



WOMEN WARRIORS REPORT ★ 2025



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WOUNDED WARRIOR
RANA CLARK





INTRODUCTION





WOUNDED WARRIORS **JESSICA COULTER** (LEFT)
AND **TONYA OXENDINE** (RIGHT)



ABOUT WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT

Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) is a leading veterans service organization (VSO) that is changing the way our nation cares for veterans and helping them thrive for a lifetime. Our direct service programs, advocacy efforts, and collaboration with best-in-class partners work together to empower the social, physical, mental, and financial wellness of warriors, families, and caregivers.



ABOUT THE WOMEN WARRIORS INITIATIVE

Today, women serve across all areas of the military, from leadership to combat. Yet many still face unique challenges during and after their service. WWP™ developed the Women Warriors Initiative to focus on the experiences of WWP women warriors, address the disparities they face, and empower them while advancing broader understanding of all women veterans' needs.



**WOUNDED WARRIOR
ANTOINETTE WALLACE**



ABOUT THE REPORT

The 2025 Women Warriors Report explores WWP women warriors' experiences — from their time in service to present day. It draws on qualitative insights from focus group discussions and quantitative findings from Wave 3 of the WWP Warrior Survey, referred to here as Warrior Survey. This executive summary highlights key themes and subthemes from the focus group discussions, compares Warrior Survey findings between WWP women and male warriors, and offers evidence-based policy and research recommendations to better support women veterans.

FOCUS GROUPS

Overall, 15 focus group sessions and three interviews were conducted with WWP women warriors from March to November 2024, each lasting approximately 90 minutes. Researchers analyzed the discussions using thematic analysis by looking at key topics and allowing themes to emerge based on what participants shared. Please see the 2025 Women Warriors Report for further details about the qualitative analysis.

WARRIOR SURVEY

The Warrior Survey has grown to represent over 185,000 post-9/11 veterans across the continental U.S. and its territories. The Warrior Survey data provides a comprehensive view of the warriors WWP serves, including their most pressing needs. It guides WWP's efforts to support warriors and enhance their quality of life. Key findings highlighting differences in experiences between WWP women and male warriors are outlined in this executive summary. For more information about the Warrior Survey, including details of the measures and references, visit warriorsurvey.com.

“Favorite memory [from service] is just the people, the various experiences. [...] especially because in my case, so many of us were so young and we essentially became adults together.”

— Focus Group Participant

★ WWP WOMEN WARRIORS: ★ A 360-DEGREE VIEW

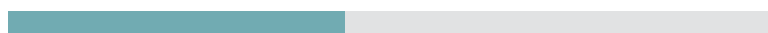
This 360-degree view paints a picture of who this report represents — WWP women warriors.

AVERAGE AGE:

