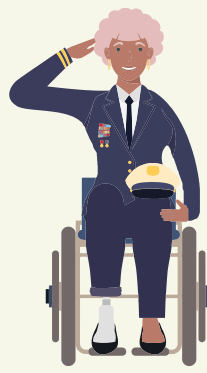


Women Veterans' Experiences with Mobility Assistive Technology

MORE THAN

2M

LIVING VETERANS ARE WOMEN



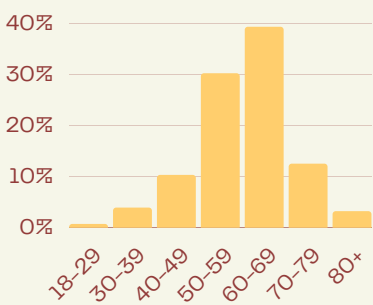
The number of women Veterans using **wheeled mobility devices** has increased by **31%**

This percentage has increased due to **aging, chronic illnesses and the fast growing** women Veteran population.

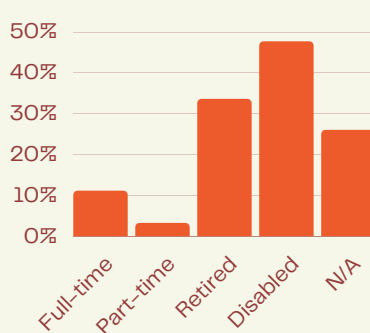
Little is known about the needs of women Veterans in terms of design, fit, and comfort of their mobility assistive technology (AT).

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

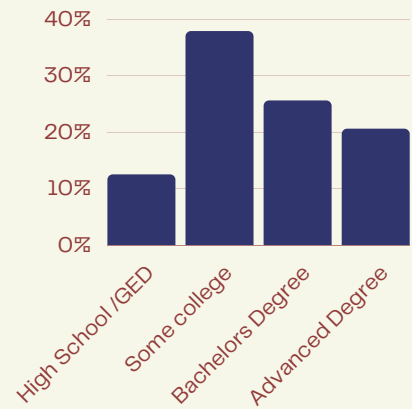
Age



Employment



Education



The three most commonly reported disabilities were:

Neuromuscular/ osteoarthritis/ rheumatoid arthritis



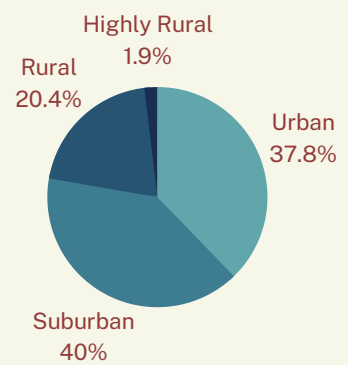
Multiple Sclerosis



Spinal Cord Injury



Residence

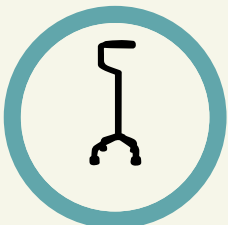


61%

reported a **single** disability

39%

reported **multiple** disabilities



26.3%



24.5%



24.5%

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

Areas of Unmet Needs



EMPLOYMENT
19% of women (19/100) felt their mobility AT did not meet their needs



TRAVEL
22% of women (82/375) felt their mobility AT did not meet their needs



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
30% of women (56/187) felt their mobility AT did not meet their needs



HOUSEWORK
26% of women (92/347) felt their mobility AT did not meet their needs



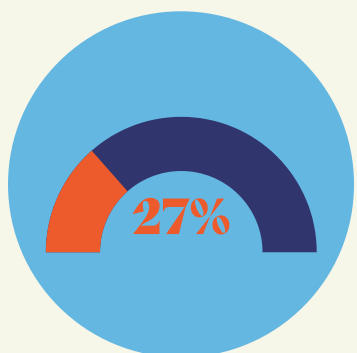
LEISURE
22% of women (92/426) felt their mobility AT did not meet their needs



CHILD CARE
35% of women (16/45) felt their mobility AT did not meet their needs



SOCIAL ACTIVITIES
19% of women (75/389) felt their mobility AT did not meet their needs

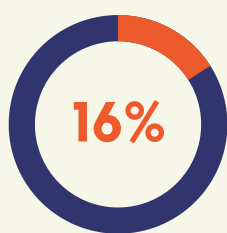


27% of women Veterans did not or were unsure if they received training on their mobility device

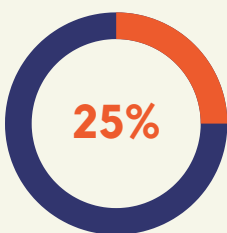


1 out of every 5 women surveyed indicated that their device did not meet at least one of their needs

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

"Very seldom do I get women's sizes"

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

"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

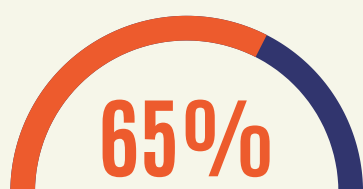


70% of the women received enough education and training to be able to effectively use their mobility device

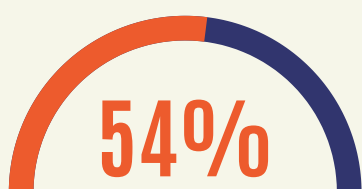


45% of the women received enough information about how to maintain and repair their mobility device

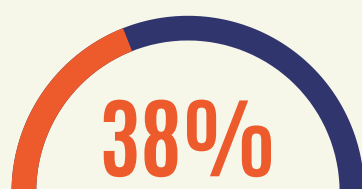
During the Device Follow-up process...



Reported that they are able to talk to someone when they have questions about their device



Reported they are able to conduct routine maintenance on their device on their own or using outside resources



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?

Mobility AT Design

- Customize mobility AT to improve the fit and size
- Take aesthetics and comfort into design consideration
- Size and weight of the device may also affect the woman's ability to maneuver the device

Service Provision

- Encourage 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

Needs Met

- 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.

