

# Housing Instability and Homelessness

## 2013 California Women Veteran Survey

Although neither the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) nor the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) collects data on the number of homeless women veterans, limited VA data show that the number it has identified as homeless more than doubled between 2006 and 2010.<sup>1</sup> Estimates from HUD's Homeless Management Information Systems suggest that women veterans are more likely to be homeless than are their male veteran or female nonveteran counterparts.<sup>2</sup>

And while many women veterans experience homelessness, it is likely that many more experience various forms of housing instability short of actual homelessness (e.g., moving in with friends/family or being behind on rent/mortgage payments). This Short Subject presents results from the 2013 California Women Veteran Survey, which asked respondents questions about experiences with homelessness and housing instability following their separation from the U.S. Armed Forces.<sup>3</sup>

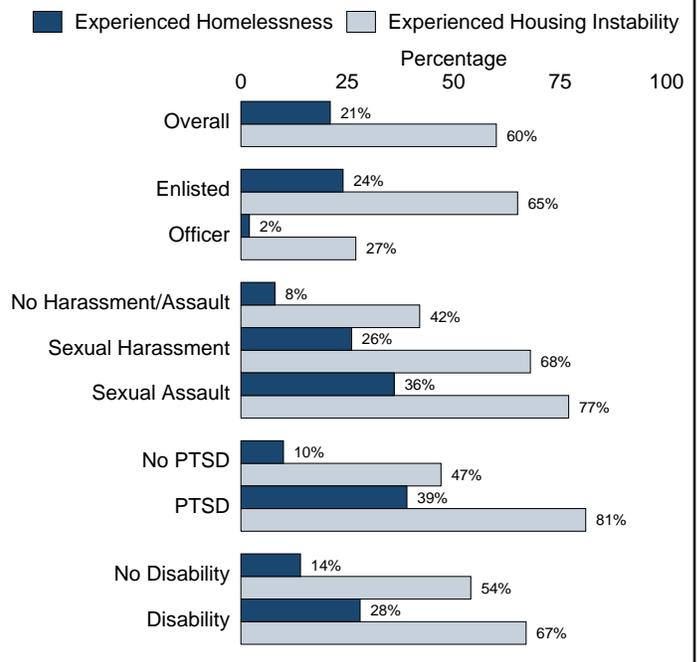
### VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

The 2013 California Women Veteran Survey asked respondents if they were currently homeless, prompting with the following definition: "homelessness is defined as lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Individuals who are sleeping in a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, campground or in a shelter designed to provide temporary living arrangements are considered homeless under this definition." Three percent of 759 respondents who answered questions on housing indicated that they were currently homeless.

### HOUSING AND SERVICE-RELATED CHARACTERISTICS

Figure 1 presents data on the percentage of 2013 survey respondents who reported experiencing homelessness or housing instability at any time following their separation from the military. Overall, 21 percent of respondents reported experiencing

**Figure 1. Homelessness and housing instability vary with service-related characteristics**



homelessness and 60 percent reported housing instability. Figure 1 also breaks these percentages out by several service-related characteristics including rank upon initial enlistment into the military, experiences with sexual assault and harassment while serving, Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD), and the presence of service-connected disabilities.

Enlisted members and those who reported experiencing sexual harassment/assault, PTSD, or a service-connected disability all were more likely to report experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability. Respondents who entered the military with an enlisted rank were 12 times more likely to report homelessness than were those who began as officers and more than 2 times as likely to report housing instability following their most recent separation. Those who reported suffering sexual harassment or assault were almost 2.5 times and 4 times more likely to report homelessness than were those who did not, respectively.

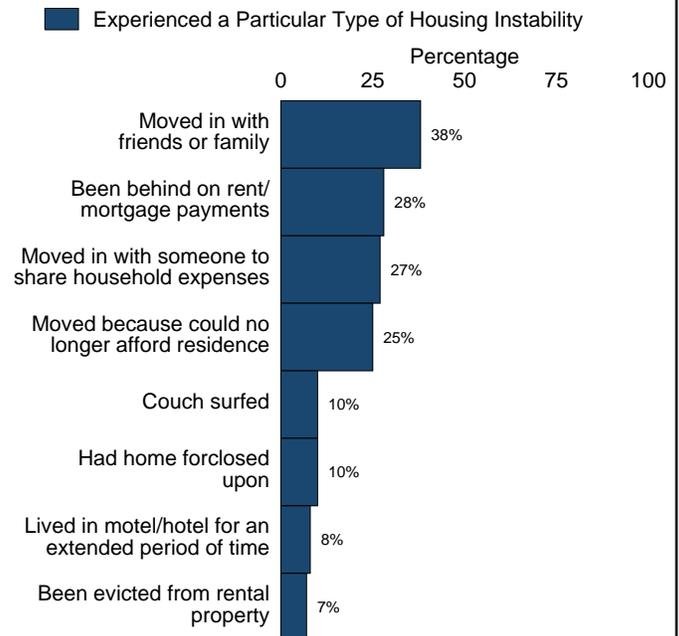
## HOUSING AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Figure 2 presents similar information, but disaggregates the data by respondents' employment status, education, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and the presence of children under 13. In general, the differences across these groups are smaller here than are the differences associated with service-related characteristics. While reported rates were similar for those with or without children, respondents who were not employed, did not have at least a Bachelor's degree, were non-white, or who identified as LGBT experienced higher rates of homelessness than their counterparts. Housing instability was also more common among these groups. In addition, respondents with children under the age of 13 reported higher rates of housing instability than did those without children.

## PREVALENCE OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF HOUSING INSTABILITY

Respondents were given a list of eight potential forms of housing instability they could have experienced following their most recent separation from the military. Figure 3 lists the eight prompts and provides information on the percentage of respondents who identified each. Again, 60 percent of respondents identified at least one form of instability. The most common, moving in with friends or family, was identified by 38 percent of respondents. Around 25 percent of respondents indicated that they had been

**Figure 3. Many respondents report moving for financial reasons**

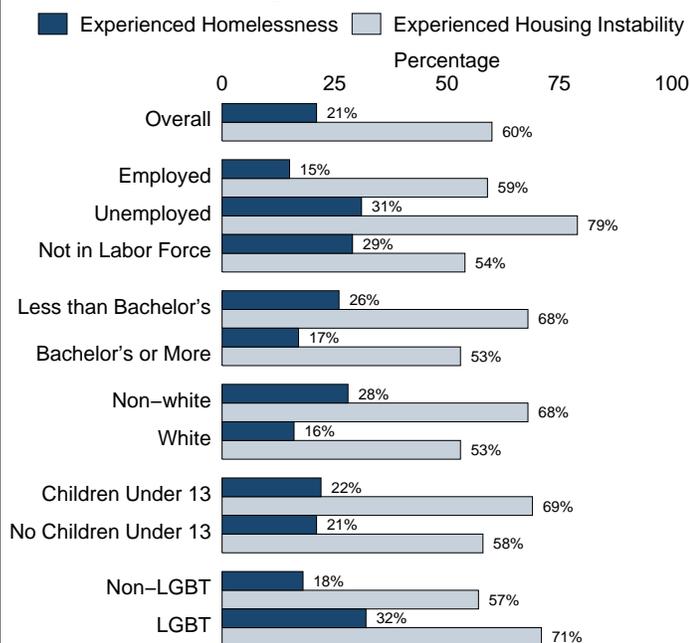


behind on mortgage or rent payments, moved in with someone to share expenses, and/or moved because they could no longer afford their residence.

## ENDNOTES

1. Government Accountability Office. (2011). "Homeless Women Veterans: Actions Needed to Ensure Sage and Appropriate Housing."
2. Congressional Research Service. (2013). "Veterans and Homelessness."
3. The 2013 California Women Veteran Survey was carried out between September and December of 2013. A total of 1,040 individuals volunteered to participate in the survey and 759 chose to answer questions on housing. The values reported here are estimates and subject to multiple sources of error. Because the sample is based on volunteers who self-selected to participate rather than a probability sample, no estimates of sampling error can be calculated. The data have not been weighted to reflect the demographic characteristics of the California women veteran population.

**Figure 2. Homelessness and housing instability vary with demographic characteristics**



*This Short Subject was requested by the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls ([www.women.ca.gov](http://www.women.ca.gov)) and the California Department of Veterans Affairs Women Veterans Division ([www.calvet.ca.gov/calvet-programs/women-veterans](http://www.calvet.ca.gov/calvet-programs/women-veterans)).*

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