40

MARITAL STATUS

Married — 46.9%



NUMBER OF CHILDREN LIVING IN THE HOUSEHOLD



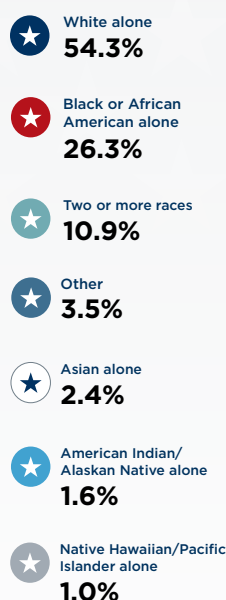
One or more

54.8%



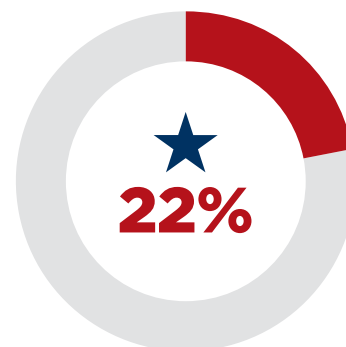
None

45.2%



RACE

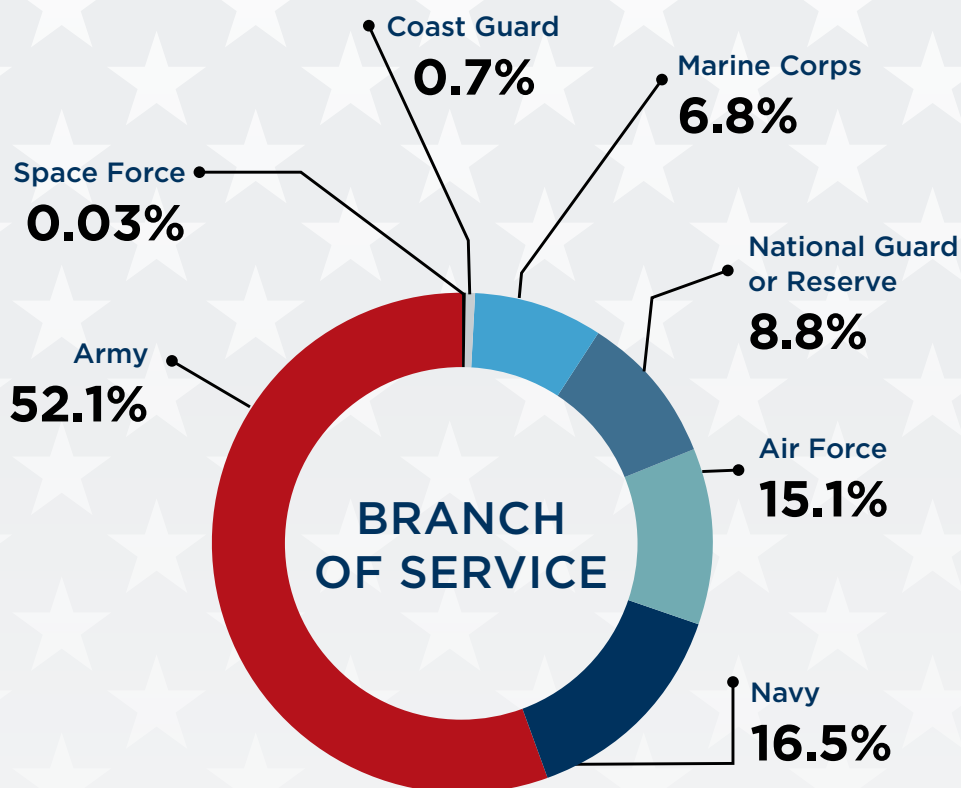
ETHNICITY



Hispanic/Latino/a
or Spanish origin

TOP 5

Self-reported
CONDITIONS



CURRENT
MILITARY
STATUS:



3.1%
ACTIVE DUTY

DISABILITY RATING:

78.5%

Disability rating of 70% or higher

8.2%

None/pending or on appeal



87.3%
Anxiety



83.3%
Depression



81.0%
Sleep problems



75.0%
Post-traumatic stress
disorder (PTSD)



65.1%
Migraines or
chronic headaches



THEMES FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The focus group discussions covered the experiences of WWP women warriors, including their time in service, transition to civilian life, current military identity, and their quality of life today. Outlined below are the key takeaways from the focus group discussions overall, as well as a summary table of the themes and subthemes identified throughout this journey for WWP women warriors.

Please note that this executive summary highlights key takeaways from the focus group discussions; however, a wide range of topics were discussed and shared during the sessions. Please refer to the 2025 Women Warriors Report for a detailed list of the findings.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

STRENGTH AND SERVICE

- ★ WWP women warriors who participated in the focus group discussions continue to exemplify service by advocating for the recognition and support of women veterans. Through their resilience and resourcefulness, they shared their experiences and fostered a supportive environment for one another.
- ★ Traits like resilience, adaptability, and bravery, as well as opportunities gained from service, helped in adjusting to post-military life.

MILITARY EXPERIENCE MATTERS

- ★ The way WWP women warriors left service, whether it was a positive or difficult experience, influenced how they see their military identity today and the ability to access veteran benefits.
- ★ Unreported incidents during service, such as instances of military sexual trauma (MST), continue to affect access to care and benefits post-service. Barriers to reporting such incidents included a lack of support or being discouraged from speaking up.
- ★ Mental and physical health conditions from military-connected experiences impact daily life, employment, and staying connected to others.

IDENTITY, PURPOSE, AND BELONGING

- ★ There was a perceived lack of respect or recognition towards women service members and veterans in comparison to their male peers — from both civilians and others in the military.
- ★ Finding purpose after leaving the military was instrumental in different aspects of post-service well-being — especially for those who felt isolated or disconnected after service.
- ★ The lasting memory of camaraderie during service and the bond with fellow veterans, particularly other women veterans, helps with feeling seen, supported, and less alone.

Table 1. Summary of Themes and Subthemes from Focus Group Discussions

	Themes	Subthemes
Serving with Honor: Experiences and Challenges of Women in the Military	Favorite memory in service	• Unique experiences • Connection with other service members • Being part of something bigger • Training and physical health accomplishments
	Positive experiences in service	No additional subthemes were identified during the analysis. All codes fell within the main theme.
	Unmet needs during service	• Care received in service • MST • Lack of support and protection • Treated poorly by others or feeling isolated • Women are not seen as equal or respected
	Impact of leadership on service	• Poor leadership • Positive leadership
Navigating Transition: From Service to Civilian Life	Adjusting to civilian life	• Being in a different world • Circumstances of leaving service
	Access to care	• Advocating for your health care • Barriers to care • Positive experiences • Specific references to treatment or care received
	Feelings after service	• Gaps in resources and support • Impact of transition on emotional well-being
	Employment after military service	• Barriers to employment • Experiencing financial difficulties
	Positive transition experience	• Positive transition experiences • WWP women warrior recommendations for improving transition experiences
Redefining Purpose: Identity and Meaning After Serving	Military identity today	• Positive sentiment towards military identity • Negative sentiment towards military identity • Lost identity • Mixed feelings over military identity
	Bond and connection with other veterans	• Connection with veterans • Connection with women veterans • Barriers to connection across different branches and eras
	Perception of veterans	• Lack of recognition and respect for women veterans • Public perceptions of veterans
	Finding purpose after the military	No additional subthemes were identified during the analysis. All codes fell within the main theme.
	Recommendation to serve	
Enhancing Quality of Life: Support and Well-being for Women Warriors	Current quality of life	• Quality of life varies • Importance of connection and support system on well-being • Community engagement
	Barriers to quality of life	• Barriers to engaging in the community • Military experiences impacting quality of life
	How to improve quality of life	No additional subthemes were identified during the analysis. All codes fell within the main theme.

