

The background of the entire page is a close-up, slightly blurred image of an American flag, showing the stars and stripes in detail.

# **PALM BEACH COUNTY VETERAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2025 REPORT**





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Dr. James Green, Director

Taruna Malhotra, Deputy Director





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# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



The Palm Beach County Community Services Department is honored to serve the brave men and women who have worn our nation's uniform. Through our Veteran Services program, we provide assistance to current and former members of the armed forces in preparing and filing claims for the benefits they have earned under federal, state, and local laws. Serving those who have served our country is not just our responsibility—it is our mission.



Recognizing the importance of strengthening support for veterans, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) directed the establishment of a Veteran Services Advisory Board (VSAB) on March 14, 2023. The board formally approved the creation of the VSAB on August 22, 2023. Composed of 11 members, the VSAB works closely with community partners to enhance coordination of services and maximize available resources to meet the needs of veterans throughout Palm Beach County.

This year, the Community Services Department, in partnership with the VSAB, has undertaken the Palm Beach County Veteran Needs Assessment. This effort will help us better understand the unique and evolving needs of our veterans and guide us in strategically allocating resources to ensure that no veteran falls through the cracks. The Veteran Needs Assessment is more than a collection of data—it is a call to action. It challenges us, as a community, to translate findings into meaningful strategies and action plans that honor our veterans with the highest quality of services and support them so richly deserve.

Sincerely,

**Dr. James Green**  
**Director**  
**Community Services Department**



# MESSAGE FROM THE VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER



We are pleased to present the Palm Beach County Veteran Needs Assessment. Over the past several months, we have engaged extensively with veterans, service providers, community partners and other key stakeholders to gather valuable insights and data. This collaborative effort has enabled us to develop a thorough and meaningful assessment that reflects the unique needs and challenges faced by our veteran community.



We extend our sincere gratitude to the veterans who shared their experiences, the advisory board members, volunteers, and community organizations whose support was instrumental throughout this process. Special thanks go to the dedicated staff who worked tirelessly to ensure that the voices of our veterans are heard and prioritized.

We look forward to utilizing this assessment to guide our efforts in enhancing services, improving access to resources, and strengthening the support network for veterans and their families across the county.

Sincerely,

**Rohn Hultgren**  
**Veterans Services Officer**  
**Community Services Department**



Palm Beach County (PBC) is home to approximately 58,000 veterans<sup>1</sup>, each with unique needs shaped by their military service. While support programs exist, service gaps remain. To better understand these challenges, the PBC Community Services Department conducted a comprehensive Veteran Needs Assessment, with the support of the Veterans Services Advisory Board (VSAB). Data was gathered through surveys, focus groups, and outreach to capture veterans' experiences, resource awareness, and service perceptions. Additional insights came from sources like the U.S. Census Bureau, West Palm Beach Veterans Affairs (VA), 211 Palm Beach and Treasure Coast, and other local agencies. Findings from the Assessment will inform targeted strategies such as program development, policy advocacy, and cross-sector collaboration to build a more coordinated, equitable system that supports veterans' success in civilian life.

## Areas of Focus in the Needs Assessment



PUBLIC SAFETY



EMPLOYMENT



HOUSING



FINANCIAL/BENEFITS  
ASSISTANCE



MOBILITY ASSISTANCE  
TRANSPORTATION



SUPPORT SERVICES AND  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



HEALTHCARE, INCLUDING  
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

<sup>1</sup> US Census- American Community Survey. <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2023.S2101?q=veterans+Palm+Beach+County>

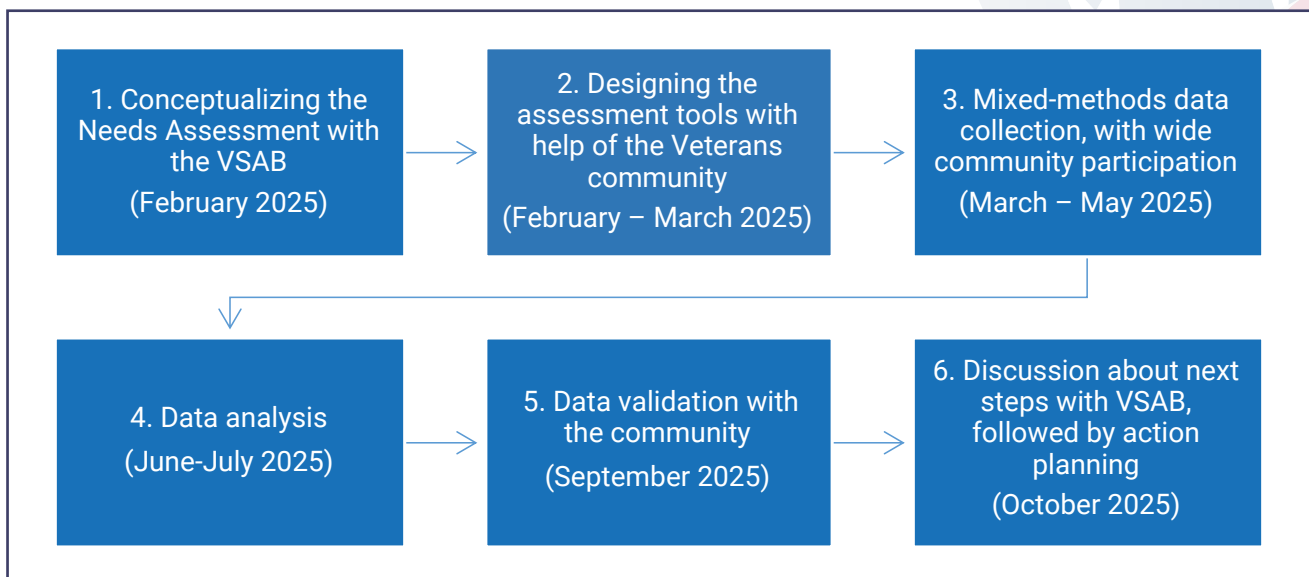


The Needs Assessment was grounded in the **Emancipatory Research Framework**<sup>2</sup>. The methodology centers collaboration, empowerment, and co-ownership of the research process by the community. The entire process was intentionally designed to be organic, iterative, and transparent.

