

Smartphone apps for mental health: Do rural and urban Veterans see things differently?



VA researchers interviewed **66 Veterans** from **rural and urban areas** in Maine, Arkansas, and California who screened positive for **PTSD, alcohol use disorder, or depression**. The Veterans shared views on smartphone use for mental health care.

- **Rural Veterans** were more likely to **oppose** the use of smartphone apps to support mental health, citing issues such as difficulty of use, financial barriers, connectivity gaps, and clashes with their values.
- **Older age did not influence** Veterans' beliefs about the compatibility of apps with their culture and identity, but older Vets more often reported not owning smartphones and described them as hard to use.
- The researchers concluded that **openness toward smartphone apps** in mental health treatment **may vary based on rurality**. They say it is important to **identify those who are open to and may benefit** from the technology, and to **address barriers** that may exist—such as by providing **training or simplified apps** for those who may have trouble using the devices.

Infographic by VA Research Communications, October 2018. Photo: © iStock/valentinrussanov; jacoblund.

From "[Veterans' Attitudes Toward Smartphone App Use for Mental Health Care: Qualitative Study of Rurality and Age Differences](#)," *JMIR Mhealth and Uhealth*, online Aug. 22, 2018.