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If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?

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2014 IAVA MEMBER SURVEY

Perceptions and views from Iraq and Afghanistan combat veterans on the challenges and successes of the new greatest generation of veterans

2014 IAVA Member Survey

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THE STORY OF A GENERATION...

Almost ten years ago, IAVA was founded to give voice to the concerns of veterans returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan. Today this mission remains more important than ever. As the country threatens to turn its attention away from new veterans, our nation must understand this new greatest generation and share in both their struggles and their successes.

Our staff hears regularly from our members as we travel across the country. They come to our events and share their stories about what programs and services are working for them. Yet, it is our annual Member Survey that best details the real experiences of new veterans.

This survey is the largest non-governmental survey of confirmed Iraq and Afghanistan combat veterans. It asks our members about their experiences with reintegration, health and mental health, employment, education and asks how the government is doing to support them and their fellow vets.

The survey is our best intel, and it often identifies problems long before they reach public prominence. It has called IAVA to action on late GI Bill checks and on the disability claims backlog. Today the stories confided through this survey have motivated our urgent call for a nationwide effort to combat suicide. Forty percent of our members have known at least one Iraq or Afghanistan veteran who has died by suicide, and 31 percent have thought about taking their own life since joining the military. Encouragingly, three out of four members who identified that they have a mental health injury are seeking help, and they've told us how important loved ones are in helping them to seek help.

These data show a generation of veterans who are still facing significant challenges, but are rising to meet them. It shows the need for the nation to step up and support this generation of veterans. That starts with understanding their stories, their hopes, their triumphs, and their challenges.

This year, our members tell us that while they support the end of the war in Afghanistan, they are worried that their legacy will be forgotten. Most report that they are using the GI bill, but still are at times frustrated by late payments. They're telling us so much, and it's time for the nation to listen.

The data of this survey drives IAVA's agenda, and it should drive the country's too. This is the new greatest generation of veterans and our future leaders. For over a decade they've had our backs; it's time for the nation to have theirs.

Paul Rieckhoff

Founder & CEO IAVA

Iraq Veteran

KEY FINDINGS

Respondents ranked the top issues facing Iraq and Afghanistan veterans as:

1 Suicide/Mental Health

2 Employment/Jobs

3 VA Disability Backlog

SUICIDE

- 31% of respondents have thought about taking their own life since joining the military.
- 40% of respondents know at least one Iraq or Afghanistan veteran that has died by suicide.
- 47% of respondents know at least one Iraq or Afghanistan veteran that has attempted suicide.

MENTAL HEALTH

- 53% of respondents have a mental health injury:
 - 18% diagnosed with TBI
 - 44% diagnosed with PTSD
- 73% of respondents who have a mental health injury are getting care.
- 77% of respondents who had a loved one suggest they seek mental health care sought help as a result.

VA MENTAL HEALTH CARE UTILIZATION

Regardless of VA or non-VA mental health care, respondents are overwhelmingly satisfied with the care they receive:

- 72% satisfied with their VA provider.
- 91% satisfied with their non-VA provider.
- 68% of respondents using a VA mental health provider report problems scheduling an appointment.
- 31% seeing a non-VA provider report scheduling challenges.

EMPLOYMENT/JOBS

- of respondents are currently unemployed.
- 53% of respondents are currently employed.
- 61% of employed respondents are satisfied with their job.

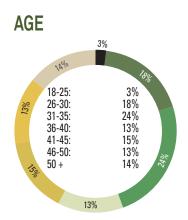
VA DISABILITY BACKLOG

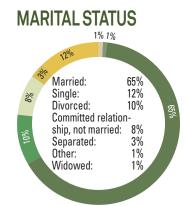
- 70% of respondents who filed a disability compensation claim waited over 120 days for the VA to notify them of a decision on their claim.
- of respondents reported a financial impact while they waited on their claim.
- 40% of respondents have a service-connected injury for which they have not filed a claim.