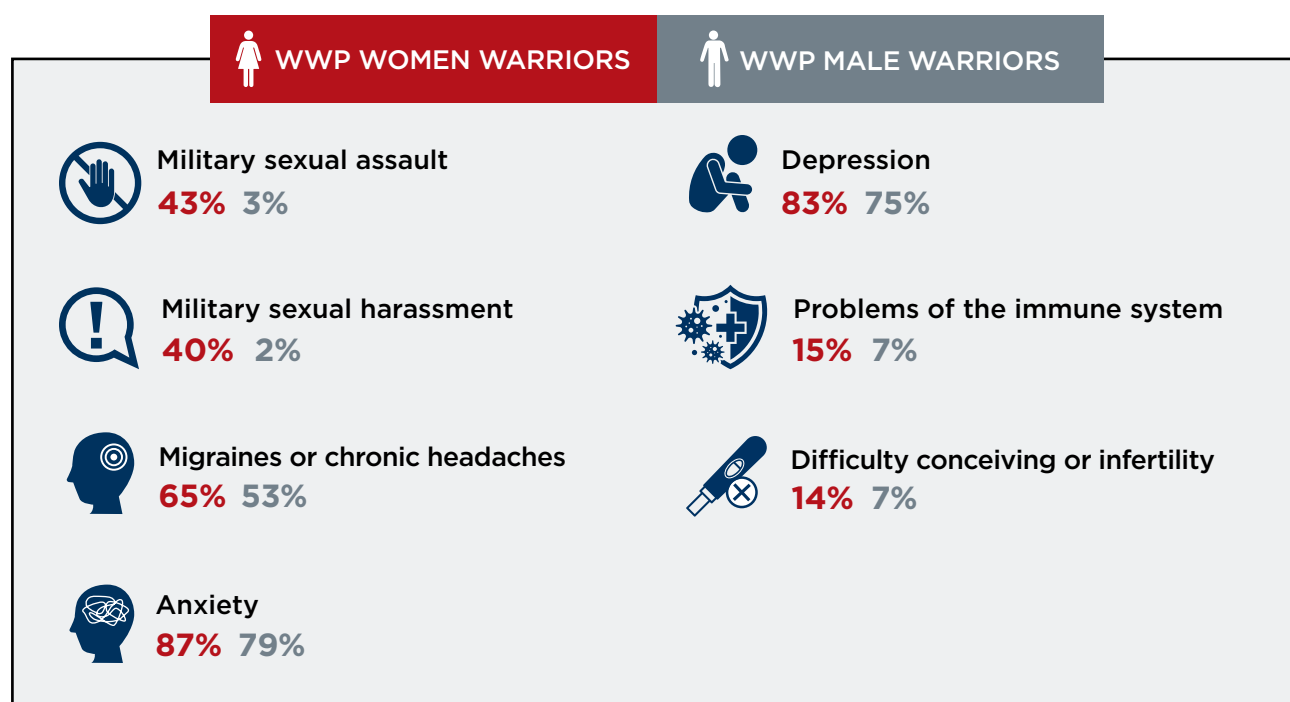
WARRIOR SURVEY FINDINGS

Responses to the Warrior Survey were compared between WWP women and male warriors. While there were some similarities, there were also clear differences — many of which reflect the unique experiences shared in the focus groups.

Below are survey findings where responses differed by 5% or more between WWP women and male warriors. Please note that these differences have not been tested for statistical significance.

SERVICE-CONNECTED INJURIES AND CONDITIONS

A **higher percentage of WWP women warriors** reported the following service-connected conditions and injuries when compared to **male warriors**:



“We have different experiences, we have different things we went through, but we all have common bonds that the guys will never understand. So, it’s different.”

— Focus Group Participant



WOUNDED WARRIOR
CORINE HAMILTON

ACCESS TO CARE

Warrior Survey findings suggest that WWP women warriors put greater emphasis on the overall experience and convenience when selecting a health care provider compared to male warriors.

