

10TH ANNUAL IAVA MEMBER SURVEY

Perceptions and views of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans on
the challenges and successes of the next greatest generation of veterans

//WHO IS IAVA?

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) is the premier veterans advocacy and support organization on the planet. Every day, we fight for veterans. Hard. We are the tip-of-the spear non-profit engine of impact that connects, unites and empowers hundreds of thousands of veterans and allies nationwide.

Founded by an Iraq veteran in 2004, IAVA is the non-partisan leader in advocacy, public awareness and 1-on-1 case-management support. We organize locally, and drive historic impacts nationally.

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I am so proud of what we have accomplished together this past year - my first as CEO - passing the *Burn Pits Accountability Act*, passing a law reversing DoD's attempt to limit the transferability of the GI Bill benefit, and getting the *Deborah Sampson Act* through the House, among other great victories! The far-reaching changes that will result from full passage of the *Deborah Sampson Act* are long-overdue. IAVA has fought hard for top-down culture change in the VA, but we need your help to get this and other pieces of important legislation across the finish line.

IAVA fought tirelessly for this generation of veterans over the last year, conducting over 300 Capitol Hill meetings, speaking directly with VA leadership, and executing robust media outreach to highlight the needs of post-9/11 veterans. It has been a humbling, eventful, educational year for me and I am excited about what is still to come. 2020 is an opportunity to build on the momentum of 2019.

IAVA routinely hears from our members on the issues that matter most to them. They come to Storm the Hill and hold VetTogethers not only to share their experiences at war but also their experiences at home: difficulties using the GI Bill, navigating VA healthcare, or dealing with symptoms of toxic exposure. Yet, it is our annual Member Survey that best details the experiences of this generation of veterans.

This year's survey data show a generation of veterans who are thriving. Seventy five percent have used their post-9/11 GI Bill or transferred their benefits to a dependent, an increase of 13 percent since 2014. Our members are volunteering in their communities at high rates and unemployment is holding steady at six percent, a historic low.

But while post-9/11 veterans are succeeding in their education and careers, our survey reveals other troubling

statistics. Many of our members are facing significant physical and mental health challenges. Forty four percent of our members report experiencing suicidal ideation since joining the military, up 13 percent since 2014.

Additionally, 62 percent of our members personally know a veteran who has died by suicide, a shocking 22 percent increase since 2014. Meanwhile, a stunning 88 percent of our members report they are experiencing symptoms that are or might be related to burn pits or toxic exposure. Our nation needs to step up and support this generation of veterans. Most pressingly, we need to pass *The Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act*. This legislation will establish innovative new suicide prevention initiatives, improve access to mental health care, and hold the VA accountable to meeting the needs of our veterans.

Let's ensure veterans get the healthcare and resources they rightly deserve. This past year was incredible but there is still much to be accomplished. Let's get it done!

Onward,
Jeremy Butler
Navy Veteran
CEO, Iraq and Afghanistan
Veterans of America

//THE BIG SIX ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

This “Big 6” contains the challenges and opportunities that IAVA members care about most—and see as areas where we can uniquely make an impact. IAVA members are poised to educate the public, design solutions for positive impact, and lead the way to the future.

Key Findings from the Big 6 Priorities

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

- 44% Report suicidal ideation since joining the military, a shocking 13% rise since 2014
- 62% Personally know a veteran who died by suicide, a 22% rise since 2014
- 61% of those who have contacted the Veteran Crisis Line (VCL) report having excellent or good experiences

VA Reform

- 86% Rate VA care as average or above average, an increase of 5% from 2019
- 41% Oppose the privatization of VA healthcare and 29% support
- 16% Have used the Community Care Program

Burn Pits and Toxic Exposures

- 86% Report exposure to burn pits or other toxins
- 88% Believe they may be or are already experiencing symptoms from burn pits or toxic exposure
- 53% of those who have been exposed are registered in the burn pit registry

Education Benefits

- 75% of IAVA members or their dependents have used or are currently using the post-9/11 GI Bill
- 66% of IAVA members or their dependents have graduated while in school on the GI Bill
- 87% Agree that the post-9/11 GI Bill is important for reintegration to civilian life

Utilization of Medical Cannabis

- 88% Support researching cannabis for medicinal purposes
- 81% Support the legalization of medical cannabis
- 22% Report using cannabis for medicinal use

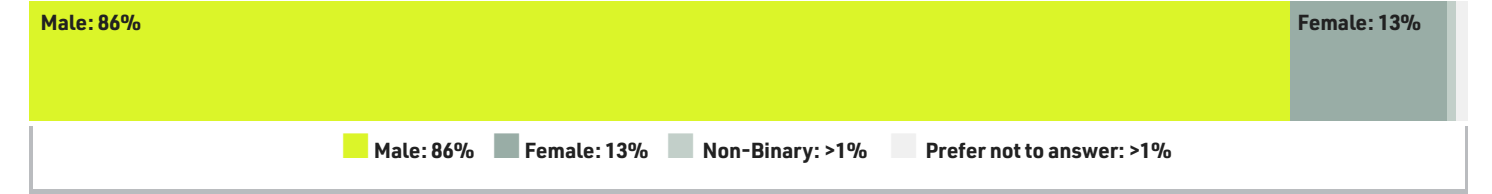
Women Veterans

- 83% of IAVA members say that it is important that IAVA focus on the issues impacting women veterans
- 46% Believe that women’s advancement in the military has been limited by past restrictions on women in combat
- 14% of female IAVA members report feeling unsafe when seeking healthcare in VA facilities

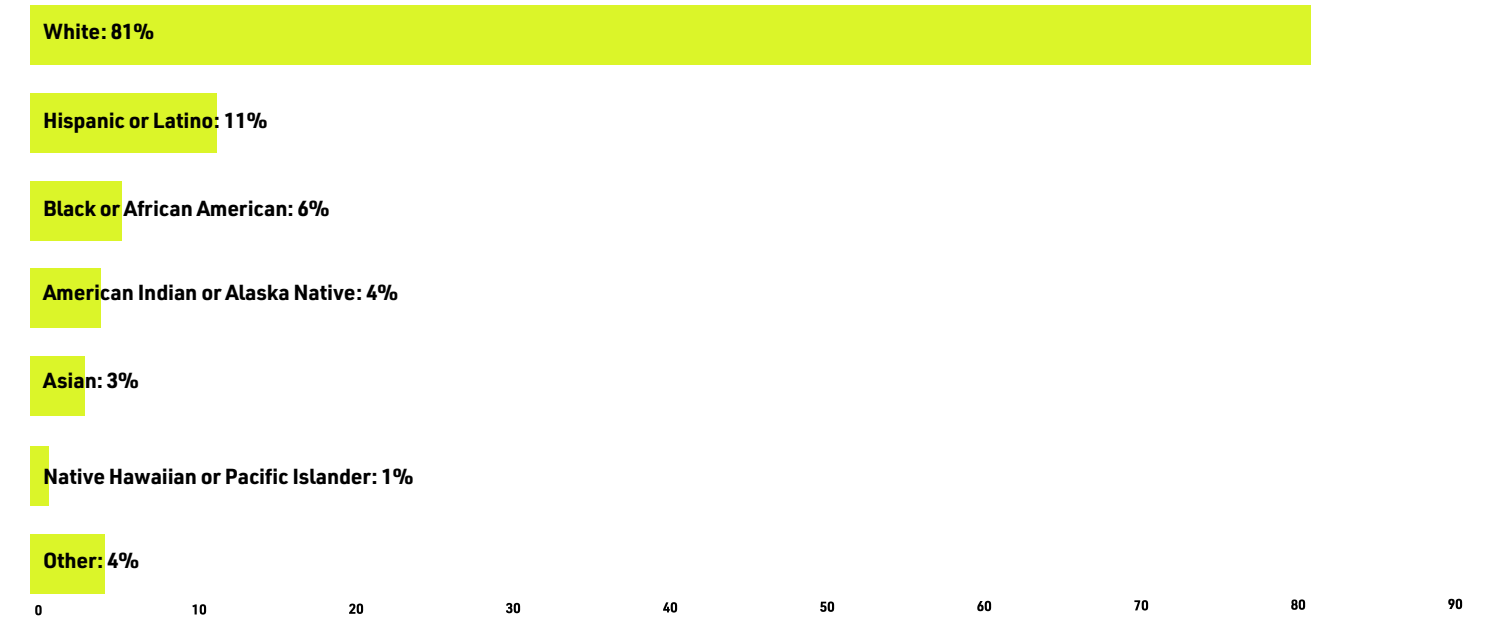
//DEMOGRAPHICS



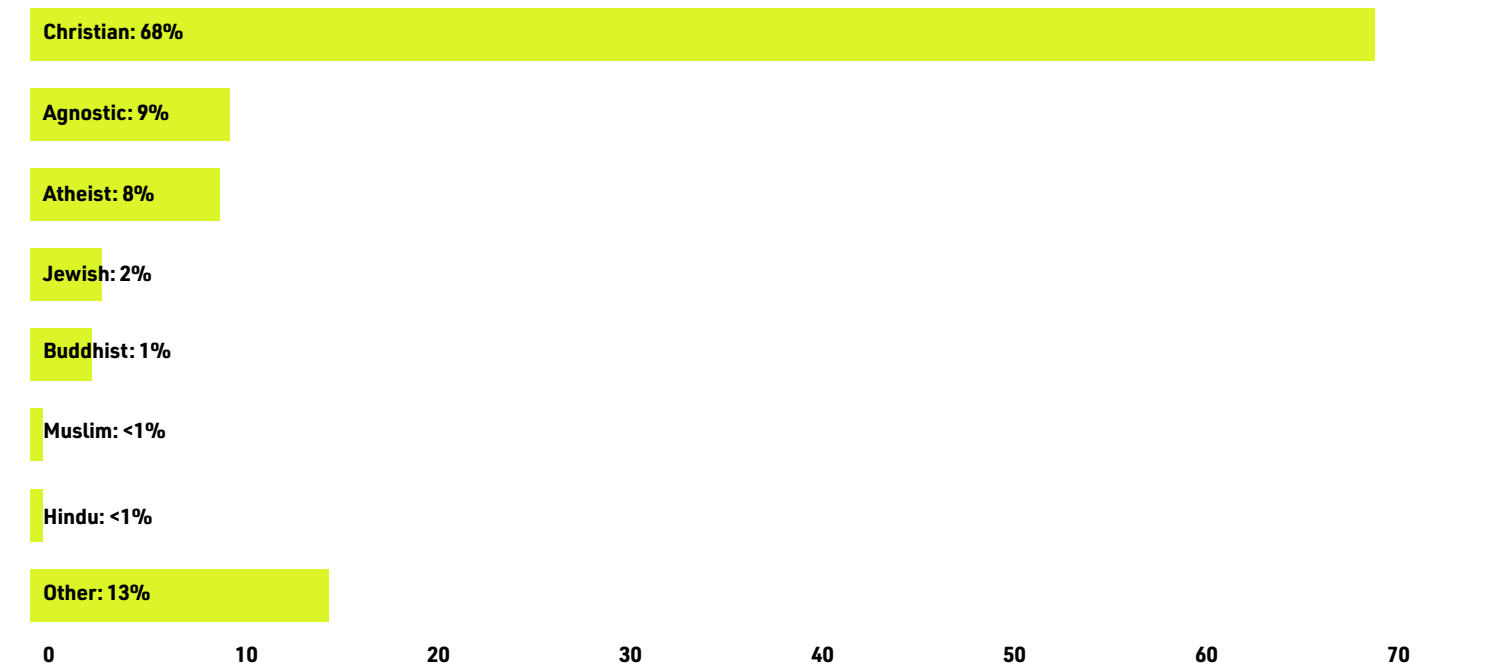
Gender



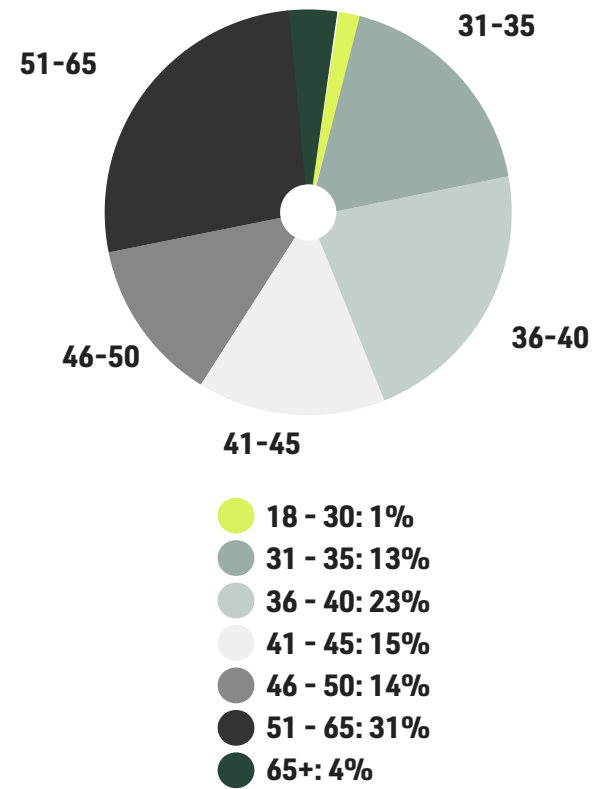
Race



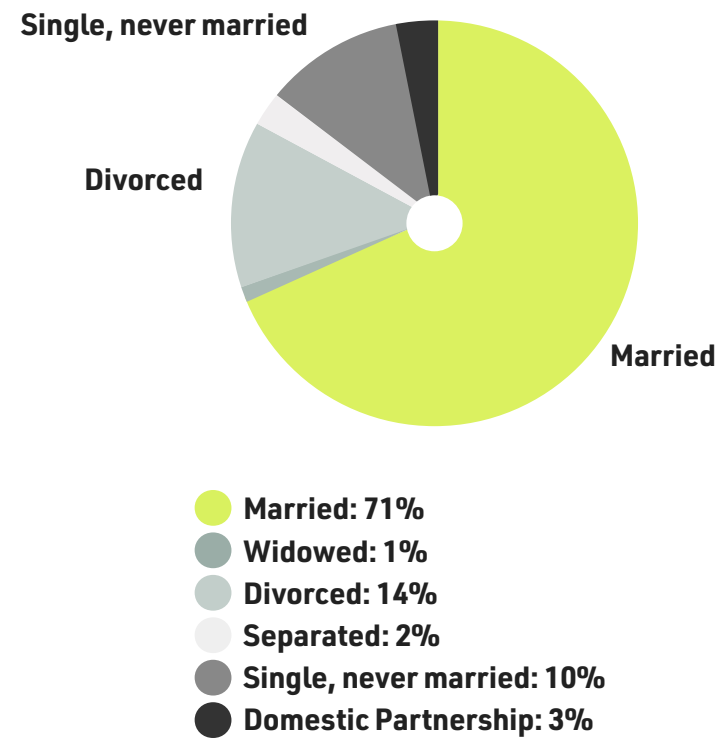
Religious Affiliation



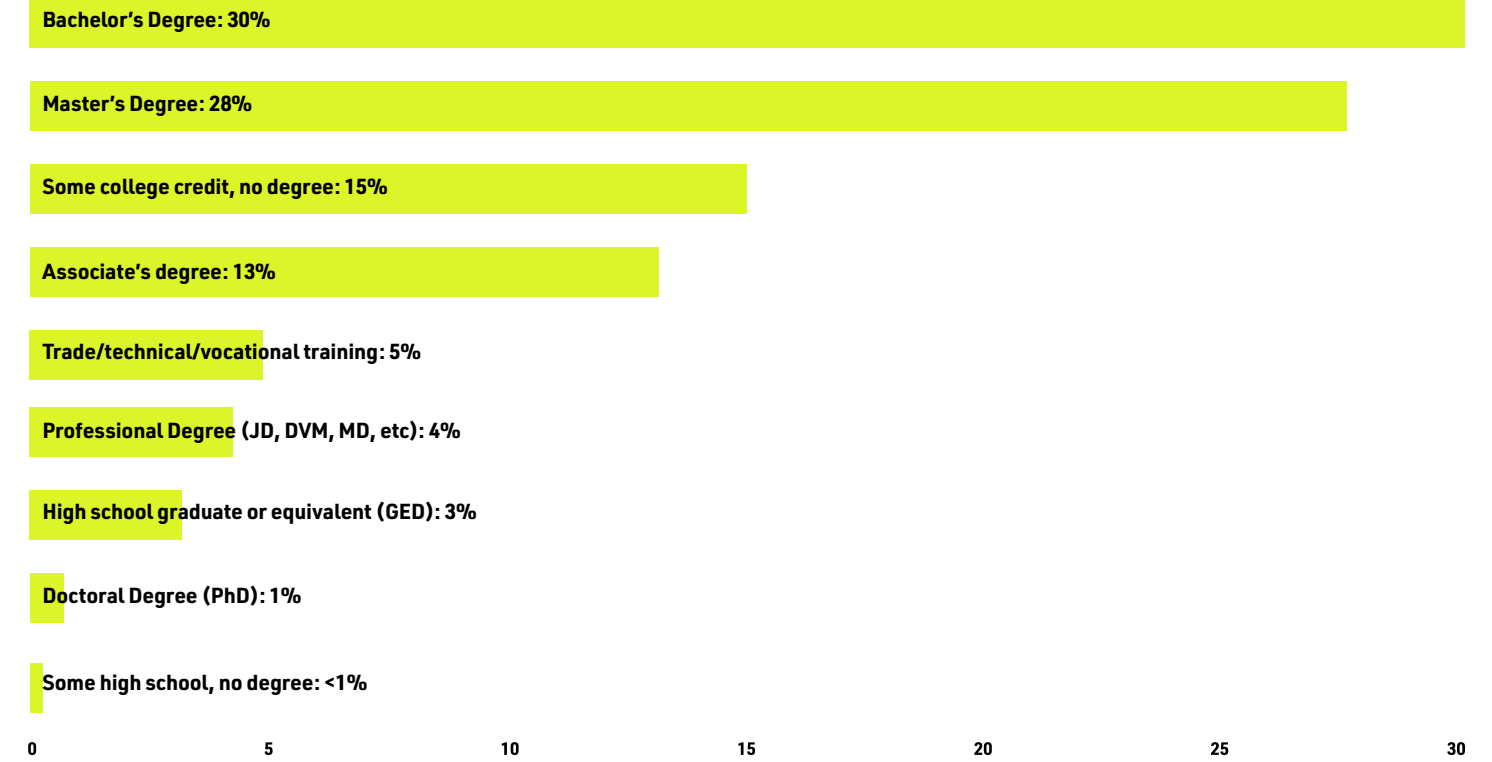
Age



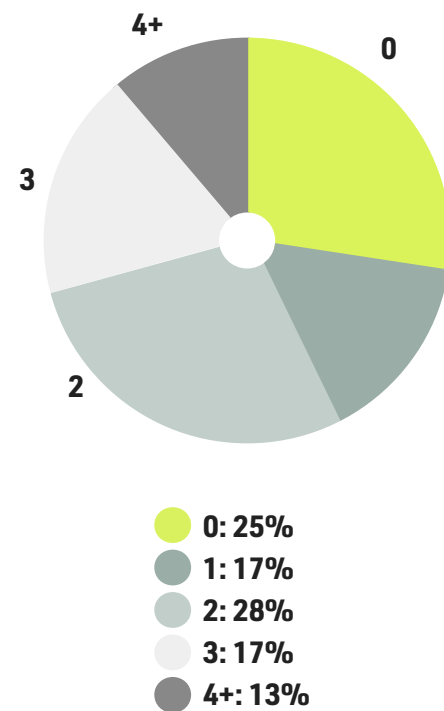
Marital Status



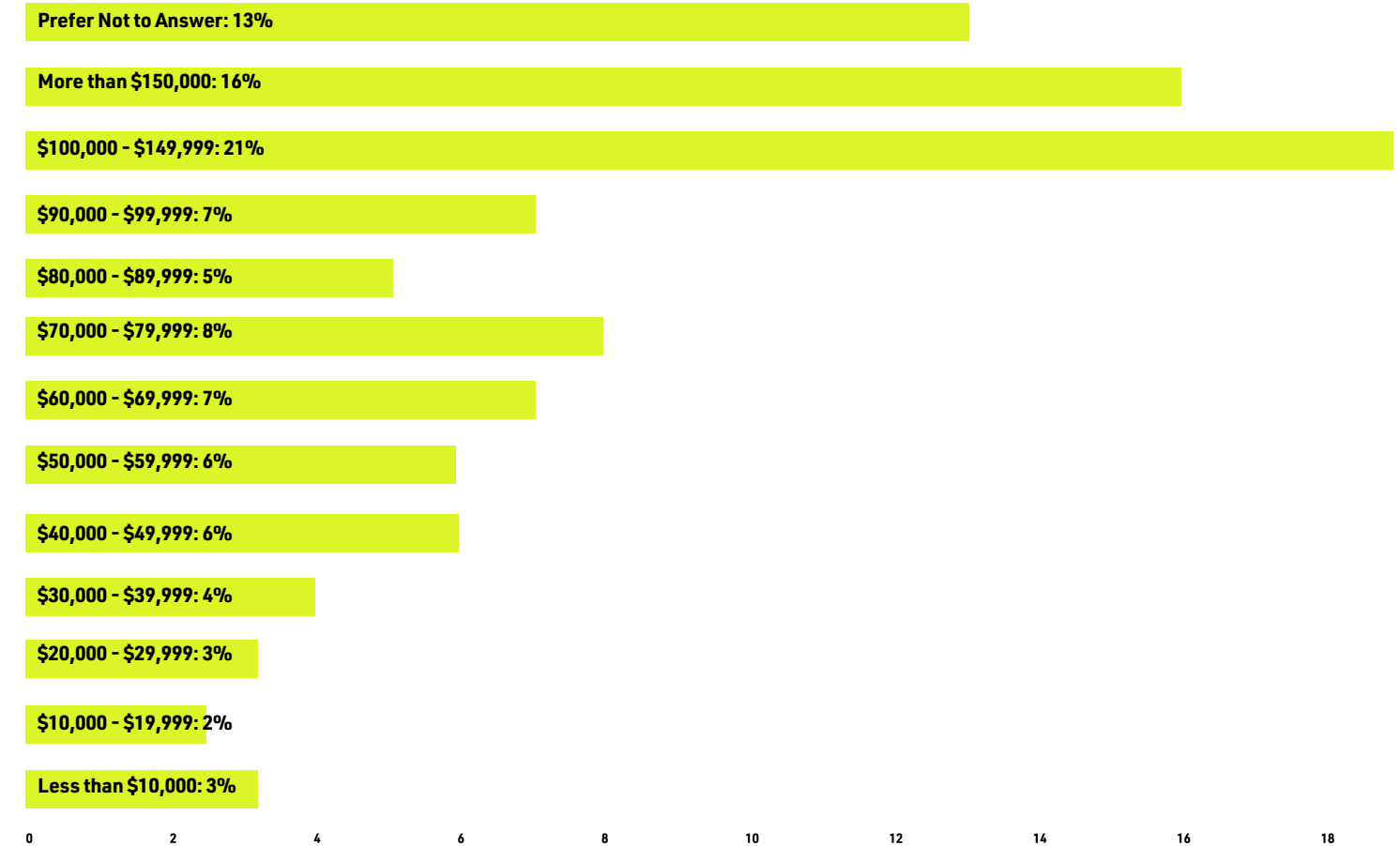
Education



Children



Household Income



//PROFILE OF AN IAVA MEMBER



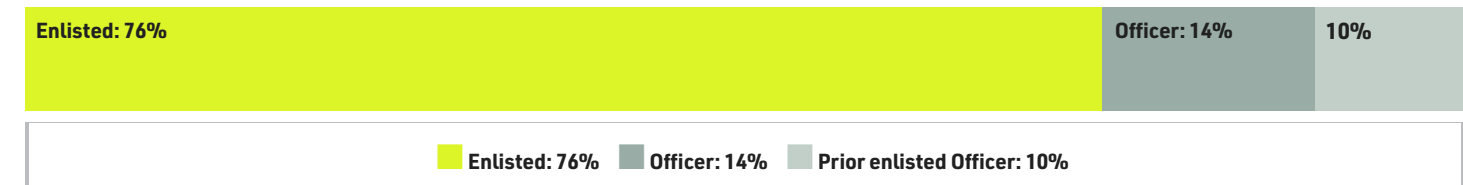
AVA members have served around the world, from Iraq and Afghanistan to Bahrain, Syria, Kuwait and other locations globally. They have deployed in every major combat operation since 9/11 and continue to serve at home, through community and veteran service organizations.

77% would recommend military service to a family member or friend.