POST 9/11 GI BILL:

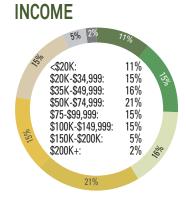
- 62% of respondents have used the Post 9/11 GI Bill.
- 78% of respondents who have used the Post 9/11 GI Bill rate it as GOOD or EXCELLENT.
- 36% report late payments as a major challenge using these benefits.

DEMOGRAPHICS

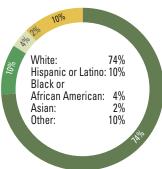




GENDER Female 10% 90% Male

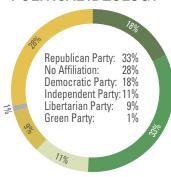


RACE



300	100/0	2%
	Full Time: Students: Disabled/Retired: Unemployed: Active Duty: Part Time:	45% 17% 10% 10% 10% 8%

POLITICAL IDEOLOGY



SERVICE DEMOGRAPHICS

Branch of Service	e
Army	63%
Marine Corps	15%
Air Force	12%
Navy	10%

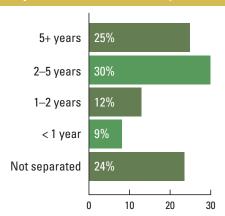
Officer or Enlisted	
Officer	23%
Enlisted	77%

Did you serve in Iraq, Afghanistan or both?		
Iraq	59%	
Afghanistan	17%	
Both	24%	

Number of Deployments	OND*	OIF**	0EF***
1	95%	66%	72%
2	4%	26%	20%
3+	1%	8%	8%

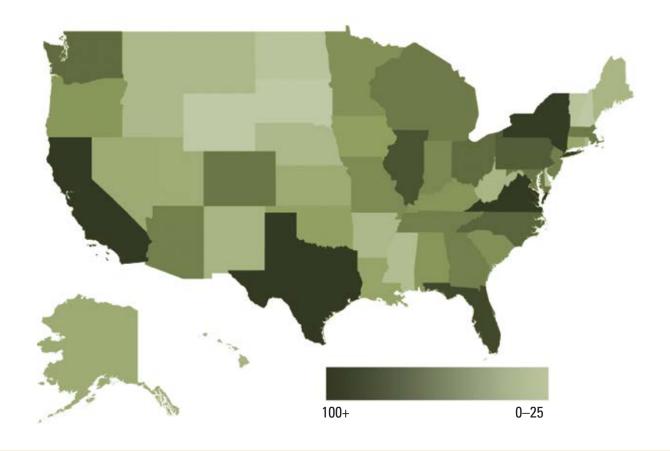
^{*} Operation New Dawn ** Operation Iraqi Freedom *** Operation Enduring Freedom

How long ago did you separate from the military?



2014 IAVA Member Survey

NUMBER OF IAVA MEMBER SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY STATE



SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The IAVA member survey was launched for three weeks during the first half of CY 2014. The IAVA survey link was sent out via email to IAVA members who were confirmed combat veterans, having served in Iraq and/ or Afghanistan, confirmed with a DD-214 or similar paperwork. IAVA surveyed 2,089* IAVA members about issues including employment, education and the GI Bill, health and mental health, VA utilization and benefits, reintegration and more.

The survey was composed of approximately 200 questions, with respondents answering only questions relevant to their experiences. The survey was created using SurveyMonkey and available on-line. Members were sent individualized access codes, and the survey was promoted via social media throughout the month of February. SPSS statistical analysis software was used to analyze survey data, including response frequencies and percentages, standard deviation and standard error for each question (where appropriate).

*Note that 2,828 IAVA members began the survey and 2,089 completed the survey, resulting in a 74 percent survey completion rate.

PERCEPTIONS

America tends to forget wars quickly, especially since such a small percentage of the population served.

MILITARY SERVICE

74%

Of respondents would recommend military service to a family member or close friend.

TROOP WITHDRAWAL

88%

Of respondents are concerned that the end of the war in Afghanistan will affect public attention to issues concerning Irag & Afghanistan veterans.