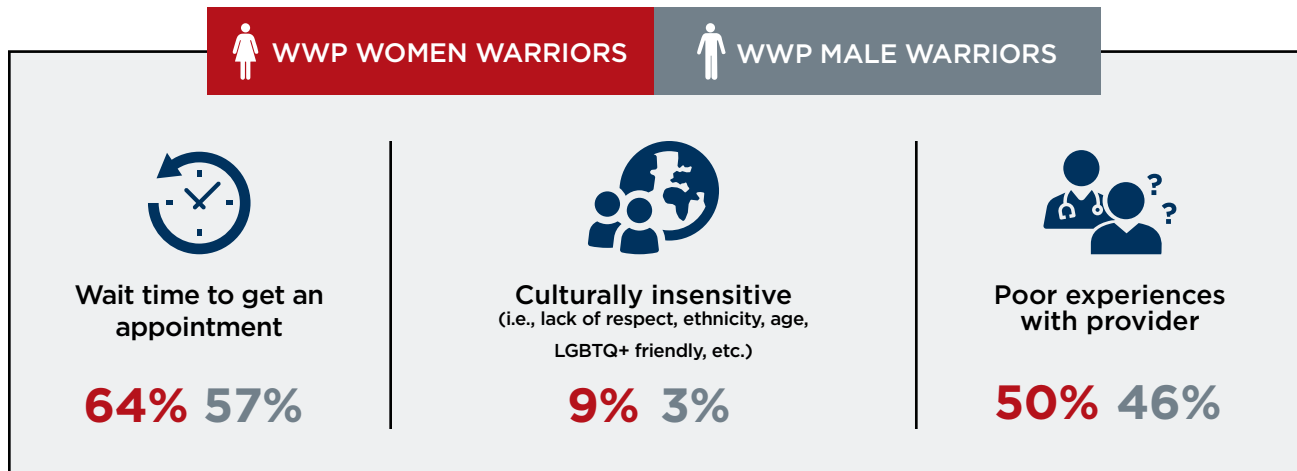
FACTORS MOST IMPORTANT WHEN SELECTING HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

A *higher percentage of WWP women warriors* reported the following factors as more important when compared to *male warriors*:

WWP WOMEN WARRIORS		WWP MALE WARRIORS	
Culturally sensitive (i.e., they are respectful of my race, ethnicity, age, LGBTQ+ friendly, etc.)		Telehealth	
20% 5%		25% 20%	
Reviews or recommendations		Care coordination or patient advocacy	
24% 19%		24% 19%	

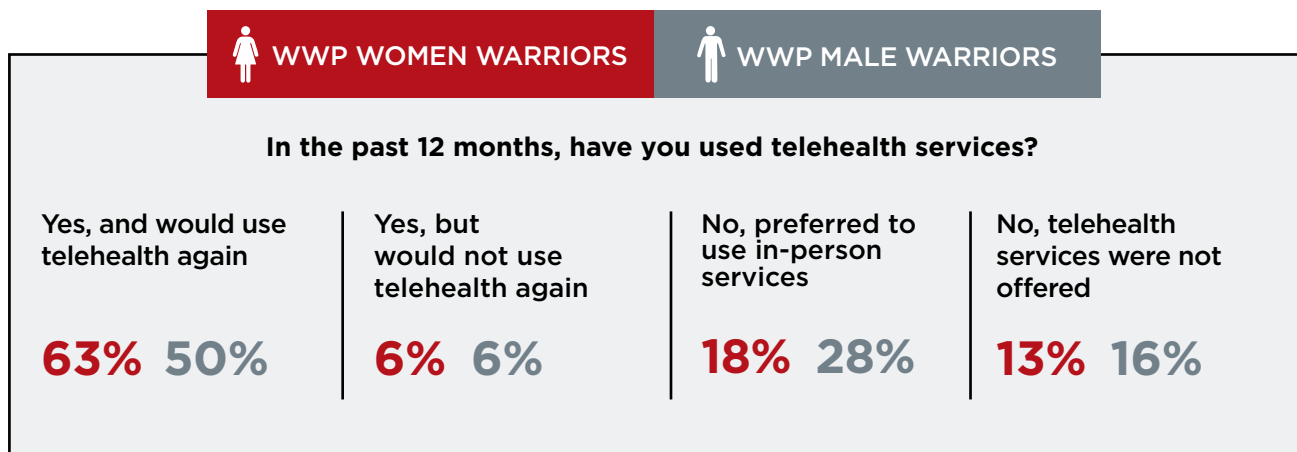
BARRIERS TO ACCESSING CARE

A **higher percentage of WWP women warriors** reported the following barriers when compared to **male warriors**:



TELEHEALTH

A **higher percentage of WWP women warriors** would use telehealth services again, whereas a **higher percentage of male warriors** would prefer in-person care when compared to women warriors:



DIFFICULTY ACCESSING CARE

A **higher percentage of WWP women warriors** experienced some degree of difficulty accessing health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compared to **male warriors**:



FINANCIAL WELLNESS

Warrior Survey findings indicate **WWP women warriors** utilize the opportunities available to them through VA or government benefits, but ***experience higher rates of financial difficulties compared to male warriors***:

TOP REASON FOR FINANCIAL STRAIN OR STRUGGLE

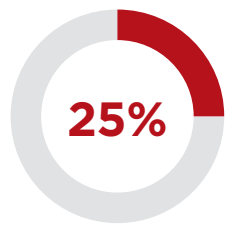


The majority of WWP women warriors indicated that at some point in the past 12 months, they did not have enough money to make ends meet (70%).