Branch of Service



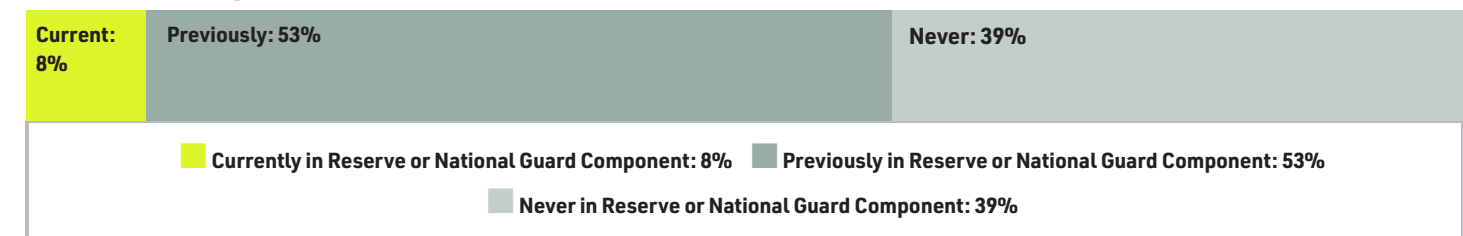
Officer or Enlisted



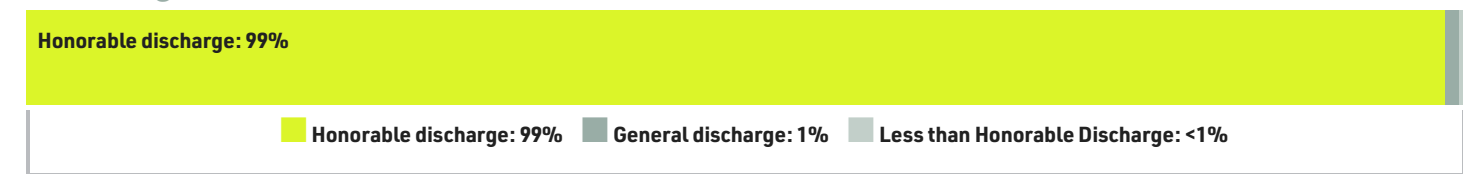
Number of Deployments

Number of Deployments	1	2	3	4	5+
Afghanistan	29%	8%	2%	<1%	1%
Iraq	52%	23%	6%	2%	1%
Other combat areas	24%	9%	4%	1%	2%

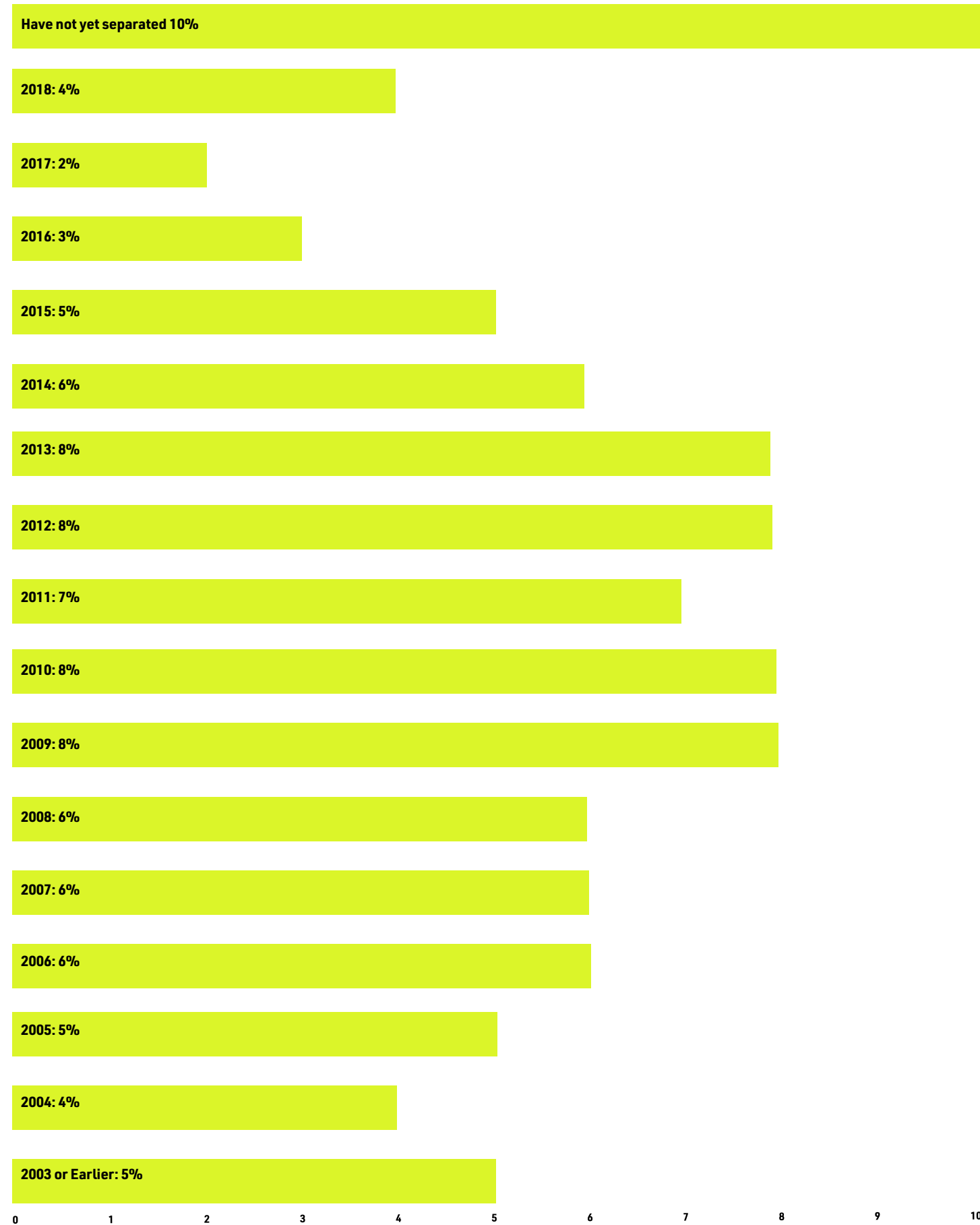
Service Component



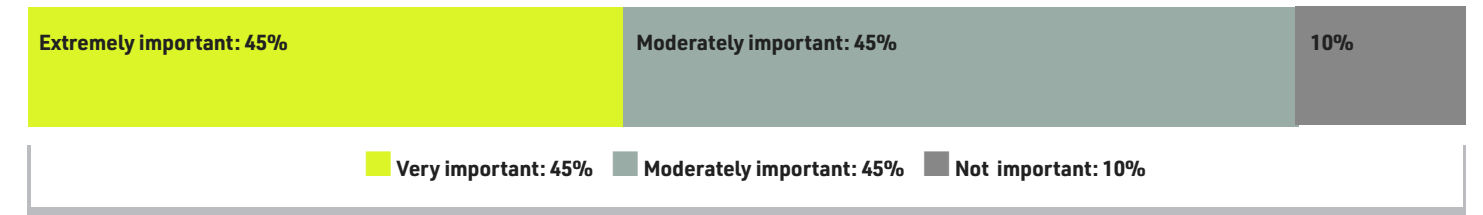
Discharge Status



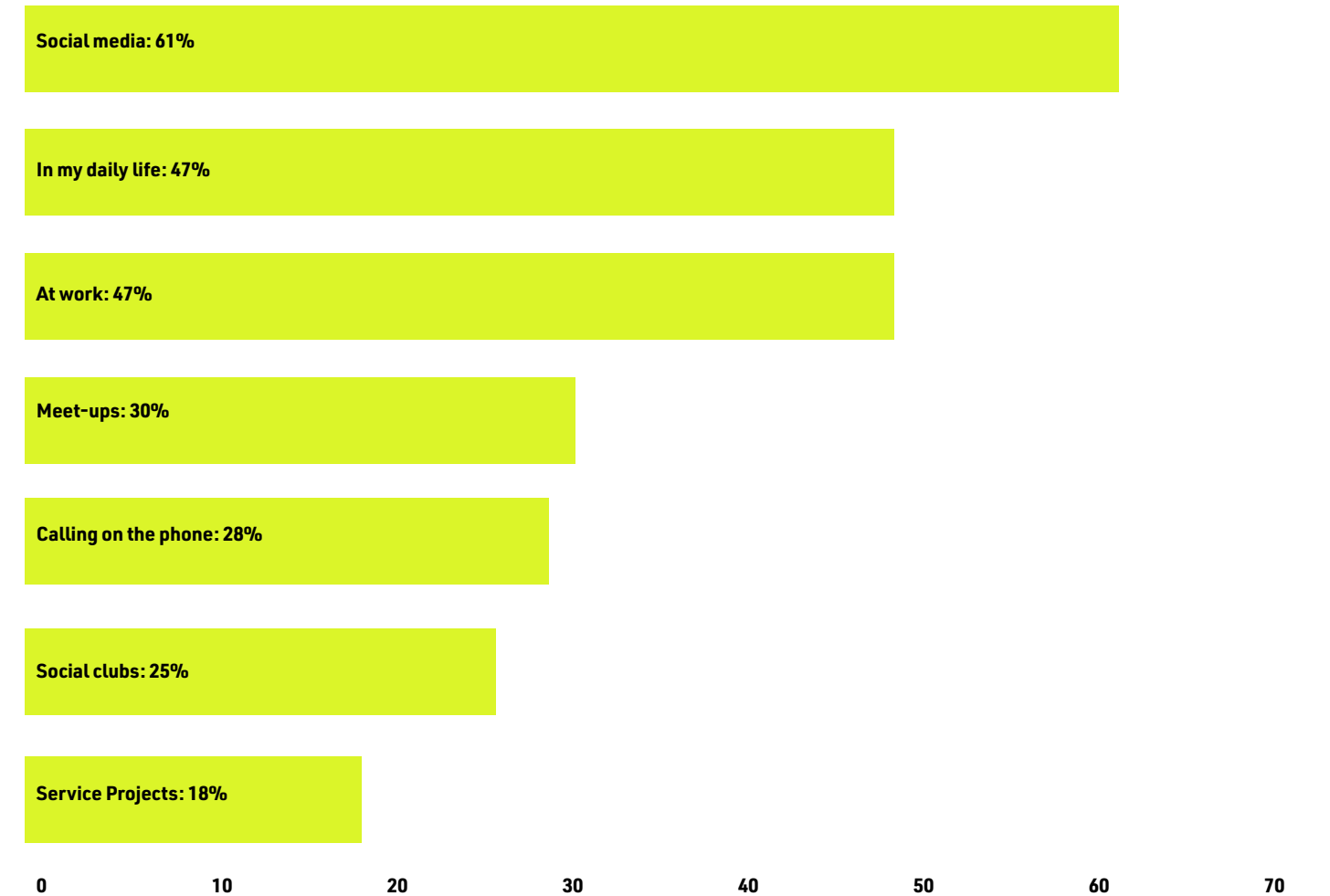
Year Separated from the Military



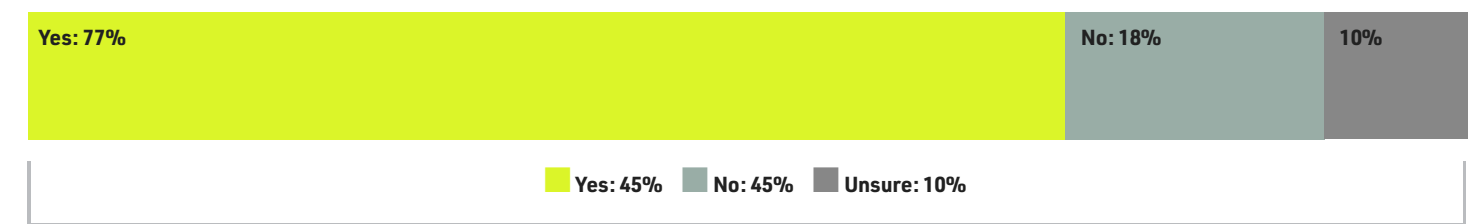
How important is it for you to interact regularly with other veterans and military service members?



How do you interact with other veterans and military service members?



Would you recommend military service to a family member or friend?



//POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT



AVA members are incredibly engaged in the policies and politics affecting the nation. From voting to speaking out on the issues that matter most, IAVA members are an important voice in American political life.

97%

of IAVA members are registered to vote

95%

of IAVA members are planning on voting in the 2020 elections

34%

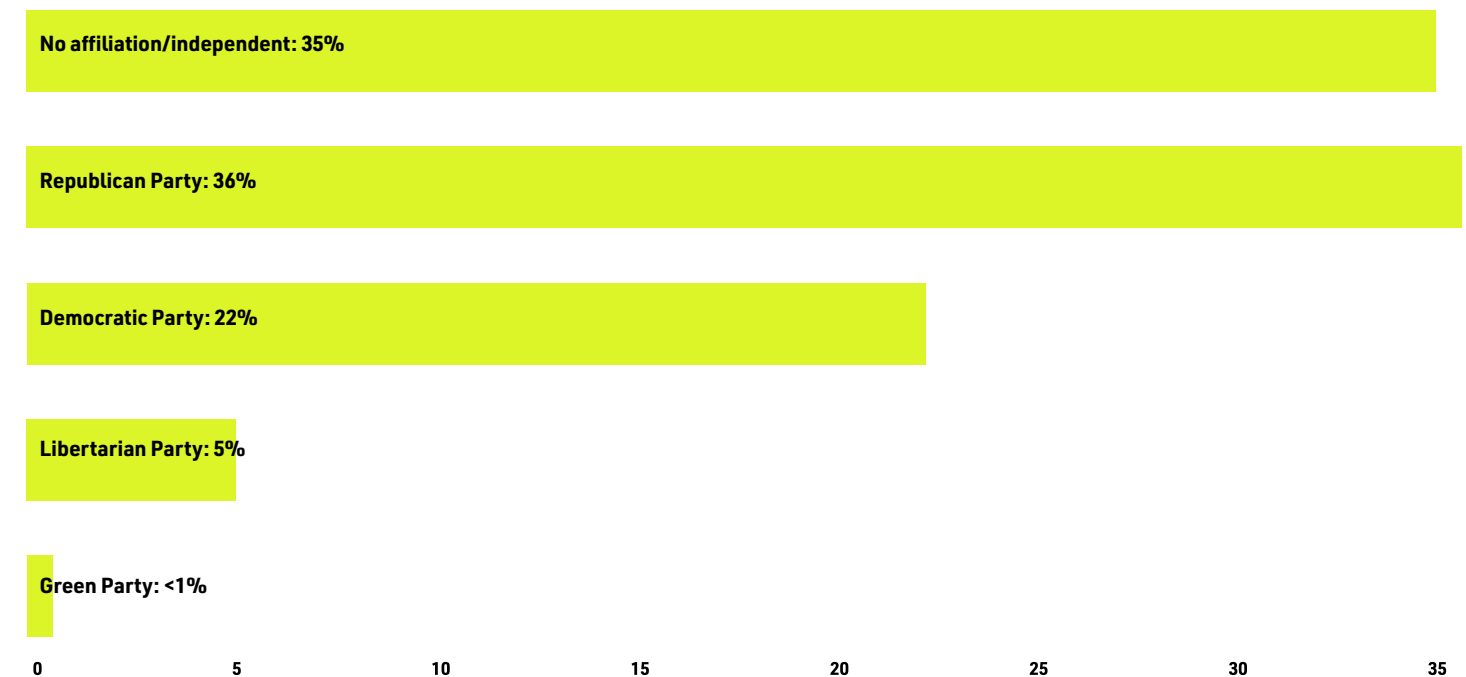
of IAVA members have considered running for office

Top 5 Issues Influencing Support for Political Candidate

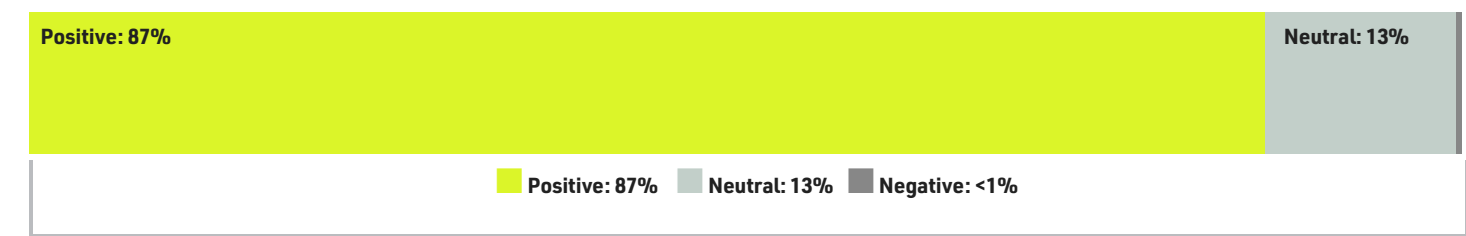
1. Veterans' issues
2. Gun control/2nd Amendment rights
3. Military/defense issues
4. Economy
5. Healthcare

Political Party Affiliation

Republican voters (36%) and Independents (35%) are most prevalent among IAVA Members, followed by those that identify as Democrat (22%). A smaller percentage identify as Libertarians (5%) or with the Green Party (<1%).



What impact do you think having more veterans in Congress would have on the ability of Congress to address national issues?



//CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

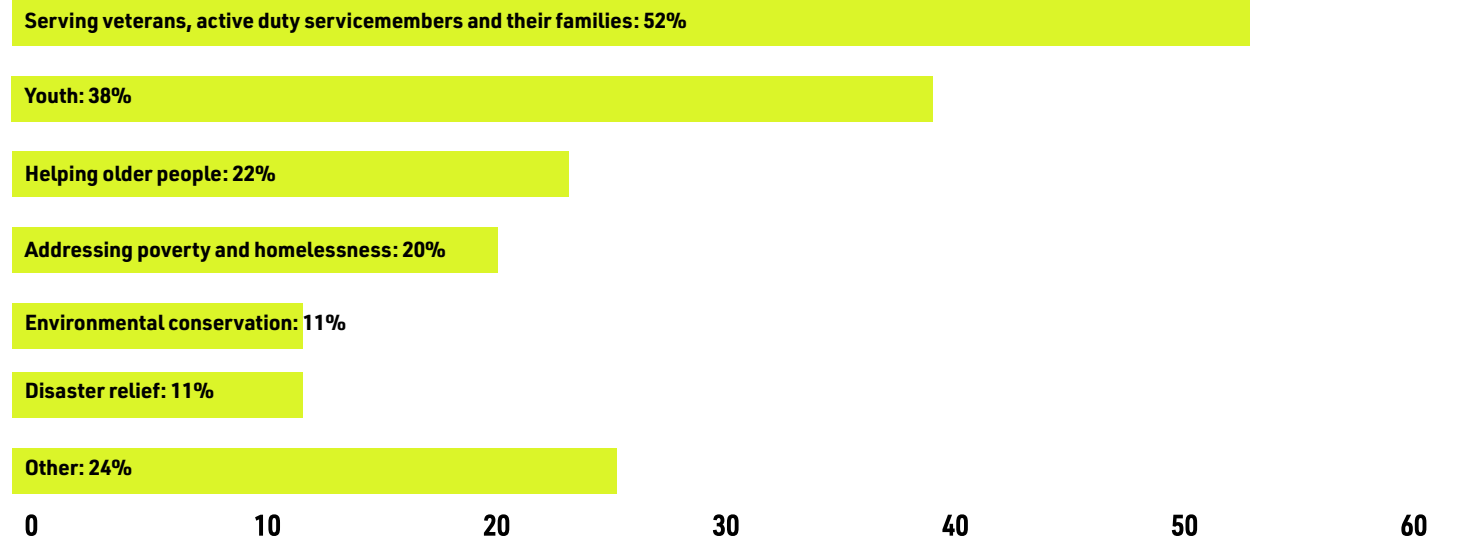


Post-9/11 veterans have stood out in the veteran community for their desire to continue to serve and give back once they return home. Many IAVA members have discovered the psychological, emotional and social benefits from serving in their local communities. Of those who volunteer on a regular basis, 63 percent report feeling like a valued member of their community, compared to 47 percent of those who do not. Additionally, 58 percent of regular volunteers feel a sense of belonging to their community compared to 42 percent of those who do not.

50% of IAVA members report volunteering on a regular basis

28% of IAVA members report volunteering more than 5 hours per month

Which issues do you focus your volunteer work on?



What organizations do you volunteer with?

1. LOCAL CHURCH
2. VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
3. SCOUTING ORGANIZATION
4. THE MISSION CONTINUES
5. AMERICAN RED CROSS
6. TEAM RUBICON
7. DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
8. VA VOLUNTARY SERVICE
9. HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
10. WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT

ISSUES FROM THE HEADLINES



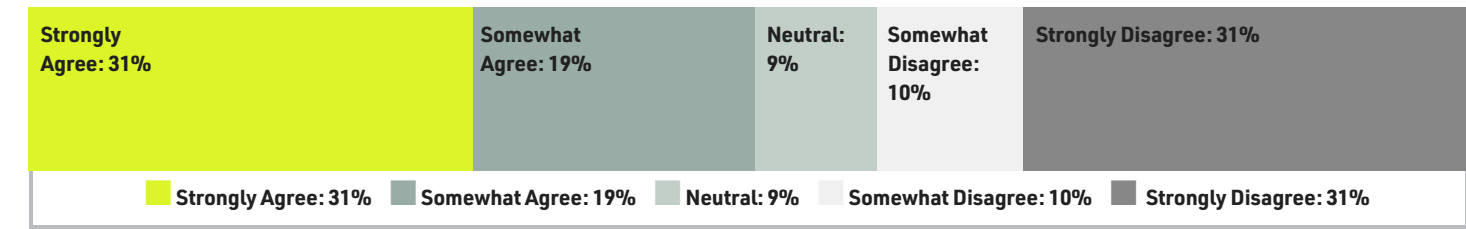
IAVA Members are engaged with the news of the day and have varying degrees of trust and support for political figures and institutions.

Do you support or oppose the impeachment of President Trump?

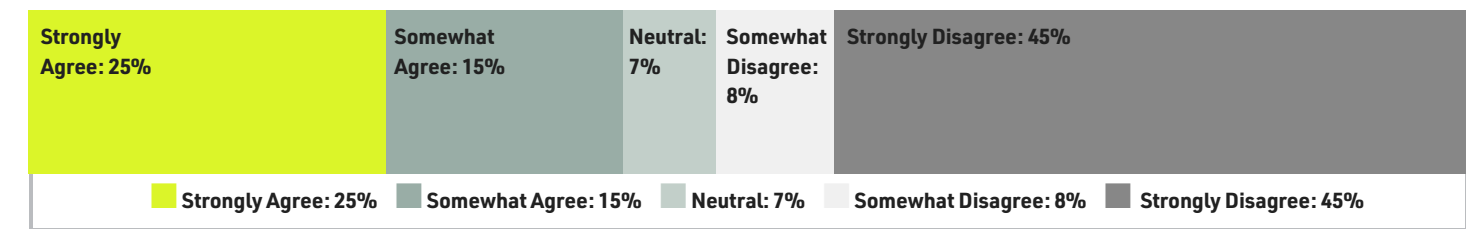


*The survey was fielded between December 6th, 2019 and January 13th, 2020. The House Impeachment inquiry began on September 24, 2019 and the formal impeachment vote in the House of Representatives took place on December 18, 2019.

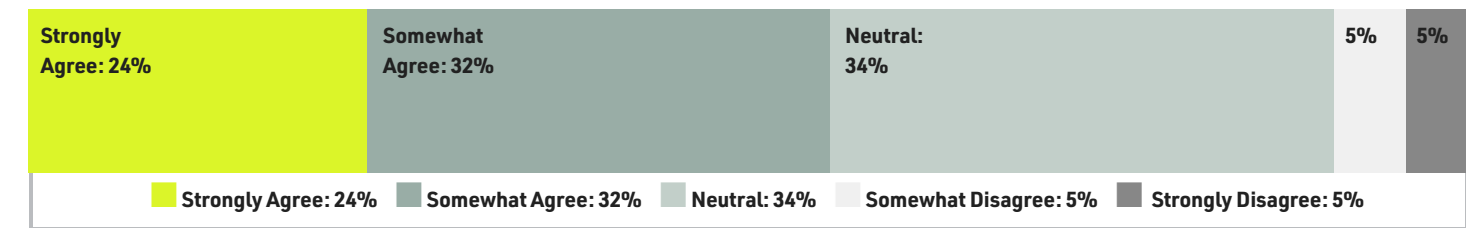
As of July 2019, there were over 6,000 military personnel deployed to the Mexican border. What is your opinion on the deployment of U.S. servicemembers to the border?



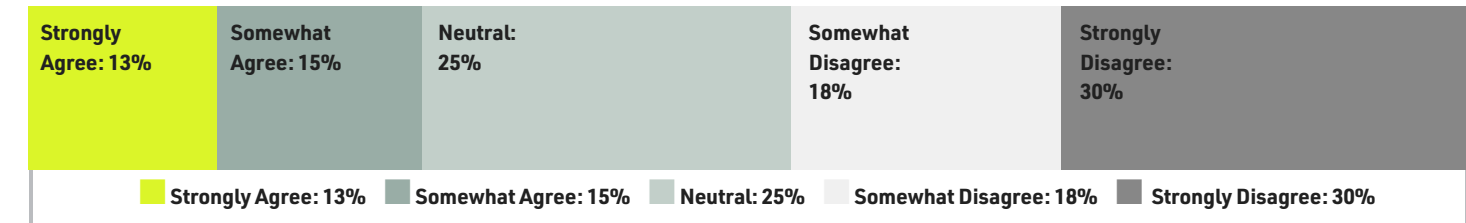
Earlier this year, \$3.6 billion in military construction funds were diverted to pay for the U.S./Mexico border wall. What is your opinion of the use of military funds for this purpose?



There is currently a discretionary program (Parole in Place) that temporarily protects non-citizen immediate family members of active duty troops from being deported in one-year increments. What is your opinion of this policy?