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Top five issues when considering a candidate that you will vote for:
1. Veterans' Issues
2. The Economy
3. Military/Defense Issues
4. Employment/Job Creation
5. Foreign Policy

94% of respondents are currently registered to vote

93% of respondents are planning to vote in the 2014 mid-term elections

...even though I support the troop withdrawal, I think with it will also go the public awareness of the lasting effects of OIF and OEF.

-IAVA Member

PERCEPTIONS

They can all do more, less political infighting, more action.

61 % Of respondents feel the American public supports Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

52% Of respondents feel corporate America supports Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

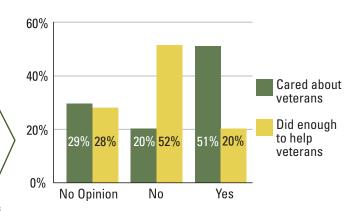
70% Of respondents don't think that the American public understands the sacrifice made by Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families.



Only 51% of respondents were able to correctly name General Eric Shinseki as Secretary of the VA.

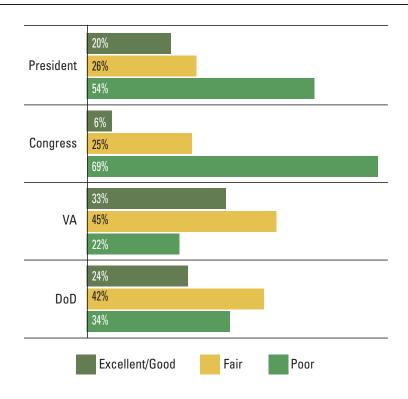
The majority of respondents felt that Secretary Shinseki **CARED** about veterans, but **WAS NOT** doing enough to help veterans.

^{*} The survey was deployed during the first half of CY 2014, prior to the events surrounding the Phoenix VA medical center and the resignation of Secretary Shinseki.



The majority of respondents think the President and Congress are doing a **POOR JOB** improving the lives of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

Respondents were more split in rating the VA and DoD.



SUICIDE

We, as a nation, with DoD in the lead, need to do a better job.

WHEN ASKED ABOUT THEMSELVES...



Of respondents indicated that they have thought about taking their own life since joining the military.



Of respondents thought about taking their own life prior to joining the military.

WHEN ASKED ABOUT THEIR FRIENDS...



Of respondents know at least one Iraq or Afghanistan veteran that has *died* by suicide.



Of respondents know at least one Iraq or Afghanistan veteran that has *attempted* suicide.

WHEN ASKED TO RATE THE EFFORTS OF THE DOD AND VA TO ADDRESS SUICIDE...

Respondents rated the DoD as reactive and the VA as slightly more proactive than the DoD in addressing military and veteran suicide. Over half think Congress and the President are not playing a role.

Department	Extremely Proactive	Somewhat Proactive	Reactive	Not Playing a Role	I Don't Know
Department of Defense (DoD)	8%	25%	50%	9%	8%
Department of Veteran Affairs (VA)	8%	33%	38%	8%	13%
The President	3%	11%	22%	51%	13%
Congress	1%	7%	24%	56%	12%

MENTAL HEALTH

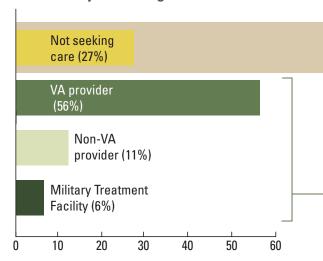
My wife told me she knew there was something wrong and that I needed it (help)... She was right and I'm glad I did (get help).

WHEN ASKED ABOUT THEMSELVES...



Of respondents indicated they have a mental health injury.

Where are you seeking mental health care?



For the 27% who have a mental health injury but are not seeking care, the top 5 reasons include:

- 1. Don't want to be perceived differently by friends, family or peers (46%)
- 2. Concern that it might affect their career (33%)
- 3. Difficulty getting time off work (23%)
- 4. Never returned after an initial visit (22%)
- 5. Prefer talking to friends/family (20%)

73% Of those with a mental health injury are seeking care.