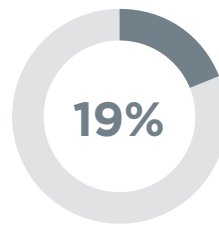


The top reported source of financial strain for WWP women warriors was the increased cost of goods (55%).

A ***higher percentage of WWP women warriors*** compared to ***male warriors*** reported family obligations (care for a parent or child, taking on dependents, funeral costs, etc.) as a top reason for financial strain or struggle:



of WWP women warriors reported family obligations as a top reason for financial strain or struggle.



of WWP male warriors reported family obligations as a top reason for financial strain or struggle.

VA OR GOVERNMENT BENEFITS

A ***higher percentage of WWP women warriors***, compared to ***male warriors***, have reported using at least one VA or government benefit:

82% of WWP women warriors **76%** of WWP male warriors

In particular, a ***higher percentage of WWP women warriors***, compared to ***male warriors***, reported utilizing the following VA or government benefits:

 WWP WOMEN WARRIORS		 WWP MALE WARRIORS	
Military Tuition Assistance Program		Federal Pell Grant	
26% 18%		25% 18%	
		VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) Program	
		26% 20%	



WOUNDED WARRIOR
RUTH CORRIGEUX

EMPLOYMENT

Family obligations were one of the leading causes of financial strain for WWP women warriors, and those responsibilities are reported as a consistent barrier to employment opportunities.

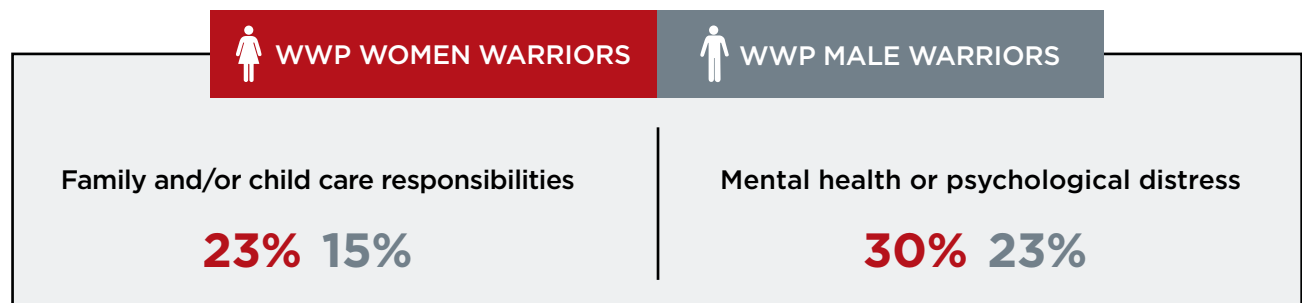
EMPLOYMENT PERCENTAGE

A *lower percentage of WWP women warriors* are employed full-time than *male warriors*:



BARRIERS TO OBTAINING EMPLOYMENT OR CHANGING JOBS

Among WWP warriors who are currently employed, a ***higher percentage of WWP women warriors*** reported the following barriers to obtaining employment or changing jobs compared to ***male warriors***:



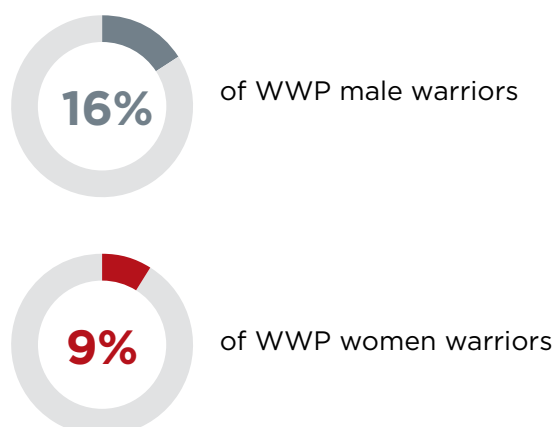
REASONS NOT CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR WORK

Among WWP warriors who are not in the labor force, a ***higher percentage of WWP women warriors*** reported the following reason:

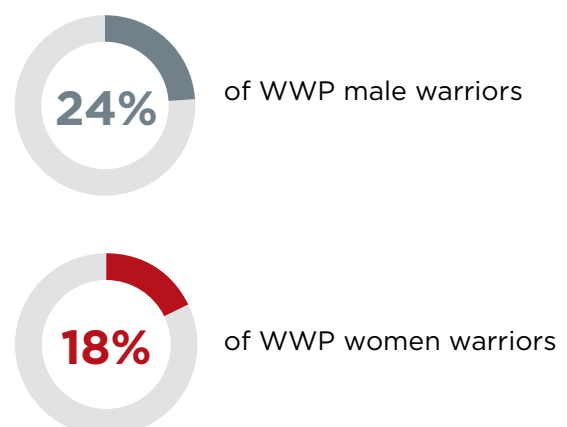


A ***higher percentage of WWP male warriors*** reported the following reasons:

Retired



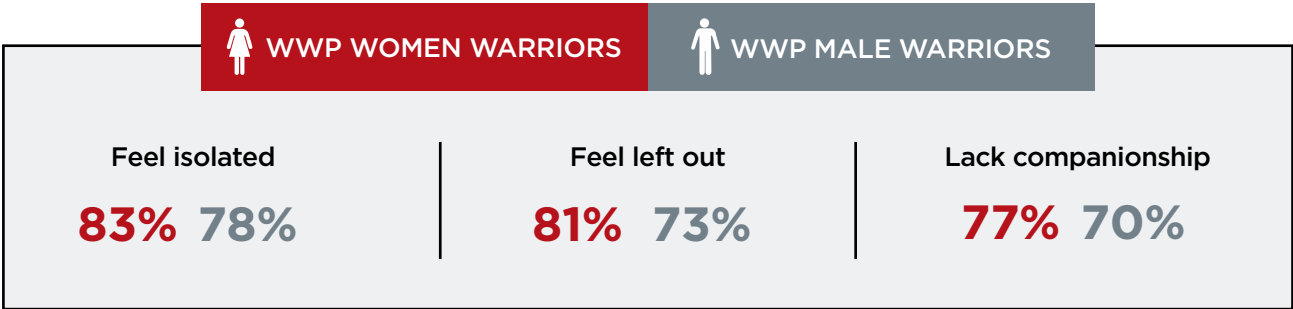
Physical injury from a service-connected disability prevents me from working



LONELINESS

WWP women warriors highlighted the importance of social connection on well-being in the focus group discussions. However, the Warrior Survey findings show a higher percentage of WWP women warriors reporting loneliness compared to male warriors.

A **higher percentage of WWP women warriors** compared to **male warriors** reported “often” feeling they lack companionship, feel left out, or are isolated from others:

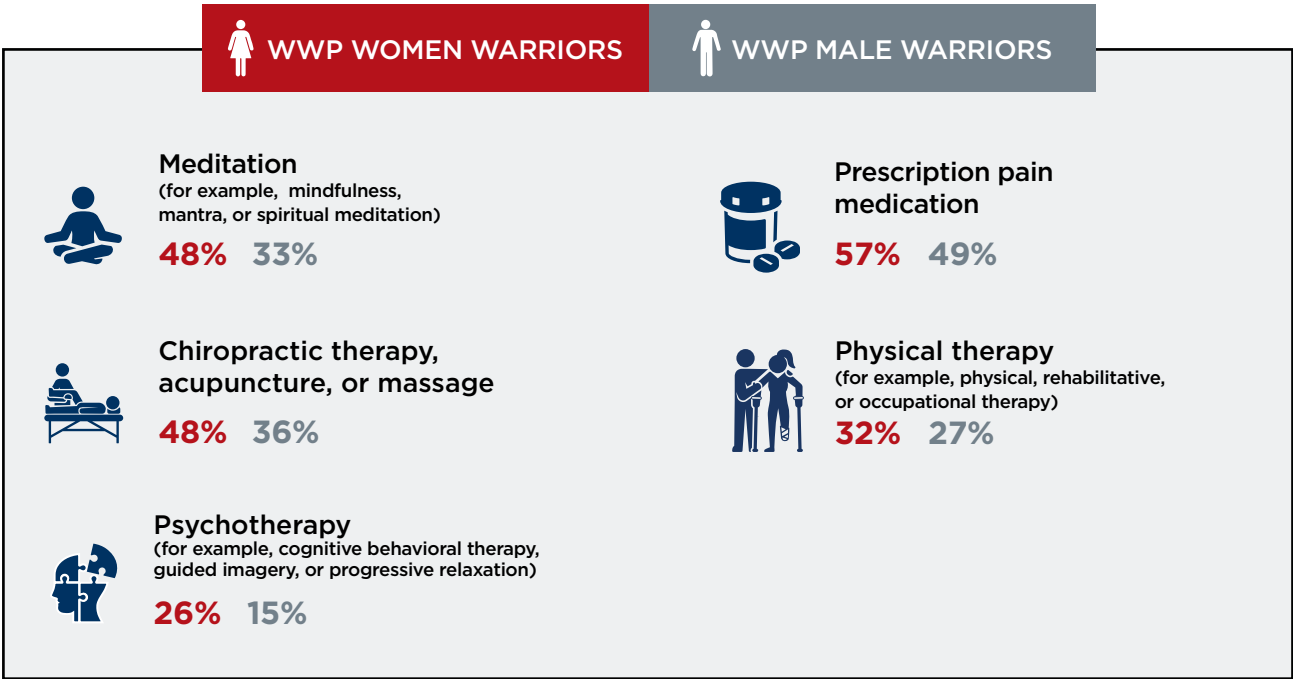


QUALITY OF LIFE

Warrior Survey findings show that WWP women warriors are utilizing a range of tools and resources for their emotional well-being and pain management, suggesting they are proactive in their care.

