

IN THIS ISSUE



RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Stories that INSPIRE

New report:
Transition experiences
of women Veterans

Celebrating early-career
researchers

Women Veterans'
reproductive health

Improving military and
Veteran mental health

RESEARCH IN ACTION

Atlas research at
CIMVHR Forum 2025

GET INVOLVED IN RESEARCH
AT THE ATLAS INSTITUTE

LATEST PUBLICATIONS

Welcome to *Research Compass*, the Atlas Institute's newsletter highlighting new developments in Veteran and Family well-being and mental health research. In each issue, you'll find updates on studies in which you can participate, opportunities to get involved as a research advisor, and links to our latest publications.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

RESEARCH MILESTONE

Stories that INSPIRE

Stories that INSPIRE is a storytelling- and film-based research project led by Dr. Jenny Liu at the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre. The project is funded by the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families and supported by Mental Health Research Canada. The project invited Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Veterans to share deeply personal accounts of transitioning out of military service, capturing both the challenges of social isolation and loneliness, and the strength found through resilience and community.

Drawing on interviews with Veterans from diverse backgrounds, service histories and transition experiences, the project highlights common emotional and social challenges following release, including loss of camaraderie, identity and belonging. It also emphasizes the healing role of peer support, purpose and reconnection.

Produced in collaboration with RADAR (Recovery Advocacy Documentary Action Research), the resulting film brings these stories to life with honesty and care, translating research into an accessible, human-centred tool for connection, education and advocacy.

This work sits within a broader, ongoing program of research examining the complex transition out of military service. The INSPIRE program is conducted in collaboration with Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) and supported by multiple



fundors, including the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans. VAC recently confirmed that the Stories that INSPIRE video will be adopted as an official onboarding tool for their employees, across all platforms, in both English and French. This milestone reflects the real-world uptake of Veteran-led storytelling and knowledge mobilization and highlights the strength of partnerships that support meaningful impact beyond the research context.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT,
INCLUDING THE FILM:



atlasveterans.ca/social-isolation-loneliness



NEW RESEARCH FINDINGS AVAILABLE

INSIGHTS ON TRANSITION AND ADJUSTMENT FOR WOMEN VETERANS OF THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

The Atlas Institute and the **Canadian Legacy Project** recently completed a study that looked at the impact transition from military service has on the mental health, well-being and adjustment of women Veterans in post-service life.

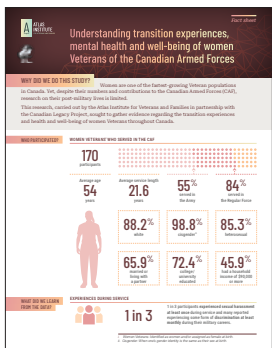
The study examined the transition experiences of women Veterans, their program and service use and needs, and factors that contributed to shaping positive or difficult transitions to post-service life. Participants comprised 170 women Veterans of the CAF who completed an online survey between October 24, 2024 and May 31, 2025.

Findings underscore the importance of mental health in women’s post-service lives, as many reported diagnosed conditions including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety or mood disorders. These challenges, together with other difficulties identified related to adjustment – such as employment and financial stability – highlight the importance

of sustained mental health support for women in a successful post-service adjustment. Other findings illustrate the high prevalence of harassment, discrimination and military sexual trauma experienced by women during service. Consistent with these experiences, participants emphasized the need for safe, trauma-informed supports, including peer and women-only groups. Ultimately, programs and services tailored to women’s needs may strengthen post-service adjustment and help facilitate successful transitions from military service for women Veterans.

These findings build on previous work and provide evidence for how programs, services and future research can more effectively support women Veterans and support their transition to post-service life.

We thank the Canadian Legacy Project for their generous funding, which contributed to the realization of this project.



READ THE FACT SHEET

atlasveterans.ca/womens-transition-fact-sheet

READ THE FULL REPORT

atlasveterans.ca/womens-transition-report

RESEARCH
MILESTONE

Celebrating early-career researchers

The Clinical Research team at Atlas is committed to training the next generation of clinician-scientists who are working diligently to improve mental health outcomes among active-service and former members of the CAF and RCMP and their Families. Our team celebrated an incredible milestone for one of its members this past quarter: Dr. Jonathan Lieberman, a leader of our neurofeedback studies for the past several years, successfully defended his PhD thesis. Neurofeedback is a non-invasive treatment that trains people to self-regulate areas of the brain that may not be functioning well in the aftermath of trauma, using real-time feedback about brain activity from a computer-based program. As part of his defence, he detailed the methods of a neurofeedback clinical trial and highlighted optimal neurofeedback targets within the brain for addressing trauma-related symptoms.