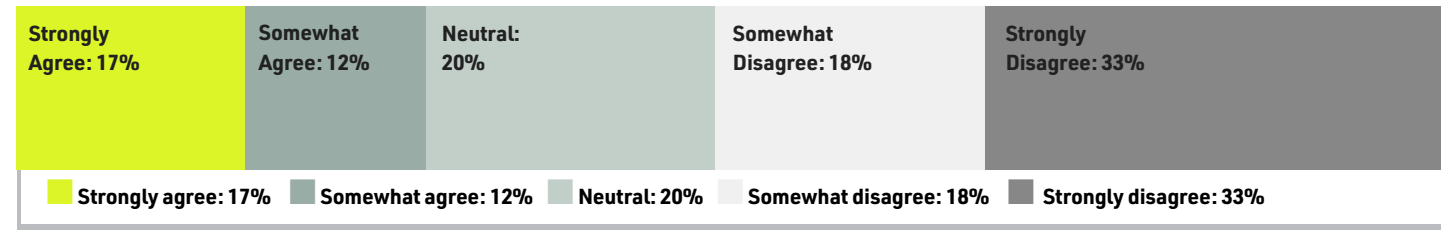


A new immigration policy withholds automatic citizenship for children born overseas to non-citizen U.S. servicemembers. What is your opinion of this policy?

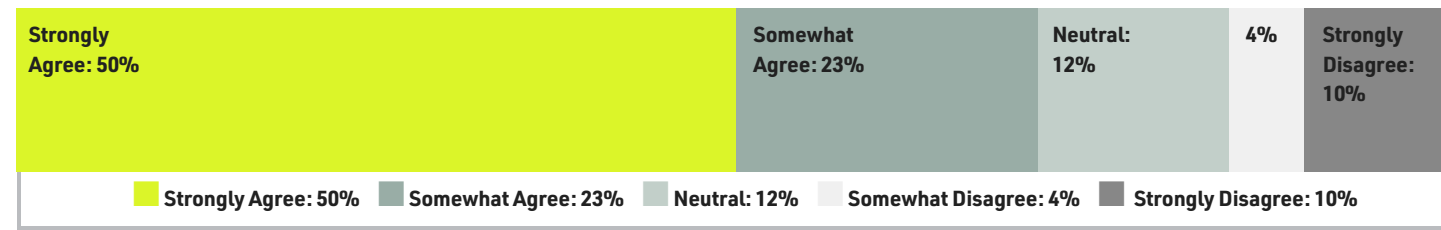


Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

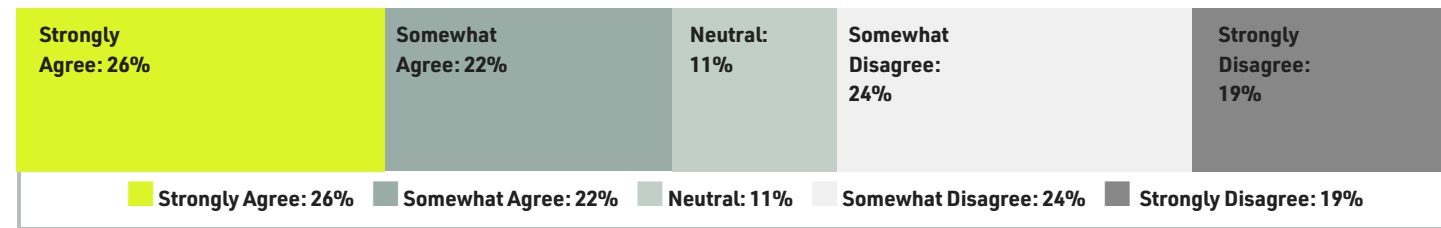
We should end the Selective Service enrollment process (used in the event of a draft) for male U.S. citizens turning 18 years old.



We should maintain the Selective Service with the inclusion of women U.S. citizens turning 18 years old in the enrollment process.

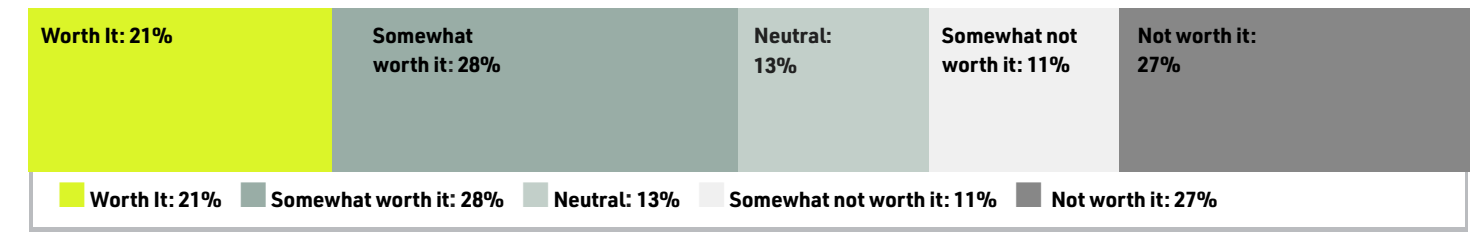


Under current immigration law, non-citizens may be deported after committing a crime, regardless of veteran status or military service. What is your opinion of this law?

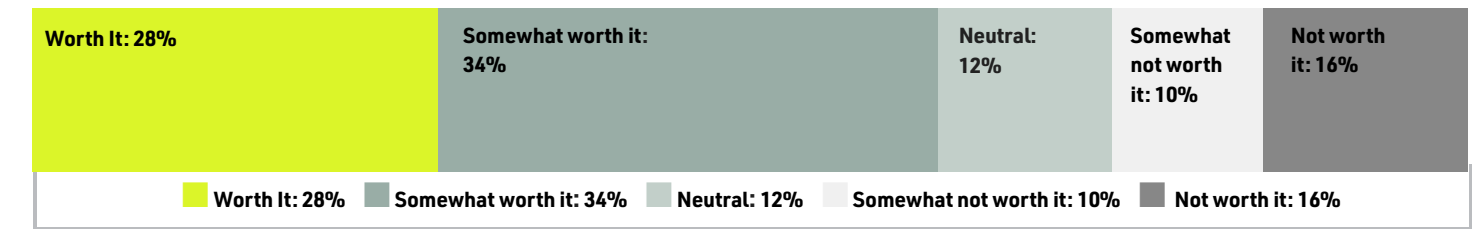


4% have been personally impacted by this immigration policy | 13% know a post-9/11 veteran impacted by this policy

In all, do you think our engagement in Iraq was worth it, or not?



In all, do you think our engagement in Afghanistan is worth it, or not?



Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

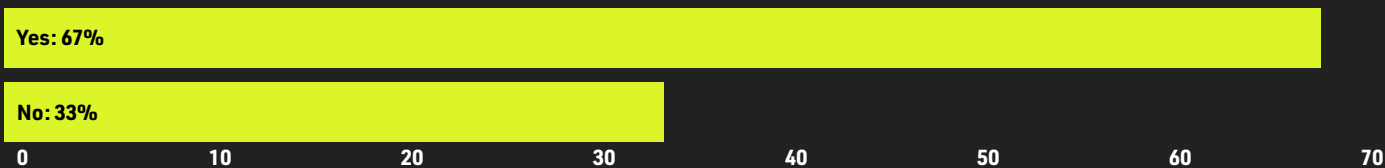
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
President Trump acts in the interest of veterans	35%	19%	12%	9%	25%
Congress acts in the interest of veterans	3%	26%	25%	28%	18%
The American public supports veterans	25%	50%	15%	8%	2%
The American public understands veterans' sacrifices	4%	19%	14%	37%	26%
Employers see value in hiring veterans	9%	37%	24%	22%	8%
Employers make efforts to retain veterans	6%	26%	35%	23%	10%

//SUICIDE



For over a decade, IAVA has been calling for immediate action to appropriately respond to increasing rates of veteran suicide. IAVA members are at the forefront of this crisis. Every year we see a rise in the percentage of IAVA members who report suicidal ideation or who know a post-9/11 veteran who died by suicide. Forty-four percent report suicidal ideation since joining the military, a shocking 13 percent rise since 2014. Sixty-two percent personally know a veteran who died by suicide, an increase of 22 percent since 2014. We must redouble our efforts as a nation and answer the call to action. IAVA will continue to maintain our leadership on that charge.

Do you personally know a post-9/11 veteran who has attempted suicide?



15% believe as a nation we are making progress in combating military/veteran suicide

11% believe that the military/veteran community are getting the care they need for mental health injuries

Do you personally know a post-9/11 veteran who has died by suicide?



Had you ever had thoughts of taking your own life prior to joining military service?



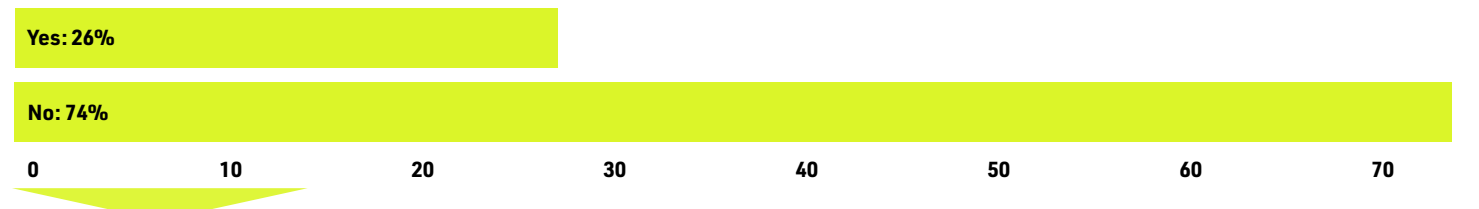
Since joining the military, have you had thoughts about taking your own life?



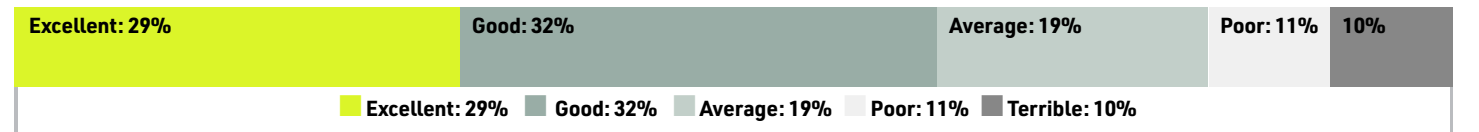
Are you aware of the Veterans Crisis Line, the 24/7 toll-free hotline connecting veterans in crisis with trained responders, which can be reached at 1-800-273-8255 (press 1)?



Have you ever contacted the Veterans Crisis Line?



Overall, how would you rate your experience with the Veterans Crisis Line?



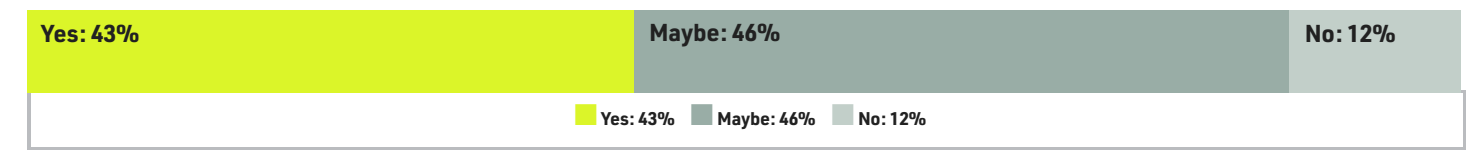
//BURN PITS



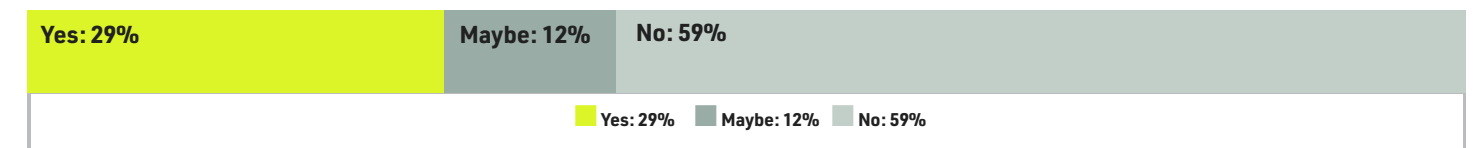
Often referred to as the Agent Orange of the post-9/11 generation, burn pits were a common way to get rid of waste at military sites in Iraq and Afghanistan. There are other hazards beyond burn pits that occurred in Iraq and Afghanistan that may pose a danger for respiratory illnesses, including high levels of fine dust, burning vehicles and other airborne hazards. Year after year, we have seen an upward trend in the number of members reporting symptoms associated with toxic exposure.

86% were exposed to burn pits and/or airborne toxic materials.

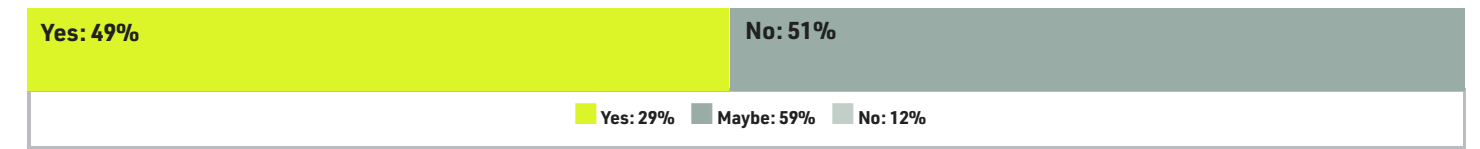
Do you believe that you have symptoms associated with burn pits or toxic exposure, such as respiratory issues?



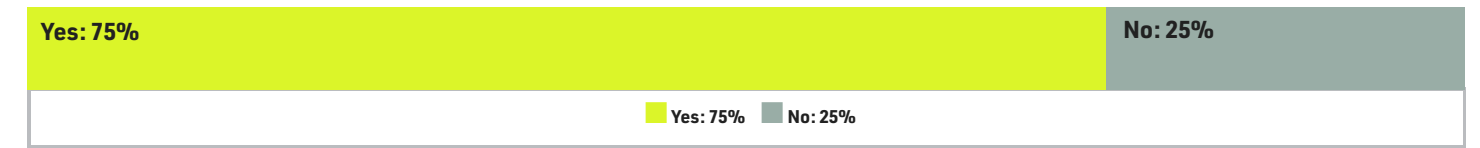
Do you discuss your burn pit and/or toxic exposures and any symptoms you may be experiencing with your primary care provider?



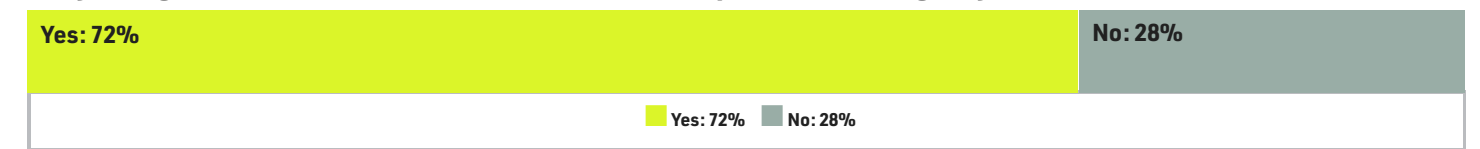
Was your burn pit or toxic exposure documented by DoD in a Periodic Health Assessment or other report?



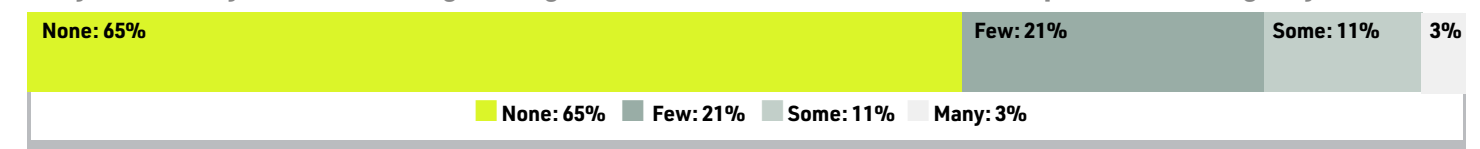
Are you aware of the VA's Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry?



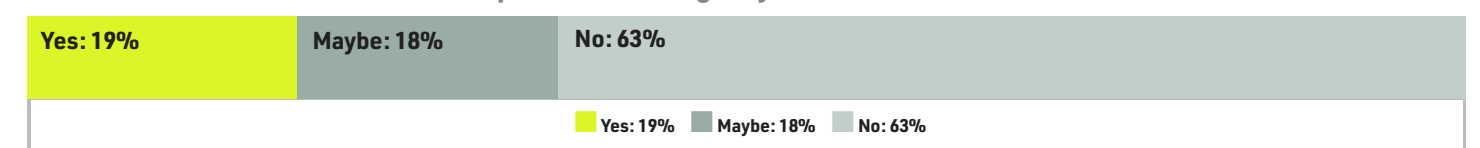
Are you registered in the VA's Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry?



Did you have any issues when registering with the VA's Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry?



Have you completed the optional in-person medical evaluation that is offered to veterans who have entered into the VA's Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry?



//WOMEN VETERANS



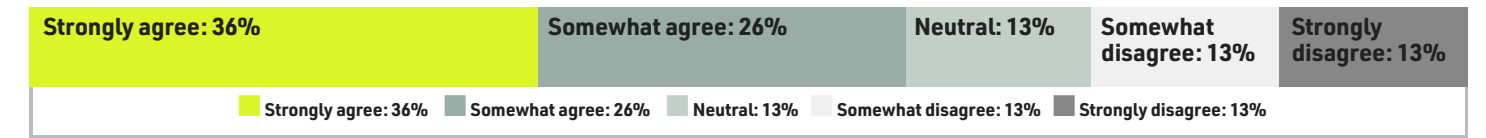
More and more IAVA members are saying that it is important that IAVA focus on the issues impacting women veterans. In 2017, IAVA launched our groundbreaking campaign, #SheWhoBorneTheBattle, focused on recognizing the service of women veterans and closing gaps in care provided to them by the VA. We fought hard for top-down culture change in the VA for all the women veterans who have served or will serve our country.

How important do you think it is for IAVA to address issues facing women veterans?

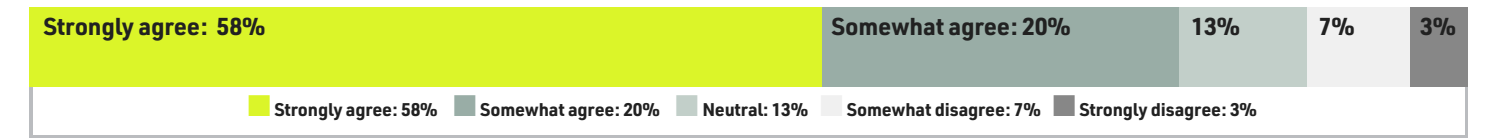


What is your opinion of the Department of Defense's (DoD) decision that opened combat MOS positions to women?

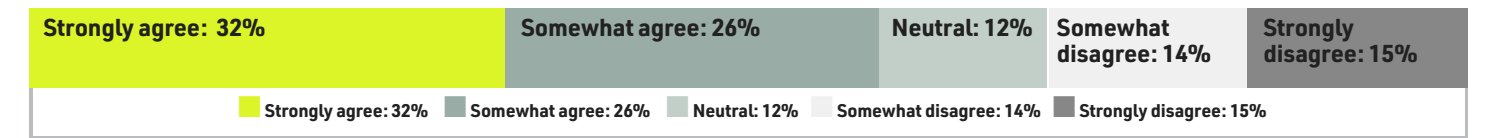
All respondents



Female respondents

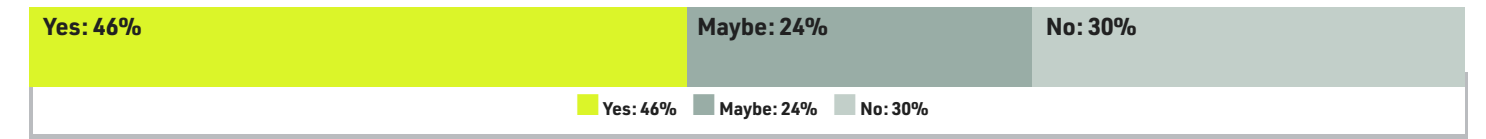


Male respondents

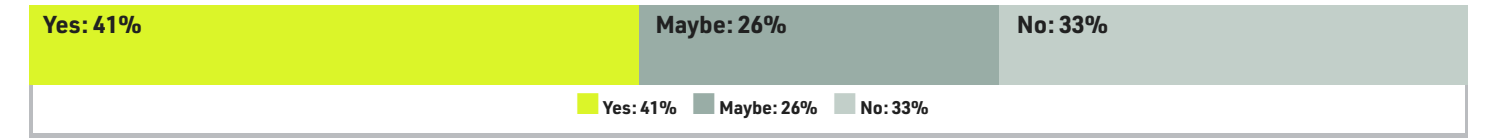


Do you think women's advancement in the military has been limited by past restrictions on women in combat?

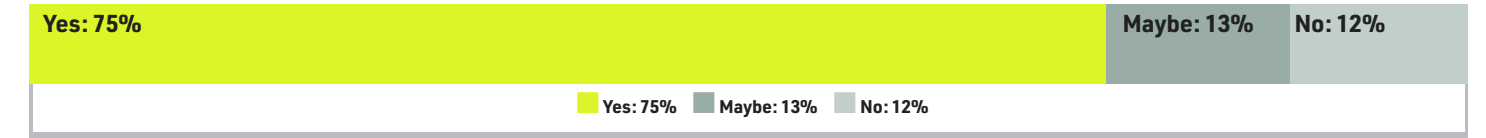
All respondents



Male respondents

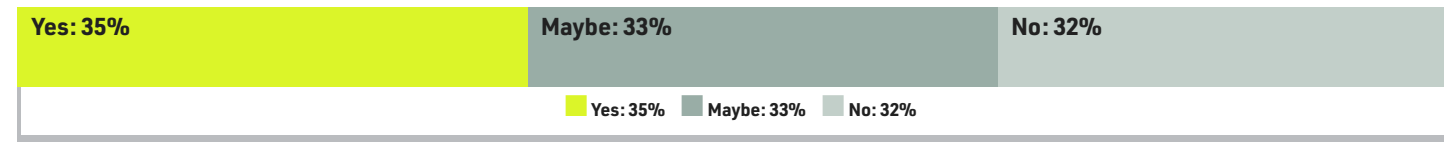


Female respondents

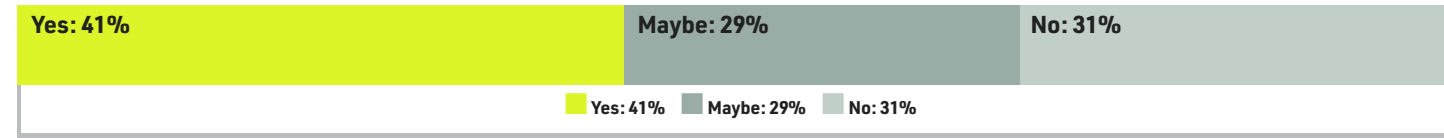


Do you believe that lifting restrictions on women in combat has improved the public recognition of their military contributions?

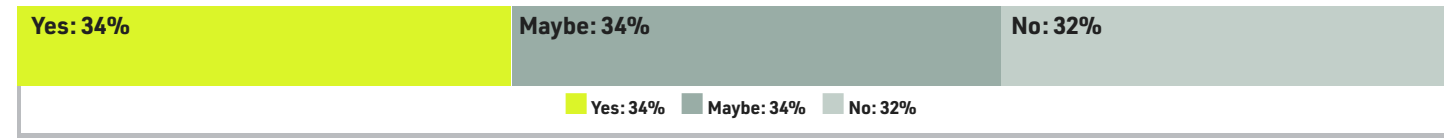
All respondents



Male respondents

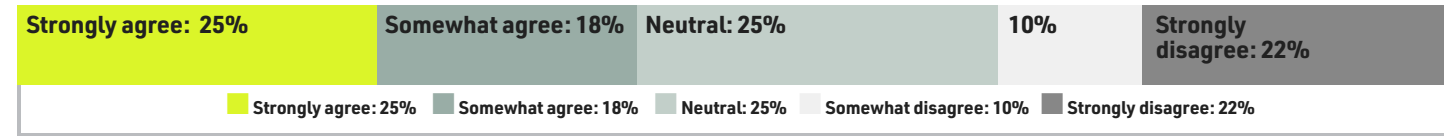


Female respondents

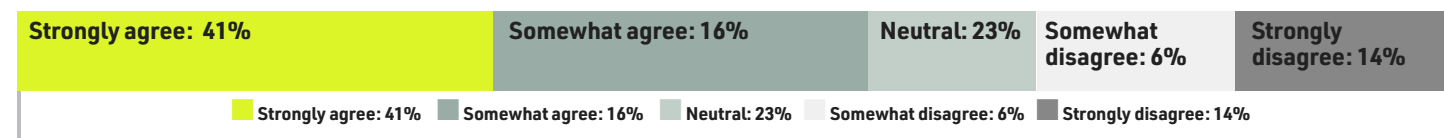


Opinions on changing the VA's motto: "To care for him who has borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."