METHODS TO TREAT OR MANAGE PAIN

The majority of WWP women warriors reported experiencing some pain in the past three months (95%). A **higher percentage of WWP women warriors** reported using the following methods to treat or manage physical pain, when compared to **male warriors**:





WOUNDED WARRIOR
DANIELLE GREEN

RESOURCES AND TOOLS FOR WELL-BEING



Approximately three in 10 WWP women warriors reported having suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months.

A *higher percentage of WWP women warriors* reported utilizing the following tools and resources for well-being compared to *male warriors*:

 WWP WOMEN WARRIORS	 WWP MALE WARRIORS
Prayer, religion, or talking to a religious leader	52% 30%
Psychotherapy with non-VA counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist	41% 30%
Meditation, journaling, or yoga	45% 35%
Self-medication (alcohol, nonprescription marijuana, or narcotics)	69% 58%
Physical activity (for example, exercise, golf, gym workouts, biking, etc.)	49% 41%
Services at VA Medical Center	63% 57%
Talking with another veteran	72% 66%



RECOMMENDATIONS



The focus group discussions and Warrior Survey findings allow WWP to identify gender-based research gaps and provide evidence-based policy recommendations to advocate for women veterans' needs.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

ADVANCING SUPPORT FOR WOMEN VETERANS

Women veterans and active-duty servicewomen are a growing and diverse part of the military community with needs that cannot be addressed through one-size-fits-all solutions. Key stakeholders, including policymakers, VA, Department of Defense (DoD), and community organizations, play an important role in creating policies and programs that reflect their experiences and needs at every stage of their military and post-military journeys.

While great strides have been made in recognizing and addressing their unique challenges, there remains significant work to be done in ensuring equitable access to care, improving financial security, enhancing transition support, and strengthening social connection for women veterans.

REDEFINING PURPOSE: IDENTITY AND MEANING AFTER SERVICE

1. PROMOTE A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION AND REINTEGRATION:

Transitioning out of military service is a critical period that often determines long-term success in civilian life. For women, this process can be complicated by gaps in mentorship, limited access to support organizations, and challenges translating military experience into civilian roles.

Recommendations:

- ★ Improve transition programs by ensuring they address the unique needs of women and involve early engagement with support networks.
- ★ Invest in social support programming, including mentorship and peer-to-peer opportunities, to foster connection, reduce isolation, and create a more welcoming and inclusive environment.
- ★ Increase opportunities for women service members to engage with veteran service organizations prior to their exit from service.
- ★ Support policies that streamline access to medical, employment, and educational services during and after separation.
- ★ Ensure programs like the VA's Women's Health Transition Training are readily available and utilized by transitioning women to assist in transition.
- ★ Address family-related barriers that hinder employment or participation in post-service training programs.
- ★ Ensure VR&E is fully staffed and has resources to operate at its highest potential and expand access to more disabled veterans. Improve the VR&E waiver process so service-connected disabled veterans can access VR&E services when past their delimiting date.



2. BUILDING BELONGING, IDENTITY, AND PUBLIC RECOGNITION:

Many women veterans report feeling disconnected and underrecognized in both civilian and veteran communities. Cultivating a strong sense of identity and belonging is vital to well-being and long-term quality of life.

Recommendations:

- ★ Support the development of and improve upon community-based programs and peer networks focused specifically on women veterans.
- ★ Increase public recognition of women veterans through outreach, representation, and symbolic gestures that affirm their service.
- ★ Promote leadership and advocacy roles that encourage women veterans to engage in shaping the communities around them.
- ★ Support policies that increase participation in programs that offer social, educational, volunteerism, and civic engagement opportunities.

ENHANCING QUALITY OF LIFE: SUPPORT AND WELL-BEING FOR WOMEN VETERANS

1. ACCESS TO CARE ACROSS THE MILITARY-VETERAN CONTINUUM:

Access to high-quality, consistent, and gender-sensitive health care remains a central concern for women veterans. Many face difficulties with provider continuity, limited availability of female clinicians, and other obstacles with a heightened impact on women. Addressing these challenges requires policies that promote flexibility, transparency, and responsiveness in the health care system.