WHEN ASKED ABOUT SUPPORT FROM LOVED ONES...

77%

Of those who had a loved one suggest they seek care for a mental health injury sought help as a result.

WHEN ASKED ABOUT SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS...

33%

Of respondents know an Iraq or Afghanistan veteran who needs care for a mental health injury and is not receiving care.

Of those who knew a veteran who needed help, 70% recommended that their friend(s) seek care.

MENTAL HEALTH

WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE DOD AND VA...

73%

Of respondents **DO NOT** think that
troops are getting the
care they need for
mental health injuries.

When asked why not, the top three reasons selected were:

- 1. The stigma of seeking help is too great (72%)
- 2. They have access to care but are not seeking it (53%)
- 3. They have access to care but not high quality care (50%)

59%

Of respondents think the Department of Defense is doing a **BAD JOB** of reaching out to troops regarding mental health.

26% think DoD is doing a good job 14% have no opinion



Of respondents think the Department of Veterans Affairs is doing a **BAD JOB** of reaching out to veterans regarding mental health.

38% think VA is doing a good job 16% have no opinion

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

When asked what resources they would recommend to veterans seeking mental health care, respondents answered		
1.	Mental Health Professional	68%
2.	Vet Center Counselor	55%
3.	Veteran Crisis Line	51%
4.	Peer Support Group	43%
5.	VA Staff Member	38%
6.	Another VSO	36%
7.	Religious/Spiritual Leader	36%
8.	IAVA's Community of Veterans	34%
9.	Civilian Counselor	29%
10.	Military Onesource	27%
11.	IAVA RRRP Veteran Transition Manager	23%
12.	Counselor Through a Non-Profit	19%
13.	Give-An-Hour	10%
14.	Uniformed DoD Counselor	9%
15.	Civilian DoD Counselor	8%
16.	Other	7%

VA MENTAL HEALTH UTILIZATION

Care, when I can get it, is great. However, they (the VA) have an immense workload. Too many patients and not enough doctors.

68%

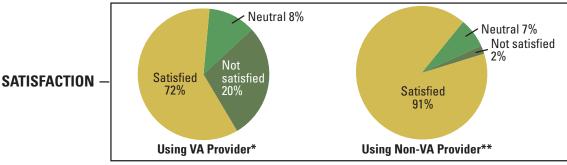
Of VA mental health users indicated challenges scheduling appointments.

31%

Of non-VA mental health users indicated challenges scheduling appointments.

	VA Provider	Non-VA Provider
I have never had a problem scheduling an appointment with my mental health provider	32%	69%
There have been some challenges scheduling an appointment with my mental health provider	34%	18%
I regularly have challenges scheduling an appointment with my mental health provider	14%	7%
I am continually frustrated trying to schedule an appointment with my mental health provider	20%	6%

RESPONDENTS ARE OVERWHELMINGLY SATISFIED WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH CARE



^{*} Number of respondents using a VA Provider = 599 **Number of respondents Using a non-VA provider = 128

2 3

Reasons respondents using a VA mental health provider chose a VA provider:

- 1. VA care is free (60%)
- 2. VA is my only source of healthcare (43%)
- 3. VA providers understand my service and service-connected injuries (35%)



Reasons respondents using a non-VA mental health provider chose a non-VA provider:

- 1. Non-VA provider offers a higher quality of care (44%)
- 2. More comfortable with a non-VA provider (39%)
- 3. Tried a VA provider and was not satisfied with the care (37%); More convenient (37%)

GENERAL HEALTH

SERVICE CONNECTED INJURIES

60% of respondents indicated that they were wounded in service, including Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

	Physically Wounded	Diagnosed TBI	Diagnosed PTSD	Chronic Pain
Yes	60%	18%	44%	64%
No	40%	78%	51%	32%
Prefer Not to Answer	N/A	4%	5%	4%

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Of the 51% of respondents not diagnosed with PTSD:

19%

feel they have PTSD but have not sought care from a clinician.