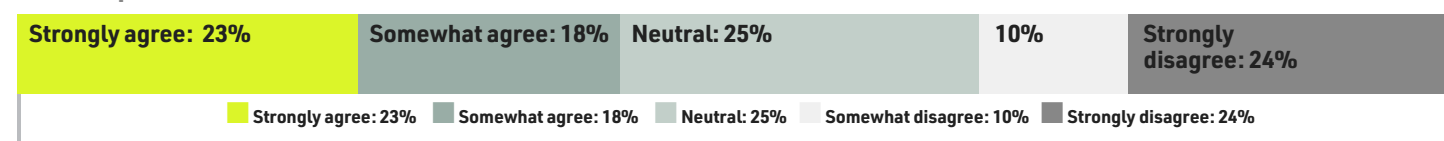
All respondents



Female respondents



Male respondents



14% of female veterans report not feeling safe in VA healthcare facilities

15% of female veterans report not feeling respected by VA employees

Report suicidal ideation since joining the military:



Report a service-connected mental health injury:



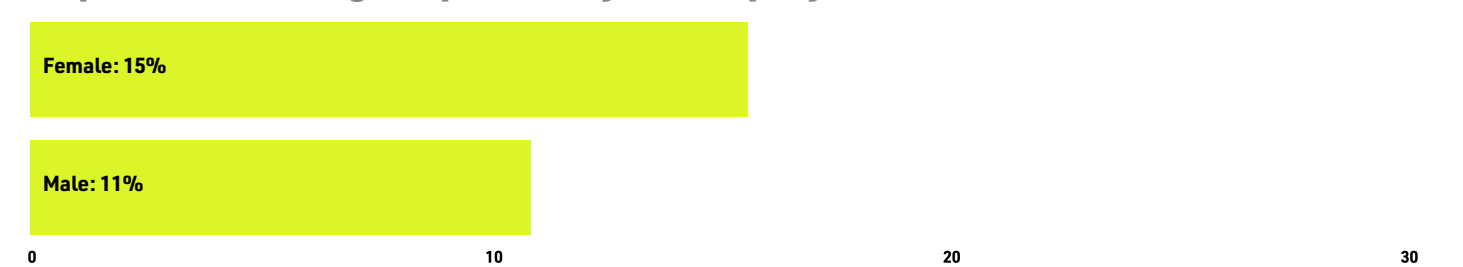
Report difficulty covering expenses in a typical month:



Report not feeling safe in VA healthcare facilities



Report not feeling respected by VA employees



//SEXUAL TRAUMA AND ASSAULT



Military sexual trauma affects an estimated one in four women veterans and one in one-hundred male veterans, according to VA. While there has been much attention on the issue from Department of Defense and VA, sexual assault continues to plague the services. By better understanding the past experience of these survivors, IAVA is dedicated to understanding the experiences of survivors so that we can better advocate for policies that will stop sexual assault in the future.

9%
are survivors of military sexual assault

43%
of females and 3% of males are sexual assault survivors

31%
of those assaulted reported the crime

Top 5 reasons survivors did not report the crime:

1. Did not think anything would be done
2. Concerned that my peers would treat me differently
3. Concerned about impact on my career
4. Fear of retaliation by my peers or commander
5. Doubted that my commander would believe me

73% of those who reported the crime experienced retaliation

If instead of your commander, a trained military prosecutor had the authority to make the decision to move forward with your case, which of the following impacts would it have had on your decision to report?



If the final decision to send someone to court martial for military sexual assault was a trained military prosecutor instead of the commanding officer, would you view the commander as:



//RATING VA HEALTH CARE

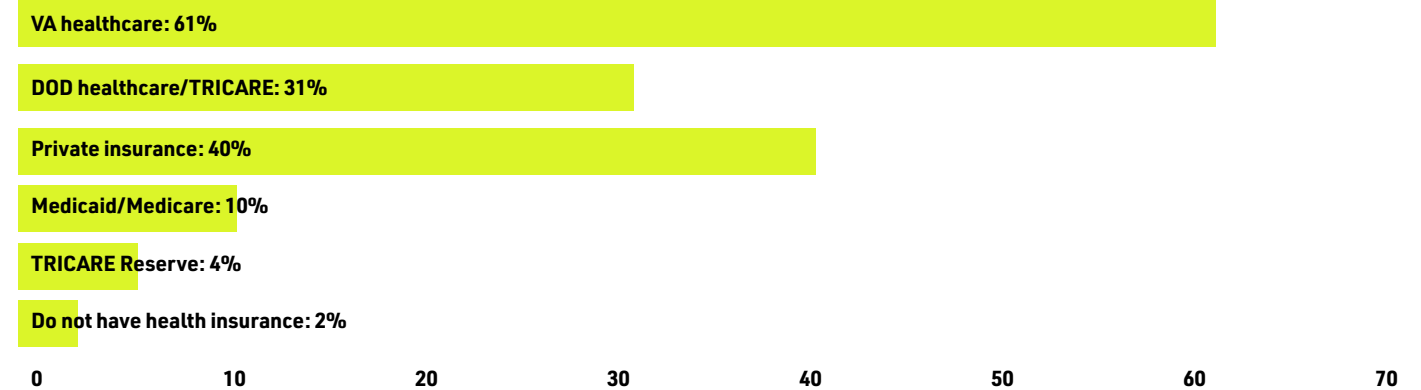


Problems have plagued VA for quite some time and every year we hear from IAVA members that they want less paperwork, less bureaucracy and easier access to care. However, VA healthcare has come a long way since the waitlist and overprescription scandals of 2014 and 2015. VA has been making progress and IAVA members report that their healthcare experiences are improving.

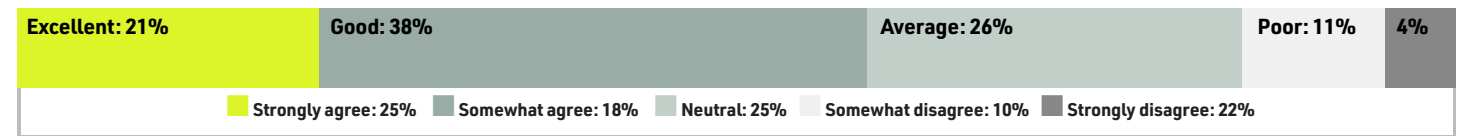
84% of IAVA members are enrolled in VA healthcare

53% use VA as their primary source for healthcare

What do you currently use for healthcare coverage?



Rate your overall experience with VA healthcare:



2019

2017

54% of IAVA members rated their overall VA healthcare experience as excellent or good

42% of IAVA members rated their overall VA healthcare experience as excellent or good

Please check the most important reforms needed to address improvements to VA healthcare:

1. Reduce paperwork and bureaucracy to access care
2. Reform hiring and firing practices to improve accountability of bad actors and rewarding good actors.
3. Expansion of specialized care
4. More post-9/11 vets working at VA
5. Updates to technology

Top 5 reasons not enrolled in VA healthcare:

1. I have other health benefits and I don't need VA care
2. I prefer my private sector provider
3. Other veterans need the benefits more
4. I am not sure if I am eligible
5. I do not trust the care that VA has to offer

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
VA clinicians understand my medical needs	24%	42%	17%	11%	6%
VA clinicians provide timely, quality care to veterans	18%	38%	18%	16%	10%
I feel safe when going to VA facilities	43%	30%	16%	7%	4%
VA employees treat me with respect	41%	33%	14%	8%	4%

Which statement best describes your experience scheduling appointments with the following providers:

	Extremely easy	Somewhat easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Somewhat difficult	Extremely difficult
VA mental health provider	27%	30%	17%	16%	11%
VA primary care provider	26%	36%	15%	16%	7%
VA specialty care	15%	27%	20%	23%	16%

Rate your level of satisfaction with the following providers:

	Extremely satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Extremely dissatisfied
VA mental health provider	32%	28%	17%	13%	10%
VA primary care provider	33%	37%	14%	8%	8%
VA specialty care	25%	33%	21%	12%	9%

Top 3 reasons to use non-VA provider as primary source of care:

1. Non-VA provider more convenient
2. Higher quality of care with non-VA provider
3. More comfortable with non-VA provider

Top 3 reasons to use VA provider as primary source of care:

1. VA healthcare is free
2. VA provider understands my military service
3. The VA is my only source of healthcare

//THE MISSION ACT & COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM

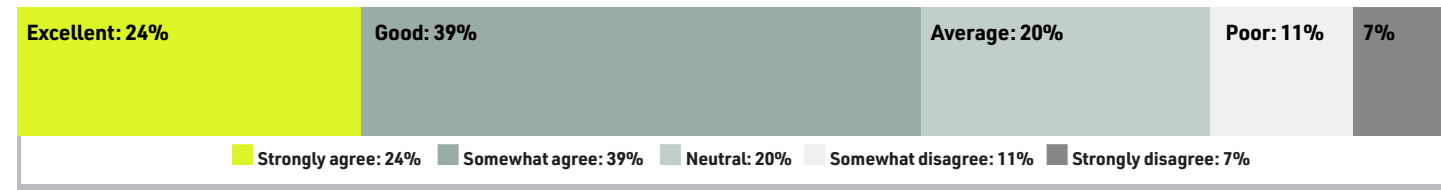


The VA MISSION Act, passed into law in 2018, seeks to consolidate, reform, and streamline the many VA community care programs and strengthen healthcare options for veterans, while sunseting the Choice program. For years, IAVA has advocated for the consolidation of VA's community care programs. With that goal now achieved, monitoring and assisting with its implementation is paramount. There is a long road ahead of us; it will take the will of Congress, the Administration, and the American public to continue on this path towards a truly integrated network of VA health care.

Only 36% of IAVA Members have heard of the VA MISSION Act and the changes it has made to the VA system

36% are familiar with the Community Care Program and 16% have used the program

Please rate your experience with the Community Care program



Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

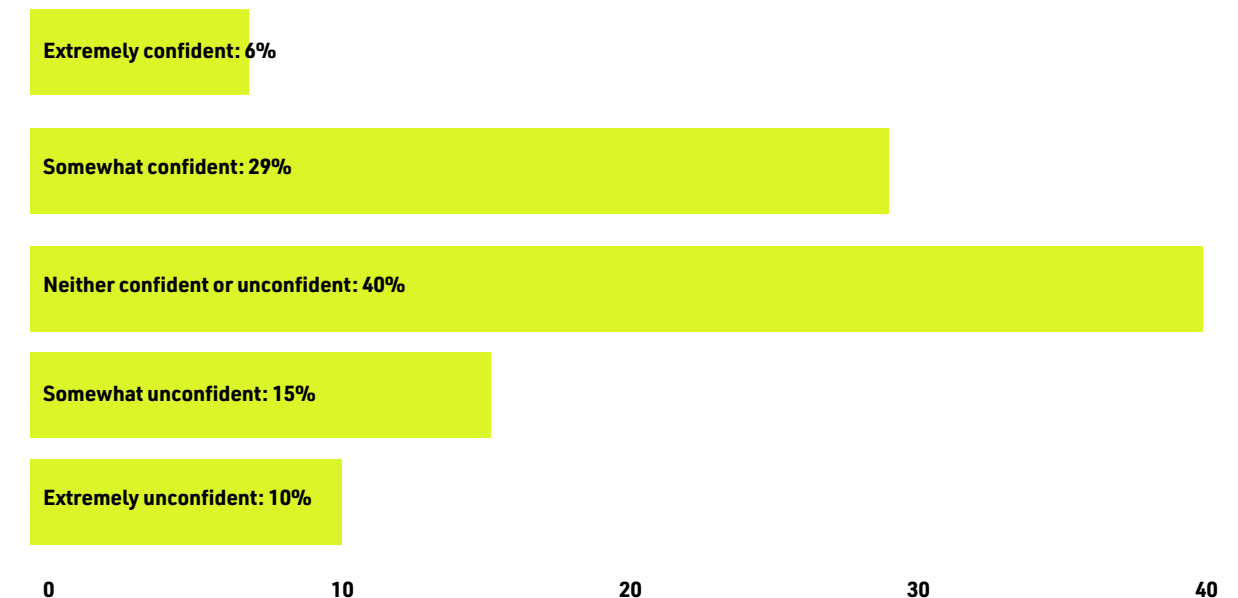
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Community Care health providers understand my medical needs	27%	39%	20%	9%	5%
I receive timely, quality care from Community Care health providers	35%	33%	12%	13%	7%

Please rate your experience scheduling appointments with the following providers:

Question	Extremely easy	Somewhat easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Somewhat difficult	Extremely difficult
Community Care Program mental health provider	33%	22%	23%	9%	13%
Community Care Program primary care provider	27%	27%	22%	14%	10%
Community Care Program specialty care provider	24%	40%	12%	10%	13%



How confident are you in VA's ability to successfully operate its Community Care program?



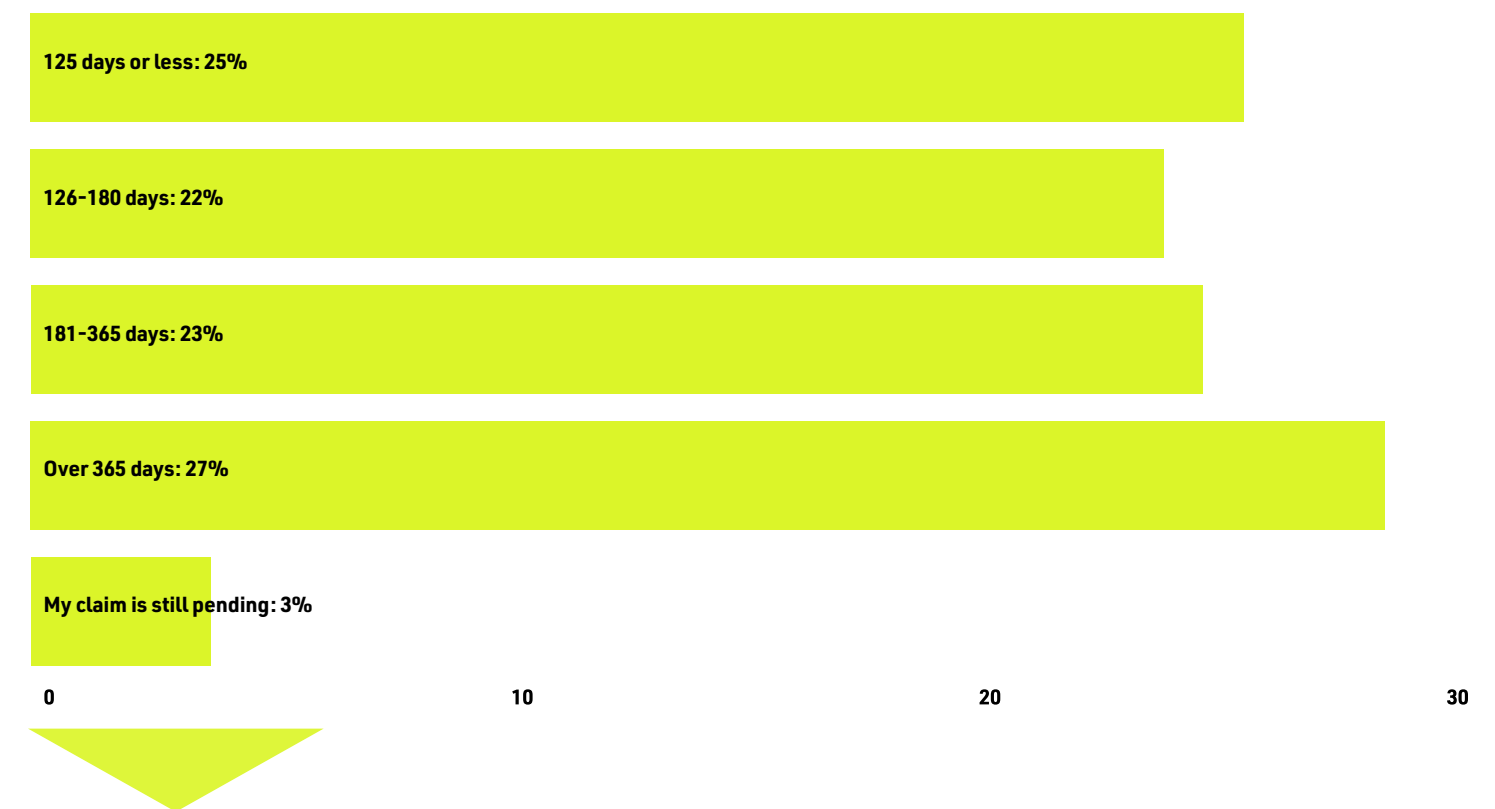
//RATING VA BENEFITS



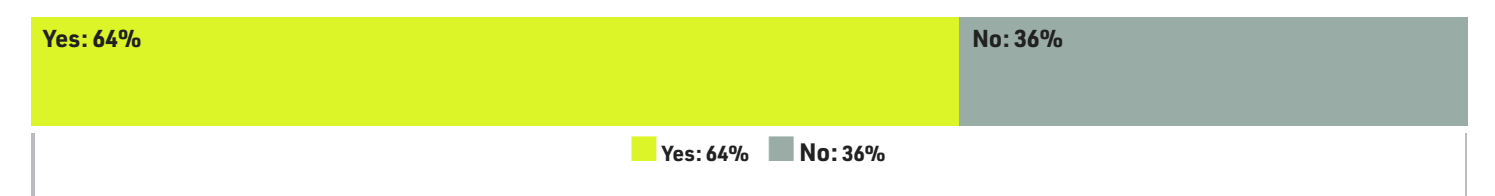
While many think of health care when it comes to VA, many veterans and their families rely on VA for earned benefits such as pensions and disability compensation. The process to access these earned benefits can be daunting and leave many veterans waiting months or longer for a decision. While progress has been made to update the system, long wait times and a lagging technology system continue to plague veterans waiting on their earned benefits.

79% of IAVA members report having a service-connected disability rating from VA

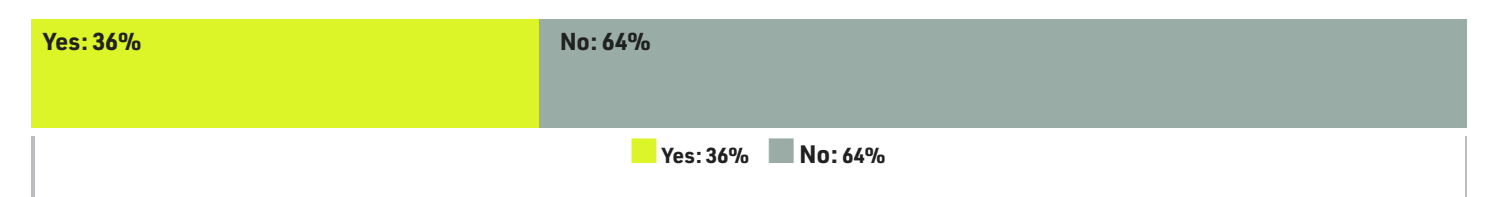
How long did it take for the VA to notify you of a decision on your claim?



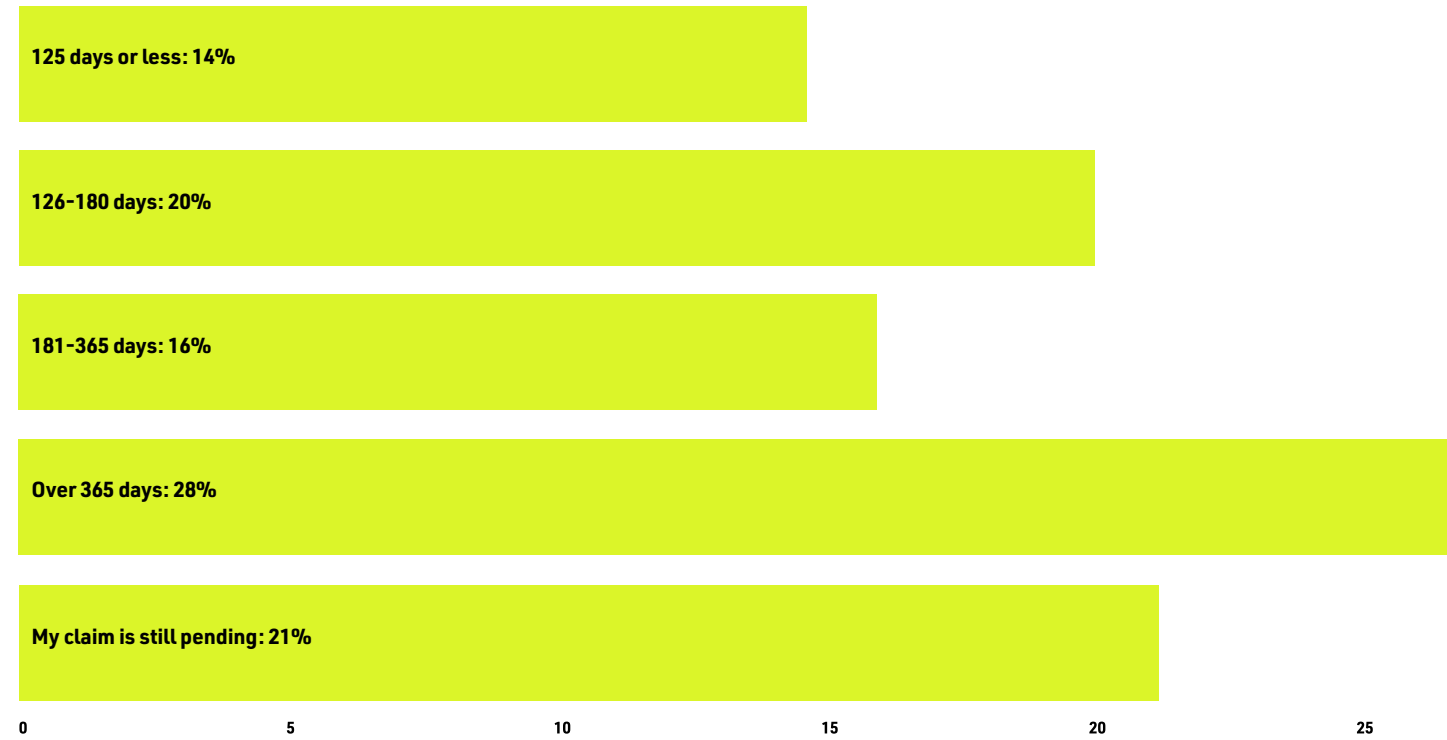
Were you satisfied with the outcome of your claim?



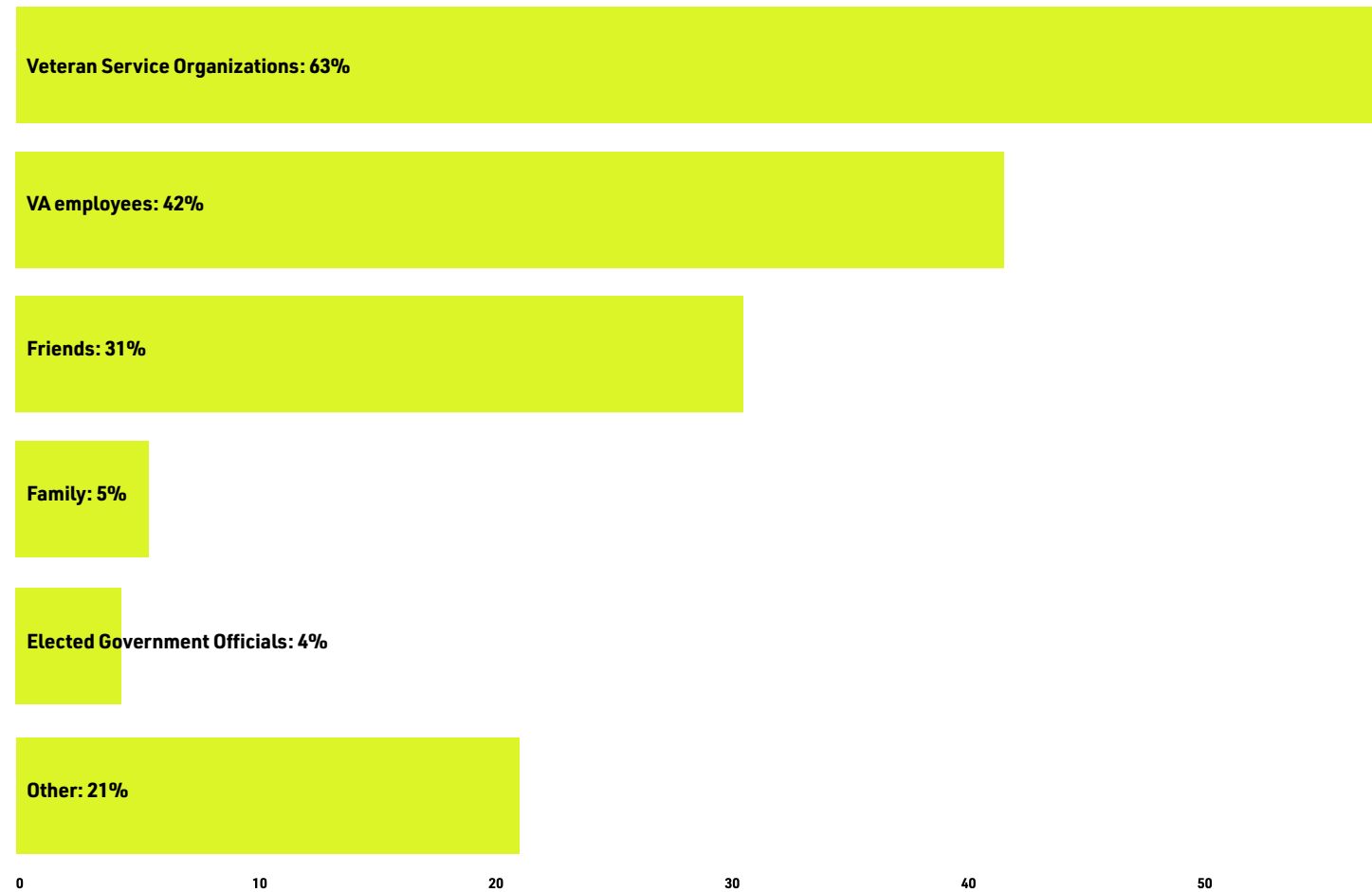
Have you ever appealed a VA disability compensation claim decision?