Recommendations:

- ★ Expand access to comprehensive, gender-specific care options within both VA and community health care systems.
- ★ Ensure the Defense Health Agency (DHA) systematically identifies and addresses the unique health care needs of women veterans who access care as military spouses or retirees.
- ★ Increase the scale of telehealth offerings to meet the growing demand among women for remote, convenient care.
- ★ Improve communication and transparency around services and benefits for survivors of MST.
- ★ Ensure women veterans are active participants in treatment decisions and provider selection. VA should publish an online directory of VA-approved community care providers specializing in women's health care.
- ★ Test innovative approaches to gender-specific care delivery through targeted pilot programs in areas such as pregnancy and reproductive care.

2. ADVANCING PREVENTIVE AND GENDER-SPECIFIC SPECIALTY CARE:

Women veterans have growing needs in specialized areas of health care such as cancer care, menopause management, infertility, and reproductive health. Current systems do not always provide continuity or consistent access to the specialized services women require.

Recommendations:

- ★ Invest in specialized programs that support women's long-term health needs, including cancer screenings, menopause care, and fertility services.
- ★ Encourage consistent provider relationships by increasing options for care with women clinicians when preferred.
- ★ Increase awareness and accessibility of preventive services through education and outreach tailored to women veterans.

3. SUPPORTING COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH AND WELLNESS FOR WOMEN VETERANS:

Comprehensive wellness for women veterans must include support for mental, physical, and emotional health. Many women experience lasting effects from their military service that require a coordinated and holistic approach. Pain, sleep disturbances, trauma, and isolation all affect quality of life and readiness for post-service opportunities. A wellness-centered policy approach must consider these factors together.

Recommendations:

- ★ Expand mental health services tailored to the unique experiences of women, including peer support and women-only groups.
- ★ Enhance retreat and recovery programs, such as VA's Readjustment Counseling Services Retreat Program, for women veterans and co-ed cohorts.
- ★ Enhance access to trauma-informed care and create safe, welcoming environments for treatment and support while filing VA benefit claims.
- ★ Strengthen physical wellness programs by offering modified exercise options that meet a wide range of ability levels, injury histories, and chronic pain conditions specific to women veterans.
- ★ Address chronic pain management by integrating physical activity programs and pain education into regular care offerings.
- ★ Improve sleep management resources through education and care strategies that emphasize non-pharmacological treatments, such as behavioral sleep therapy, physical activity, and lifestyle support.

4. STRENGTHENING ECONOMIC SECURITY AND HOUSING STABILITY:

Women veterans often carry significant caregiving responsibilities, face gender pay gaps, and are more likely than their male counterparts to cite family obligations as a barrier to financial well-being and access to care. Addressing financial strain and housing insecurity requires targeted supports that reflect these realities.

Recommendations:

- ★ Increase financial education and support programs that address caregiving, family obligations, and cost-of-living pressures.
- ★ Expand access to safe, stable, and women-focused housing solutions, including emergency and transitional options, and increase and improve options for women veterans with children.
- ★ Strengthen support for child care services to reduce barriers to employment and health care access.
- ★ Improve opportunities for women veteran entrepreneurs through grants, mentoring, and contracting support.

A woman with short hair, wearing a black tank top and shorts, is riding a green recumbent trike on a paved path in a park. She has her arms raised in the air and is smiling. The background shows lush green trees and grass.

WOUNDED WARRIOR
DONNA PRATT



RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

WWP recommends that further research be conducted to better understand:

★ Differences in barriers to care among women and male veterans

Overall, the Warrior Survey findings indicate variances in the reported outcomes for barriers to care and factors of importance when seeking care between WWP women and male warriors. Further understanding of these barriers and potential differences could help reduce obstacles for women veterans receiving care.

★ Differences in utilizations of tools and resources among women and male veterans

Warrior Survey findings show a higher percentage of WWP women warriors utilizing a range of tools and resources for emotional well-being compared to male warriors, yet women warriors tend to report poorer mental health outcomes. Further understanding of utilization and effectiveness of mental health support among women veterans will help identify gaps and areas of intervention to improve their well-being.

★ Impact of family obligations on women veterans' quality of life

Family obligations came up as barriers to accessing care, employment opportunities, financial well-being, and engaging socially and in the community in both the Warrior Survey findings and focus group discussions. Further understanding is needed to explore if or how these challenges may be unique to women veterans compared to civilians and how best to address them.

★ Consistent support for both women and families across military and veteran life

Focus group discussions highlighted the impact of military-connected experiences on children as well as support available for dual military couples or mothers who are in service. These military families may face unique experiences and a potential need for tailored tools or resources to support the whole family unit. By gaining further understanding of the support continuum available for all military families, both during service and in veteran life, will help address gaps and move towards a holistic approach of care.



Scan to download the full report and learn more about the Women Warriors Initiative or visit woundedwarriorproject.org/womenwarriors



4899 Belfort Road, Suite 300
Jacksonville, FL 32256

©2025 Wounded Warrior Project, Inc. All rights reserved.