12%

feel that they have PTSD and have sought care from a clinician.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG USE

Respondents were asked if they have been prescribed and are currently taking anti-depressants, anti-anxiety or opioid-based pain medication for a service-related injury:

35%

of respondents said yes for anti-depressants.

32%

of respondents said yes for anti-anxiety medication.

18%

of respondents said yes for opioid-based medications.

BURN PIT EXPOSURE

76%

Of respondents were exposed to burn pits while deployed.

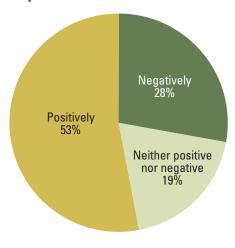


Of those exposed feel they have symptoms associated with that exposure.

VA BENEFITS UTILIZATION

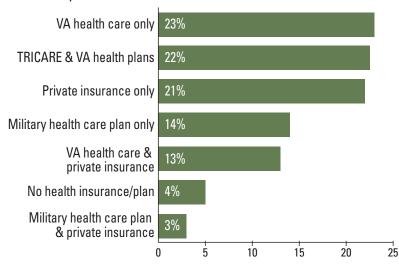
THE VA

Only half (53%) of respondents feel positive about the VA.



VA HEALTHCARE

58% of respondents currently use VA healthcare, either as their only source of healthcare or in combination with another plan.



VA BENEFITS AND ONLINE SERVICES

When asked to rate VA benefits and online services, the majority of respondents who have used them rated them positively, however, many indicated they have not used them at all.

VA Benefits	Disability Benefits	Health Care	Housing Benefits	Vocational Rehab	Education Benefits
Good	41%	40%	23%	12%	51%
Neither Good nor Bad	11%	16%	8%	6%	10%
Bad	13%	12%	5%	6%	6%
Have Not Used	35%	32%	64%	76%	33%

Online Services	eBenefits	Compensation & Pension Applications	MyHealth eVet	Education Benefit Application	Health Benefit Application	Career Search	GI Bill
Helpful	63%	45%	49%	53%	36%	19%	53%
Not Helpful	8%	13%	7%	8%	9%	15%	8%
Have Not Used	29%	42%	44%	39%	55%	66%	39%

2014 IAVA Member Survey

VA BENEFITS

What VA claims have you filed?

Disability (68%)

Education (55%)

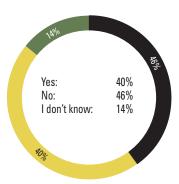
Home Loan (36%)

None (14%)

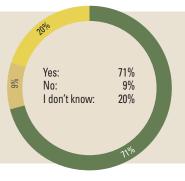
Pension (7%)

VA DISABILITY COMPENSATION CLAIMS

When asked if respondents have a service-connected injury and have not yet filed a claim, 40% said yes.



Are you planning to file a disability compensation claim?



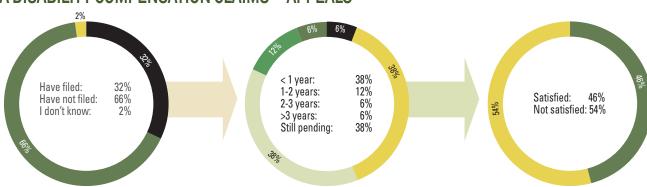
Of the respondents who have not yet filed a claim but plan to (71%), the top reasons for the delay were:

- 1. Collecting the paperwork (35%)
- 2. Not sure where to start (29%)
- 3. Too busy right now (26%)

For the 29% either not planning to or uncertain about filing a claim, the top reasons were:

- 1. Don't want to deal with the VA (54%)
- 2. Discouraged by the number of claims backlogged/long wait times (41%)
- 3. Don't think the VA will process the claim accurately (35%)
- 4. Don't want to deal with the paperwork (35%)

VA DISABILITY COMPENSATION CLAIMS—APPEALS



For those respondents who have filed a disability compensation claim, 32% have also appealed a decision.

