



2019

Arizona Veteran Survey

Full Report



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About the Survey

The Arizona Veteran Survey was first conducted in 2017 by the Arizona Coalition for Military Families (ACMF). It was the first ever comprehensive survey of the Arizona military, veteran, and family community and received almost 5,000 submissions. ACMF and ASU College of Health Solutions (CHS) conducted a second survey that was active from August 19, 2019 - December 31, 2019.

The 2019 survey was drafted based on the 2017 survey questions and included the following ten sections:

- Demographics
- Physical & Mental Health
- Injuries/Disabilities
- Housing & Lifestyle
- Family & Social Supports
- Stressors & Suicide
- Substance Use & Treatment
- Legal Issues
- Education
- Employment

As with the previous studies, the survey was voluntary, anonymous, and open to all service members, veterans, and family members in Arizona. The survey was distributed by the Arizona Department of Veteran Services (ADVS) and ACMF and was primarily distributed online, with a paper-based survey option available for specific populations.

The purpose of the Arizona Veteran Survey is to assess the needs of Arizona's military and veteran population to continue to improve the care and resources available.

The 2019 survey gathered over 11,000 responses.



DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Race

3.4%
American Indian
or Alaska Native

1.3%
Asian

4.5%
Black or African
American

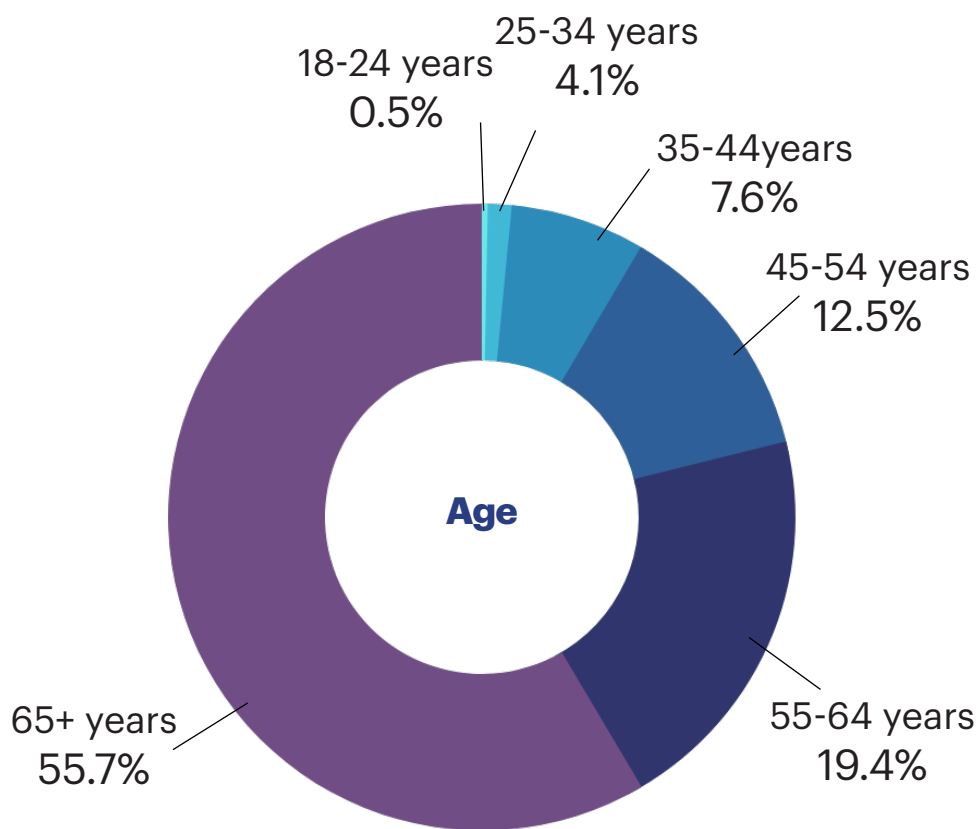
90.0%
White or
Caucasian

0.7%
Native Hawaiian/Other
Pacific Islander

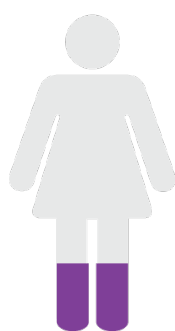
Ethnicity

9.3%
Hispanic or
Latino

90.7%
Not Hispanic or
Latino



Gender



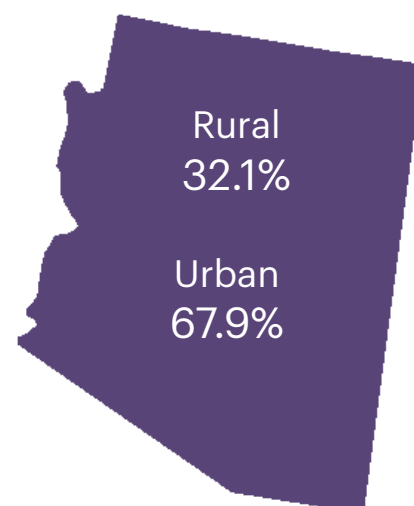
Female
13.2%



Male
86.5%

Other
0.3%

Counties



PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

Veteran Respondents

✓ **1 in 4** veterans reported mental health concerns and that someone close to them has recommended they receive mental health care.

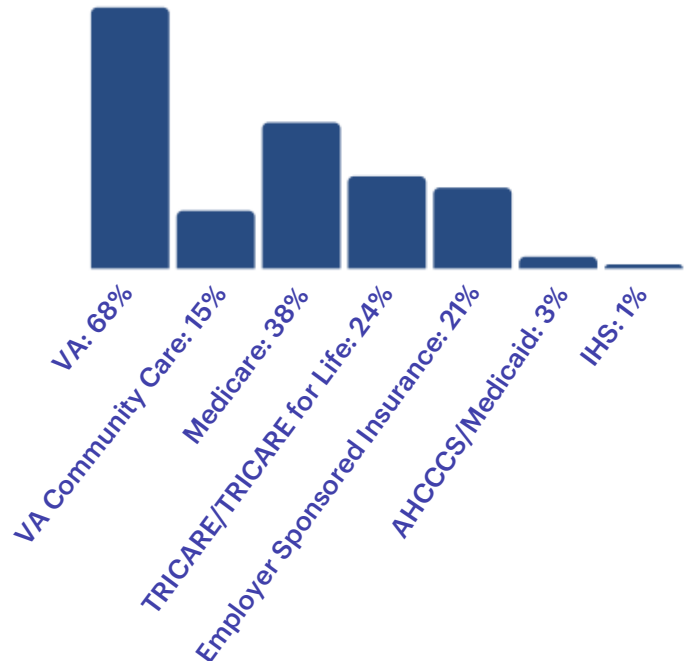
✓ Of those, only **17%** are currently seeking mental health care.

✓ The top **3** reasons for not accessing mental health services for veterans include:

1. Time and availability
2. Concern about being diagnosed with a mental health condition
3. Lack of belief that mental health services would be helpful

✓ On average veteran respondents reported **14 days** in the past month that their physical health was poor and **12 days** out of the past month their mental health was poor.

✓ Veteran respondents use a number of different health care services including:



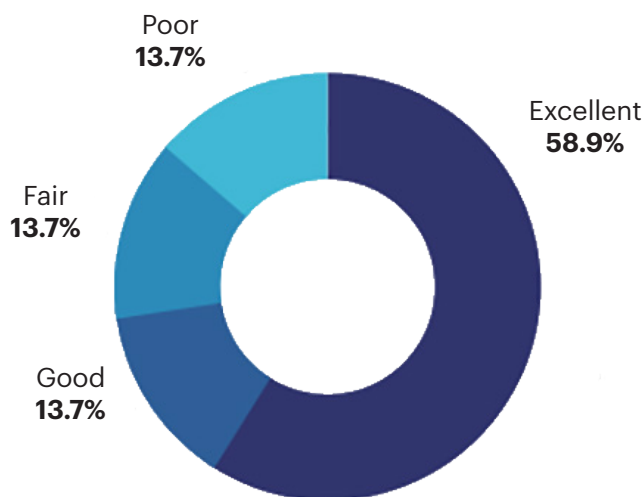
✓ **45%** of veteran respondents reported feeling little interest or pleasure in doing things in the past month.



PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

Service Member Respondents

- ✓ On average, service members said their physical health was poor for **9 days** and their mental health was poor **11 days** during the past month.
- ✓ **1 in 4** service members has several days where they feel little to no interest in doing things.
- ✓ However, only **14%** of service members are seeking mental health care.
- ✓ The top **3** reasons for not accessing mental health services include:
 - 1. Time, can't take time off work, transportation is too far, etc.**
 - 2. I am concerned about being diagnosed with a mental health issue.**
 - 3. Access or difficulty finding a provider.**
- ✓ Overall, service member respondents rated their overall health as:



Family Member Respondents

- ✓ On average in the past month family members reported their physical health was poor **10 days** and their mental health **12 days**.
- ✓ **28%** of family member respondents have had someone recommend they seek mental health care.
- ✓ For those not receiving mental health care, the top **3** barriers reported were:
 - 1. Time**
 - 2. Cost**
 - 3. Access or difficulty finding a provider.**

INJURIES & DISABILITIES

Veteran Respondents

- ✓ **67%** of veteran respondents reported having an injury or disability.



- ✓ **2 out of 3** reported a line of duty (LOD) injury.
- ✓ Veteran respondents with a service-connected disability have, on average, a VA Compensation rating of **~50% (0-100%)**.
- ✓ Additionally, **82%** of respondents have a documented disability by a medical professional.

Service Member Respondents



- ✓ Comparatively, **64%** of service member respondents have a line of duty (LOD) injury.
- ✓ **41%** have a service-connected disability with an average VA Disability Compensation rating of **~40%**.
- ✓ **36%** of respondents have not applied for VA Disability Compensation but would like to learn more about it.

Family Member Respondents

- ✓ **46%** of family member respondents have a service member/veteran in their life who has sustained an injury or disability.



- ✓ **28%** of family members have lost a loved one in the military.
- ✓ **17%** of military family members have a disability or injury.

HOUSING & LIFESTYLE

Veteran Respondents

✓ **28%** of veteran respondents reported struggling with meeting the basic needs of their family, up **10%** from 2017.

✓ **16%** reported experiencing homelessness at least once in their lifetime.



✓ **6%** reported concerns about losing their current housing and **2%** reported they were currently without a steady place to live.



✓ **1 in 4** veterans reported struggling with finances.

✓ **Over half** of veteran respondents have firearms in or around the house.

✓ **28%** of these firearms are loaded and **22%** are unlocked.

Service Member Respondents

✓ Of the service member respondents, **67%** are homeowners, **24%** are renting, and **7%** live with friends/family.

✓ The top **3** things service members struggle affording include:

1. Home maintenance

2. Car repairs

3. Pet care

✓ **66%** have firearms in or around their home with **30%** loaded and **19%** unlocked.

Family Member Respondents

✓ **22%** of family member respondents reported food insecurity.

✓ **38%** reported difficulty paying for basics like food, housing, medical care, and heating/cooling.

✓ **35%** reported not having enough money to pay bills.

✓ **1 in 2** family members have firearms kept in or around the house with **20%** of the firearms loaded and **13%** unlocked.

FAMILY & SOCIAL SUPPORTS

Veteran Respondents

- ✓ **34%** of veteran respondents reported feeling lonely or isolated from those around them.

- ✓ **13%** of veteran respondents have minor children living in their home.



- ✓ **14%** reported problems getting childcare which makes it difficult to work or study.

- ✓ The top **5** sources of support for veterans include:

- 1. Family**
- 2. Friends**
- 3. Medical and other providers**
- 4. Fellow military service members or veterans**
- 5. Faith community**

Service Member Respondents

- ✓ Of the service member respondents, **60%** use spirituality as a source of strength and comfort.

- ✓ **49%** of service member respondents have minor children living at home.

- ✓ **13%** struggle to find childcare.

- ✓ The top **5** sources of support for service members include:

- 1. Family**
- 2. Friends**
- 3. Fellow military service members or veterans**
- 4. Co-workers**
- 5. Animals**

Family Member Respondents

- ✓ **33%** of family member respondents are a caretaker for someone.

- ✓ Spirituality is a source of comfort for **50%** of family members.



- ✓ The top **5** sources of support for family members include:

- 1. Family**
- 2. Friends**
- 3. Co-workers**
- 4. Faith community**
- 5. Animals**

- ✓ **37%** have felt lonely or isolated.

STRESSORS & SUICIDE

Veteran Respondents

- ✓ **2 in 3** veteran respondents know at least one person who has died by suicide.
- ✓ **70%** know other military service members or veterans who have attempted suicide.
- ✓ **43%** of veteran respondents have had thoughts of suicide, and **16%** have attempted suicide.



Service Member Respondents

- ✓ **75%** know of at least one person who has died by suicide.
- ✓ **22%** have had thoughts of suicide and **7%** have attempted suicide.
- ✓ **88%** know of other military service members or veterans who have attempted suicide.

Family Member Respondents

- ✓ **67%** of family members know at least one person who has died of suicide.
- ✓ **60%** know a military service member or veteran who has attempted suicide.

Stress Zone	Veterans	Service Members	Family Members
LOW (no crisis and stress is manageable)	58%	48%	49%
MILD (trouble sleeping, relationship problems, irritable)	35%	43%	45%
MODERATE (panic attacks, self-harm, heavy substance use)	6%	8%	6%
SEVERE (danger to self or others)	1%	1%	0.7%

SUBSTANCE USE & TREATMENT

Veteran Respondents

✓ **39%** of veteran respondents reported a current or previous opioid prescription.

✓ **21%** are currently or were previously prescribed anti-depression medication.



✓ **13%** have combined alcohol with prescription pain relievers in the same event.

✓ **4%** of veterans reported current or prior abuse of alcohol.

✓ **2%** of veterans reported current or prior prescription pain reliever abuse.

✓ **35%** reported a current or previous opioid prescription.

✓ **11%** reported combining alcohol with prescription pain relievers.

Family Member Respondents

✓ **31%** of family member respondents reported a current or previous opioid prescription.



✓ **1 in 5** military family members have or previously have been prescribed antidepressants.

✓ **6%** of family member respondents have taken prescription pain relievers that were not theirs or in a way not prescribed.

Service Member Respondents

✓ **44%** of service member respondents reported consuming alcohol multiple times in the past **30 days**.



EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

Veteran Respondents

✓ **44%** of veteran respondents have a bachelor's, master's, or advanced graduate degree.

✓ **36%** have utilized veteran-specific programs and resources at their schools.



✓ **58%** of veterans are retired, **27%** are employed full time, and **4%** are unemployed and looking for work.

✓ The top **3** barriers identified were:

1. **Overqualified**
2. **Bias due to age, disability, or other**
3. **Pay or benefits not sufficient to make a living**

Service Member Respondents



✓ **1 in 3** service members are currently a student.

✓ **50%** have utilized veteran-specific and resources at their school.

✓ In the next **2 years**, the top anticipated pathways for career advancement included:

- **Go back to school**
- **Get a promotion within their current company**
- **Add skills through their own effort outside of work**
- **Add skills through on-the-job training opportunities**

✓ The top **3** barriers identified were:

1. **Pay or benefits are not sufficient to make a living**
2. **Lack of quality jobs available**
3. **They were overqualified**

Family Member Respondents

✓ **30%** of family members have a bachelor's degree, **29%** have an associates degree, **19%** have a high school degree, and **18%** have a master's degree.

✓ **80%** of family member respondents are employed full time.

✓ The top **3** barriers identified were:

1. **Pay or benefits are not sufficient to make a living**
2. **They were overqualified**
3. **Lack of quality jobs**

RURAL VETERANS

BACKGROUND

There were a significantly larger percentage of veterans experiencing mental health conditions in the 13 rural Arizona counties (Arizona Veterans Survey Summary, 2018). Living in rural areas may contribute to geographic, psychological, and socioeconomic disparities, limiting access to suicide preventative measures (Hirsch, 2006). Furthermore, rural populations often delay health care treatment and hold stigmas toward mental health treatments, further limiting their willingness to seek treatment (Hoyt et al., 1997; Spleen et al., 2014). Rural populations are rapidly growing with older adults (Bolin et al., 2015, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2016). In 2019, nearly 1 out of every 10 older adults falls below the poverty level (Administration for Community Living, 2020). With populations rapidly migrating to urban areas, changes in the numbers of rural populations have immediate implications on the community structure (Garkovich, 1989). Rural communities have fewer housing options, education, and employment opportunities, which can have detrimental effects on the economic health of rural communities (Spleen et al., 2014). The 2019 Arizona Veteran Survey included 2,903 rural veterans.

Arizona Veteran Survey DEMOGRAPHICS

Race:

- **4.0%** American Indian or Alaska Native
- **0.8%** Asian
- **2.0%** Black or African American
- **95.4%** White or Caucasian
- **0.7%** Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

Ethnicity:

- **8.3%** Hispanic or Latino
- **91.7%** Non Hispanic or Latino

Age:

- **0.2%** 18-24 years
- **2.8%** 25-34 years
- **6.1%** 35-44 years
- **10.1%** 45-54 years
- **18.9%** 55-64 years
- **62.4%** 65 or older

Gender:

- **89.4%** Male
- **10.3%** Female
- **0.3%** Other

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

- **89%** are receiving healthcare coverage and/or service through VA health care.
- **38%** of rural veteran respondents rated their overall health as poor.
- On average, rural veterans rate their mental health as poor for **12 days** out of the past month.
- Only **16%** are seeking care for a mental health issue or concern.

INJURIES & DISABILITIES

- **59%** of rural veteran respondents have physical injuries and/or disabilities.
- **67%** have a line of duty (LOD) injury that was sustained while in the military.
- **12%** of respondents applied for compensation, but their claims were denied.

RURAL VETERANS

HOUSING & LIFESTYLE

- **15%** of rural veterans have experienced homelessness.
- **1 in 3** rural veterans finds it difficult to pay for basic needs (food, housing, medical care, and heating/cooling).
- **60%** had electric, gas, oil, or water companies threaten to shut off services in their home.

FAMILY & SOCIAL SUPPORTS

- Rural veterans find the most support from Family (**76%**), Friends (**42%**), and Medical and other providers (**18%**).
- **41%** of rural veteran respondents said spirituality has been a great source of strength and comfort.
- **34%** have reported experiencing loneliness.

STRESSORS & SUICIDE

- **41%** reported having thoughts of suicide, **13%** of respondents reported attempted suicide, and **25%** have called a crisis line for help.
- **72%** know another military service member or veteran who has attempted suicide.
- **38%** know more than one who has died by suicide.

SUBSTANCE USE & TREATMENT

- **42%** of rural veterans are prescribed prescription pain relievers.

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

- **64%** of rural veterans are retired.
- **23%** are currently employed full-time.



FEMALE VETERANS

BACKGROUND

In the 2019 Arizona Veterans Survey, 1,084 female veterans shared responses on their health, lifestyle, stressors and suicide, and much more. As more women have joined the military service, the number of female veterans has increased. In 2018, 9% of veterans were female. Additionally, the number of female service members and veterans will continue to rise (Barrett, 2020). Unfortunately, combat exposure and harsh living conditions are not the only obstacles female service members often face. Several studies have found that over 90% of servicewomen have reported sexual harassment (Wilson, 2018). While in the military, the work and home life are melded, making an escape from the experiences of sexual trauma more difficult and nearly impossible (Ruzek et al., 2011). Veterans with Military Sexual Trauma (MST) can also hold other trauma exposures during their war-zone deployment (Ruzek, 2011). Additionally, the prevalence of depression is significant in military-connected women (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2019). Further, female veterans' suicide risk is 2.5 times the rate of non-veteran women and a suicide rate of 31.4 per 100,000 (Fargo et al., 2012).

Arizona Veteran Survey DEMOGRAPHICS

Race:

- **4.1%** American Indian or Alaska Native
- **1.5%** Asian
- **10.2%** Black or African American
- **86.5%** White or Caucasian
- **0.8%** Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

Ethnicity:

- **13.5%** Hispanic or Latino
- **86.5%** Non Hispanic or Latino

Age:

- **0.8%** 18-24 years
- **7.5%** 25-34 years
- **13.1%** 35-44 years
- **21.5%** 45-54 years
- **33.6%** 55-64 years
- **23.0%** 65 or older

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

- **60%** of female veteran respondents reported feeling little to no pleasure in doing things.
- On average, female veterans rate their mental health as poor for **18 days** out of the past month and their physical health as poor for **15 days**.
- Of this respondent population, **31%** are seeking care for a mental health issue or concern.

INJURIES & DISABILITIES

- **3 in 5** female veteran respondents have physical injuries and/or disabilities.
- **65%** have a line of duty (LOD) injury that was sustained while in the military.
- Of the **69%** of female veteran respondents with a service-connected disability, the average VA service-connected disability rating is **53%**.

FEMALE VETERANS

HOUSING & LIFESTYLE

- **19%** of female veterans have experienced homelessness.
- **34%** of female veterans find it difficult to pay for basic needs (food, housing, medical care, and heating/cooling).
- **10%** had electric, gas, oil, or water companies threaten to shut off services in their home.
- **45%** have firearms within or around their homes, **20%** are loaded, and **17%** are unlocked.

FAMILY & SOCIAL SUPPORTS

- **76%** said spirituality has been a great source of strength and comfort.
- **51%** have reported experiencing loneliness.
- **21%** reported having children living in their homes and **5%** find getting childcare difficult for them to work or study.



STRESSORS & SUICIDE

- **42%** reported having thoughts of suicide, **13%** of respondents reported attempted suicide, and **25%** have called a crisis line for help.
- **72%** know another military service member or veteran who has attempted suicide.
- **38%** know more than one who has died by suicide.

SUBSTANCE USE & TREATMENT

- **41%** are currently or were previously prescribed anti-depression medication.



- **15%** reported combining alcohol and prescription pain relievers.

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

- **9%** of female veterans are currently students.
- **35%** of female veterans are retired.
- **42%** are currently employed full time.

VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

BACKGROUND

Homelessness is a public health problem that disproportionately impacts US military veterans (Fargo et al., 2012). Although veterans make up only 7.9% of the US population, they comprise approximately 11% of the US homeless population (Solari, 2016), totaling over 37,000 homeless veterans in 2019 (PIT Estimate of Homeless Veterans). Arizona ranks 12th in states with the highest numbers of homeless populations per capita and also has a large veteran population of over 500,000. This overrepresentation of veterans in the homeless population is multifaceted and associated with a wide range of psychological and physical factors that impact housing outcomes (Brenner et al., 2017) including physical illnesses, mental disorders, substance use disorders, barriers to accessing health care, stigma associated with help-seeking behavior, lack of social support and sense of isolation. Many of these same risk factors associated with increased rates of suicide are also known risk factors for homelessness. Of the 2019 survey respondents, 16% (1,168) of veterans reported experiencing homelessness at least once in their lifetime.

Arizona Veteran Survey DEMOGRAPHICS

Race:

- **7.8%** American Indian or Alaska Native
- **0.8%** Asian
- **8.9%** Black or African American
- **86.6%** White or Caucasian
- **1.1%** Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

Ethnicity:

- **11.9%** Hispanic or Latino
- **88.1%** Non Hispanic or Latino

Age:

- **0.3%** 18-24 years
- **6.4%** 25-34 years
- **11.3%** 35-44 years
- **19.1%** 45-54 years
- **30.6%** 55-64 years
- **32.4%** 65 or older

Gender:

- **81.6%** Male
- **16.8%** Female
- **0.6%** Other

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

- **74%** of homeless veteran respondents receive care at a VA facility.
- **27%** report their overall health as fair and **9%** rate their overall health as poor.

The top 3 barriers to seeking mental healthcare include:

- **13.8%** don't think it will help.
- **12.4%** time.
- **10.6%** concern about being diagnosed with a mental health issue.

INJURIES & DISABILITIES

- **71%** of homeless veteran respondents have physical injuries and/or disabilities.
- **61%** of homeless veteran respondents have a service-connected disability.

VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

INJURIES & DISABILITIES

- **71%** of homeless veteran respondents have physical injuries and/or disabilities.
- **61%** of homeless veteran respondents have a service-connected disability.

HOUSING & LIFESTYLE

- **72%** have experienced homelessness in their lifetime, **17%** have experienced homelessness within the last 5 years, and **11%** have experienced homelessness within the past year.
- **60%** of homeless veterans find it difficult to pay for basic needs (food, housing, medical care, and heating/cooling).

FAMILY & SOCIAL SUPPORTS

- **76%** said spirituality has been a great source of strength and comfort.
- **68%** have reported experiencing loneliness.
- **21%** reported having children living in their homes and **5%** find getting childcare difficult for them to work or study.

STRESSORS & SUICIDE

- **52%** reported having thoughts of suicide, **19%** of respondents reported attempted suicide, and **35%** have called a crisis line for help.
- **74%** know another military service member or veteran who has attempted suicide.
- **55%** know more than one who has died by suicide.

SUBSTANCE USE & TREATMENT



- **40%** are currently or were previously prescribed anti-depression medication.
- **28%** reported combining alcohol and prescription pain relievers.

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

- **13%** of homeless veterans are not employed but looking for employment.
- **39%** reported that they do not believe they have opportunities for pay/position advancement.
- **34%** reported a lack of quality jobs available.



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For more information, please visit: **www.ConnectVeterans.org/survey**
or email **survey@arizonacoalition.org**.