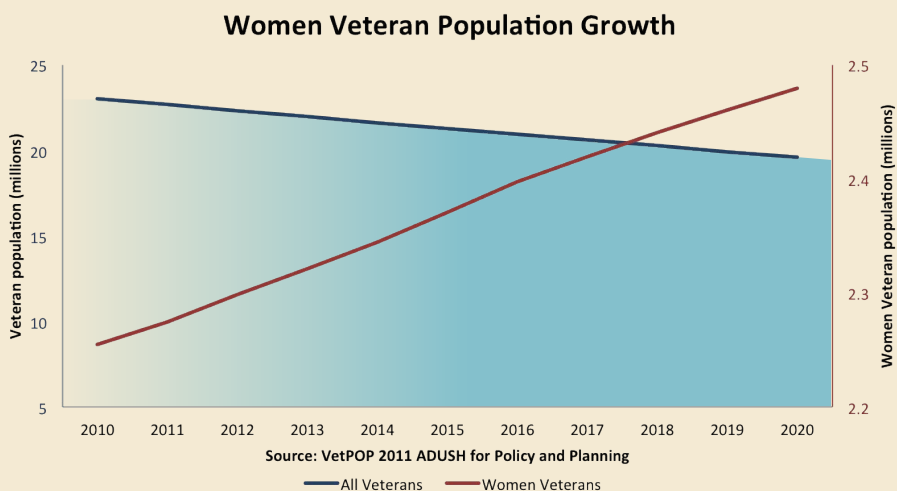
- Women represent nearly 15% of today's active duty military and 18% of guard and reserve forces.
- Women serve in every branch of the military.
- There are 2.2 million living women Veterans.
- The average age of women Veterans using VA care is 48 years, compared to 63 years for male Veterans.
- The number of women Veterans using VA care is expected to increase dramatically.

### Impacts of Military Service on Women Veterans

- 56% of women Veterans using VA care have a service-connected disability, meaning an injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated during service.
- 1 in 5 women seen by VA health care respond "yes" when screened for Military Sexual Trauma.
- Women are the fastest growing segment of the homeless Veteran population and are more likely to be homeless with children.

### Women Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND)

- Women comprise nearly 12% of service members who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- More than 79% of them are younger than 40; 88% are enlisted and 12% are officers.
- Most common medical conditions for which they visited VA: diseases of the musculoskeletal and connective tissue, mental disorders, readjustment difficulties, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- 1 in 5 women Veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are diagnosed with PTSD.



As the total Veteran population decreases, the population of women Veterans is increasing.

## VA is here to serve

To support the growing number of women Veterans, VA is enhancing facilities, training health care staff, and improving services to make sure women who are eligible for VA care can access services tailored to their needs.

Women Veterans using VA health care can expect:

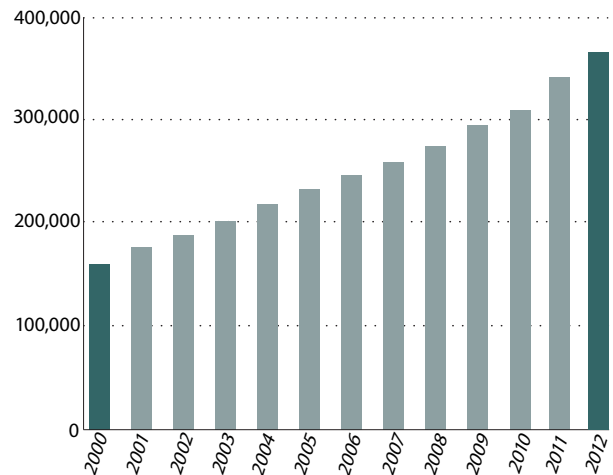
- Women Veterans Program Managers to assist them at every facility
- Comprehensive primary care, mental health services, emergency and specialty care by proficient and interested providers
- Privacy, safety, dignity, and sensitivity to gender-specific needs
- State-of-the-art health care equipment and technology
- Pharmacy services by mail-order and online

In addition to health care, VA offers other benefits to women who served their country. Visit the VA eBenefits website at [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov) to apply or view your status. Benefits include:

- Disability claims
- Education benefits - GI Bill
- Home loans
- Life insurance
- Housing for the homeless
- Survivor and death/burial benefits and planning
- Employment services

A campaign is under way across the VA system to enhance the language, practice and culture of VA to be more inclusive of women. VA has taken this culture change message public with a Public Service Announcement and other materials like this, encouraging everyone to rethink the term Veteran, recognize the vital role of women in the military, and appreciate what it means to be a woman Veteran.

Number of Women Veteran VHA Patients



The number of women Veterans using VA care has more than doubled from 159,000 in 2000 to 360,000 in 2012.



★ *She served, she deserves the best care anywhere* ★

**Women's Health Services:** [www.womenshealth.va.gov](http://www.womenshealth.va.gov)

**Women Veterans Call Center:** 1-855-VA-WOMEN (1-855-829-6636)

**Locate the nearest VA facility:** [www.va.gov/directory](http://www.va.gov/directory)

**Check VA eligibility:** [www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility)

**VA benefit information:** [www.vba.va.gov/VBA](http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA)

**VA Homeless program:** [www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless)

**Veteran Crisis Hotline:** 1-800-273-8255, press 1

**eBenefits:** [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov)



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## WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

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