

Understanding transition experiences, mental health and well-being of women Veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces

WHY DID WE DO THIS STUDY?

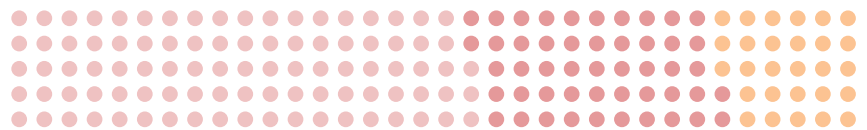
Women are one of the fastest-growing Veteran populations in Canada. Yet, despite their numbers and contributions to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), research on their post-military lives is limited.

This research, carried out by the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families and funded by the Canadian Legacy Project, sought to gather evidence regarding the transition experiences and health and well-being of women Veterans throughout Canada.

WHO PARTICIPATED?

WOMEN VETERANSⁱ WHO SERVED IN THE CAF

170
participants

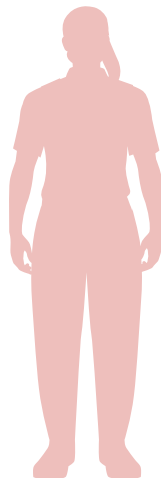


Average age
54
years

Average service length
21.6
years

55%
served in
the Army

84%
served in
the Regular Force



88.2%
white

98.8%
cisgenderⁱⁱ

85.3%
heterosexual

65.9%
married or
living with
a partner

72.4%
college/
university
educated

45.9%
had a household
income of \$90,000
or more

WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE DATA?

EXPERIENCES DURING SERVICE



1 in 3

1 in 3 participants experienced sexual harassment at least once during service and many reported experiencing some form of discrimination at least monthly during their military careers.

^{i.} Women Veterans: Identified as women and/or assigned as female at birth.

^{ii.} Cisgender: When one's gender identity is the same as their sex at birth.

TRANSITION



60%+
of participants reported
transition was difficult

48.8%
of women were
medically released

Most difficult stressors during transition:

- 67.1%** Daily living with a mental health condition
- 60.9%** Being understood by civilians
- 52.4%** Getting care for mental health conditions
- 51.0%** Getting care for a physical health condition

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



60% indicated that their current
overall health was worse now when
compared to their health during service.

Participants
reported diagnoses
of mental health
conditions including:

49.4% posttraumatic stress
disorder (PTSD)
44.7% an anxiety disorder

ACCESSING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



Nearly all participants had accessed services from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC):

67.5%
disability benefits

65.3%
pension

64.9%
treatment benefits

64.7%
VAC case management

Just over half had accessed
services or programs from
not-for-profit organizations:

32.9%
Soldier On

18.2%
The Pepper Pod

14.1%
Veteran Transition Network

WHAT DO WOMEN WANT IN PROGRAMS/SERVICES?



60%+
reported wanting
better access to
mental health support

Characteristics identified as important
for women Veterans' programming:

- Trauma-informed
- Psychologically safe
- Women-specific

Participants also highlighted
the importance of programs
incorporating peer
mentorship, virtual and
women-only options.

WHAT DO THE FINDINGS TELL US?

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Read the
full report
for detailed
findings:



- Mental health is an important and ongoing concern for some women Veterans. Many reported living with diagnosed conditions such as PTSD, anxiety or mood disorders. These challenges – combined with difficulties related to adjusting to post-military life, employment and finances – suggest that supporting mental health is essential for successful post-service adjustment.
- Harassment, discrimination and military sexual trauma during service remain prevalent. Many women report challenges accessing care and emphasize the value of safe, trauma-informed supports, including peer- and women-only groups where they can share experiences and feel understood.
- Programs that are tailored to women's needs, offering peer mentorship, trauma-informed care and gender-sensitive approaches, may help better support women Veterans and their transition to post-service life.

atlasveterans.ca/womens-transition-report

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