How long did it take to receive a final decision on your appeal?

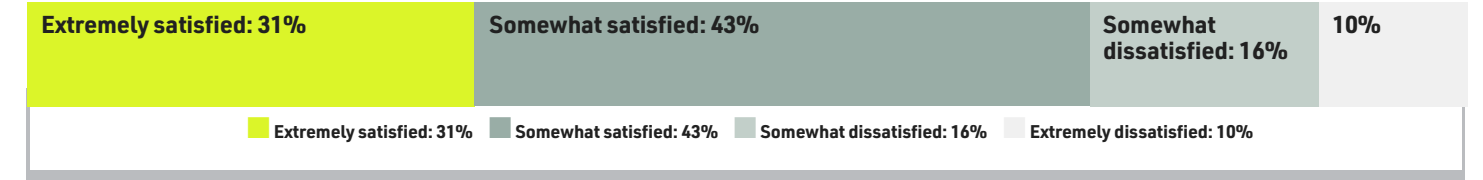


When you have questions about VA benefits, who do you ask?

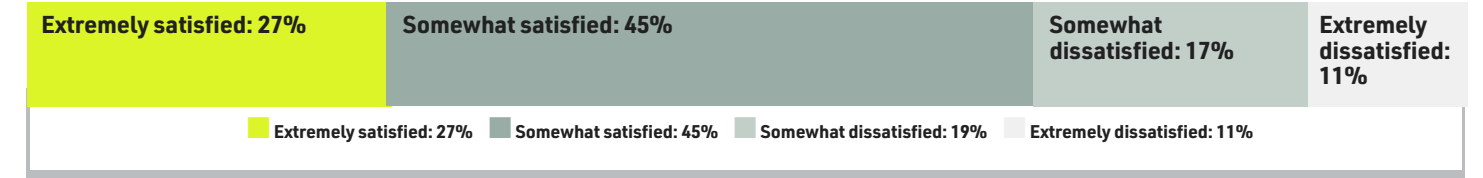


Please rate your satisfaction with the following VA benefits:

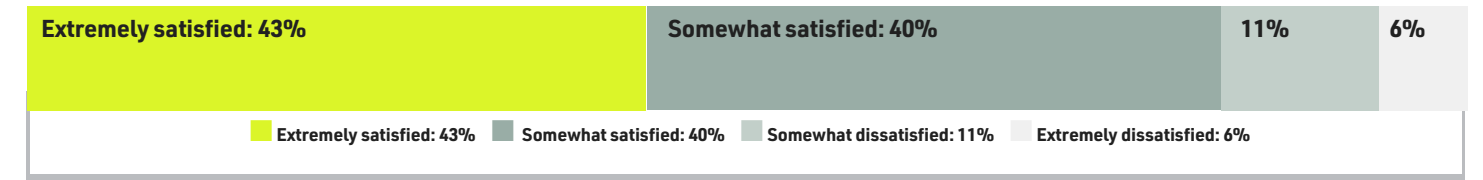
Disability compensation



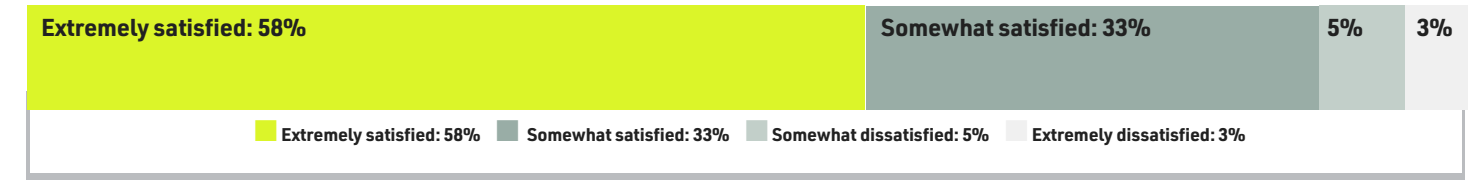
Pension



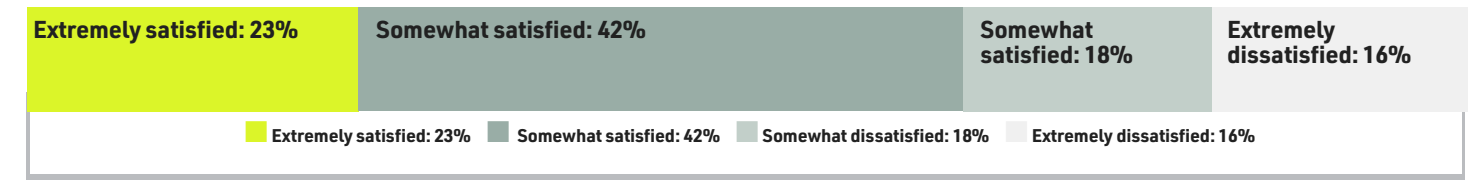
GI Bill/Education Benefits*



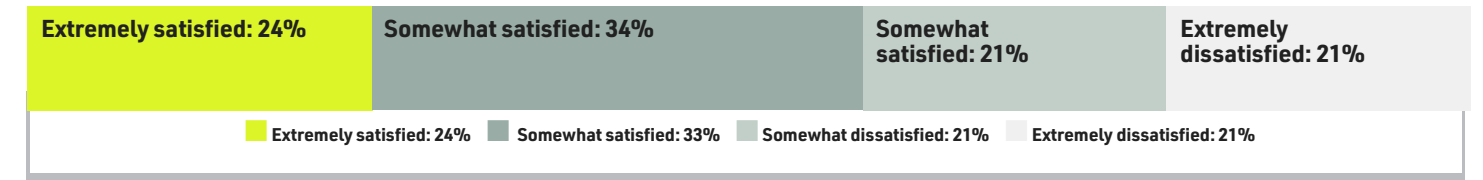
Home loans



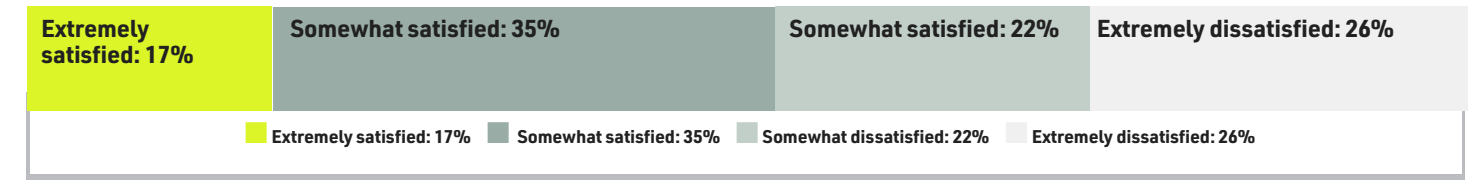
Insurance



Vocational rehabilitation/employment services



VA Caregiver Benefits



//GI BILL AND EDUCATION

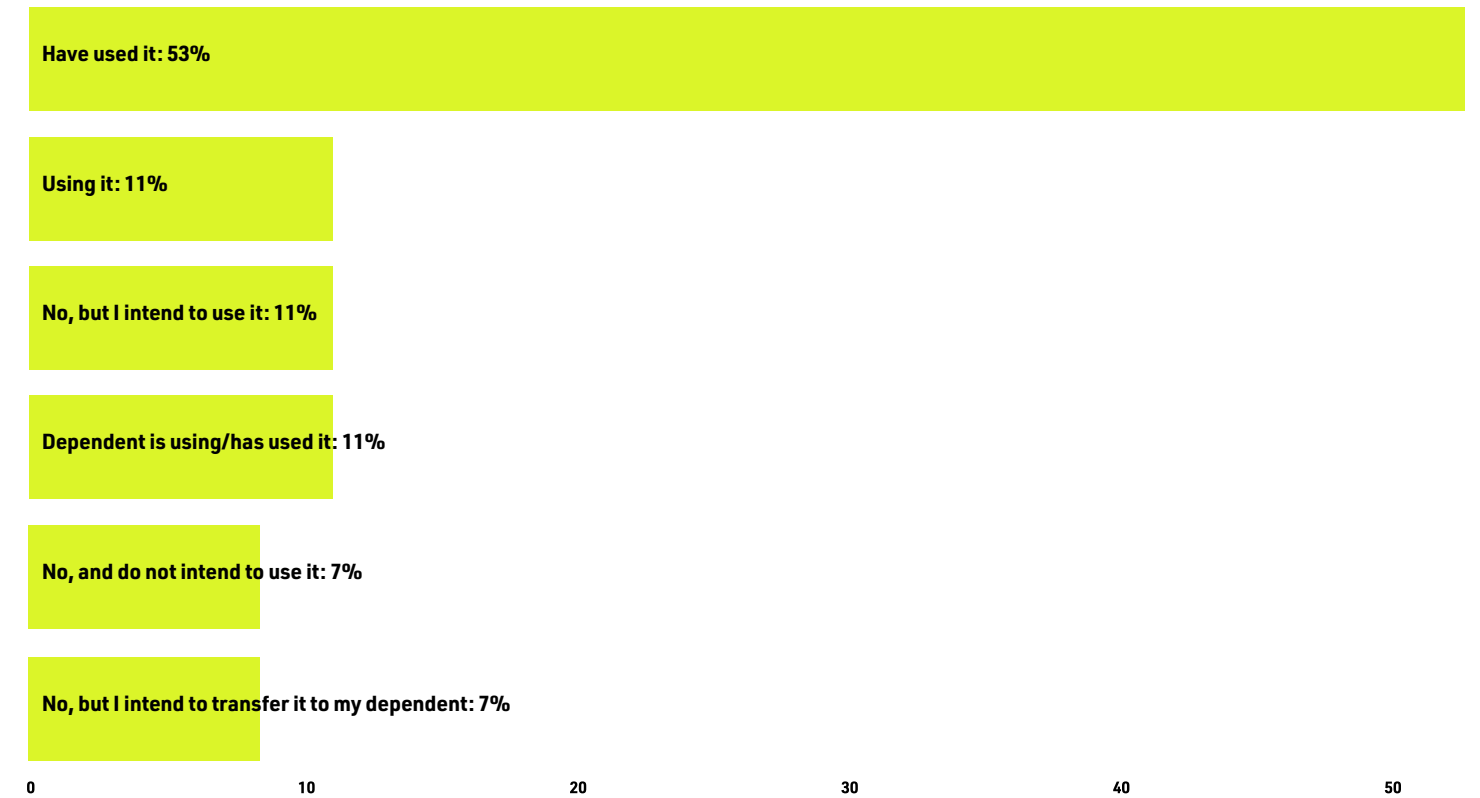


IAVA was integral to the landmark passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill in 2008. Since then, IAVA has fought for improvements to the GI Bill, recently advocating for the passage of the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, or more commonly known as the "Forever GI Bill." Additionally, IAVA successfully advocated for a provision in the 2020 NDAA that would repeal the controversial limit on servicemembers with more than 16 years of service from transferring their post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to their dependents. IAVA knows how essential the GI Bill is to this generation of veterans and their families for success and reintegration into civilian life.

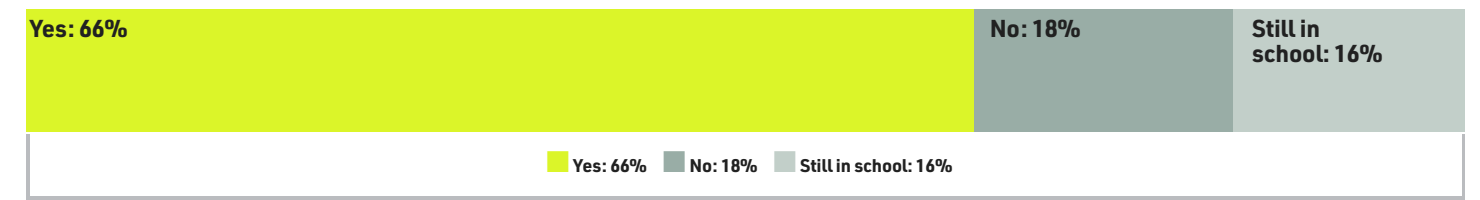
75% of IAVA members are eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill

16% of IAVA members are currently in school

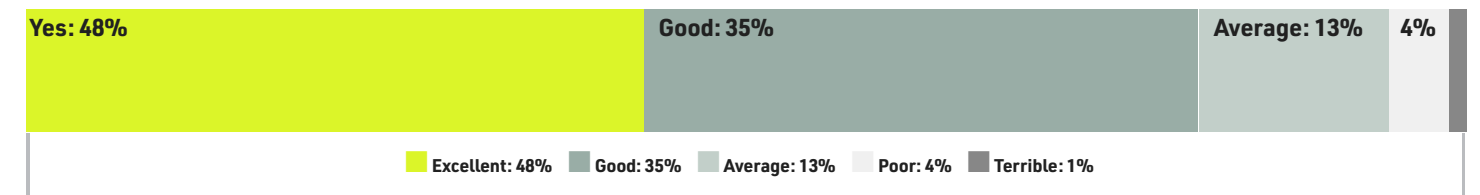
Have you or one of your dependents ever used the Post-9/11 GI Bill?



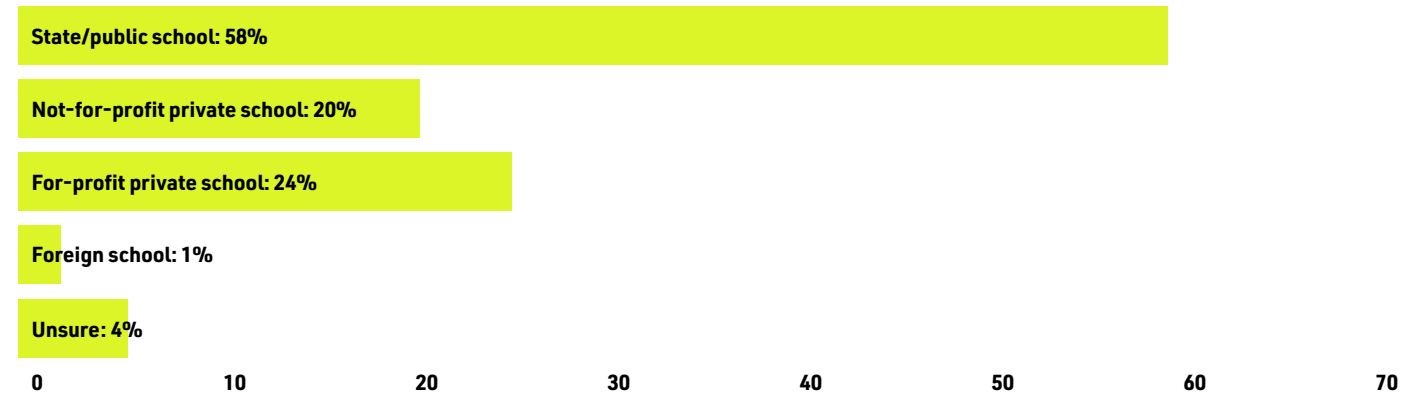
While in school on the Post-9/11 GI Bill, did you (or your dependent) graduate?



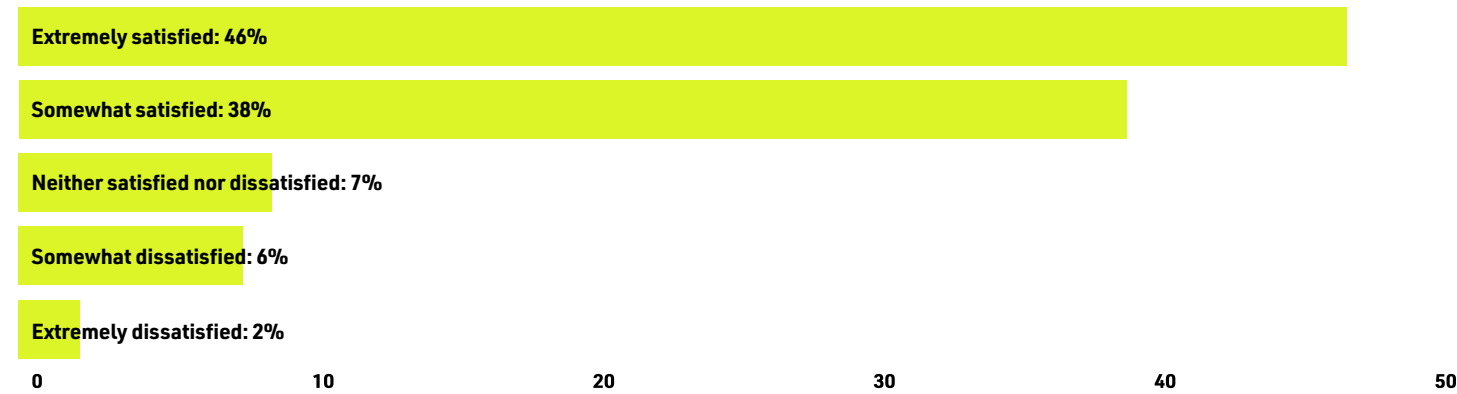
Overall, how would you rate your experience or your dependent's experience with the Post-9/11 GI Bill?



What type of school are you attending/did you attend?



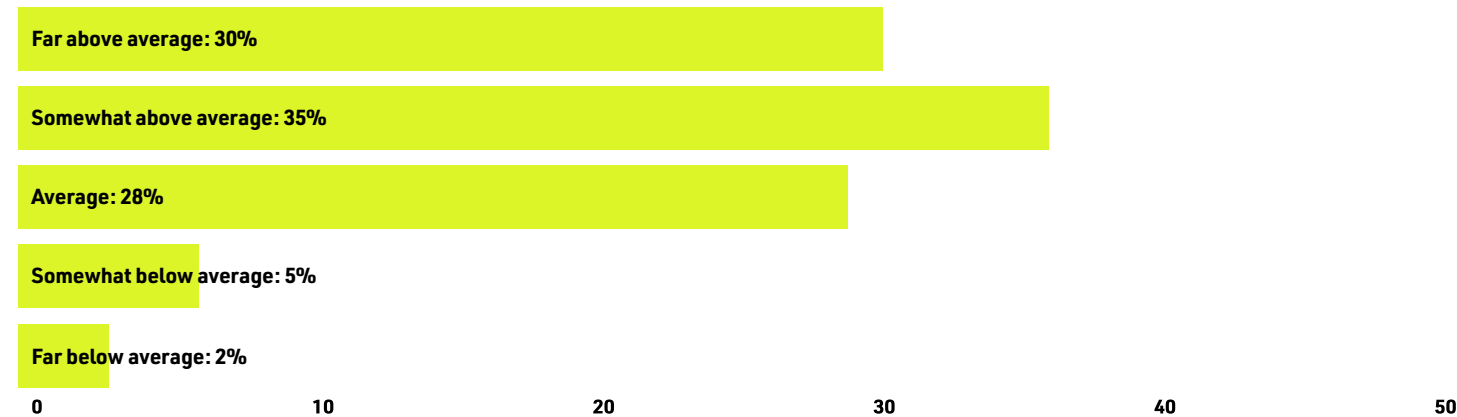
Please rate your overall level of satisfaction with your educational program(s):



Top 5 reasons why you chose your institution:

1. Acceptance of GI Bill benefits
2. Location in relation to my home
3. Veteran-friendly institution
4. Offering of specific program/field of study
5. Availability of online classes

To what level is/are your school(s) veteran friendly?



VA educational benefits used for education:

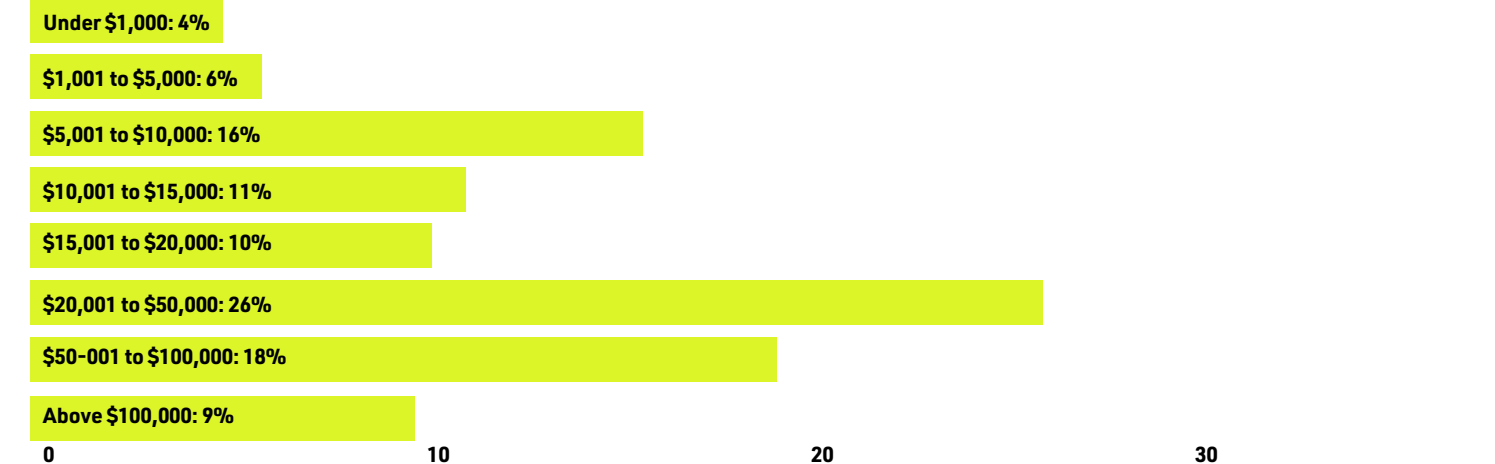


How important is the Post-9/11 GI Bill for the following:

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Military recruitment	47%	32%	14%	3%	3%
Military retention	39%	28%	21%	5%	6%
Successful transition/reintegration of veterans into civilian life	60%	27%	9%	2%	1%

41% took out private or federal loans for school

How much debt have you accrued through student loans?



Top 5 ways in which IAVA members believe veteran education outcomes can be improved:

1. In-state tuition for out-of-state veterans at public colleges and universities
2. Veterans success centers at colleges and universities
3. Paid internships/fellowship programs
4. Job search preparation programs
5. VA work study program

//CANNABIS

6 ESTABLISH SUPPORT FOR VETERANS WHO WANT TO UTILIZE MEDICAL CANNABIS



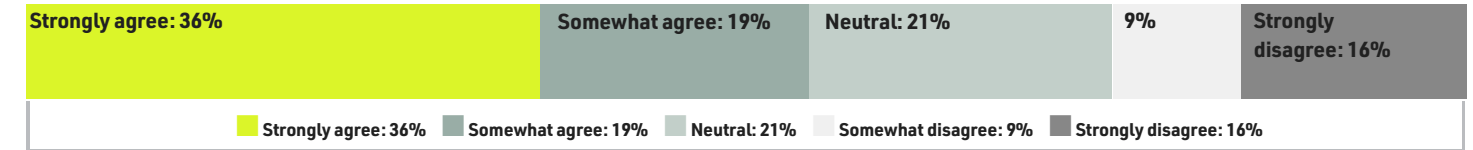
Veterans consistently and passionately have communicated that cannabis offers effective help in tackling some of the most pressing injuries they face when returning from war. Our national laws are rapidly changing and 33 states now permit medical cannabis. Across party lines, medicinal cannabis is largely unopposed. Yet our national policies are outdated, research is lacking, and stigma persists.

