



California Women Veterans Survey Status Update March 2012

Historically, women have played important roles in the military, with veterans having served in Desert Storm/Desert Shield, the Vietnam War, the Korean War, and World War II, as well as at home and throughout the world during peacetime. Since 2003, they have served in the second Gulf War, Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, the largest wartime deployment for U.S. women. Following their military service, often in combat conditions, they are returning to their roles as private citizens – wives, mothers, caregivers, workers – in unprecedented numbers. Women veterans share many of the short- and long-term physical and emotional consequences and needs that their male counterparts face as a result of serving their country. In addition, they have unique experiences and needs as female veterans.

California's Women Veterans

California has the greatest proportion of female veterans in the country (8%). In 2008, the California Commission on the Status of Women (the Commission) and State Senator Lois Wolk requested that the California Research Bureau (CRB) identify the characteristics of the State's more than 167,000 women veterans, including the challenges these veterans face and the services they need.

Related Resources

Available at the California State Library website (<http://www.library.ca.gov/>) under the **CA Research Bureau Reports** link:

California's Women Veterans: The Challenges and Needs of Those Who Served. Lisa K. Foster and Scott Vince (CRB-09-009, August, 2009)

<http://www.library.ca.gov/crb/09/09-009.pdf>

Briefly Stated: Women Veterans By the Numbers.

<http://www.library.ca.gov/crb/09/WomenVeteransBrieflyStated.pdf>

Briefly Stated: California's Women Veterans: Challenges and Needs

<http://www.library.ca.gov/crb/10/WomenVeteransBrieflyStated.pdf>

The CRB report *California's Women Veterans: The Challenges and Needs of Those Who Served* provides insight to state legislators and others on the service barriers faced by women who have served their country. It was informed by the experiences of over 170 women veterans who participated in the first California Women Veterans Survey, administered by

the CRB in 2008. This report also explains the federal, state, and local service delivery structures that provide benefits and services to veterans, identifies benefits and programs, and provides additional resource materials.

California Women Veterans Survey

The Commission and California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) requested that the CRB assist them in assessing the progress that has been made since the earlier survey, as well as identifying new needs. The three partners developed and administered a second survey which continues to focus on identifying the needs of women veterans and understanding how they are utilizing the resources available to them. This information will be used by the Commission and CalVet to improve services to women veterans living in California.

Like the first survey, the CRB used a social-networking type methodology, not a random sample.¹ This method was used because women veterans are generally hidden within the larger population and are not easily accessible. The survey was distributed to participants at the annual statewide 2011 CalVet Women Veterans Conference, to federal, state, and county providers of veteran services (including

¹ In this “snowball sampling” methodology, study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances (thus the sample group appears to grow like a rolling snowball). As the sample builds up, enough data is gathered to be useful for research. This type of sampling is efficient in terms of getting respondents from a hidden population; the major limitations include the loss of randomness and the reliance on individuals to personally recruit others for the survey, which may lead to selection bias.

the Veterans Home at Yountville), and private veteran organizations and groups. Most commonly, it was passed on by women veterans to their own networks of contacts. While over 150 surveys were completed manually, the vast majority were submitted electronically via SurveyMonkey during the survey period (October 2011 through February 2012).

Current Status

Over nine hundred women responded to the 2011/12 Women Veterans survey. A summary of the survey responses will be posted on the Commission and CalVet websites.

The CRB is currently analyzing the survey responses; this process includes categorizing the narrative responses to specific questions and the comments included with several other responses. Preliminary findings will be shared with the Commission and CalVet during the analyses, and we plan to release a report on the survey results in early May 2012.

Additional Information

- The Commission on the Status of Women website is at women.ca.gov
- The CalVet website is at www.calvet.ca.gov
- For questions about this survey, contact Lisa Foster, Senior Policy Analyst, CRB, at (916) 393-2478 or lfoster@library.ca.gov.
- For questions about state services and resources for women veterans, contact Lindsey Wathen, Deputy Secretary, Women Veterans, CalVet, at (916) 653-2327 or Lindsey.Wathen@calvet.ca.gov.