Of those respondents who have appealed a decision, 24% waited over a year to receive a final decision, and 38% are still waiting.

46% of respondents who have received a decision on an appeal were satisfied with the outcome.

VA BENEFITS

VA DISABILITY COMPENSATION CLAIMS



- 1. Musculoskeletal injuries
- 2. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- 3. Hearing Loss
- 4. Mental Health Injuries
- 5. Traumatic Brain Injury

59% of respondents used outside assistance to file their claim.

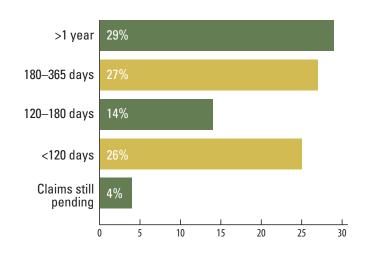
The Top Three Resources Indicated were:

- 1. Disabled American Veterans (34%)
- 2. Veterans of Foreign Wars (17%)
- 3. County/State Service Officer (14%)



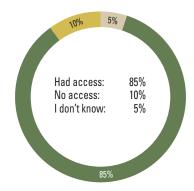
Of respondents waited over 120 days for the VA to notify them of a decision on their disability compensation claim.

29% waited over a year.

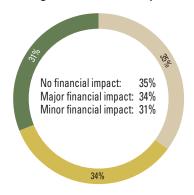


My vehicle was repossessed and foreclosure proceedings were started twice. The final [claims] decision saved me from foreclosure.

85% of respondents had access to healthcare while waiting for a decision on their claim.



65% of respondents reported they were financially impacted while waiting on their disability claim.

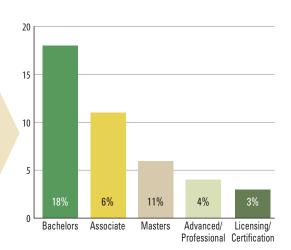


EDUCATION

FOR THOSE CURRENTLY ENROLLED...

42%

Of respondents indicated that they are currently enrolled in a degree or certification/training program.



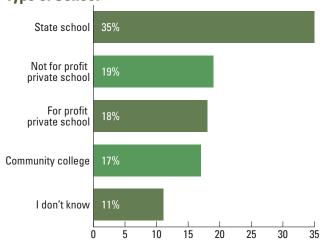
The Top Three Reasons for Pursuing a Degree:			
Associates and Bachelors:	Masters, Advanced & Professional Degrees		
I need this degree to pursue my career goals (58%)	Personal fulfillment/ intellectual curiosity (53%)		
Personal fulfillment/ intellectual curiosity (53%)	I need this degree to pursue my career goals (50%)		
I want to increase my earning potential (50%)	I want to increase my earning potential (47%)		

TOP FIVE DEGREE FIELDS:

- 1. Business, Management, Marketing & Related Services
- 2. Computer and Information Sciences
- 3. Health Professions and Related Clinical Science
- 4. Social Sciences
- 5. Engineering

ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Type of School



Veteran-Friendly Schools

Vet Friendly Program :		
83% Yes	6% No	11% Neutral

Top 3 Reasons Schools are Seen as Vet-Friendly:

- 1. Administrative support (71%)
- 2. Online Course Options (53%)
- 3. Specific veteran support programs (48%)

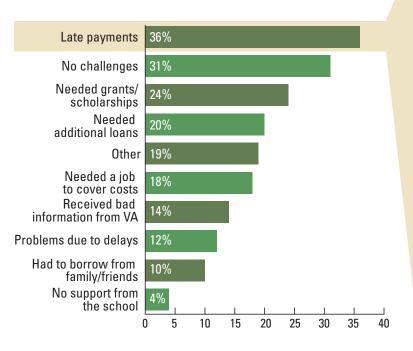
POST 9/11 GI BILL

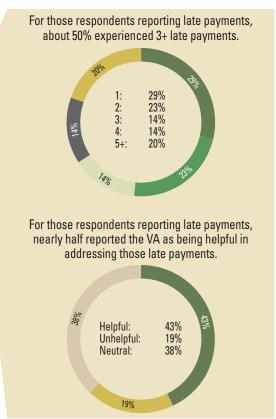


Of respondents have used the Post 9/11 GI Bill (either personally or their dependents have used it).