The rigorous data collection process resulted in a significant amount of data from the PBC Veteran respondents. The data was analyzed using a mixed-methods research approach, wherein descriptive statistics are used to analyze the survey data, and thematic qualitative analysis is used to analyze and interpret the qualitative data.

**Consent and privacy:** All primary data were collected after obtaining participant consent. All data has been de-identified for the purpose of analysis.

## Key Steps and Timeline of the Needs Assessment



<sup>2</sup> Crests Liberate [Culturally Responsive - Trauma Care](#) | CRESTS Program



The results of the assessment are presented as two major sections:

- Findings from secondary data, presented as General Information of Veterans in PBC (Secondary Data).
- Findings from the survey and community conversations are presented based on the Focus Areas.

Secondary data from multiple sources were analyzed and considered to form a contextual understanding of the veteran demographics in PBC. This section presents data about gender, service periods, poverty status, crisis needs and veterans experiencing homelessness.

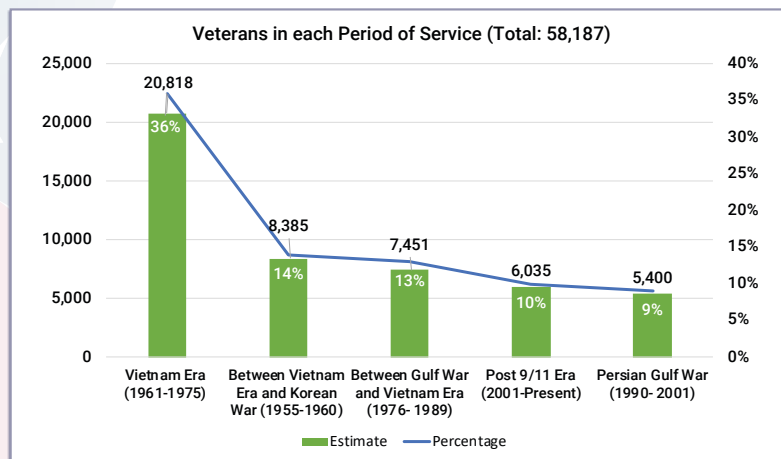
### DEMOGRAPHICS

#### Gender and Age:

- PBC is the home of approximately 58,000 veterans, comprising about 5% of the county population of 1,247,362. Of the approximately 58,000 PBC veterans, males make up about 92%, while females comprise about 8%<sup>1</sup>.
- There are higher veteran percentages in the older male population, with 34% of PBC males being veterans in the 75 and over age group, while 9% of PBC males were veterans in the 65-74 age group. Only 1.5% of age 18-34 and 4% of age 35-54 males are veterans. The age groups are more evenly distributed in the county's female veteran population.

#### Service Era:

The highest percentage of veterans in PBC is from the Vietnam era, at 36%, followed by the era between the Korean and Vietnam Wars, at 14%<sup>2</sup>.



### INCOME, EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY STATUS

- Veterans in PBC have a higher annual median income (\$52,832) compared to the overall county population (\$41,561). This applies to both male and female veterans.
- Most veterans in PBC are employed, with a very low unemployment rate. However, a significant portion in each age group is classified as not in the labor force: 22% of veterans aged 18–34, 17% of those aged 35–54, and 46% of those aged 55–64.
- The highest percentage of veterans living below the poverty level is among those aged 55–64 (10%), followed by the 35–54 age group (8.7%).

<sup>1</sup> 2023 US Census American Community Survey Data

<sup>2</sup> 2023 US Census American Community Survey Data





### ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

- PBC and its surrounding counties are served by the Veteran Affairs (VA) Healthcare System's Thomas H. Corey VA Medical Center located in West Palm Beach.
- There are also other, more limited VA- operated clinics in Port St. Lucie and Delray Beach and five community-based outpatient clinics in Boca Raton, Fort Pierce, Okeechobee, Stuart and Vero Beach that serve the veterans of South Florida<sup>5</sup>.
- The PBC VA Healthcare System serves more than 61,000 veterans annually, of which, the majority are men. About 8% of VA enrollees are women (FY 2024).
- The VA in FY 2024 also contributed \$430,973,488 in direct expenditures to PBC veterans. The majority of this went to compensation and pension sent to veterans (\$395,406,697). In FY 2023 the VA contributed approximately 936,765,000 in direct expenditures to PBC veterans. Compensation and pension accounted for about \$407,082,000 of the overall total.

### VETERANS' CRISIS NEEDS

- Data from 211 Palm Beach and Treasure Coast (PBTC), an agency that assists residents, including veterans, with crisis intervention, as well as connects people to needed services shows that, in 2024, 211 PBTC assisted 1,185 PBC veterans with crisis intervention and connection to services. While women only make up about 7% of PBC veterans, women veterans made approximately 42% of the local veteran calls to 211-PBTC.
- The top 6 needs that were sought by veteran 211-PBTC callers were electric service payment assistance, rent payment assistance, veteran/military hotline information and information on food pantries, legal counseling and transitional housing/shelter.

### VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN PBC

- As per the Point-in-Time Count 2025, there are 107 veterans experiencing homelessness in PBC, of which 67 were sheltered and 40 were unsheltered veterans.
- PBC's Continuum of Care relies on a robust Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which is a centralized database that collects unduplicated data on individuals experiencing homelessness and the services provided to them in real time.
- The HMIS database recorded a total of 2,045 unhoused veterans between October 2022-2025.
- The largest group identified as White non-Hispanic/Latina/e/o (43.6%), followed closely by Black, African American, or African non-Hispanic/Latina/e/o (41.0%).
- The gender distribution of veterans experiencing homelessness is predominantly male, with 84%, while women make up 16% of the homeless veteran population.
- The age of veterans experiencing homelessness ranged from 19 to 92 years, with an average age of 54.69 years.
- The highest concentration of unhoused veterans in PBC were found in zip code 33460 (Lake Worth Beach), with 135 individuals, followed by 33406 and 33407, (West Palm Beach) with 119 and 120 individuals respectively.

<sup>1</sup> VA HealthCare System. <https://www.va.gov/west-palm-beach-health-care/> and <https://www.va.gov/west-palm-beach-health-care/locations/>

<sup>2</sup> More information about Point-in-Time Count can be found at Homeless and Housing Alliance of Palm Beach County. [Community Services - Human Services Homeless and Housing Alliance of Palm Beach County](#). More data can be found at: [PowerPoint Presentation](#)



This section presents the results of data collected directly from PBC veterans for this Needs Assessment. It begins with a brief description of the respondents who participated in the data collection process, followed by findings about access to services and benefits, and then, findings from each identified Area of Focus.

## RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

### *Respondents of Community Conversations:*

Six Community Conversations (focus groups) were conducted in various geographical areas of the county to engage different sub-groups of veterans sub-groups of veterans, bringing together 25 participants, including veterans from different service eras, and service providers from throughout the county.

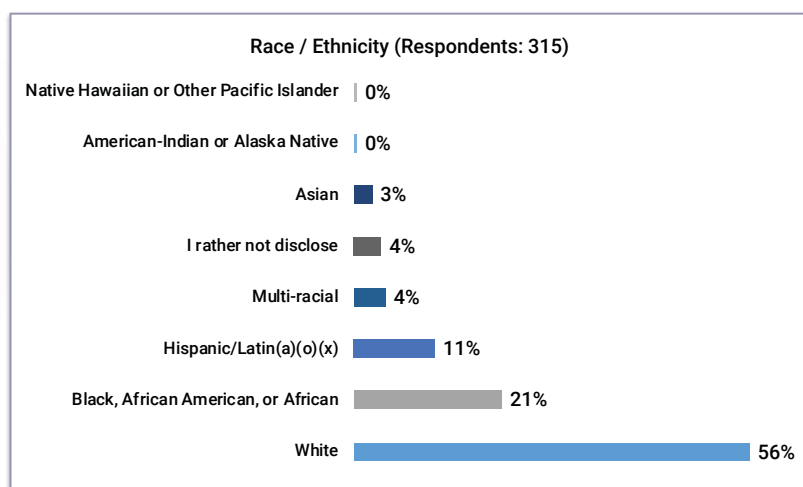
The PBC team also attended several other events and meetings and disseminated the information to encourage veteran participation in the assessment.

Community Conversations Hosted	Community Coffee Chats hosted by Veteran Affairs	Community Events/ Activities	Emails Sent to encourage participation	Survey Disseminated by Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Six community conversations in Riviera Beach, North Palm Beach, West Palm Beach, Boca Raton, Lake Worth, Belle Glade</li> <li>25 attendees (veterans, family members, service providers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attended six Coffee Chats throughout PBC that were hosted by the VA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rep Lois Frankel Veteran Social Roundtable</li> <li>Veteran lunch event with Boynton Beach Mayor Rebecca Shelton</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 3,000 veterans were emailed to encourage participation through CSD Direct Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Veterans Facebook group and other social media helped disseminate the survey</li> <li>Partners - United Way, Stand Down, and others made several efforts to spread the survey</li> <li>Florida Atlantic University, and Everglades University Veterans services helped spread the survey to their student community</li> </ul>

### *Respondents of the Survey:*

A total of 317 veterans responded to the Needs Assessment survey between March and June 2025. The number of respondents from each zip code is provided in the Annex.<sup>1</sup>

**Race and ethnicity:** In terms of race/ethnicity, survey respondents reflected the diversity of PBC; 21% were Black, African American, or African, 56% were White and 11% were Hispanic/Latin (a) (o) (x) as the top groups of survey respondents.



