7TH ANNUAL IAVA MEMBER SURVEY

THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE LOOK INTO THE LIVES OF POST-9/11 VETERANS
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (www.IAVA.org) is the leading post-9/11 veteran empowerment organization (VEO) with the most diverse and rapidly growing membership in America. Founded in 2004, our mission is to improve the lives of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

IAVA’s Member Survey would not be possible without the funding support provided by the Marcus Foundation and the Streisand Foundation.
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INTRODUCTION

In February 2015, the President signed into law the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act. IAVA’s member survey was the driver for what became a national call to action. In March 2014, IAVA launched the Campaign to Combat Suicide, sounding an alarm about the crisis of suicide among veterans. This fight was personal; the road was long—longer than it should’ve been—but together we got it done.

But the fight is far from over. And the stakes have never been higher. With each year, veterans worry about the nation’s attention and support turning away from this community. Thus with each passing year it becomes more crucial that this nation understands and shares in both the struggles and successes of this newest generation of veterans.

IAVA’s annual member survey is one of the largest non-governmental surveys of Iraq and Afghanistan combat veterans and is the most comprehensive, asking about employment, education, benefits, health and other emerging issues.

Through this survey, the collective voice of IAVA members have influenced the 2013 Campaign to End the VA Backlog, the Vow to Hire Heroes Act and so much more!

This year’s survey highlights some of the challenges that the fastest growing population of service members and veterans -- women veterans -- face. It also shows that mental health challenges and access to care continue to impact veterans in all facets of their lives. And it highlights a continued need for a focus on finances during the transition period.

Yet it also shows that vets are rising. Twenty percent of our members are planning to start their own business and three percent already have. Ninety-three percent are planning to vote in the 2016 Presidential Election, and thirty-seven percent considering a run for public office themselves.

The information from this survey is a major driver for all that IAVA does. It should be a road map for the country too. The post-9/11 generation of veterans has had the nation’s back for over a decade; it’s time for the nation to have theirs.

Best,

Paul Rieckhoff
Founder and CEO
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The IAVA member survey was open for seven weeks during the first half of CY 2015. The IAVA survey link was sent out via e-mail to IAVA combat members having served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan and previously submitted a DD-214 or similar paperwork to IAVA. A separate IAVA member survey link was sent out via e-mail to IAVA members who had not yet submitted a DD-214 or similar paperwork to IAVA, partner veteran and military service organizations and was also shared widely on social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.). After closing the survey we performed an analysis comparing demographic data from these two groups and found them to be similar enough to warrant combining the data sets.

In total, 3,015 IAVA members began the survey and 1,501 completed it, resulting in a 50 percent completion rate. On average it took respondents approximately one hour to complete the survey. This comprehensive survey asked about issues including employment, education, GI Bill usage, health (including mental health), VA utilization, VA benefits, reintegration and more.

The survey was composed of approximately 300 questions, with respondents answering only questions relevant to their experiences. The survey was created using QuestionPro survey software and was available online. During the last two weeks of the survey, respondents were offered incentives including Starbucks gift cards and a random drawing for a trip to New York City. SPSS statistical analysis software was used to analyze survey data, including response frequencies and percentages and standard error (where appropriate).

This publication presents only IAVA member data. Non-IAVA member data were excluded from this report. We have also indicated data from 2013 and 2014 where applicable for comparative purposes.
KEY FINDINGS

MENTAL HEALTH

58% Have a service-connected mental health injury

▶ 82% Are seeking care for that injury

▶ 78% Are getting care from a VA provider

▶ 63% Are satisfied or extremely satisfied with that care

59% Had someone close to them suggest they seek help for a mental health injury

▶ 77% Sought help as a result

SUICIDE

40% Have thought about taking their own life since joining the military

54% Know an Iraq or Afghanistan veteran they served with who attempted suicide

45% Know an Iraq or Afghanistan veteran they served with who died by suicide

GENERAL HEALTH

92% Rated their overall health before joining the military as excellent or good

32% Rated their current overall health as excellent or good

68% Reported being wounded during military service

34% Have someone assisting in some aspect of their daily health needs

BURN PIT AND TOXIC EXPOSURES

74% Have been exposed to burn pits during deployment

▶ 60% Feel that they have symptoms associated with that exposure

▶ 36% Are registered in the VA's burn pit registry

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

68% Support the legalization of medical marijuana in their state

75% Feel the VA should allow medical marijuana as a treatment option where warranted

WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

15% Feel that the general public understands the contributions of women in the military

79% Feel that it's important/very important for IAVA to address the issues women veterans face

73% Believe that physical fitness standards should be uniform for men and women
### KEY FINDINGS

#### DISABILITY COMPENSATION BACKLOG
- **79%** Reported waiting over 125 days to be notified of the VA claim decisions.
- **56%** Reported waiting over 125 days to be notified of the VA appeal decision.
- **33%** Are still awaiting a decision.

#### EQUALITY
- **49%** Feel allowing military service by openly transgender individuals will negatively impact mission readiness.
- **43%** Are neutral.
- **8%** Feel it would have a positive impact.

#### EMPLOYMENT
- **8%** Reported being unemployed, as compared to **10%** in 2014 and 2013.
- **74%** Have experienced a period of unemployment since leaving the military.

#### MILITARY SERVICE
- **23%** Support a return to the draft.
- **82%** Support the creation of a national monument for post-9/11 veterans.

#### FINANCIAL STRESS
- **74%** Did not have a comprehensive financial plan during their transition out of service.
- **57%** Felt prepared to manage finances immediately after transitioning out of the military.

#### GUN OWNERSHIP AND SAFETY
- **57%** Own a firearm
  - **32%** Store their firearm locked, unloaded with ammunition separate
  - **17%** Store it unlocked and loaded

#### HOUSING
- **24%** Did not have a permanent place to live when they transitioned out of the military.
## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Gender
- Female: 18%
- Male: 82%

### Age
- 18-30: 15%
- 31-35: 24%
- 36-40: 14%
- 41-45: 15%
- 46-50: 14%
- 51+: 18%

### Race
- White: 71%
- Hispanic/Latino: 12%
- Other: 11%

### Marital Status
- Single: 17%
- Married/Domestic partnership: 65%
- Divorced/Separated: 18%

### Income
- <$20K: 8%
- $20K-$35K: 14%
- $35K-$50K: 16%
- $50K-$75K: 23%
- $75K-$99K: 16%
- $100K-$150K: 15%
- >$150K: 8%

### Employment Status
- Full time: 53%
- Part time: 7%
- Unemployed: 11%
- Active Duty: 6%
- Disabled/Retired: 23%

### Education
- High School: 6%
- Some college: 26%
- Vocational/Associates: 18%
- Bachelor’s: 29%
- Master’s/PhD: 21%

### Political Ideology
- Democrat: 18%
- Republican: 36%
- No political affiliation: 38%
- Other: 8%

### Top 5 Member Organizations
1. IAVA (100%)
2. Veterans of Foreign Wars (41%)
3. Wounded Warrior Project (30%)
4. Disabled American Veterans (27%)
5. American Legion (25%)

### Years Since Separating from the Military
- Still in military: 14%
- 1 year or less: 10%
- 1-5 years: 33%
- 5-10 years: 36%
- 10+ years: 7%

## SERVICE DEMOGRAPHICS

### Branch of Service
- Army: 60%
- Marine Corps: 14%
- Navy: 13%
- Air Force: 12%
- Coast Guard: 1%

### Rank
- Officer: 18%
- Enlisted: 82%

### Deployments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Deployments</th>
<th>OIF</th>
<th>OEF</th>
<th>OND</th>
<th>ORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Breakdown of registered political party of members:

- **Democratic**: 18%
- **Republican**: 36%
- **No political affiliation/Independent**: 38%
- **Green**: 1%
- **Libertarian**: 5%
- **Other**: 2%

#### Engagement Rates

- **93%** Are currently registered to vote
- **80%** Voted in the 2014 elections
- **93%** Are planning to vote in the 2016 Presidential election
- **37%** Have considered running for office

Members were asked to rank the importance of various issues when considering the support of a candidate...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veterans’ Issues</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Control/ 2nd Amendment rights</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military/Defense Issues</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget and the Economy</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeland Security</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**PERCEPTIONS**

"I feel there is a lot of stigma related to being a veteran. People assume PTSD and other problems likely exist."  
- IAVA Member

Respondents ranked the top issues affecting Iraq and Afghanistan veterans...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suicide/Mental Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA Disability Benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment/Jobs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked whether they agreed with the following statements...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The President listens to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress listens to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Secretary of the VA listens to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The American public supports Iraq and Afghanistan veterans</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate America supports Iraq and Afghanistan veterans</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While 63% of veterans believe the public supports veterans, only 22% believe the public understands the sacrifices veterans have made.

When asked about the impact the new VA secretary has on veterans...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive 22%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral 61%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative 10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ratings for improving the lives of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Good or Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The President</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Secretary of the VA</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

“A woman could not qualify for decorations I earned as an infantryman. I think that is wrong... the fact that a woman due to being born a woman is barred from service. It’s antiquated and below us.”

- IAVA Member

When asked how important it is for the IAVA to address the issues women veterans face...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Importance</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Importance</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Of female respondents would NOT apply for a MOS in combat arms unit: 50%
- Of female respondents would apply for a MOS in combat arms unit: 32%
- Of female respondents have applied for a MOS in combat arms unit: 5%

2014: 43%
2013: 34%

When asked about the following statements regarding women in the military*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Female Support</th>
<th>Male Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The general public understands the contributions of women in the military</td>
<td>Yes 7% No 87%</td>
<td>Yes 17% No 70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s advancement in the military has been limited by restrictions on women in combat</td>
<td>Yes 64% No 36%</td>
<td>Yes 35% No 65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifting restrictions on women in combat will improve the public recognition of their contributions</td>
<td>Yes 52% No 48%</td>
<td>Yes 33% No 67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical fitness standards should be uniform for men and women</td>
<td>Yes 49% No 51%</td>
<td>Yes 77% No 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the opening of all military occupational specialties to women</td>
<td>Yes 64% No 21%</td>
<td>Yes 38% No 49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Missing percentages represent those who were unsure
When asked the following questions...

Would you recommend military service to a family member or a close friend?  
- Yes: 75%  
- No: 14%  
- Don't Know: 11%  

Do you support the planned draw down of troops from Afghanistan?  
- Yes: 50%  
- No: 35%  
- Don't Know: 15%  

Would you support the creation of a national monument for post 9/11 veterans?  
- Yes: 82%  
- No: 7%  
- Don't Know: 11%  

70% Support the all-volunteer force while 23% support a return to the draft.

75% Are concerned that the end of combat missions in Afghanistan will decrease public attention.

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Are military retirees  
- Yes: 36%  
- No: 64%

Do you believe that the military retirement system should be reformed?  
- Yes: 45%  
- No: 33%  
- Don't Know: 22%  

How do you think the retirement system should be reformed?  
- Expand to allow for partial benefit: 40%  
- Blended retirement benefits: 28%  
- Replace with 401K-type system with government matching: 27%  
- Reduce amount of benefits for working retirees: 5%  

---

Did you support or oppose the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT), the law that banned military service by openly gay troops?  
- Support: 41%  
- Oppose: 25%  
- Don't Know: 34%  

What impact do you think the repeal of DADT has had on mission readiness?  
- Positive: 21%  
- Neutral: 63%  
- Negative: 16%  

What impact do you believe allowing military service by openly transgender troops would have on military readiness?  
- Positive: 49%  
- Neutral: 43%  
- Negative: 8%
**Gun Ownership and Safety**

Do you own personal firearms?

- **Yes 57%**
- **No 33%**
- **Prefer not to answer 10%**

**Of those who own a firearm are consistent in their method of storage 97%**

**Would support community lockers as a means to safely store weapons outside of the home 43%**

**When asked to select their primary method of storage...**

- Locked, unloaded, ammunition stored separately 32%
- Locked, loaded 22%
- Unlocked, unloaded, ammunition stored separately 20%
- Unlocked, loaded 17%
- Other 5%
- Locked, unloaded, no ammunition in home 2%
- Unlocked, unloaded, no ammunition in home 2%

If a buddy of yours was in crisis, would you support having a mental health professional talk to him/her about options for temporary safe storage of firearms, such as use of a lock, safe, or storing it outside the home? Yes 82%

If a buddy of yours was in crisis, would you support having a veteran peer talk to him/her about options for temporary safe storage of firearms, such as use of a lock, safe, or storing it outside the home? Yes 93%
MENTAL HEALTH

I was on active duty when members of my unit encouraged me to seek mental health counseling. I experienced no stigma, and fortunately this did not become a long-term issue for me.

- IAVA Member

80% Do not think troops and veterans are getting the mental health care they need

2014: 73%
2013: 80%

49% Know an Iraq or Afghanistan veteran who needs care for a mental health injury and is not getting it

Top 3 Reasons Why Not
1. They have access to care, but not quality care (34%)
2. The stigma of seeking help is too great (31%)
3. They have access but are not seeking care (14%)

Top 3 Recommended Mental Health Resources
1. Vet Center counselor (53%)
2. VA staff member (44%)
3. Veterans Crisis Line (40%)

82% Of those respondents have suggested that they seek help

When asked whether the following groups are doing a good job of providing support to veterans regarding their mental health injuries...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Department of Defense</td>
<td>Yes 16%</td>
<td>No 65%</td>
<td>Unsure 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 26%</td>
<td>No 59%</td>
<td>Unsure 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 26%</td>
<td>No 74%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The VA</td>
<td>Yes 24%</td>
<td>No 59%</td>
<td>Unsure 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 38%</td>
<td>No 46%</td>
<td>Unsure 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 39%</td>
<td>No 61%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Communities</td>
<td>Yes 25%</td>
<td>No 75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MENTAL HEALTH

Do you have a mental health injury?

- Yes, a service-connected mental health injury: 58%
- No mental health injury: 28%
- No answer: 14%
- Yes, a non-service connected injury: 2%

Are you seeking care for your mental health injury?

- Yes: 82%
- No: 18%

Top 3 Resources from which Respondents Seek Care

1. Mental health professional (75%)
2. Veteran center counselor (27%)
3. Peer support group (18%)

Top 3 Reasons for Not Seeking Mental Health Care

1. It was hard to get time off work (30%)
2. Started treatment but decided to stop (25%)
3. Concerned it might affect career (24%)
   AND
   Don't want to be perceived differently (24%)

59% Have had people close to them recommend they seek mental health care
23% Have not sought care as a result
77% Have sought care as a result

"I saw a psychologist who suggested that my time in Iraq had affected me more deeply than I was willing to admit. He was right. Ironically when I became defensive he said, 'I'm not here to convince you that you have PTSD, but why don't you go home and ask your wife what she thinks.' The rest is history. My wife agreed, I was rated at 30% for my PTSD and I began seeking care. I still struggle with some things, but I understand my PTSD and triggers now." - IAVA Member
VA MENTAL HEALTH UTILIZATION

The areas around me are overtaxed. Each appointment I make is over a month’s wait away, and in that time I’m having extremely difficult days.

- IAVA Member

Do you primarily see a VA or non-VA provider for your mental health care?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 3 Reason for Choosing a VA Mental Health Provider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. VA health care is free (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The VA is my only source of health care (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. VA provider understands my military service (38%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 3 Reason for Choosing a Non-VA Mental Health Provider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Not satisfied with VA provider (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Higher quality of care with non-VA provider (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Non-VA provider more convenient (33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Level of satisfaction with mental health care provider:

- Extremely Satisfied: Using VA Provider 25%, Using non-VA Provider 32%
- Somewhat Satisfied: Using VA Provider 38%, Using non-VA Provider 35%
- Neutral: Using VA Provider 19%, Using non-VA Provider 20%
- Somewhat Unsatisfied: Using VA Provider 10%, Using non-VA Provider 7%
- Extremely Unsatisfied: Using VA Provider 8%, Using non-VA Provider 6%

Experience scheduling appointments:

- Never had a problem: Using VA Provider 35%, Using non-VA Provider 54%
- Some challenges: Using VA Provider 41%, Using non-VA Provider 30%
- Regularly have challenges: Using VA Provider 13%, Using non-VA Provider 7%
- Continually frustrated: Using VA Provider 11%, Using non-VA Provider 9%

I was in a very dark mental space. They were able to get me an appointment the next day at the VA. The funny thing is I had been trying to schedule with the VA for the previous 3 months, but they kept sending the appointment times out during my work hours. If I had been able to get in to see someone at the VA, that dark place could have been dealt with quicker...

- IAVA Member
SUICIDE

"Posters and pretty speeches are not going to change a thing, they never have. A complete change in culture and in society’s response to the issue and compassion for those who suffer is what will really make a difference."

- IAVA Member

When asked whether they had ever considered taking their own lives...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Prior to joining the military</th>
<th>Since joining the military</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54% Personally know a veteran they served with in Iraq or Afghanistan who attempted suicide

45% Personally know a veteran they served with in Iraq or Afghanistan who died by suicide

When asked which of the following are proactive in addressing military and veteran suicide...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>Yes 2015</th>
<th>No 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Department of Veterans Affairs</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Department of Defense</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The President of the United States</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Missing percentages represented by those with no opinion

17% Have called the Veterans Crisis Line for support for themselves or someone else

81% Have not used the crisis line

1% Don’t know if they’ve called

1% do not know what the crisis line is
### GENERAL HEALTH

I have frequent headaches brought on by strenuous activity. It has led to a decline in my physical health as PT causes a headache that requires hours of sleep and lots of pain meds. This has been an issue only since Iraq. Before that, I was able to do anything I wanted.

- IAVA Member

When asked to rate their health before joining the military and their health now...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Before Joining the Military</th>
<th>Current Overall Health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>53%  21%  26%  3%</td>
<td>36%  11%  37%  16%  4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>57%  33%  9%  1%</td>
<td>22%  41%  23%  8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>58%  32%  9%  1%</td>
<td>25%  36%  27%  8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>61%  30%  8%  1%</td>
<td>23%  39%  22%  5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>65%  27%  7%  1%</td>
<td>25%  39%  23%  6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>69%  26%  5%  3%</td>
<td>32%  39%  20%  4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51+</td>
<td>73%  23%  1%  3%</td>
<td>30%  35%  25%  8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before Joining the Military | 53% | 21% | 26% | 3%
Current Overall Health | 36% | 11% | 37% | 16% | 4%

### SERVICE-RELATED INJURIES

**68%** Were wounded during military service

**64%** Suffer from chronic pain due to a service-related injury

**34%** Have someone assisting them with some aspect of their daily needs

**6%** Have a service dog to support their service-related injuries

### Did you sustain any of the following injuries or illnesses as a result of your service?

- **PTSD**: 77%
- **Anxiety**: 68%
- **Depression**: 67%
- **Musculoskeletal/joint injuries**: 61%
- **Hearing loss**: 56%
- **TBI**: 34%
- **Other**: 18%
- **Scarring or burns**: 16%
- **Vision loss**: 8%
- **Paralysis**: 2%
GENERAL HEALTH

MEDICATION
Respondents were asked if they had been prescribed and are currently taking antidepressants, anti-anxiety or opioid-based pain medication for service-related injury:

- 41% Anti-anxiety medication
- 43% Antidepressant
- 34% Sleeping pills
- 28% Opioid-based pain medication

THERAPY
Are you using any of the following supplemental/alternative therapies as part of your care regimen?

- Nature/outdoor adventure therapies: 37%
- Chiropractic care: 31%
- Meditation: 29%
- Yoga: 22%
- Animal-assisted therapy: 18%
- Acupuncture: 16%
- Music or art therapy: 16%

BURN PIT EXPOSURE

- 74% Were exposed to burn pits during deployment
- 60% Feel they have symptoms associated with burn pit exposure
- 36% Are registered in the VA’s burn pit registry

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

- Support the legalization of medical marijuana in their state: 68%
  - 20% DO NOT | 12% HAVE NO OPINION
- Support the legalization of recreational marijuana in their state: 49%
  - 37% DO NOT | 14% HAVE NO OPINION
- Believe the VA should allow medical marijuana as a treatment option where warranted: 75%
  - 14% DO NOT | 11% HAVE NO OPINION

"I am concerned about the long-term health effects of burn pits. I am also concerned for other veterans who have been places with poor air quality like Africa or even Kosovo where they burn trash and coal for heating." - IAVA Member
MILITARY SEXUAL ASSAULT*

I was a uniformed victim advocate when on active duty. Still too much culture of blaming the victim, explaining it away, or a culture of protecting people’s career or stigmas for the victim.

- IAVA Member

FEMALE RESPONDENTS

74 % Think DoD is doing a BAD JOB decreasing the occurrence of military sexual assault

34 % Are survivors of military sexual assault

48 % Reported the crime

69 % Experienced retaliation after reporting

MALE RESPONDENTS

53 %

1 %

30 %

67 %

Top 3 Reasons Survivors DID NOT Report the Crime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Female Respondents</th>
<th>Male Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t think anything would be done (71%)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried that my peers would treat me differently (56%)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried that my commander would not believe me (49%)</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If instead of your commander, a trained military prosecutor made the decision to move forward with your case, would you be more or less likely to report?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>More likely to report</th>
<th>Less likely to report</th>
<th>No difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the decision to send someone to court martial was taken away from a commander, would you view the commander as less of an authority figure?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Would not impact my view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With my unique view of sexual assault in the military as a woman, former enlisted woman and then a member of the JAGC, I can tell you that the culture of the military must change before we can effectively address the issue of military sexual assault. The culture of the military has not changed since I first enlisted... The leaders just hide their bad behavior better today.

- IAVA Member

*Answers to these questions have been presented by gender. The male population totaled 1333 and the female totaled 279.
VA HEALTH UTILIZATION

Current Health Care Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VA health care</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private insurance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tricare + VA</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA + private health care</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tricare</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoD</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t have health insurance</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA + Medicaid/Medicare</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoD + VA</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoD + private health care</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FOR THE 80% WHO ARE ENROLLED IN VA HEALTH CARE

Time Enrolled in VA Health Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Enrolled</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 year</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

52% Experienced a time at the VA when they did not feel comfortable receiving care

Last Time Health Care Sought from the VA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Enrolled</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 year</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

75% Continue to seek care at that VA or another

Top 3 Reasons for Not Feeling Comfortable

1. Unprofessional/unwelcoming staff
2. Difficulty with care providers
3. Poor quality of care

Top 3 Reasons for Continuing to Seek Care

1. Only care available
2. Quality of care improved
3. Overall satisfied with the care

Overall Experience with VA Health Care

- Very Poor: 7%
- Poor: 12%
- Fair: 34%
- Good: 34%
- Very Good: 13%

31% Would refer a friend to the VA
VA BENEFITS UTILIZATION/DISABILITY COMPENSATION

Experience with VA Benefits

- Very good: 10%
- Good: 30%
- Fair: 34%
- Poor: 9%
- Very Poor: 8%
- Have never used VA benefits: 9%

Satisfaction with the Following VA Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Have not used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GI Bill/Education benefits</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability compensation</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home loans</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational rehabilitation/employment services</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top Sources of Disability

1. Post traumatic stress disorder (61%)
2. Musculoskeletal (58%)
3. Hearing Loss (42%)
4. Mental health (38%)

Top Resources Used to File Disability Claim

1. Disabled American Veterans (21%)
2. Veterans of Foreign Wars (11%)
3. County or state service officer (11%)

VA DISABILITY RATING

- 71% Have a service-related disability rating
- 57% Have an injury from military service that has not been rated by the VA
- 74% Plan on seeking a VA disability rating
- 26% Do not plan on seeking a VA disability rating

Top 3 Reasons for Delaying Seeking a VA Disability Rating

- Collecting paperwork (37%)
- Don't know where to start (20%)
- Too busy right now (15%)

Top 3 Reasons for Not Seeking a VA Disability Rating

- Don't want to deal with the VA (46%)
- Don't want to bother with paperwork (38%)
- Discouraged by the long wait time (29%)
7th Annual IAVA Member Survey

VA BENEFITS UTILIZATION/DISABILITY COMPENSATION

- 79% have waited over 125 days

Time Taken to Notify Respondent of VA Claim Decision:
- <125 days: 29%
- 126-180 days: 4%
- 181-365 days: 17%
- Over 1 year: 21%
- Still pending: 29%

Length of Time Waiting for VA Claim Decision (for those currently waiting):
- <125 days: 21%
- 126-180 days: 5%
- 181-365 days: 13%
- 1-2 years: 5%
- 2-3 years: 12%
- 3-4 years: 4%
- > 5 years: 5%
- Still pending: 62%

Of the 4% whose claims are still pending:
- 29% have waited over 125 days
- 21% have waited 126-180 days
- 17% have waited 181-365 days
- 12% have waited 1-2 years
- 5% have waited 2-3 years
- 4% have waited 3-4 years
- 5% have waited > 5 years

79% have waited over 125 days

Did not have access to health care while waiting on a claim: 11%

Felt a major financial impact due to waiting on a claim: 31%

- 30% suffered a minor financial impact
- 39% had no financial impact

APPEALS

- 37% of those who have submitted a claim have also submitted an appeal

Time Waiting on VA Appeal Decision:
- < 125 days: 11%
- 126-180 days: 13%
- 181-365 days: 17%
- 1-2 years: 12%
- 2-3 years: 5%
- 3-4 years: 4%
- > 5 years: 5%
- My appeal is still pending: 33%

39% were not satisfied with the outcome of his or her appeal

- 2014: 54% were not satisfied with the outcome of their appeal
- 2013: 40% were not satisfied with the outcome of their appeal

Experience with VA Benefits Satisfaction with the Following VA Benefits:

- Very good: 10%
- Good: 30%
- Fair: 34%
- Poor: 9%
- Very poor: 9%

Have never used VA benefits: 8%

Insurance: 17%
- Pension: 10%
- Home loans: 73%
- Disability compensation: 16%
- GI Bill/Education benefits: 8%

Vocational rehabilitation/employment services: 13%

57% have a service-related disability rating

71% have a service-related disability rating

23
I have a chronic condition that requires specialty care. My specialty care doctor is 60 miles away, but because my primary care doctor is 20 miles away, I'm ineligible for the program.

- IAVA Member

Are you familiar with the VA Choice Card program?

- No 54%
- Yes 46%

Have you used the VA Choice Card program?

- No 95%
- Yes 5%

Why have you not yet used the VA Choice Card program?*

- Don't know how to use it 43%
- Have not needed to use it since it began 26%
- Not eligible for the program 15%
- Prefer to seek care at a VA facility 11%
- Have not received my VA Choice Card 10%
- Tried to use it but was denied access 6%

How was your experience using the VA Choice Card?

- Extremely Positive 12%
- Positive 24%
- Neutral 24%
- Negative 12%
- Extremely Negative 28%

* Respondents selected all options that apply. Totals will not add to 100%

I used the program at a private medical provider. My doc at the VA clinic had submitted information and I heard back within a few days. I made the appointment and everything was done within two weeks. I got the notification from the VA a couple of weeks ago that the procedure’s cost was covered by the VA. In this case, it worked precisely how I believe it’s supposed to.

- IAVA Member
POST-9/11 GI BILL

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is one of the best benefits that service members have the opportunity to utilize. - IAVA Member

50% Of respondents have used the GI Bill for themselves or their dependents

2013: 69%
2014: 62%

46% Of respondents or their dependents graduated while in school on the GI Bill

35% Are currently attending school

32% Of respondents or their dependents experienced challenges when applying for or using the GI Bill

Top 3 Reasons Why Dependents or Respondents are not Using the GI Bill

1. Plan to use it in the future (29%)
2. Already have a degree (20%)
3. Do not have the time for school (17%)

Top Challenges with Using the Post-9/11 GI Bill

2015
1. Needed a job to cover expenses (28%)
2. Needed grants to cover expenses (27%)
3. Needed loans to cover expenses (21%)

2014
1. Late payments (36%)
2. Needed grants to cover expenses (24%)
3. Needed loans to cover expenses (20%)

2013
1. Late payments (36%)
2. Needed loans to cover expenses (25%)
3. Educational problems due to delays (19%)

Overall Experience with the Post-9/11 GI Bill

Excellent 33%
Good 42%
Neutral 14%
Fair 7%
Poor 4%

2014: 78% Rated the Post-9/11 GI Bill Excellent or Good
2013: 79% Rated the Post-9/11 GI Bill Excellent or Good
7th Annual IAVA Member Survey

EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Not working</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

79% Would describe their education program as veteran-friendly

Top 3 reasons program is veteran-friendly
1. Respects military service and experience (76%)
2. Accommodates reserve component demands (45%)
3. Gives preference to hiring veterans (42%)

FINANCING

74% Worry about the level of debt they are taking/have taken on as a student

40% Have taken out private or federal loans to supplement their education

Debt Accrued Through Student Loans

When asked whether their degree was/is worth it...

- 46% Well worth it
- 38% Not sure
- 16% Not worth it
25% Currently in school

45% Of those not currently in school have pursued a degree since separating from the military

Did you graduate?

No 35%
Yes 65%

Which of the following contributed to your decision not to complete your degree?

- Mental health challenges 57%
- Financial challenges 44%
- Family challenges 33%
- Interfered with my job 24%
- Physical health challenges 21%

My advisor/professor is a 20 year retired CID agent, and he has been a tremendous advisor, supporter, and instructor. He has been invaluable in my educational endeavors and also personal life advisor... I also think that my small campus, with small class sizes, in a small town that has a significantly sized VA medical center, are all huge assets to my educational needs.

- IAVA Member

Types of Degree Pursued or Pursuing

- Bachelor’s 44%
- Master’s 28%
- Associate 18%
- Advanced/Professional 4%
- Licensing/Certification 4%
- Vocational 1%
- Other 1%

Type of School Attended/Attending

- State 50%
- Not-for-Profit 19%
- For-profit 23%
- Don’t Know 8%

VA Educational Benefits Used

- Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chp 33) 71%
- Montgomery GI Bill (Chp 30) 27%
- Other 14%
- None of the Above 10%
- Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) 3%
EMPLOYMENT

"Finding what I am interested in is difficult, and many employers do not understand my military experience and how it applies to their open position."

- IAVA Member

PERCENT UNEMPLOYED DROPPED FROM 10% IN 2013 & 2014 TO 8% IN 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed and looking for work</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top 5 Industries of Employment

1. Government (32%)
2. Health care (7%)
3. Telecommunications/tech (7%)
4. Education (6%)
5. Non-profit (4%)

VETERAN FRIENDLY

85% Of employed participants would consider their current employer veteran friendly

63% Seek out employers specifically recruiting veterans

48% Found employers were open to hiring a veteran

JOB SATISFACTION

56% Of employed participants believe their current position is an appropriate professional fit

45% Of employed participants would consider themselves underemployed

Percent Satisfied with Current Job:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EMployment

“I was looking for a move up from my previous job. It just took a little while to find. The real issue was that hiring managers tended to think that every veteran was likely to have PTSD issues. While I am sure we were all changed by the experience, I also know that many of us were positively changed and are better and happier people for it. I wish that vets organizations could get that word out as loudly as I hear the suicide discussion.”

- IAVA Member

Have experienced a period of unemployment since leaving the military

81%

Were actively looking for employment during this period of unemployment

74%

Longest Period of Unemployment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 30 days</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-60 days</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-90 days</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-180 days</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180-365 days</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 365 days</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top 3 Challenges in Finding Work

1. Unable to find a job in a specific field (15%)
2. Lack of education (15%)
3. Medical challenges - mental (13%)

Top 3 Parts of Job Search Considered Most Challenging

1. Locating jobs that match skill set (56%)
2. Initial interviews (14%)
3. Resume and cover letter (11%)

Top 3 Tools Most Helpful in Securing a Job

1. Additional education (39%)
2. Professional certification (24%)
3. Access to veteran friendly employers (33%)
### FINANCIAL STRESSORS

My transition was not only difficult, but nearly cost me my own life. I lost all sense of purpose and identity. Thankfully, my family and organizations such as your own helped bring me back from the ledge. I owe a debt of gratitude to all that you do, and I have now found my purpose in helping other veterans.

- IAVA Member

Did you experience challenges when transitioning out of the military?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes 81%</th>
<th>No 19%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Top 3 biggest challenges when transitioning:

1. Loss of identity and purpose
2. Finding/keeping employment
3. Mental health concerns

Did you have a job secured when you left the military?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes 35%</th>
<th>No 65%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

How long were you without a job after transitioning out of the military?

| Less than 30 days | 7% |
| 31 - 60 days | 12% |
| 61 - 90 days | 10% |
| 90 - 180 days | 13% |
| 180 - 365 days | 10% |
| Over 365 days | 21% |
| Have not experienced unemployment | 7% |
| Opted to attend school | 20% |

### HOUSING

76% Had a permanent place to live when they transitioned out of the military.

Which best describes your current housing situation?

| Own home/have a mortgage | 58% |
| Rent | 27% |
| With friends/family/significant other | 10% |
| Base housing/barracks | 2% |
| Other | 2% |
| Don’t have a place to live and can’t afford one | 1% |

### HOMELESSNESS

10% Have lived in a car after separating from the military.

- 4% Have lived in a shelter
- 5% Have lived on the streets

Longest period without stable housing?

| Less than 1 month | 18% |
| 1-5 months | 34% |
| 6-12 months | 22% |
| More than 1 year | 14% |
| More than 2 years | 12% |

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- IAVA Member
**FINANCIAL STRESSORS**

Did you experience any of the following during or within one year of your transition out of military service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Experience</th>
<th>During transition</th>
<th>Within one year</th>
<th>Did not experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had a comprehensive financial plan</td>
<td>Yes 26%</td>
<td>Yes 15%</td>
<td>Yes 63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 74%</td>
<td>No 85%</td>
<td>No 37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a household budget</td>
<td>Yes 35%</td>
<td>Yes 22%</td>
<td>Yes 49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 65%</td>
<td>No 78%</td>
<td>No 51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not have credit card debt</td>
<td>Yes 32%</td>
<td>Yes 18%</td>
<td>Yes 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 68%</td>
<td>No 82%</td>
<td>No 44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to pay bills</td>
<td>Yes 47%</td>
<td>Yes 28%</td>
<td>Yes 35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 53%</td>
<td>No 72%</td>
<td>No 65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Find it difficult to cover their expenses and pay all their bills
  - 37%
  - 56% Did not find it difficult
  - 7% Did not answer

- Had financial management training provided by the Department of Defense
  - 26%

Types of debt respondents currently have:

- Credit card debt 67%
- Auto loans 61%
- Mortgage 55%
- Student loan 33%
- Home equity loan 9%
- None of the above 7%

- Sought out resources to help manage their finances
  - 22%

- Felt prepared to manage finances immediately after transitioning out of the military
  - 57%

"It took two and half years to secure a government job for which I was qualified... I had to learn to write a good federal resume on my own... I had to wait out an extra year because of a hiring freeze... Private sector employers did not understand or appreciate my skills and abilities... I am doing very well now... I purchased a home with the VA program and am completing a master's degree with the GI Bill. This was a success story in the end."  

- IAVA Member
ABOUT THE ISSUES

IAVA’s 2015 Member Survey covers a number of issues impacting service members, veterans and their families. Here we provide an overview of each.

PERCEPTIONS
When service members transition out of the military, they come home to an environment that may or may not engage and support them as they are transitioning. This section asks IAVA members about their perceptions of how Congress, the Administration and the community is or is not supporting them as they return home.

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Veterans tend to be more civically engaged than the civilian population, volunteering and becoming involved in their local community as well as engaging in politics and elections. This section asks IAVA members about their participation in politics, the issues that matter to them and their propensity to engage in the electoral process.

MILITARY SERVICE
With less than one percent of the U.S. population having served in the current wars, it’s important to ask veterans and servicemembers their thoughts on current issues facing the military. These include the repeal of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, policies and regulations regarding transgender servicemembers, military retirement, and many other issues facing the all-volunteer force. This section asks IAVA members to weigh in on these timely and difficult issues.