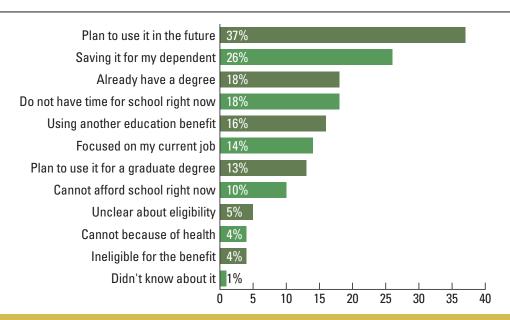
78% of respondents who have used the Post 9/11 GI Bill rate the experience as GOOD or EXCELLENT

CHALLENGES USING POST 9/11 GI BILL





Respondents who had not used the Post 9/11 GI Bill cited the following reasons:



EMPLOYMENT

53%

Of respondents are employed:

• Full time (45%) • Part-time (8%)

10%

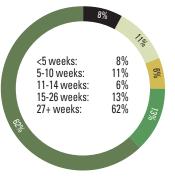
Of respondents are currently unemployed.

§ 5

Industries of Employment:

- 1. Government
- 2. Protective/Law Enforcement
- 3. Health Professions and Related Clinical Science
- 4. Telecommunications, Technology, Internet & Electronics
- 5. Manufacturing

62% of unemployed respondents have been unemployed for 27 weeks or more



VETERAN FRIENDLY

81% of employed respondents describe their workplace as veteran friendly.

69% of respondents sought out employers openly recruiting veterans.

10% of respondents encountered employers not open to hiring veterans.

EMPLOYMENT SATISFACTION

67% of employed respondents report their current position is an appropriate professional fit.

61% of employed respondents are satisfied with their job, 28% are dissatisfied.



- 1. Can't find a job that matches skill level (21%)
- 2. Can't find jobs in my field (19%)
- 3. Lack of certification (10%)

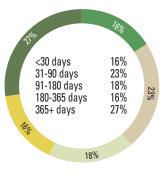
Top five tools unemployed respondents identified to help them find a job:

- 1. Knowing what companies have veteran preferences programs (51%)
- 2. Veteran specific job fairs/Networking (43%)
- 3. Access to job placement resources (38%)
- 4. Professional Certifications (35%)
- 5. Resume/Interview Training (28%)

77%

Of respondents have experienced a period of unemployment since leaving the military.

27% of those experienced a period of unemployment for over a year.



WOMEN IN COMBAT**



Of female respondents would apply for a combat MOS.*

41% Would Not

16% Don't Know



Of female respondents support the opening of all MOS to women.

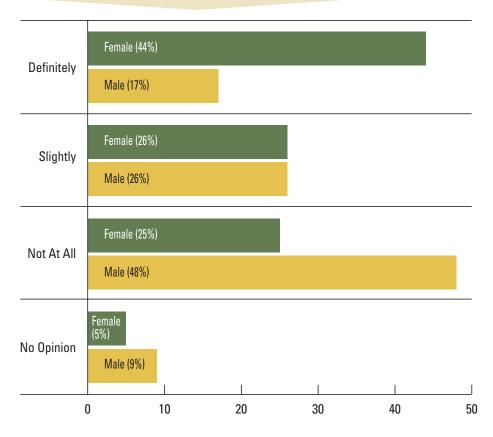
37%

Of males support the opening of all MOS to women.

70%

of female respondents and 43% of males think women's advancement in the military has been limited by restrictions on women in combat.

Do you feel women's advancement in the military has been limited by restrictions on women in combat?