<sup>1</sup> Though 317 veteran respondents started the Needs Assessment survey, not everyone completed / responded to all the questions. Therefore, some questions have a lower number of respondents

# RESULTS

## FINDINGS FROM THE VETERAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

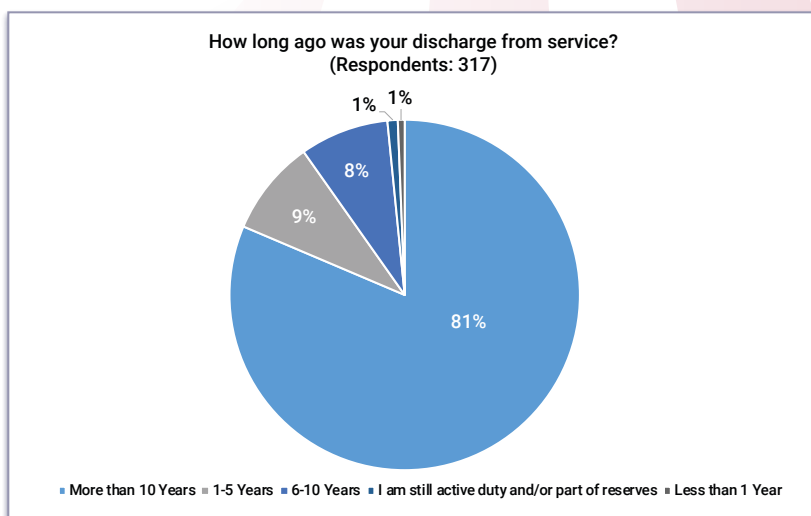
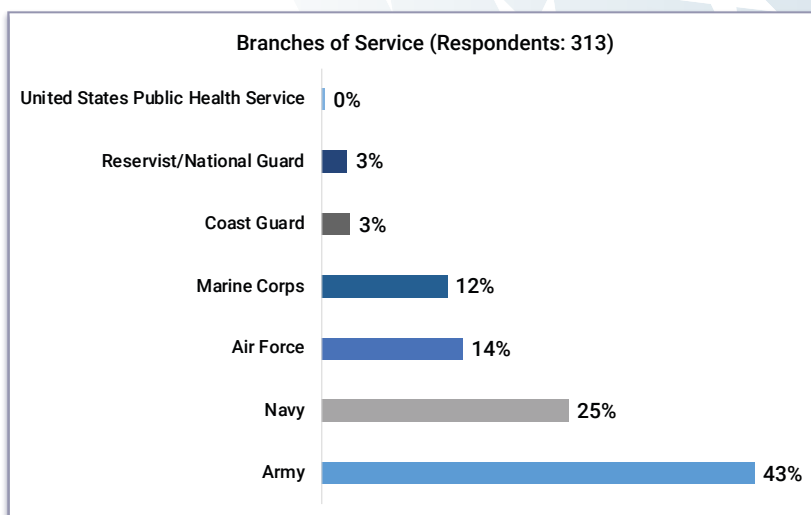
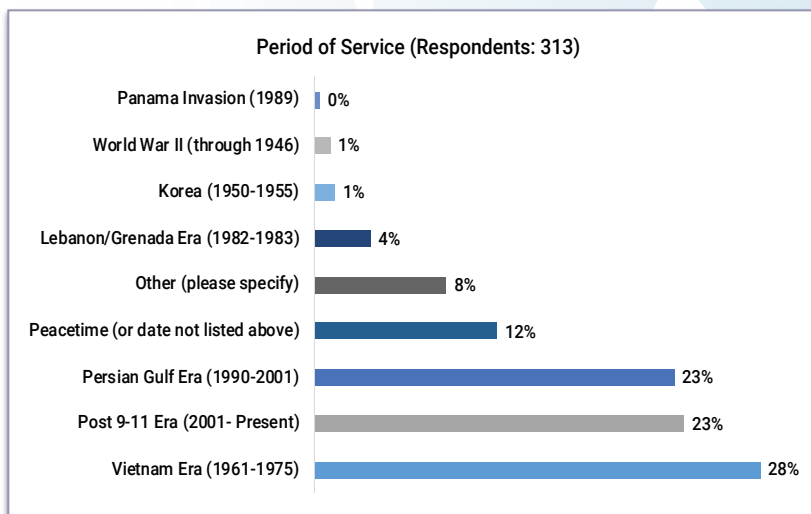


**Gender:** About 78% of the respondents were male and 19% were female, with 2.5% preferring not to answer.

**Service era:** The responses reflected a wide range of service eras, with the highest proportion being from the Vietnam Era (1961-1975) with 28%. This was followed by the Post 9-11 Era (2001-Present) and Persian Gulf Era (1990-2001), both at 23% of the respondents.

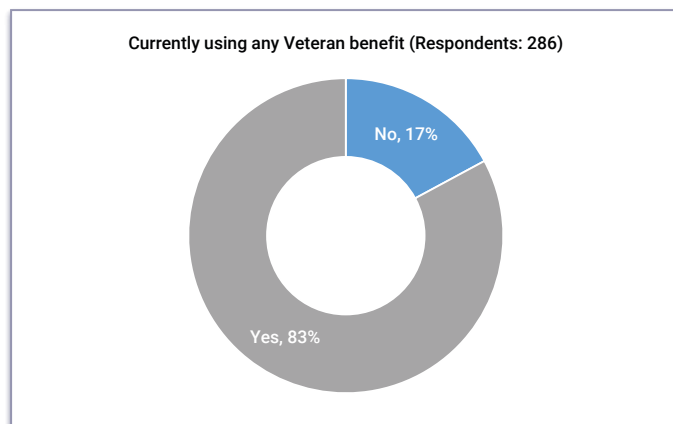
**Branches of service:** The 313 veterans responding to this question served in varied branches of the armed forces, with the highest proportion serving in the U.S. Army (43% of respondents), followed by the Navy (25% of respondents).

**Discharge time:** Over 81% reported their end of service as more than 10 years ago, while around 8% separated between 6-10 years ago, and around 9% separated between 1-5 years ago.