Some of the findings from this research were recently published in *NeuroImage: Clinical*. The article, titled [Contributions of the default mode and central executive networks during posterior cingulate cortex-targeted fMRI neurofeedback in PTSD](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nicl.2024.103000) (bit.ly/publication-dmn-cen-pcc-nfb) revealed that for individuals with PTSD, neurofeedback targeting the posterior cingulate cortex (PCC) — a region of the brain involved in reflecting on oneself, recalling memories and processing emotions that can become overactive during trauma-related thoughts — resulted in more significant engagement of the default mode network, a neural network involved with self-referential processing and identity, than the central executive network, which plays a role in emotion regulation. These findings suggest distinct neural dynamics during PCC-targeted neurofeedback, which could help inform more tailored neurofeedback protocols among active members, Veterans and their Families, and highlight the importance of treating PTSD symptoms that are related to disruptions to one's sense of self in the aftermath of trauma.

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITY



INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING?



atlasveterans.ca/study-reproductive-health

NEW
STUDY

Women Veterans' reproductive and mental health


Many women who have served in the military or police force have experienced reproductive and mental health challenges. However, to date, research about these issues remains limited.

The Atlas Institute has partnered with the [Centre for Military Women's Research at Anglia Ruskin University](https://www.anglia.ac.uk/research/centres-centre-for-military-womens-research) to launch a new multinational study that will explore and compare the reproductive and mental health of women who served in the United Kingdom (UK) or Canadian militaries, the UK police or as uniformed members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

This research study is open for recruitment and we are looking for women living in Canada or the UK to take part in a short, one-time survey that asks questions on reproductive health and touches on topics such as fertility, contraceptive use, menopause, sexual health and mental health.

Participating in this study will generate insights about reproductive and mental health, helping to inform services and supports for women Veterans in both Canada and the UK.

QUESTIONS?

Contact the Canadian research team:  research@atlasinstitute.ca

Improving military and Veteran mental health

Four articles authored or co-authored by Atlas researchers were recently published in a new special issue of the *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health* on the role of measurement-based care and approaches to treatment resistance.



READ THIS SPECIAL
ISSUE OF JMVFH

[bit.ly/
jmvfh-vol-12-no-1](https://bit.ly/jmvfh-vol-12-no-1)

*Toward a definition of treatment-resistant posttraumatic stress disorder:
A systematic review*

This review consolidated existing research on treatment-resistant PTSD, revealing significant variability in its definition across studies. The authors propose a dynamic reassessment of treatment resistance that considers adherence, treatment delivery, comorbidities and mechanisms for action.

*Reimagining MAiD for psychiatric illness:
Ethical dilemmas among Veterans,
clinical realities, and the road ahead*

This article examines how the expansion of medical assistance in dying (MAiD) in Canada to include mental illness as a sole underlying medical condition raises clinical, legal and ethical concerns, particularly for Veterans who are disproportionately affected by difficult-to-treat psychiatric conditions.

*Barriers to and facilitators of measurement-based care in posttraumatic stress disorder treatment:
A systematic review*

This review identified a limited number of studies examining barriers to and facilitators of measurement-based care use and implementation for PTSD, highlighting gaps in the literature.

*Augmenting evidence-based PTSD psychotherapy with neuroscientifically informed interventions:
A mind-body-brain approach*

This article describes how neuroscience-informed treatment interventions, including neurofeedback, may improve outcomes of trauma-focused psychotherapies traditionally used to treat PTSD.

Atlas research at CIMVHR Forum 2025

Atlas had the opportunity to present new research findings at the **Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR)** Forum held in October 2025 in Ottawa, ON.