37% of IAVA members have used cannabis or other cannabinoid products for recreational use

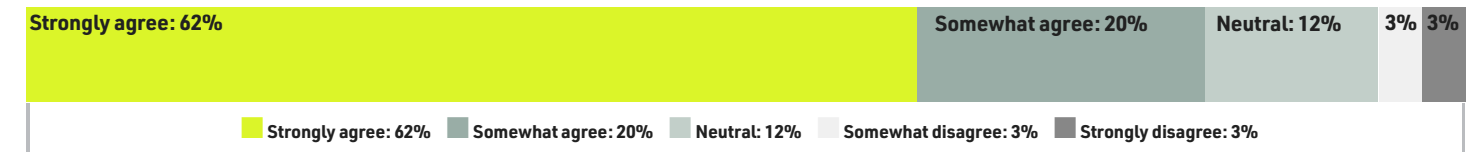
22% of IAVA members have used cannabis or other cannabinoid products for medicinal use

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

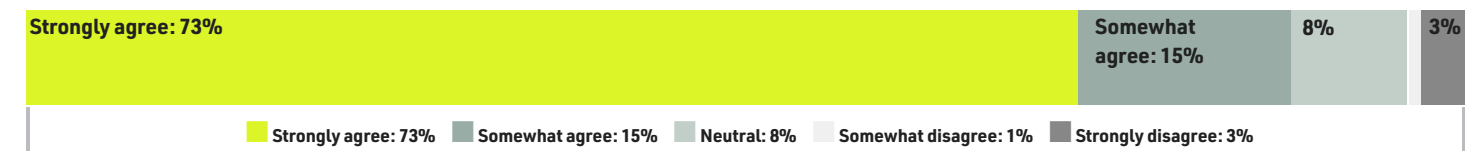
Cannabis should be legal for recreational purposes



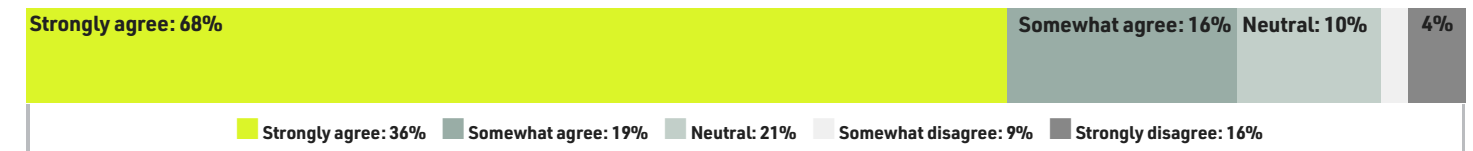
Cannabis should be legal for medicinal purposes



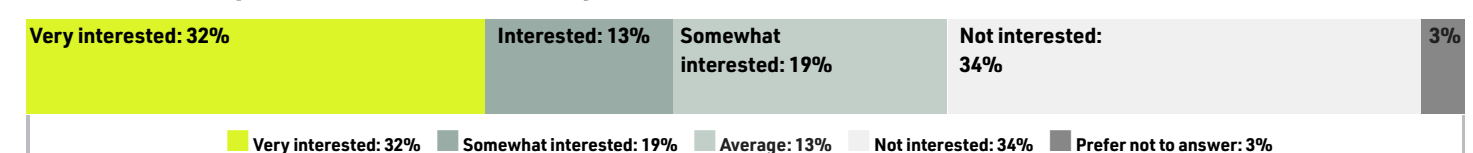
Cannabis should be researched for medicinal uses



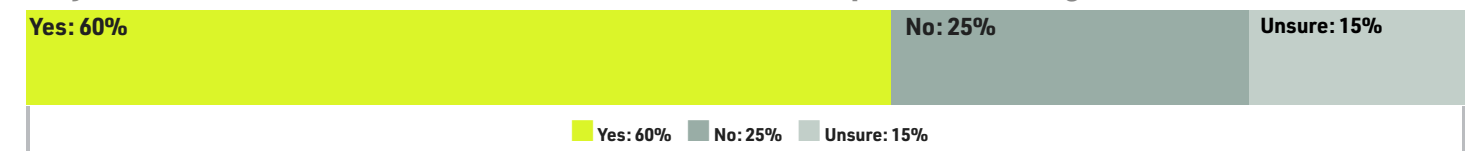
The VA should research cannabis as a treatment option



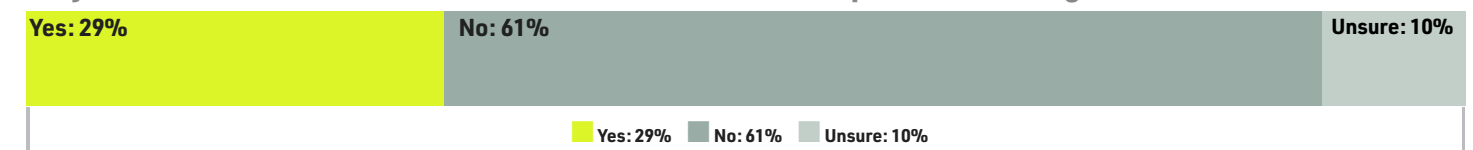
Would you be interested in using cannabis or cannabinoid products as a treatment option if it were available to you?



Do you live in a state where cannabis or other cannabinoid products are legal for medicinal use?



Do you live in a state where cannabis or other cannabinoid products are legal for recreational use?

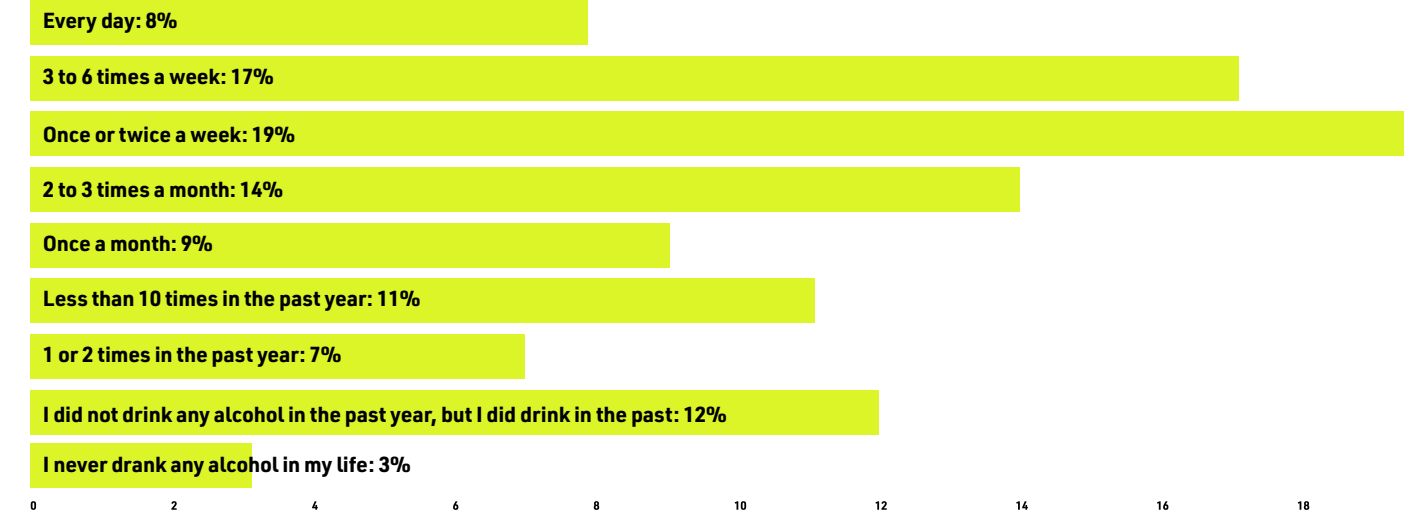


//TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL

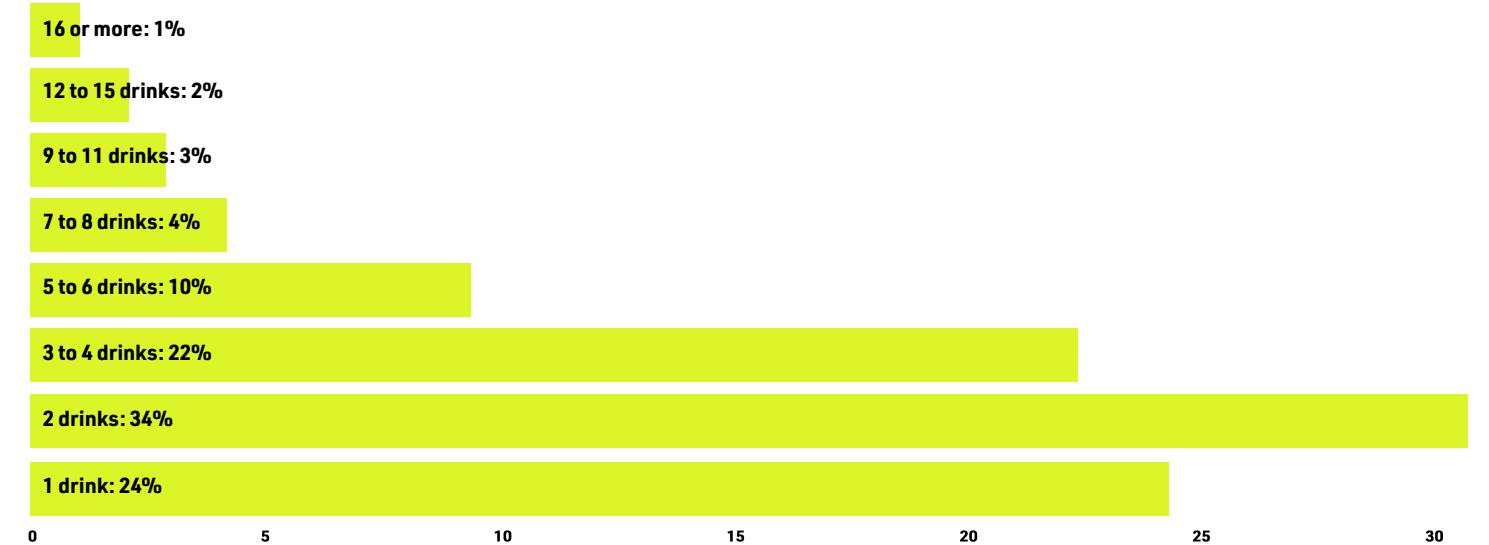


Substance abuse and long-term daily use can have a myriad of harmful health effects from physical to mental health impacts, such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and cancer. IAVA applauds DoD and VA in their efforts to reduce alcohol and tobacco consumption by military personnel and veterans.

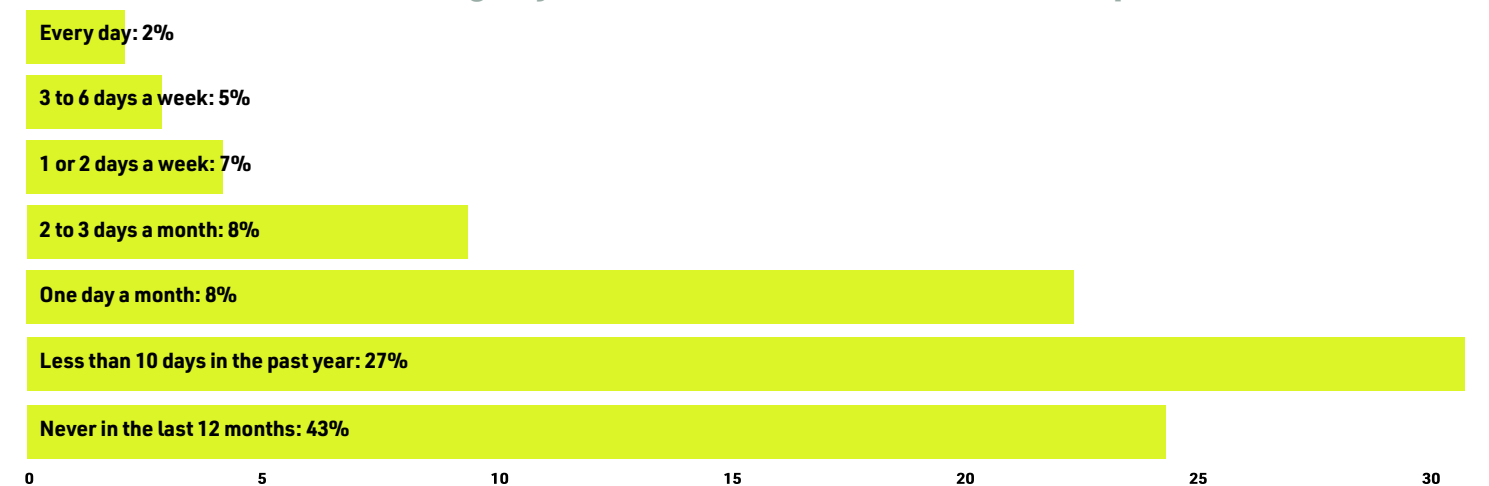
During the last 12 months, how often did you usually have any kind of drink containing alcohol?



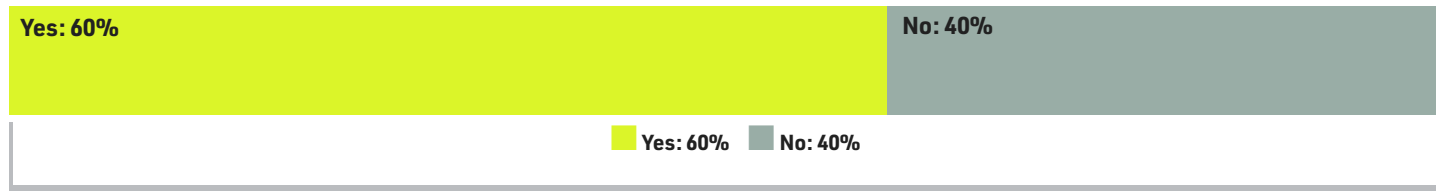
During the last 12 months, how many alcoholic drinks did you have on a typical day when you drank alcohol?



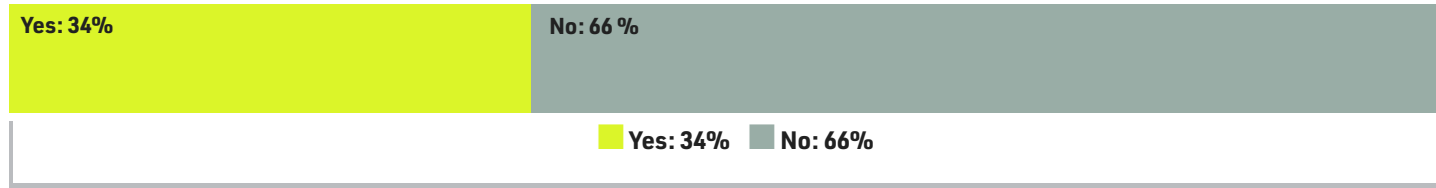
During the last 12 months, how often did you have 5 or more (males) or 4 or more (females) drinks containing any kind of alcohol within a two-hour period?



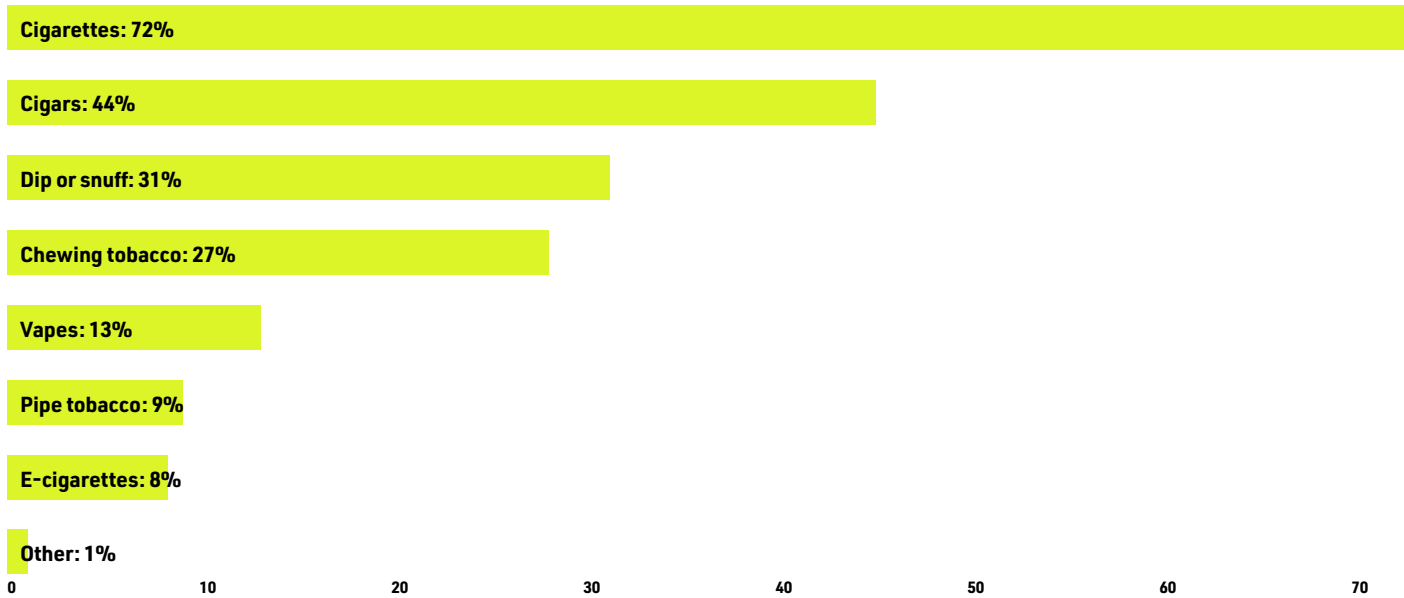
Have you ever used tobacco products?



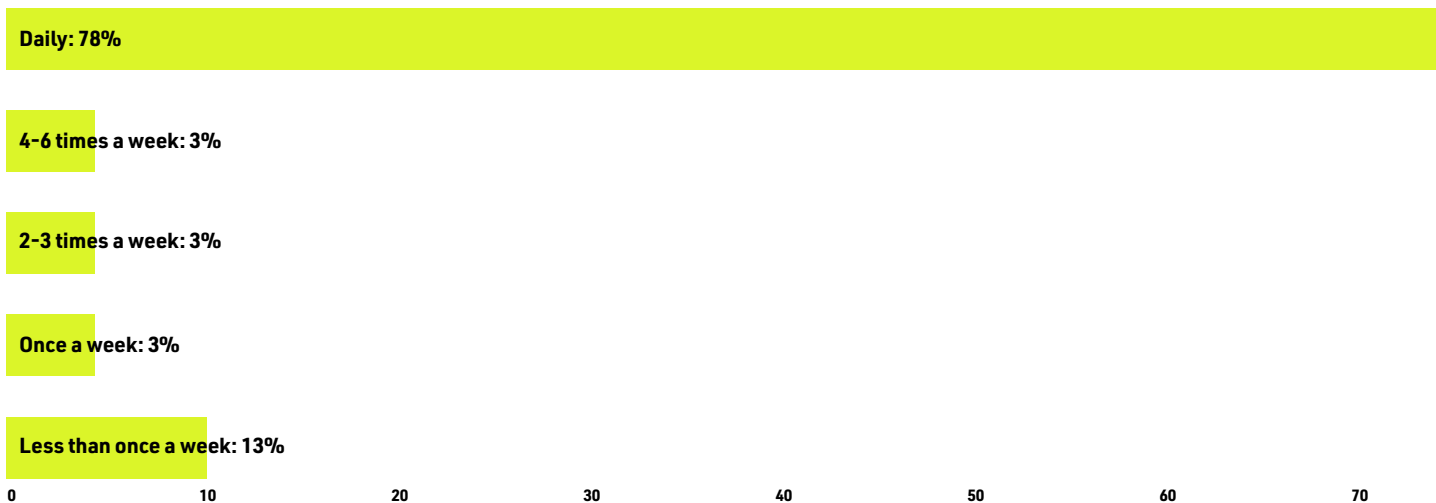
Do you currently use tobacco products?



What form of tobacco products have you used?



How often do you use tobacco products?



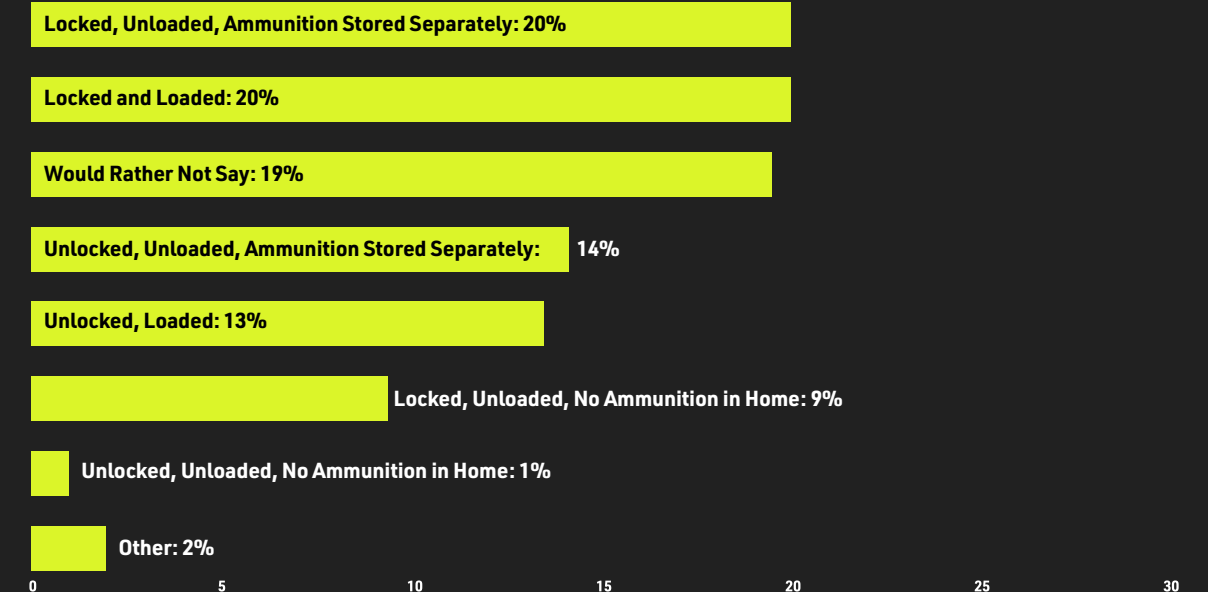
//GUN OWNERSHIP AND STORAGE



It is a powerful and often politicized topic in today's environment, but firearm ownership and storage is a particularly important topic in the veteran community. IAVA members overwhelmingly support universal background checks but do not support banning assault style weapons or high capacity magazines. Firearm safety and storage is a continuing topic of conversation in the veteran community, particularly how access to lethal means is related to suicide.

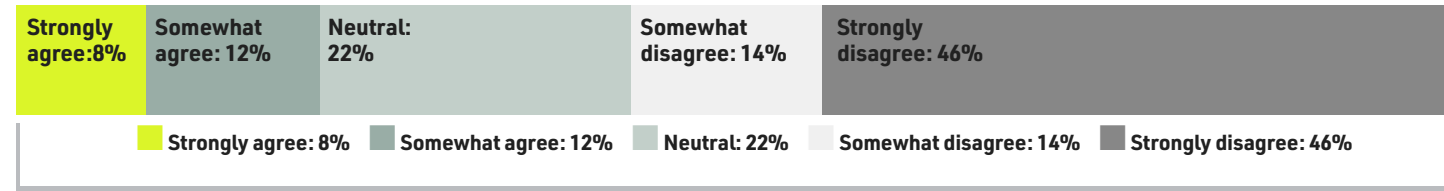
67% of IAVA members own a personal firearm

Please select your primary method of storage for your firearm:

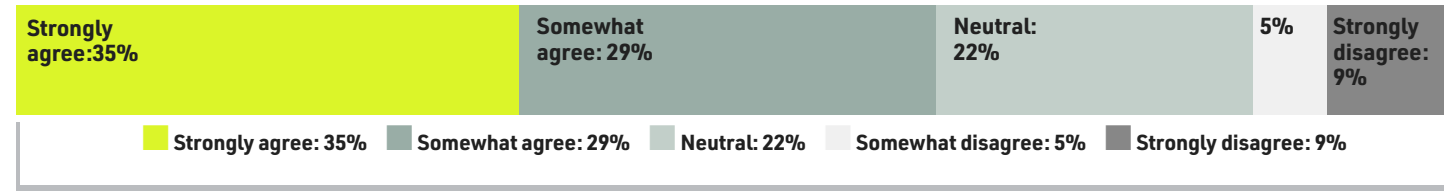


Please indicate your level of agreement with the following:

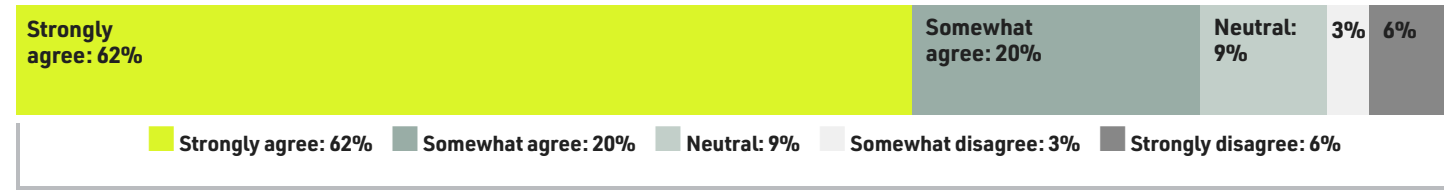
Establishment of community lockers as a means to safely store weapons outside of the home



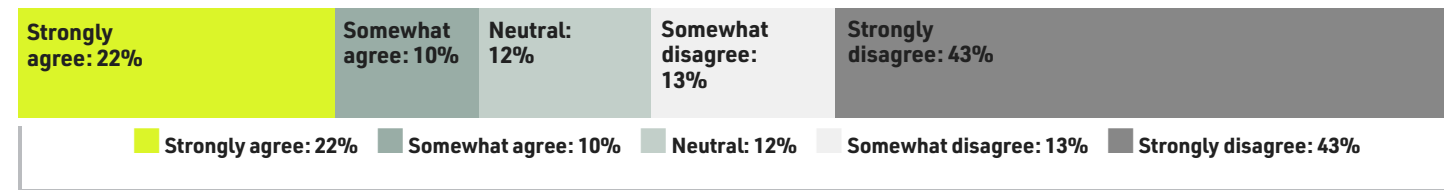
Distribution of trigger locks at medical centers, sporting good/gun stores and community centers.