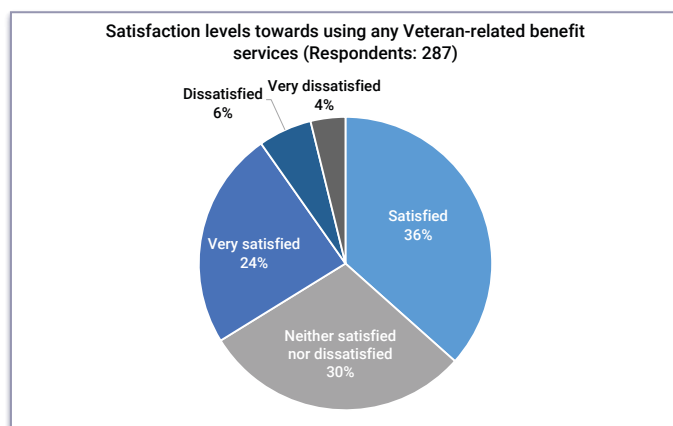




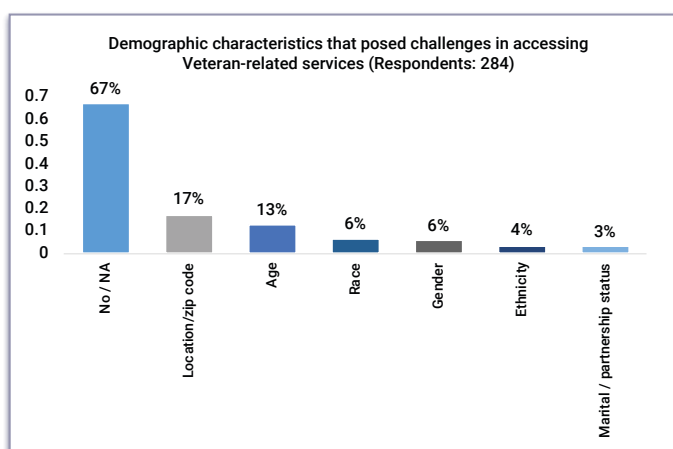
**Currently Using any Veteran Benefit:** A significant 83% of respondents indicated they are currently using some form of veteran benefit, suggesting that the surveyed population is connected to the veteran benefits system and actively accessing available resources.



**Satisfaction Levels Among Veterans Regarding Their Experiences with Veteran-Related Benefit Services:** 60% of respondents had positive feelings about veteran-related services, with 24% being very satisfied and 36% being satisfied, along with some neutral respondents (30%) that were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.



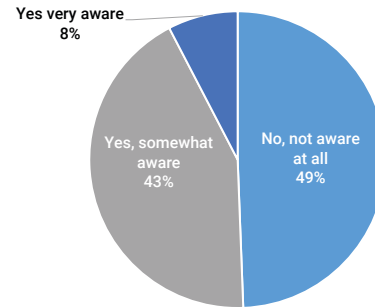
**Demographic Related Challenges:** While demographic characteristics are not barriers to accessing services, location and age were reported to pose some issues.





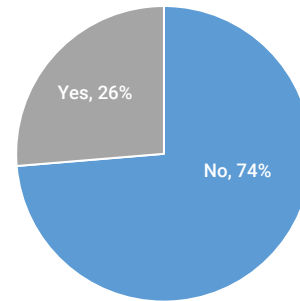
**Awareness of Free, Authorized and/or Accredited Local Organizations And Resources That Help Veterans Navigate Various Assistance:** Almost half (49%) of 249 respondents reported having no awareness at all, indicating a significant information gap, while another 43% said they were only somewhat aware, while just 8% were very aware of such resources.

Awareness of free, authorized and/or accredited local organizations and resources that help veterans navigate various assistance (Respondents: 249)



**Using Services from the Community Service Department:** Data from 285 survey respondents about their current use of PBC Community Services Veterans Services revealed that the vast majority (74%) are not currently receiving client services, while 26% reported to be using them. This distribution suggests that approximately one in four surveyed individuals were connected to the department's Veterans Services.

Currently a client getting services through PBC Community Services Veterans Services (Respondents: 285)