WOMEN IN THE MILITARY
Women are currently the fastest growing population in both the military and veteran communities. Two hundred and eighty thousand women have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Women currently comprise nearly 20 percent of new recruits, 15 percent of the 1.4 million active duty force, 18 percent of the 850,000 reserve component and their leadership presence is growing. With the inclusion of women in combat arms positions, these numbers will only continue to grow. This section focuses on this extremely important and ever growing military and veteran population.

GUN OWNERSHIP AND SAFETY
Gun ownership and safety continues to be at the forefront of the national conversation. The military community is one of the most highly trained when it comes to safe handling and storage of guns. However, 22 veterans a day die by suicide and gunshot wounds are the number one means in which these veterans die. This section asks IAVA members about their gun ownership and storage habits, as well as what their thoughts are on about asking hard questions when a buddy is in crisis.

MENTAL HEALTH AND VA UTILIZATION
It is estimated that one in five service members who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan have symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder or depression. About the same number of service members experienced a possible traumatic brain injury while deployed. For those struggling with mental health injuries, access to high quality, timely care is critical. In this section, IAVA members focus on their experiences with mental health injuries and care.

SUICIDE
The VA estimates that 22 veterans die from suicide each day. The DoD reports that 434 service members (active and reserve components) died by suicide in 2014. IAVA’s members are on the front lines of this critical issue. This section asks IAVA members about their connection with this important issue.

GENERAL HEALTH
It’s estimated that over 50,000 service members have been wounded in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Issues like chronic pain and exposure to airborne hazard and burn pits are
ABOUT THE ISSUES

just some of the health challenges concerning this recent generation of veterans. In the meantime, complementary and alternative therapies are generating more interest in the community. This section asks IAVA members about their general health, both before and after service.

MILITARY SEXUAL ASSAULT
The FY2012 annual report from the DoD’s Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPR) was a wake-up call to the nation, revealing an estimated 26,000 cases of unwanted sexual contact in the military. While military sexual assault is often framed as a women’s issue, it impacts both men and women. And while the percentage (4.3 percent in FY 2014) of active duty women estimated to experience unwanted sexual contact is higher than the percentage of men (0.9 percent in FY 2014), in raw numbers more active duty men are estimated to have experienced unwanted sexual contact than women. This section asks IAVA members about this important issue.

VA HEALTH AND BENEFITS UTILIZATION
The Veterans Benefits Administration serves nearly four million veterans for compensation and pension benefits. About 40 percent of all veterans and 60 percent of new veterans are enrolled in VA health care. The VA plays a critical role in supporting veterans. However, an effective VA system must be very different from the current legacy system. Our newest veterans are returning home ready for full lives. Meanwhile, the veteran population in the United States is shrinking and public awareness of veterans’ issues are waning. This section of IAVA’s Member Survey asks about VA health care and benefits utilization, who’s using benefits and how satisfied they are with them.

VA CHOICE PROGRAM
IAVA was one of the leading veterans organizations involved in the early negotiations on the Veterans Access to Choice and Accountability Act (VACAA) and took an active role in advocating for its passage in 2014. This is a highly complex law that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is continuing to implement to ensure veterans are not left waiting unacceptable lengths of time to receive health care services. This section of the survey focused on surveying IAVA members on their experience with the Choice Program.

THE POST-9/11 GI BILL AND EDUCATION
Less than two years ago, the one millionth new veteran went to school on the Post-9/11 GI Bill. However, despite the enormous success of the New GI Bill, there is still work to be done. And with so many veterans using this benefit, it’s important for schools to understand how best to set veterans up for success. This section focuses on understanding the IAVA member population going back to school, the programs they’re enrolling, the schools they’re attending and the financial supports and challenges that they face.

EMPLOYMENT
In August 2015, unemployment numbers for the post-9/11 generation of veterans dropped to the lowest since these numbers began being tracked by the Department of Labor. Steady progress in decreasing veteran unemployment has been made over the last few years. Veterans who have jobs in their preferred career field do better work and tend to remain in those jobs longer, meaning there are fewer issues with employee retention or attrition. This section asks IAVA members to tell us about their employment experience and their job satisfaction.

FINANCIAL STRESSES
There has been a great deal of focus on the challenges of service members as they transition out of the military. In addition to the stress of leaving their units, veterans transitioning to civilian life must learn to manage their finances, find housing, and gain employment. This section asks IAVA members about their preparedness in facing these challenges as they transitioned out of service.
Jacqueline Maffucci, Ph.D. is the Research Director for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. She holds a Bachelor of Science from Cornell University and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Neuroscience from The University of Texas at Austin. Prior to her position at IAVA, Dr. Maffucci spent nearly four years as a consultant to the Pentagon focusing on behavioral health policy for the Army. This included over two years spent on the Army's Suicide Prevention Task Force. Among other responsibilities, she acted as the liaison to the Department of Defense research community working to translate research into policy.

Dr. Maffucci currently serves on the National Center for PTSD Education Advisory Board and the Department of Veterans Affairs Women's Health CREATE Veterans Council and the National Academic Affiliations Council.

As Research Associate, Chantell utilizes social, economic and demographic data to conduct policy research and execute IAVA’s veteran-focused research initiatives. Prior to joining IAVA, Chantell worked as a Research Associate at the Institute for Veterans and Military Families in Syracuse, NY. Chantell received her Ph.D. in Medical Sociology from Syracuse University, and a B.S. in Sociology and Biology from DePaul University.