



# Activity limitations, pain and mental health in a sample of Canadian women Veterans

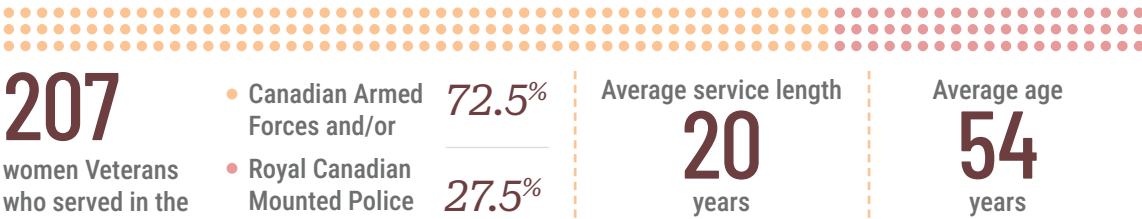
## WHY DID WE DO THIS STUDY?

Canadian research suggests women Veterans' experiences of chronic pain outpace that of men<sup>1</sup> and women Veterans experience more limitations in daily activities<sup>2</sup>. Data from the United States indicates women Veterans are more likely to have multiple and overlapping pain conditions (e.g. joint pain, neck pain, headaches)<sup>3</sup>. *Such findings emphasize the need for more research in women Veterans' health and well-being.*

In 2024, the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families launched a survey to better understand the well-being and health needs of women Veterans. This fact sheet presents results from that survey, which included questions about pain, activity limitations and mental health.

## WHO PARTICIPATED?

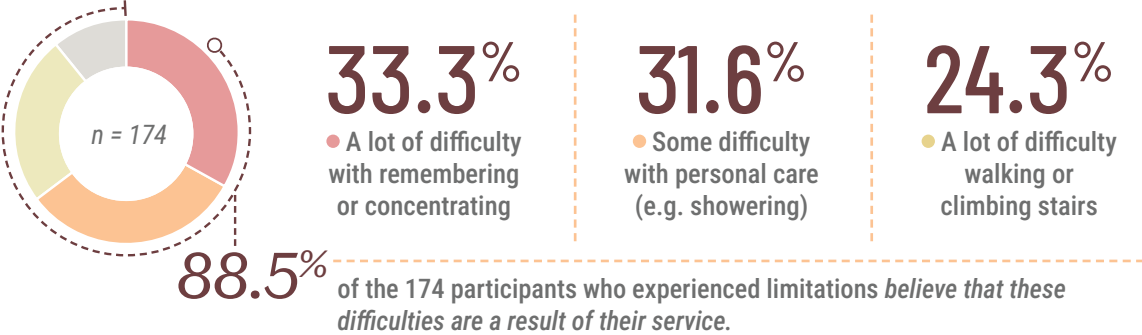
### SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS



## WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE DATA?

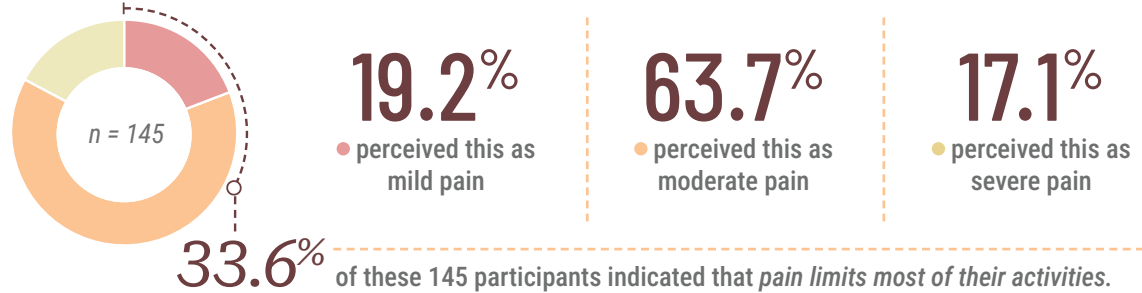
### LIMITATIONS IN DAILY LIVING

174 participants reported limitations in daily living.



### EXPERIENCES WITH PAIN

Over two-thirds of participants (70.4%) currently experience pain or discomfort.

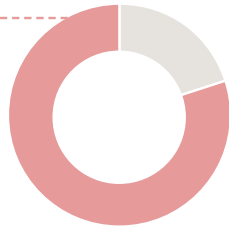


## MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health can and often does co-occur with chronic pain. Women Veterans who participated reported being diagnosed with:

80%

of those with a diagnosed trauma or stress-related disorder reported experiencing pain or discomfort.



70.0%

Trauma-related or stress-related disorder

47.8%

Anxiety disorder

28.5%

Operational stress injury

27.5%

Mood disorder

Compared to those without pain, participants with pain reported:



Significantly higher

severity of symptoms related to *depression, anxiety and posttraumatic stress disorder*



Significantly lower

satisfaction with life

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

More than half of participants reported experiencing pain or discomfort.



For a third of this group, *pain limits most of their activities.*

There is a significant link between the experience of pain and mental health symptoms.



This finding aligns with what is known about how chronic pain and mental health often exist together and underscores *the importance of considering chronic pain in the treatment of mental health (and vice versa).*

The data represents a sample of women Veterans and cannot be generalized to the entire population of women Veterans.

1. Veterans Affairs Canada Research Directorate. Chronic pain in Veterans: info brief [Internet]. Charlottetown (PE): The Directorate; 2018. Available from: [veterans.gc.ca/pdf/about-vac/research/research-directorate/info-briefs/chronic-pain.pdf](https://veterans.gc.ca/pdf/about-vac/research/research-directorate/info-briefs/chronic-pain.pdf)
2. Hall AL, Sweet J, Tweel M, MacLean MB. Comparing negative health indicators in male and female Veterans with the Canadian general population. *BMJ Military Health*. 2022;168(1):82-87. doi:10.1136/bmjilitary-2020-001526
3. Hadlandsmyth K, Zhuang C, Driscoll MA, Lund BC. Comorbid chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder: current rates and psychiatric comorbidities among US military veterans. *Military Medicine*. 2024 Nov;189(11-12):2303-2306. doi:10.1093/milmed/usae313