# RESULTS

## FINDINGS FROM THE VETERAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOCUS AREAS

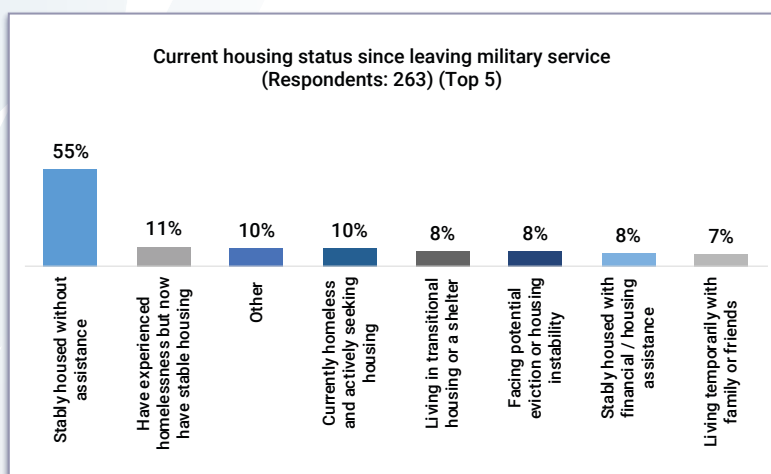


### HOUSING

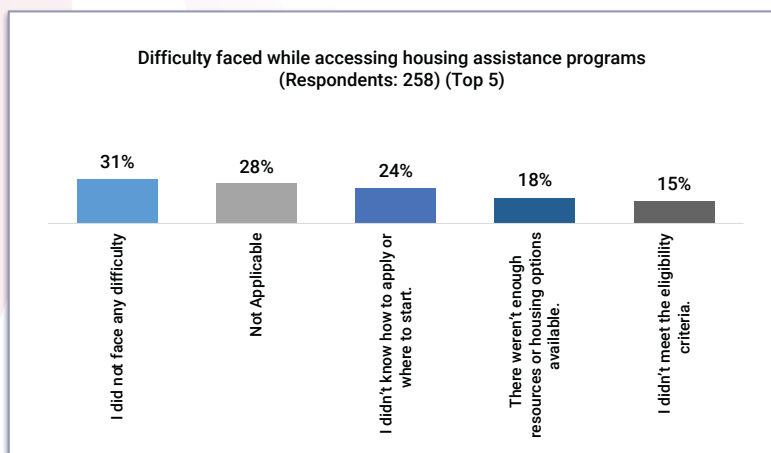
The need for and gap in affordable housing emerged as the most pressing issue during the entire assessment. All groups listed housing needs as the top veterans' priority in PBC.

#### Results from the survey

**Current Housing Status:** Fifty-five percent of respondents reported being stably housed without any form of assistance, while the remaining 45% experienced various forms of housing instability, including current homelessness, living in transitional or institutional housing, facing potential eviction, or temporarily staying with friends or family.



**Challenges Accessing Housing Assistance:** Thirty-one percent of respondents reported no issues accessing housing assistance, while 28% indicated that the question did not apply to them. Among those who faced challenges, 24% lacked information on how to apply, 18% found that there were not enough housing resources, and 15% were deemed ineligible for assistance<sup>1</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> The chart represents the top five challenges reported.



### ***Community and Provider Conversations:***

- **VA Home Loan Benefits:** These loans are praised for offering zero down payment and low interest and low interest rates; however, they are limited by restrictions on rural properties and can involve significant post-purchase costs.
- **Perceptions of Homelessness within the Veteran Community:** Some veterans perceive homelessness not solely as a systemic failure, but also as a behavioral or personal choice made by certain individuals.
- **Lack of Affordable and Safe Housing:** This issue emerged as a top priority across all groups, particularly for women and veterans on fixed incomes. Many face unsafe and unstable living conditions.
- **The “Missing Middle” Gap:** Employed veterans often earn too much to qualify for aid but too little to afford market-rate housing, leaving them excluded from key housing programs.
- **Structural Rigidities in Housing Programs:** Programs such as VASH and Section 8 are constrained by strict eligibility rules, while emergency assistance tends to be reactive rather than preventive.
- **System Navigation and Benefit Access Barriers:** Poor communication and complex administrative processes often leave veterans unaware of available resources or unsupported until they reach a crisis point. *“They don’t tell you about these programs. You have to figure it out yourself—and that’s after you’re already in trouble.” “I was living in my car when I got out. There’s no real transition support. You just wait for the benefits to kick in.”*
- **Gender-Specific Gaps in Housing Services:** There is no dedicated housing for women veterans in PBC. Additionally, stigma and fears related to child custody deter many from seeking shelter.
- **Short-Term Focus and Lack of Wraparound Services:** Temporary housing options often lack essential wraparound services such as mental health care, substance use treatment, and financial counseling, contributing to ongoing instability. *“They house you but then leave you... without support for mental health or substance abuse, they can’t maintain that housing.”*
- **Financial Barriers:** Veterans face layered financial challenges, including high eviction rates, unaffordable rent, restrictive benefit criteria, and limited access to assisted living. These issues disproportionately affect elderly and fixed-income individuals, perpetuating housing instability.

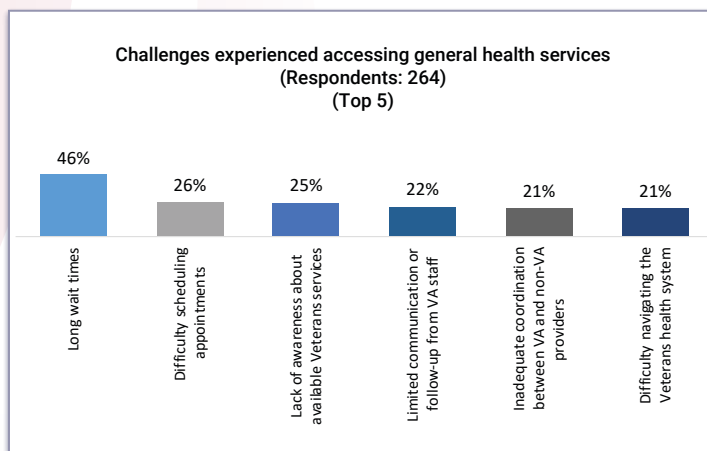


### HEALTHCARE, INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH

**Currently Enrolled in any Health Care Services Using Health Insurance:** The majority of respondents are currently enrolled in VA healthcare services, with 33% using TRICARE insurance only and 30% combining VA services with other private or public insurance like Medicare or Medicaid.

Respondents: 273		
	Count	Percentage
Currently enrolled in VA healthcare care services, using TRICARE health insurance only	89	33%
Currently enrolled in VA healthcare care services, using another private or public (Medicare/Medicaid) health insurance	82	30%
Currently enrolled in other health care services (outside of VA), using another private health insurance	52	19%
No, not enrolled in any health care services and do not have any health insurance	39	14%
Not sure	28	10%
Currently enrolled in other health care services (outside of VA) within the TRICARE Network, using TRICARE health insurance	18	7%

**Challenges Experienced while Accessing Veteran-Related ‘General Health Services’:** 264 veterans listed their top five challenges to be long wait times at 46% of respondents, followed by difficulty scheduling appointments (26%), lack of awareness about available veteran services (25%), limited communication or follow-up from VA staff (22%), and inadequate coordination between providers, and difficulty navigating the veteran health system (21%).

