

# 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 served, ask her if she's checked out VA lately.

### Did you know?

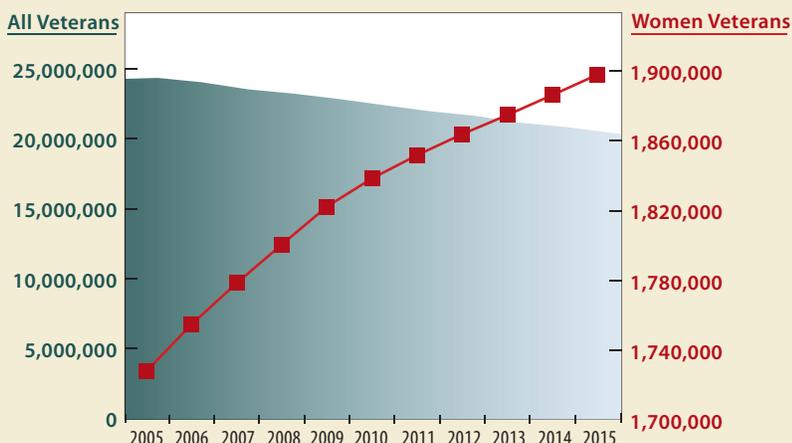
- Women represent nearly 15% of today's active duty military and 18% of guard and reserve forces.
- Women serve in every branch of the military.
- Women serve as gunners, police, pilots, truck drivers, and fuel suppliers.
- Women soldiers see intense combat and receive combat-related injuries.
- There are 1.8 million living women Veterans.
- The number of women Veterans is expected to increase dramatically.

- The average age of women Veterans is 48 years, compared to 63 years for male Veterans.
- By proportion, women Veterans using VA care are more likely than their male-counterparts to have a service-connected disability, meaning an injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated during service.
- 1 in 5 women Veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- 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 OEF/OIF/OND

- Women comprise nearly 12% of soldiers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- More than 79% of them are younger than 40.
- 88% are enlisted; 12% are officers.
- The largest group of women Veterans today served in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation New Dawn (OND).
- Most common medical conditions for which they visited VA: diseases of the musculoskeletal and connective tissue, mental disorders (including readjustment difficulty) and undefined symptoms.

### Women Veteran Population Growth



As the population of women Veterans increases, the total Veteran population is decreasing.



## 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.

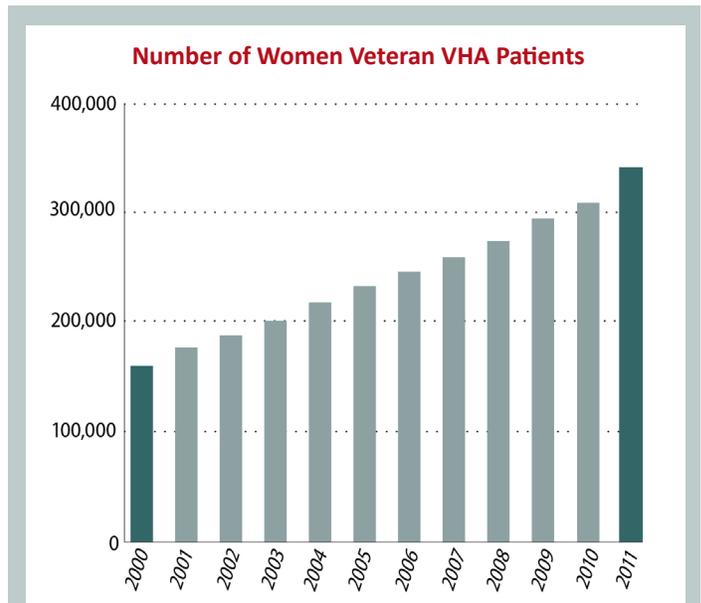
Women Veterans using VA health care can expect:

- Care coordinated by a Women Veterans Program Manager at every facility
- Comprehensive primary care by proficient and interested providers
- Privacy, safety, dignity, and sensitivity to gender-specific needs
- High-quality preventive care
- State-of-the-art health care equipment and technology

In addition to health care, VA offers other benefits that women who served their country may be able to take advantage of, including:

- Employment services
- Education compensation
- Home loans
- Life insurance
- Survivor and death/burial benefits

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 PSA and 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 female Veteran.



The number of women Veterans using VA care has doubled in the last decade, from nearly 160,000 in 2000 to 310,000 in 2010.



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

Learn more: [www.womenshealth.va.gov](http://www.womenshealth.va.gov)

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



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## WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE