Little is known about the needs of women Veterans in terms of design, fit, and comfort of their mobility assistive technology (AT).

593 Women Veterans completed surveys on their experiences with their mobility assistive technology.

### Age

- 0-19: 10%
- 20-29: 20%
- 30-39: 30%
- 40-49: 20%
- 50-59: 10%
- 60-69: 40%
- 70+: 50%

### Employment

- Full-time: 30%
- Part-time: 17%
- Retired: 50%
- Disabled: N/A

### Education

- High School / GED: 60%
- Some college: 30%
- Bachelors Degree: 20%
- Advanced Degree: 10%

### Residence

- Urban: 20.4%
- Suburban: 40%
- Rural: 17.8%
- Highly Rural: 1.9%

### Characteristics

- More than 2M living veterans are women.
- The number of women Veterans using wheeled mobility devices has increased by 31%.
- This percentage has increased due to aging, chronic illnesses and the fast growing women Veteran population.

Women Veterans' Experiences with Mobility Assistive Technology

The three most commonly reported disabilities were:

- Neuromuscular/osteoarthritis/rheumatoid arthritis: 60%
- Multiple Sclerosis: 20%
- Spinal Cord Injury: 17%

Age:

- 26.3% reported a single disability
- 39% reported multiple disabilities

Cane, Walker, and Manual or Power Wheelchair were the most commonly reported primary devices.

593 Women Veterans completed surveys on their experiences with their mobility assistive technology.
27% of women Veterans did not or were unsure if they received training on their mobility device

1 out of every 5 women surveyed indicated that their device did not meet at least one of their needs

During the Device Evaluation/Assessment process...

16% of women did not feel their needs were accurately identified for their mobility AT

25% of women did not feel comfortable providing input into the decision-making process for their mobility AT

1 in 2 women did not feel like there were several options for their mobility AT and were not able to try out different devices

Mobility AT Design

Only 14% of women Veterans felt the available devices were designed with women in mind

“Very seldom do I get women’s sizes”

“We cannot be pretty”

“Sometimes it feels like they, meaning whoever is designing things, forget that they are women with a wheelchair, manual wheelchair you need wheelchair gloves, and my hands are, I mean I guess my hands are small.”

“Being a female everything is centered around males at the VA nothing is adapted for females at all and is too big. The transport chair and rollator and Walker can be smaller for a female and not so wide.”
During the Device Procurement process...

- 75% of the women received the mobility device in a reasonable timeframe
- 70% of the women received enough education and training to be able to effectively use their mobility device
- 45% of the women received enough information about how to maintain and repair their mobility device

During the Device Follow-up process...

- 65% reported that they are able to talk to someone when they have questions about their device
- 54% reported they are able to conduct routine maintenance on their device on their own or using outside resources
- 38% reported they are able to get their device fixed quickly when it breaks down

11 Women shared further insight on their experiences with their mobility AT during qualitative interviews:

Women commented that they were satisfied with the following with respect to their device:

- Safety
- Durability
- Comfort

Some women felt vulnerable while using their device:

That’s one thing I cannot stand about being in a wheelchair. Is that I can’t just have a conversation eye to eye standing up. People are always looking down on me.

"We have to deal with a lot of things that, the men don’t have to deal with. We are challenged with authority, we’re challenged with whether we should have served, even if we served a long time and may have some of the same injuries. We’re not recognized that we’re worthy of the same things."

How can we improve Women Veterans’ experiences using Mobility AT?

- Customizing mobility AT to improve the fit and size
- Encouraging women to be a part of the decision-making process
- Offering multiple options, trying out devices before choosing, and accessing patient reviews and info about devices
- Improving the timeliness of receiving and repairing the mobility AT
- Take into consideration how the mobility AT acts as a barrier or facilitator to women’s daily activities

Acknowledgements
This research was supported by VA Rehabilitation Research and Development SPIRE grant #RX003452 (Frances M. Weaver (PI), Brad Dicianno (Co-I), Alicia Koontz (Co-I), Lincoln Clarke, Eleanor Quinby, Pooja Solanki, Nicholas Gatto, Kelsey Berryman, and Diya Kad).

This infographic was designed by Pooja Solanki and the SPIRE team.