Presentations by Atlas researchers covered a variety of topics related to Veteran and Family mental health including:

- Best-practice peer support guidelines for Veterans, military, public safety personnel, and their Families
- Secondary traumatic stress in Families of individuals with PTSD
- Well-being of women Veterans of the RCMP
- The role of institutional betrayal in the association between service-related sexual trauma and moral injury
- Predictors of post-treatment outcomes among inpatients completing treatment for PTSD
- Neurofeedback for PTSD
- The role of psychological flexibility and hope in the well-being of aging Veterans

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHT

One highlight from CIMVHR Forum 2025 was the representation of lived experience at the podium. This year, three Atlas presentations included Veterans as co-presenters, with two of them focusing on studies conducted as part of the Athena Project (atlasveterans.ca/athena-project). These presentations marked an exciting and important milestone for the Athena Project and for the Atlas Institute, reflecting a distinctive moment in which Veteran researchers and Atlas researchers shaped presentations together and then stood side-by-side to share findings at CIMVHR Forum.



Corporal (Ret'd) Sarah Lefurgey presenting on women's experiences in the RCMP at CIMVHR Forum 2025.

Recruiting studies

Interested in participating in research? Research participation helps expand our understanding of Veteran and Family mental health and well-being and can support the improvement of treatments, programs and services. The Atlas Institute leads and supports research projects – new opportunities to participate open up regularly. Check out a few of the studies currently looking for participants.

LED BY ATLAS

- Women's well-being in post-service life: Evaluating the psychological, social and systemic factors associated with transition from the Canadian military *[Note: Currently only open to CAF women in the process of transitioning out of the military or posted at a transition centre]*
- Thriving after service: The prevalence and predictors of flourishing among military and RCMP Veterans

→ To find out if you're eligible to participate, please visit: atlasveterans.ca/get-involved

- The neural correlates of minority stress: Uncovering systemic oppression related to the intersectionality of identity with neuroimaging and machine learning

→ To find out if you're eligible to participate, please visit: redcap.link/minoritystresscontact

SUPPORTED BY ATLAS

- [Studying the effectiveness and implementation of Sudarshan Kriya Yoga for Canadian Veterans with PTSD](#)
- [Understanding the mental and reproductive health of UK and Canadian ex-servicewomen](#)
- [Brain measures linked to hyperarousal in PTSD using MRI imaging](#)

LEARN MORE ABOUT
RECRUITING RESEARCH PROJECTS

atlasveterans.ca/recruiting-studies

OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

The Atlas Institute recognizes the importance of including different experiences and perspectives in our various projects. We believe the voices of our lived experience community are vitally important to the work we do and invite you to participate in our projects, including research projects, through surveys, panels, webinars and town hall events and more.

SEE OUR CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES

atlasveterans.ca/get-involved

Note: Bolded names indicate Atlas Institute researchers and staff.

posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

neurofeedback

Augmenting evidence-based PTSD psychotherapy with neuroscientifically informed interventions: A mind-body-brain approach

2026-01-27

Jetly R, Frewen P, Lieberman JM, Kearney B, Al-Shamali HF, Bhat V, Lanus R, **Nicholson AA**

Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health

posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Barriers to and facilitators of measurement-based care in posttraumatic stress disorder treatment: A systematic review

2026-01-27

Al-Shamali HF, Martin J, Perivolaris A, Kami A, Al-Hassan MA, Fikretoglu D, Germain A, **Nicholson AA**, Krishnan S, Greenshaw A, Enns MW, Sareen J, Frewen P, Vermetten E, Jetly R, Bhat V

Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health

mental health

Reimagining MAiD for psychiatric illness: Ethical dilemmas among Veterans, clinical realities, and the road ahead

2026-01-27

Dupuis G, Jetly R, Bélanger SAH, Sareen J, **Nicholson AA**

Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health

brain imaging

posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

neurofeedback

Longitudinal mapping of a randomized controlled trial of EEG neurofeedback in PTSD: Early symptom stabilization and implications for adjunctive therapeutic potential

In press

Lieberman J, **Brady B**, Lanius R, Ros T, Theberge J, Frey B, Bhat V, Scharnowski F, **Nicholson AA**

Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging

health and well-being

Instruments measuring housing and physical environment as a domain of well-being: A scoping review

In press

Gregory A, Welch LA, Lauzon A, Hosseiny F, Rodrigues S

Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health

aging

health and well-being

Tracking well-being over time: A longitudinal analysis of aging Veterans and their civilian counterparts in the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging

2026-04-02

Van Veen WFS, **Lauzon A**, Laham N, **Gaudett G, Rodrigues S, Hosseiny F**, Maggi S

Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health

TO READ THESE PUBLICATIONS

atlasveterans.ca/publications



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