^{**}Answers to these questions have been presented by gender. The male population totaled 1,933 while the female population totaled 224.

^{*}MOS means Military Occupational Specialty

REINTEGRATION CHALLENGES

The top three challenges in transitioning out of the military were:

- 1. Employment (28%)
- 2. Loss of Identity (19%)
- 3. Mental Health Concerns (17%)

FAMILY

3

Those respondents who were married during a deployment identified the top three deployment impacts on the relationship as:

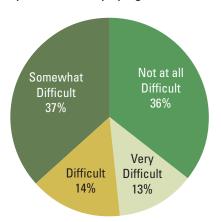
- 1. Difficulty with readjustment (66%)
- 2. Communication challenges (63%)
- 3. Caused major strains on the relationship (56%)
- Those they had identify

Those respondents who indicated they had children during a deployment identified the top three deployment impacts on children as:

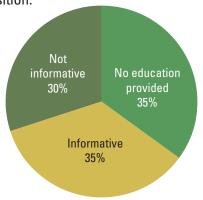
- 1. Difficulty with readjustment (59%)
- 2. Child is concerned I will leave again (42%)
- 3. My anger issues affected our relationship (34%)

FINANCES

64% of respondents indicated some level of difficulty each month paying all of their bills.



65% of respondents indicated that the Department of Defense did not provide an informative financial education to prepare for their transition.

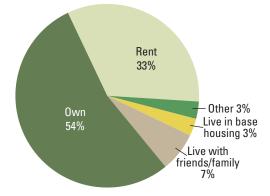


HOUSING

When asked if they've ever had a period of time after separating from the military during which they did not own or rent their home and...

Location	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Stayed with Friends	22%	64%	14%
Stayed with Family	44%	43%	13%
Lived in a Shelter	2%	85%	13%
Lived in your Car	7%	79%	14%

When asked about their current living situation, nearly **90% of respondents** indicated that they own or rent.



MILITARY SEXUAL ASSAULT**

FEMALE RESPONDENTS

Think DoD is doing a **BAD JOB** decreasing the occurrence of military sexual assault.

Indicated they are survivors of military sexual assault.

35% Of female survivors reported the crime.

MALE RESPONDENTS

Think DoD is doing a **BAD JOB** decreasing the occurrence of military sexual assault.

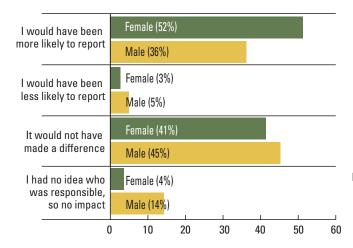
1 % Indicated they are survivors of military sexual assault.

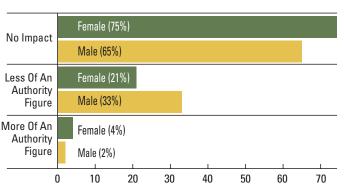
260/ Of male survivors reported the crime.

The Top Three Reasons Survivors Did Not Report The Crime:		
Females	Males	
I didn't think anything would be done once it was reported (59%)	I was worried that my peers would treat me differently (69%)	
I was worried that my peers would treat me differently (57%)	I was worried that people would think I was weak (57%)	
I was worried about impact on my career (57%)	I was worried about impact on my career (57%)	

If a trained military prosecutor made the decision to move forward with their case, **52% of females** and **36% of males** indicated that they would have been more likely to report.

75% of females and **65% of males** said removing the power to send someone to court martial would have "No Impact" on their view of their commander.





**Answers to these questions have been presented by gender.

The male population totaled 1,933 while the female population totaled 224.

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (www.IAVA.org) is the nation's first and largest nonpartisan, nonprofit organization representing veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan and has more than 270,000 Member Veterans and civilian supporters nationwide. Celebrating its 10th year anniversary, IAVA consistently recieves the highest rating — four-stars — from Charity Navigator, America's largest charity evaluator.





IAVA 2014 Member Policy Survey available in a searchable format online at www.iava.org
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