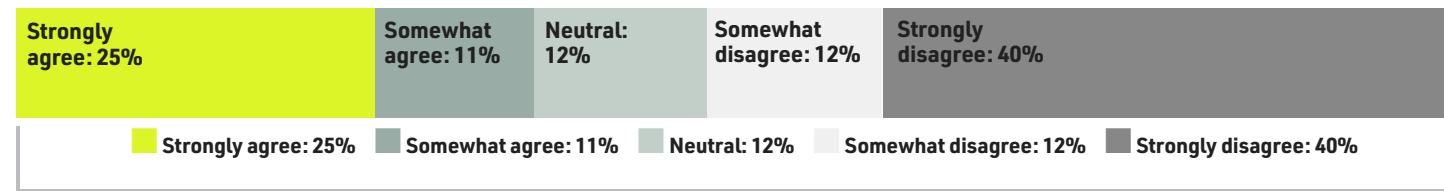
Universal background checks for individuals purchasing firearms



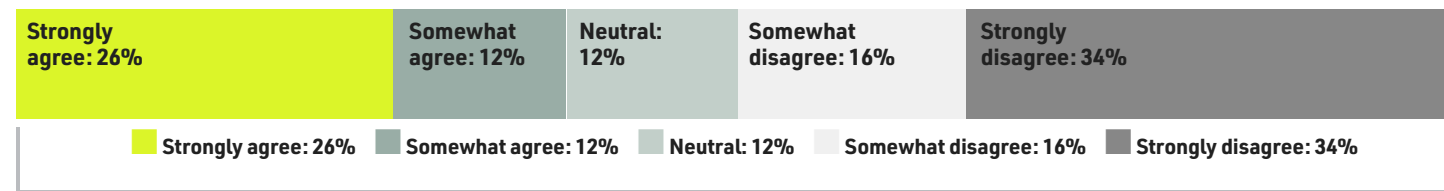
Banning assault-style firearms



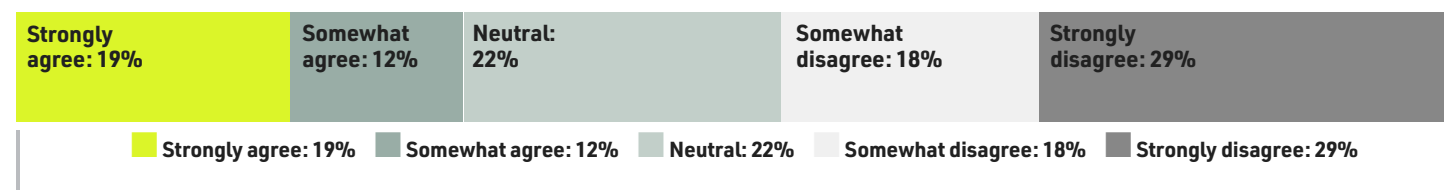
Banning high-capacity magazines



Allowing concealed carry without a permit



Shortening waiting periods for buying firearms legally



//MENTAL HEALTH

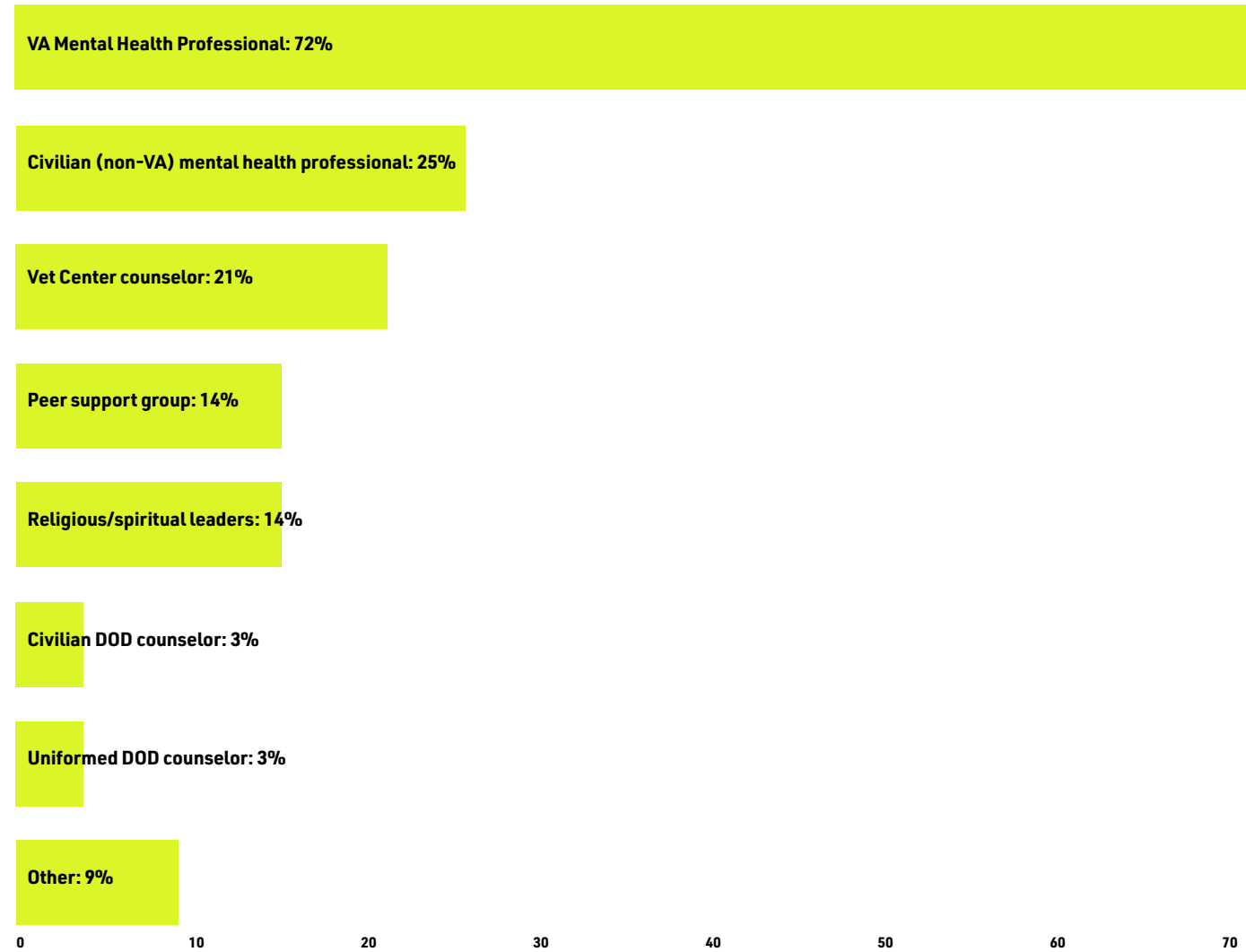


Mental health injuries impact the post-9/11 generation at an alarming rate. Among IAVA members, mental health injuries like PTSD, anxiety and depression are higher than even VA reported numbers for the post-9/11 generation. Ensuring access to effective treatment options for mental health injuries is paramount to the long term health of post-9/11 veterans.

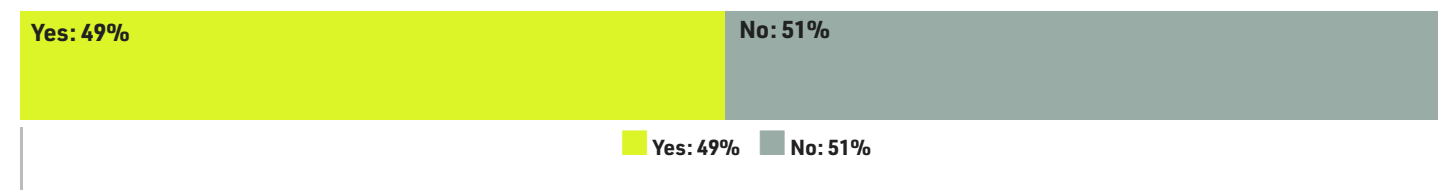
61% have a service-connected mental health injury

75% are seeking care for their service-connected mental health injury

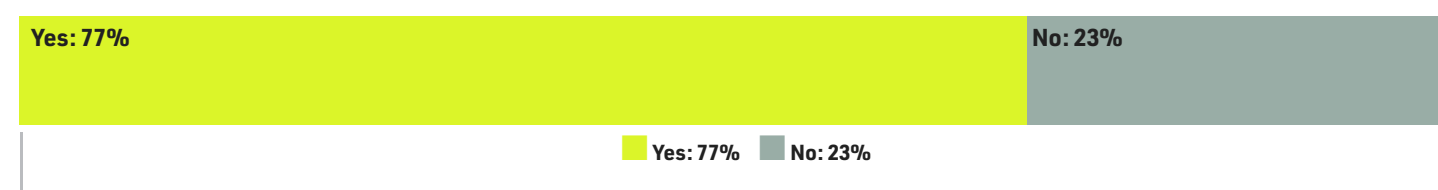
Where are you seeking care?



Has anyone close to you suggested you seek care for a mental health injury?



Have you sought help as a result of someone close to you suggesting you seek care for a mental health injury?



What are some of the reasons that you believe contribute to the military/veteran community not getting the mental healthcare they need?

1. The stigma of seeking help is too great
2. They have access to care but not quality care
3. They have access but are not seeking care

Select the top reasons why you are not seeking care for a mental health injury:

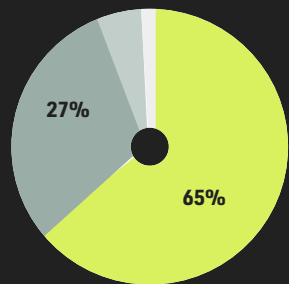
1. Have not found a mental health professional that understands my needs
2. Started treatment but decided to stop
3. Concerned it might affect my career

//GENERAL HEALTH



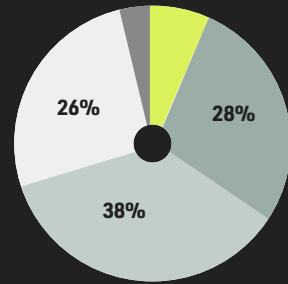
Over 52,000 servicemembers have been wounded in action in Iraq and Afghanistan according to the Department of Defense. Continuing issues such as shrapnel wounds, second and third degree burns, limb loss, musculoskeletal damage, traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress are of great concern for the post-9/11 generation.

How would you rate your health before joining the military?



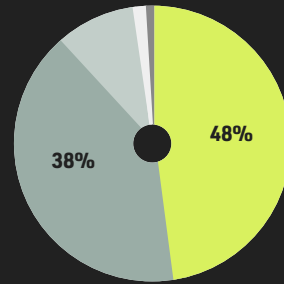
- Excellent: 65%
- Good: 27%
- Average: 7%
- Poor: 1%
- Terrible: <1%

How do you rate your current overall health?



- Excellent: 5%
- Good: 26%
- Average: 38%
- Poor: 28%
- Terrible: 3%

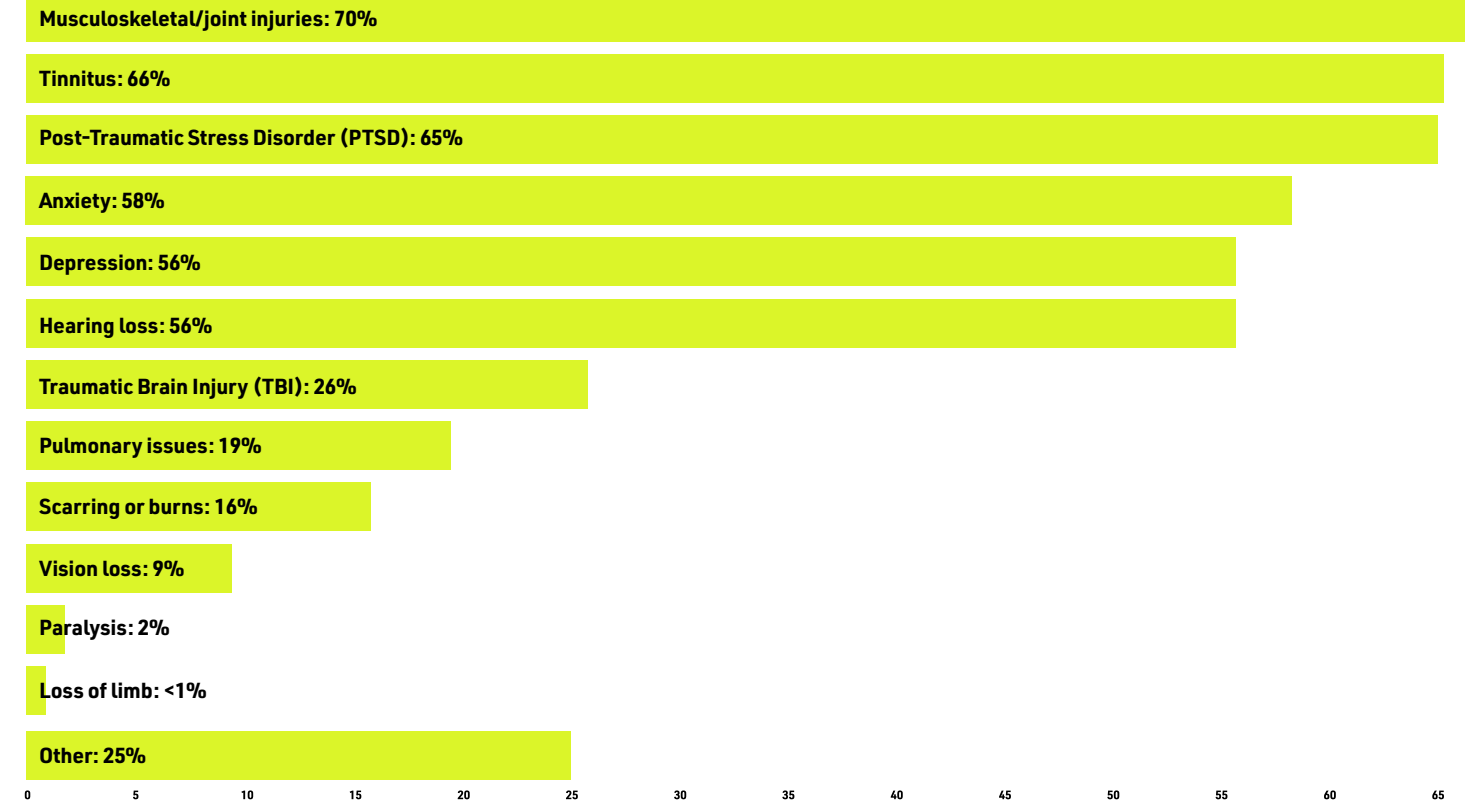
How important is maintaining your health to you?



- Extremely important: 48%
- Very important: 38%
- Moderately important: 12%
- Slightly important: 2%
- Not at all important: <1%

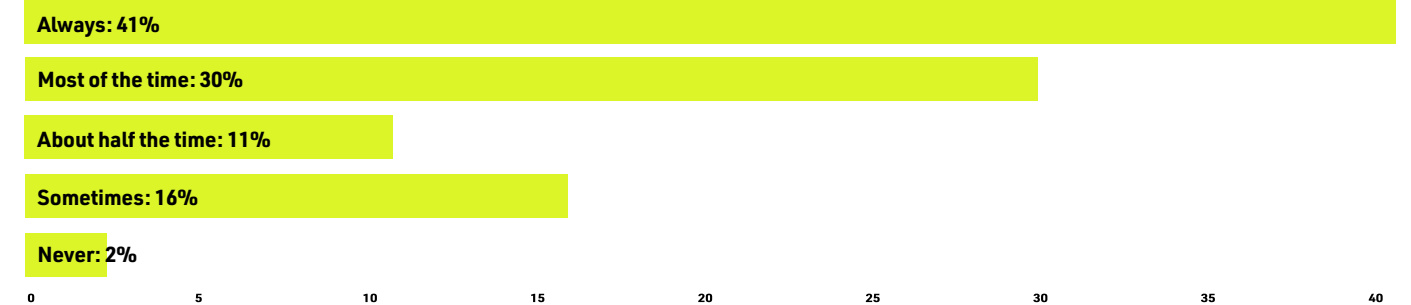
90% report experiencing a service-connected injury

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

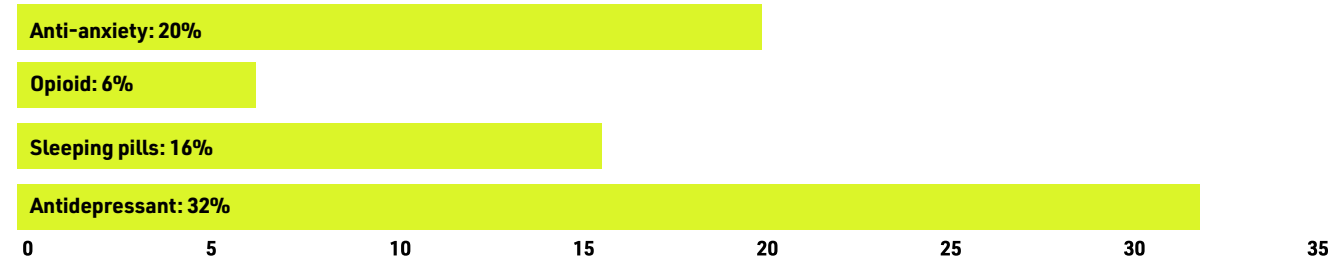


74% suffer from chronic pain due to a service-connected injury

How often do your service-connected injuries affect your daily life?

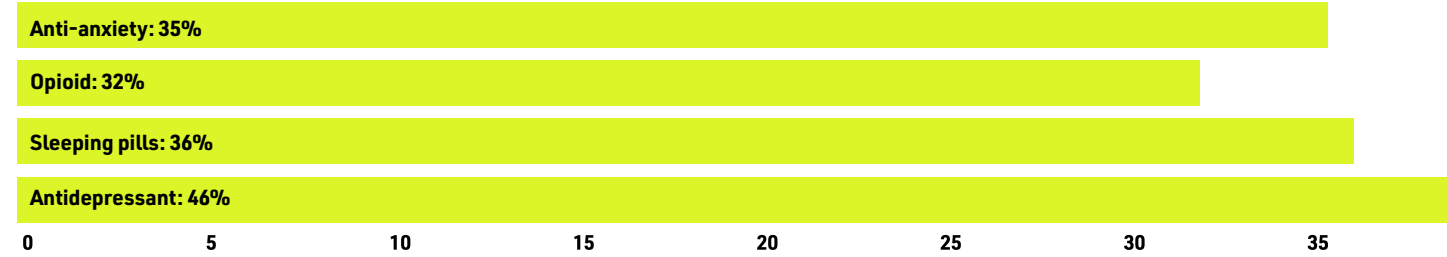


Are you currently taking any of the following drugs for a service-related injury?

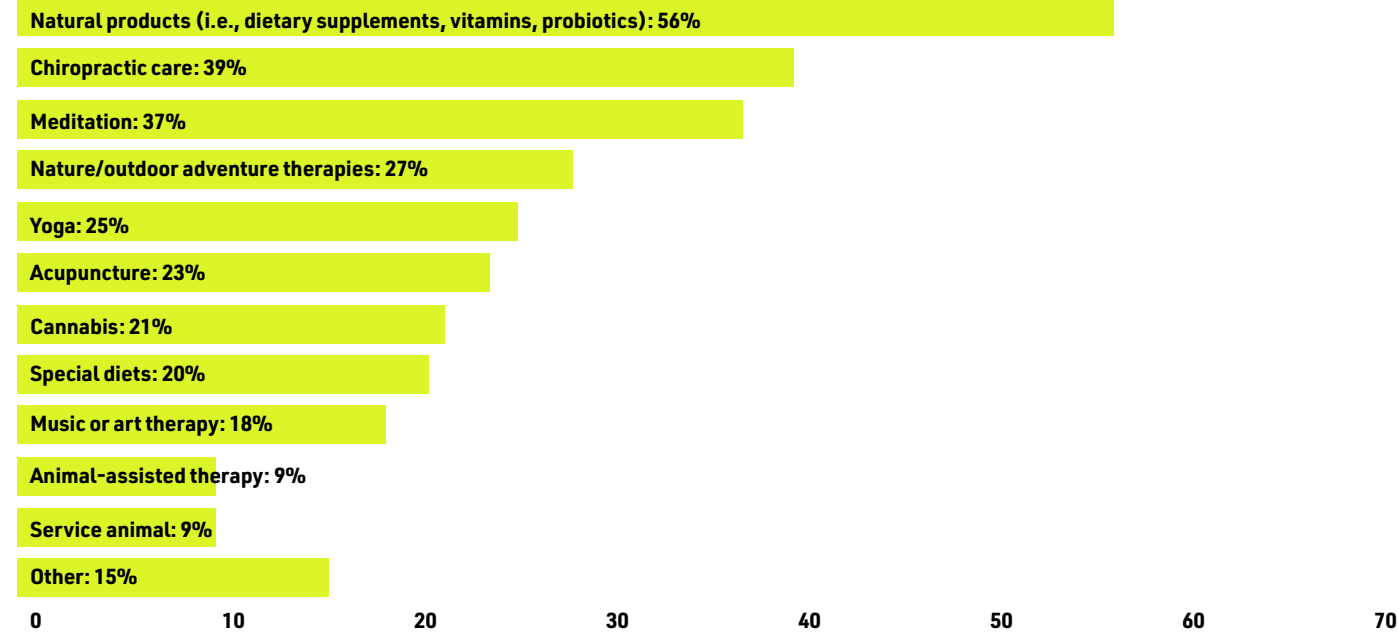


Only 6% of IAVA members are currently taking an opioid-based medication, a decrease from 28% in 2016

In the past, have you been prescribed any of the following drugs for a service-related injury?



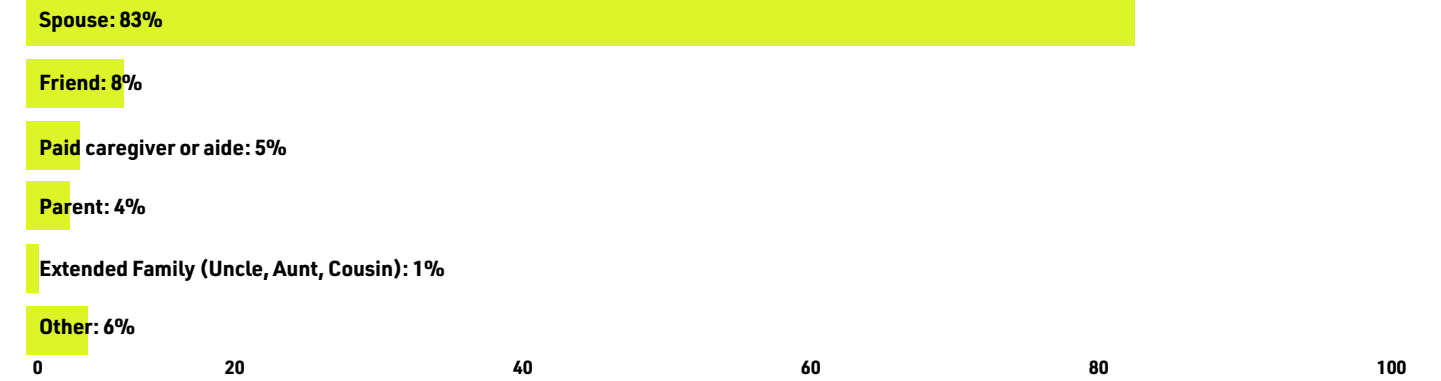
Alternative Therapies Used in Care Regimen:



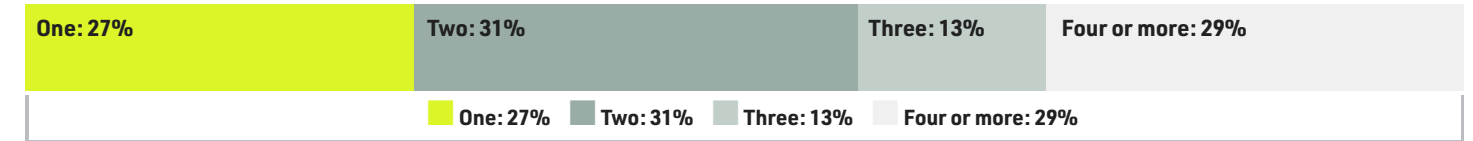
71% of members are using one or more of these alternative therapies to treat an injury they received as a result of their service

21% of IAVA members currently have someone assisting them with some aspect of their daily health needs

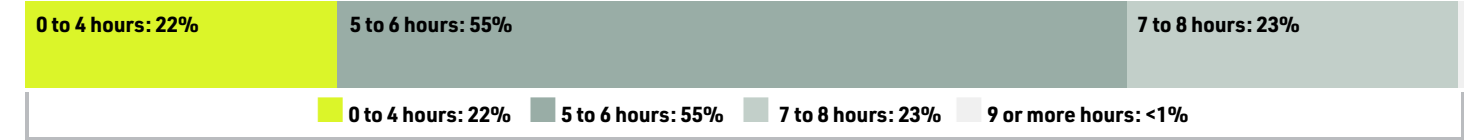
The caregivers are:



How many daily activities do you need assistance with?



On average, how many hours of sleep do you get per night?

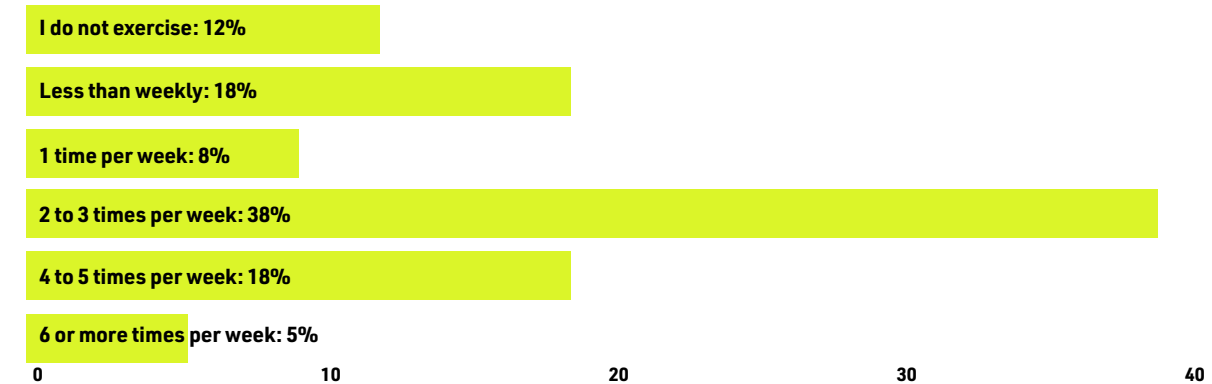


How often do you have trouble sleeping at night?



44% have been diagnosed with a sleep condition

How many times a week do you exercise?

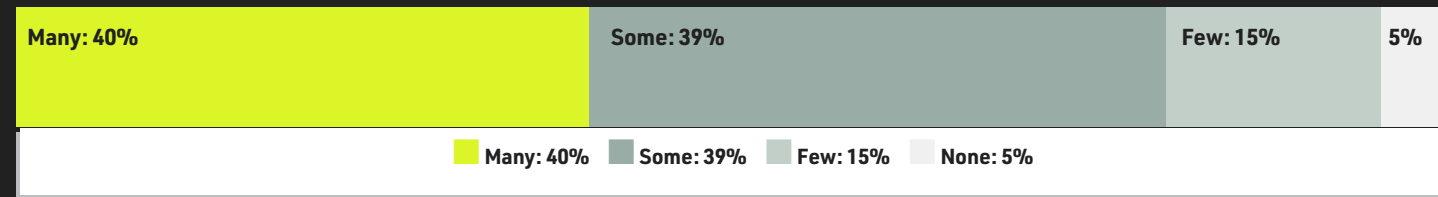


//TRANSITION EXPERIENCES

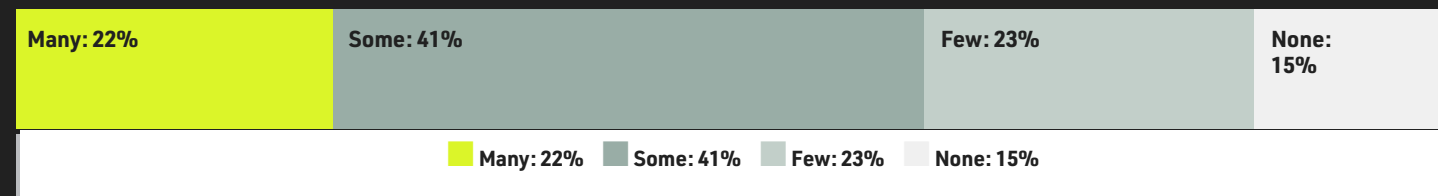


The transition from military to civilian life is often a challenging time for IAVA members. We know a successful transition experience can set up many for a life of continued success. However, a difficult transition experience can have the opposite effect.

Did you experience challenges when transitioning out of the military?



Do you currently experience any challenges related to your military service?



Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

I had a successful transition into civilian life



I was successful in overcoming the challenges I faced in my transition



I feel like a valued member of my community



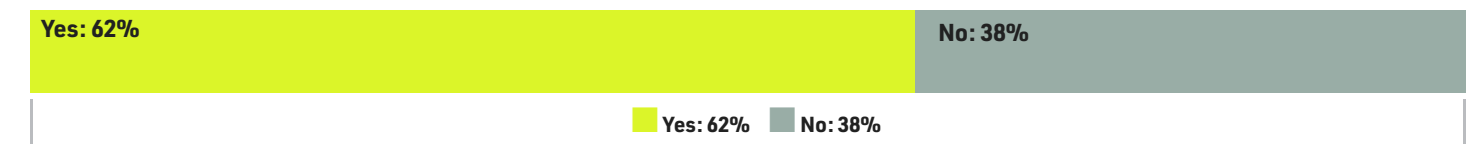
I feel a sense of belonging in my community



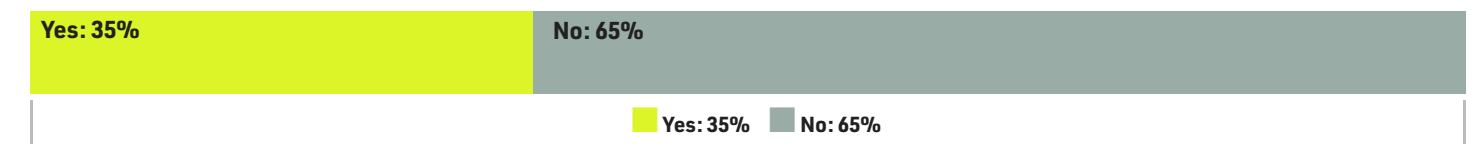
Top 5 Transition challenges

1. Loss of identity/purpose
2. Relating to non-veteran civilians/Reintegrating with community
3. Readjusting to social life
4. Health concerns (Mental or Physical)
5. Difficulty navigating VA benefits

Were you prepared to manage your finances immediately after your transition out of the military?

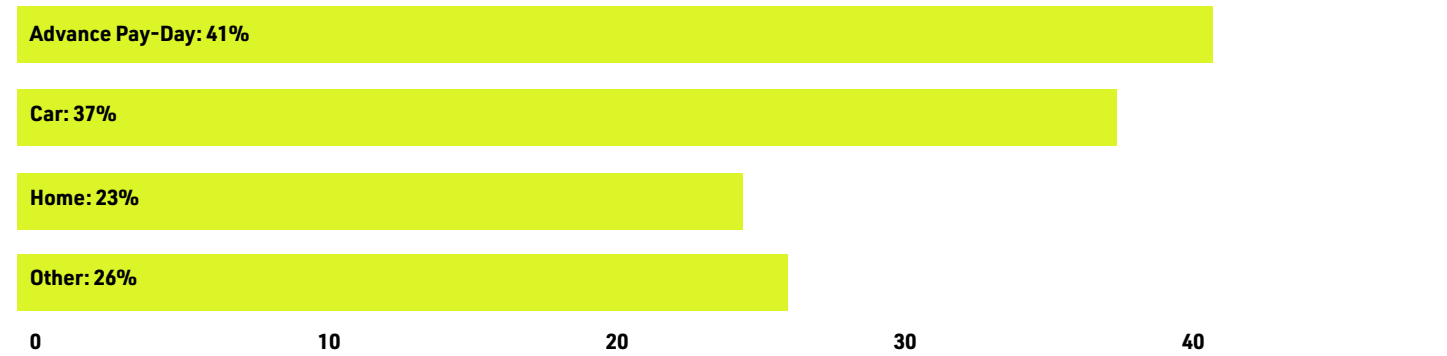


In a typical month is it difficult to cover your expenses and pay all your bills?

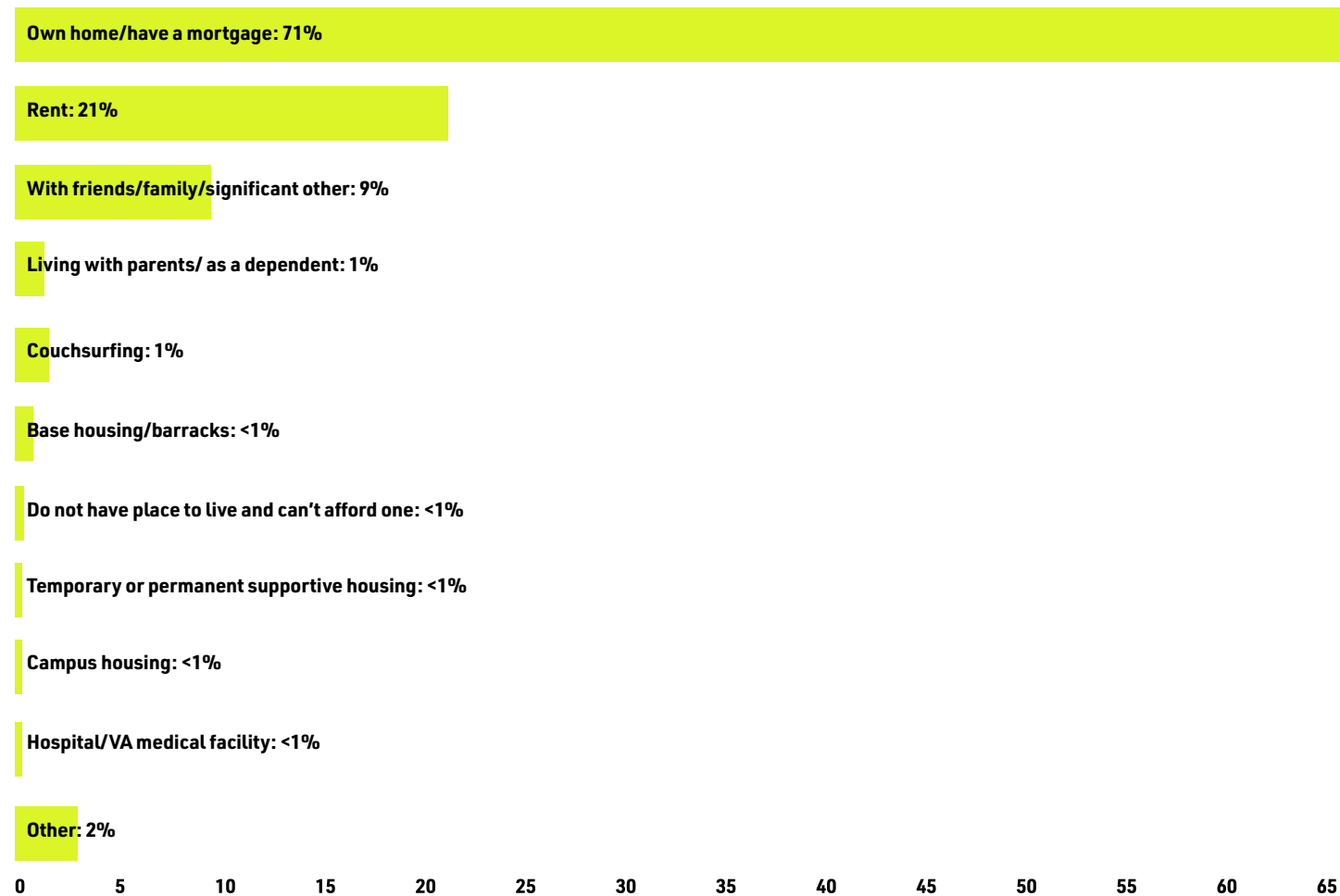


36% Believe they may have or did experience predatory loan practices, described as deceptive, unfair, or fraudulent practices

Predatory Loan Type



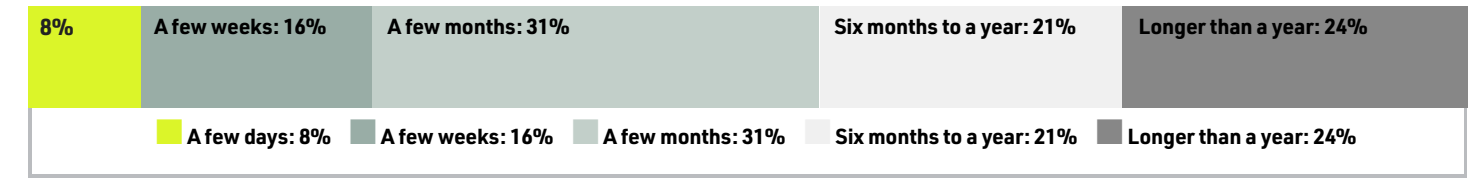
Current Living Situation:



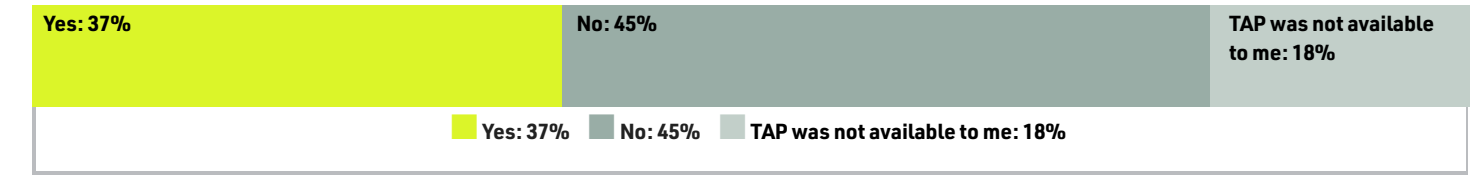
22% Of IAVA members report not having a permanent place to live when they transitioned out of the military

81% Report couchsurfing, or staying with family or friends temporarily, when they transitioned out of the military

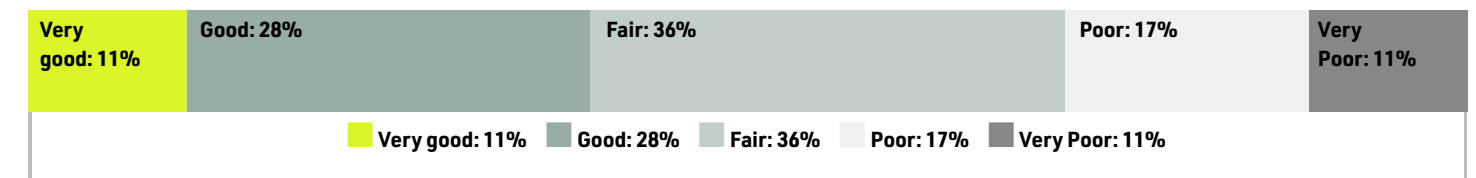
How long were you without a permanent place to live when you transitioned out of the military?



Have you participated in or are you currently participating in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)?



How would you rate your experience in the Transition Assistance Program?

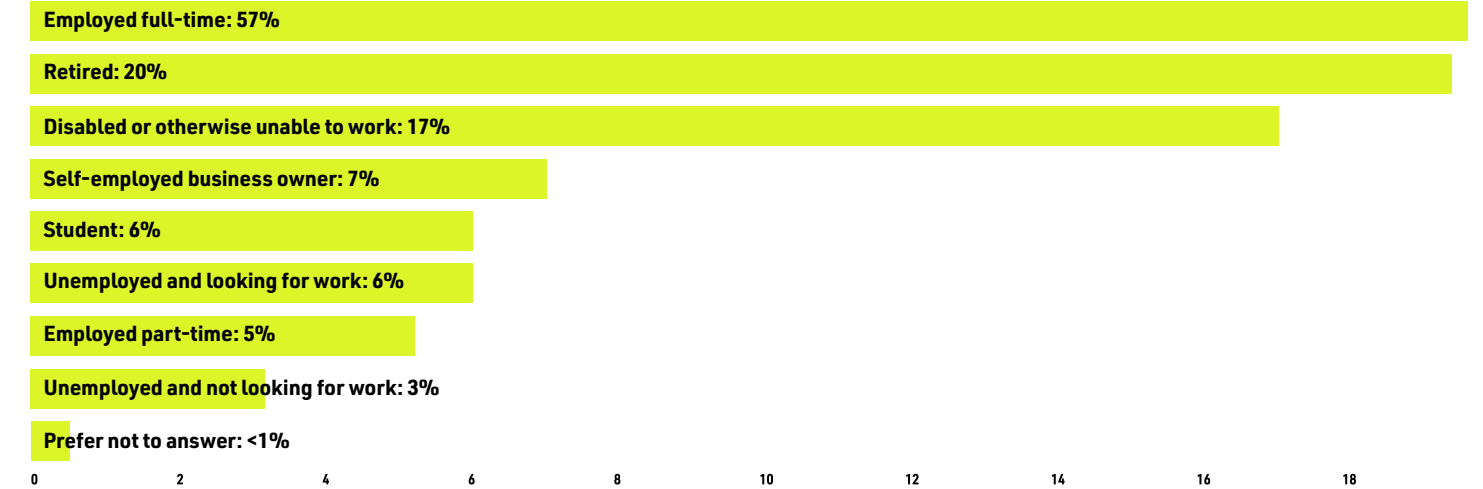


//EMPLOYMENT



Unemployment rates among IAVA members have been consistently declining, since being 10% in 2014. In 2020, the unemployment rate is holding steady at 6%. But job satisfaction, underemployment, veteran-friendly employment practices and other factors continue to impact the overall employment outlook for the post-9/11 generation.

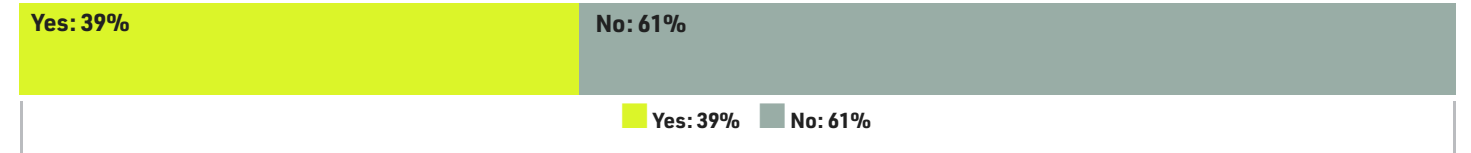
What is your employment status?



34% of IAVA members consider themselves currently underemployed, defined as not having enough paid work or not doing enough work that makes full use of your skills or abilities

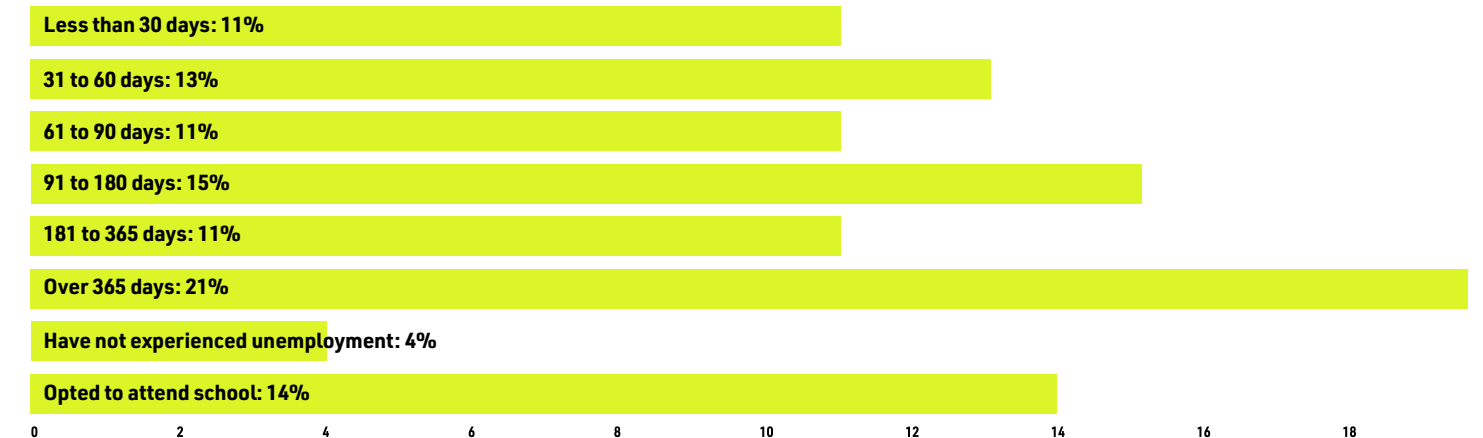
- When looking for employment, what are you most concerned about?
1. Salary/benefits package
 2. Work/life balance
 3. Job is meaningful

Did you receive support/training for transitioning to the civilian workforce before leaving the military?



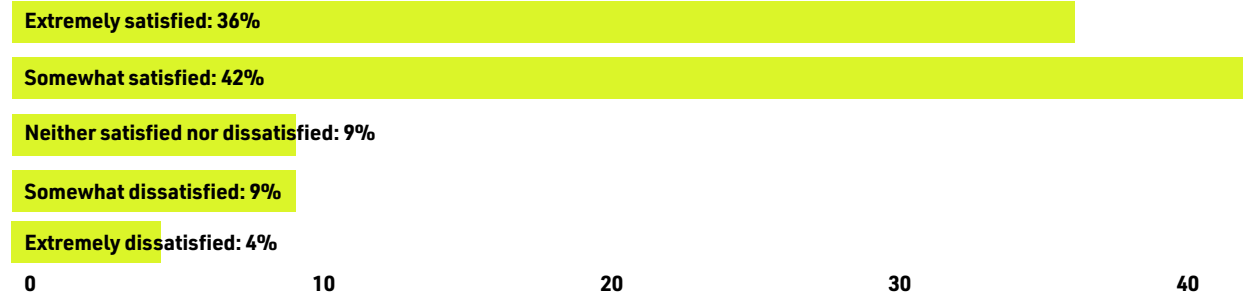
66% Did not have a job secured before they left the military

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





Are you personally satisfied with your current job?



Top 3 job satisfaction factors:

1. The environment and/or people
2. Compensation
3. Job is mission driven/has an impact

Top 3 reasons unsatisfied with job:

1. The environment and/or people
2. Job does not best use my skills
3. Compensation

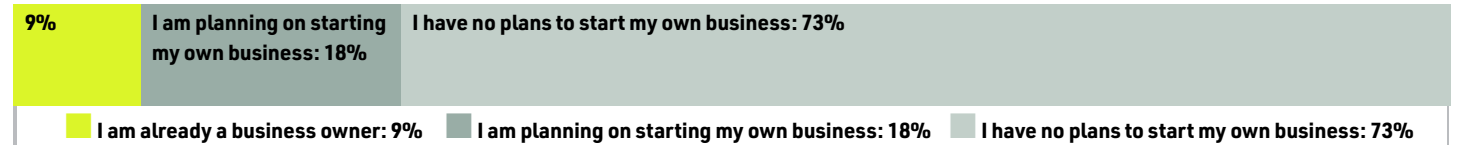
Top 3 challenges faced in finding work:

1. Competing with candidates who have been in the workforce longer
2. Mental health injuries
3. Explaining how military skills translate

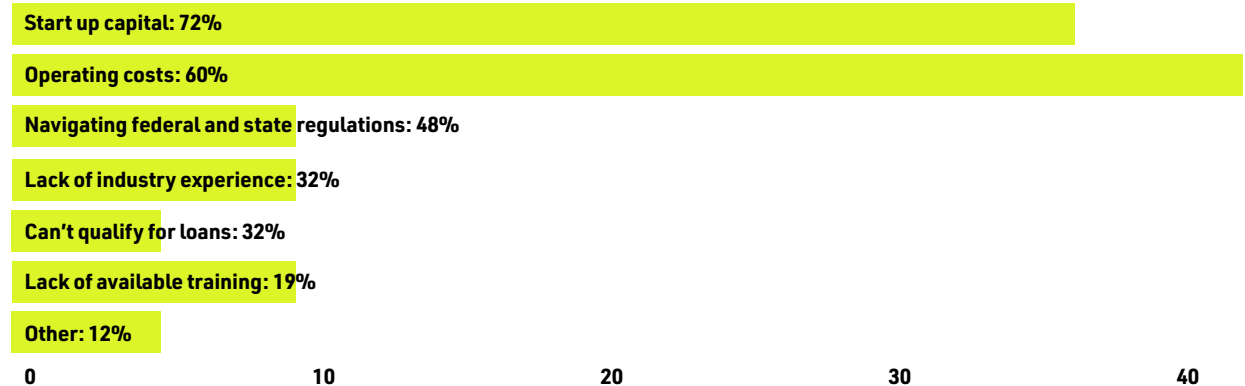
Top 3 reasons not looking for work:

1. Mental health concerns/challenges
2. Physical health concerns/challenges
3. Concern about employer stereotypes

Are you currently a business owner or do you have plans to start your own business/non-profit enterprise?



What challenges do you currently experience or anticipate for starting your business/non-profit?



57% are unaware of VA/Department of Labor small business support programs for veterans

//SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey alpha test was distributed among IAVA staff members from October 21-25, 2019 and later beta tested among a dozen IAVA leaders and staff members from November 18-29. The final survey was fielded among all IAVA veteran members via email from December 6, 2019 to January 13, 2020. The opportunity to enter a drawing for five Southwest Airlines vouchers to fly anywhere the airline flies domestically in 2020 was provided as an incentive to complete the survey. Social media was utilized to encourage post-9/11 veterans to join IAVA and take the survey. New members were also provided a link in the welcome email received during this time frame.

2,254 members began the survey and 1,705 IAVA members completed it, resulting in a 76% completion rate.

//AUTHOR



Ryan Britch serves as IAVA's Associate of Government Affairs and specializes in veterans' housing and health policy issues. Ryan's efforts in translating IAVA members' experiences and views based on the annual survey advises the work of IAVA on legislative and policy matters.

Ryan spent 8 years as an Infantryman in the Vermont Army National Guard and deployed to Paktia, Afghanistan from 2009-2010. After leaving the military, he joined the Peace Corps and spent over 2 years in The Kingdom of Swaziland working on agricultural, youth, and HIV-AIDS prevention programs.

In 2017, Ryan had the privilege of presenting his research on using traditional techniques to influence positive masculinity and sexual reproductive health at the International Aids Society Conference in Paris, France. Ryan has contributed to the Military Times and authored a white paper evaluating trends in the rates of veteran suicide and it's potential causes.

Ryan is a graduate of the University of Vermont with a B.A in Sociology and is currently a Master of Public Administration candidate at American University.

//THANK YOU

Thank you to all of our IAVA Members who participated in this survey. Thank you to all the IAVA staff members who worked tirelessly to design, edit, and provide feedback on this survey. Thank you to Qualtrics for providing the platform to IAVA for survey fielding.

This project would not have been possible without the creative vision and talents of Eric Schoenborn and Chris Rosenthal. Thank you for all your work and sharing your talent to make this project a success.

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