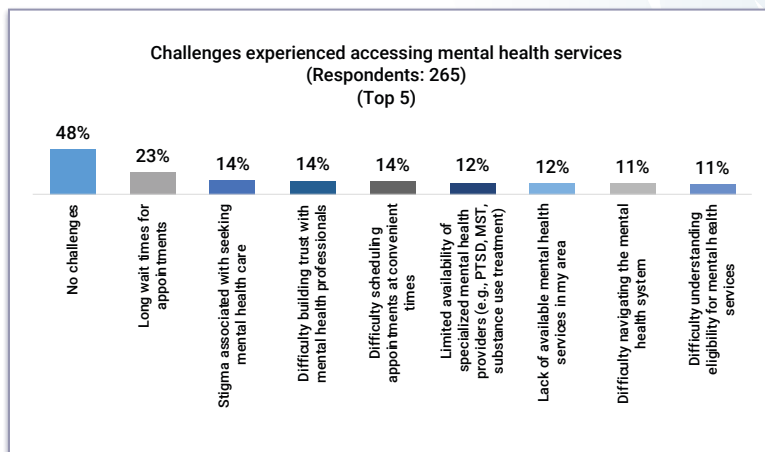


# RESULTS

## FINDINGS FROM THE VETERAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOCUS AREAS



**Challenges Experienced while Accessing Veteran Related ‘Mental Health Services’:** The top five challenges reported while accessing mental health services are: long wait times at 46% of respondents, followed by difficulty scheduling appointments (26%), lack of awareness about available veteran services (25%), limited communication or follow-up from VA staff (22%), and inadequate coordination between providers (21%), with difficulty navigating the veteran health system also at 21%. Nearly half of respondents (48%) reported no challenges in accessing mental health services.



### Community and Provider Conversations:

- **Mixed Experiences with the VA System:** There was appreciation for recent improvements in VA, while some respondents also said that there are unmotivated or dismissive staff, inconsistent service quality, long wait times, and challenges with record transfers. *“I have had one minor issue, and it got resolved quickly. The VA has been great to me.”*
- **Lack of Understanding of Gender-Based Differences in Healthcare Needs:** Critical health issues affecting women - hormonal care, traumatic brain injury (TBI), and Military Sexual Trauma (MST) are often poorly understood or addressed. *“Even in uniform, they ask me for my husband’s Social Security number.”*
- **Geographic Inequities and Access Gaps:** Distance and outsourcing to third-party providers, which participants described as lower quality.
- **Lack Of Realistic Family Health Care Benefits:** Children, dependent needs were either dropped as they turned 18 or were understood as policy gaps disconnected from the real lives and responsibilities of veteran families.
- **Barriers to Accessing Mental Health Care** due to stigma, time, and delays in appointment. *“The stigma is real. They don’t want to seem weak... especially for mental health.”*
- **Communication and System Barriers:** Language differences, long waiting times, difficulties reaching providers, messaging system issues.
- **Complex Administrative Processes:** Scheduling, data and information system, medical records, navigation, coordination etc.

# RESULTS

## FINDINGS FROM THE VETERAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOCUS AREAS



### EMPLOYMENT

#### Results from the survey

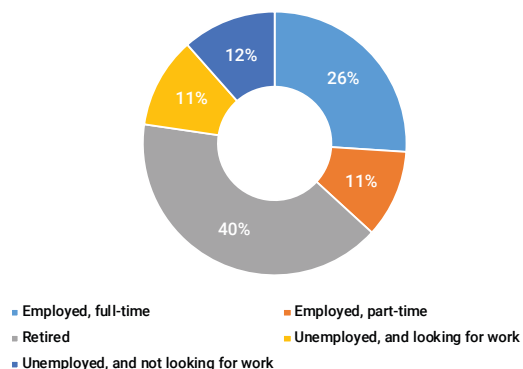
**Current Employment Status:** 40% of respondents said they are retired, followed by 26% who are employed full-time. 11% of respondents said they are unemployed and looking for work. 12% are unemployed and not looking for work.

**Challenges Encountered in Finding Employment After Service:** Nearly half of the 264 respondents (49%) reported no challenges, suggesting that a significant portion transitioned successfully. However, the remaining group experienced a variety of difficulties affecting job performance or readiness (22%), followed by difficulty translating military experience into civilian roles (17%), and a lack of mentorship or networking opportunities (15%).

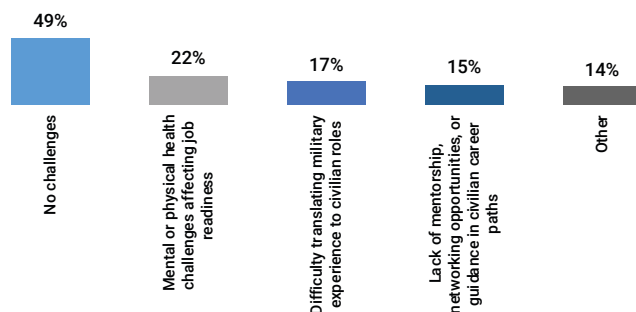
#### Community and Provider Conversations:

- **Strengths:** Many veterans reported that benefiting from hiring preferences in both the public and private sectors. *"When they see you're a veteran, it helps. They'll hire you first."*
- **Transition Barriers and Gaps in Support:** Younger or recently discharged veterans often struggle to transition into civilian employment due to limited support in translating their military experience into civilian job qualifications. Although educational benefits and VA career services are available, many veterans perceive them as insufficient for adequately preparing them for the civilian workforce.
- **Gender-Based Barriers:** Women veterans, despite possessing strong qualifications and leadership experience from their military service, are often excluded from technical or leadership roles in civilian employment.
- **Workplace Inflexibility:** Veterans with disabilities or caregiving responsibilities described traditional work environments as largely inflexible and unsupportive, failing to accommodate their unique needs. *"Veterans may look healthy but have invisible wounds; employers don't always get that they need more time for appointments or mental health days."*

Current employment status (Respondents: 269)



Challenges encountered in finding employment after service (Respondents: 264) (Top 5)





# RESULTS

## FINDINGS FROM THE VETERAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOCUS AREAS



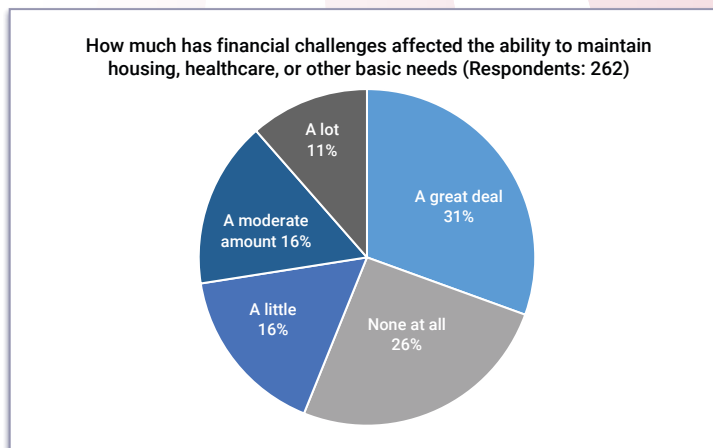
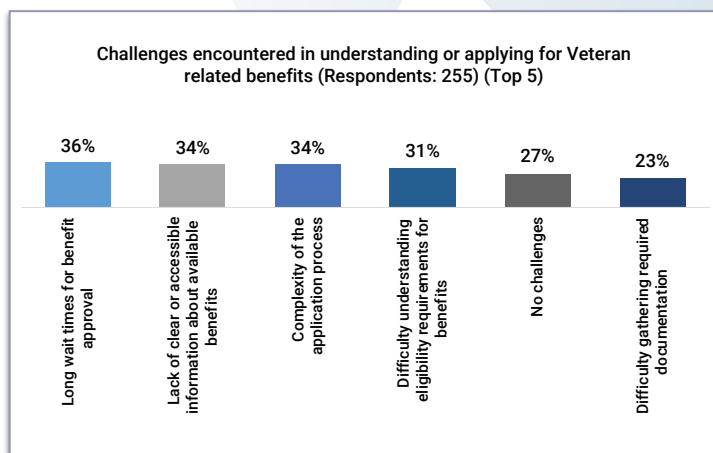
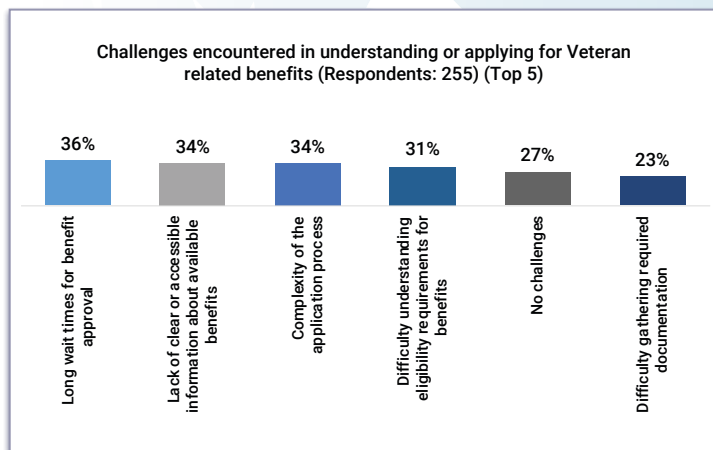
### FINANCIAL BENEFITS/ASSISTANCE

#### *Results from the survey*

**Access to Benefits:** Only 22% of veterans reported having access to all the benefits available to them. The remaining 78% either had access to only some benefits or were unsure about what benefits they were entitled to.

**Challenges in Understanding and Applying for Benefits:** About 27% of veterans reported experiencing no challenges in understanding or applying for veteran-related benefits. The remaining respondents identified several challenges, including long wait times for benefit approval (36%), lack of clear or accessible information about available benefits (34%), the complexity of the application process (34%), and difficulty understanding eligibility requirements (31%).

**Financial Difficulties:** Approximately 74% of veterans reported that financial difficulties have affected them to some degree.



# RESULTS

## FINDINGS FROM THE VETERAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOCUS AREAS



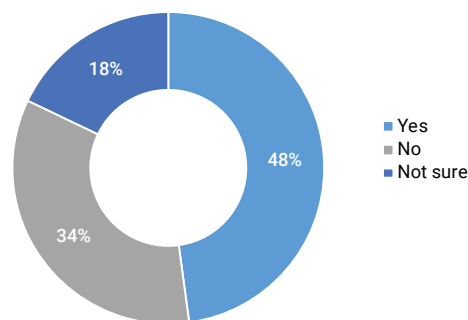
### Community and Provider Conversations:

- **Mixed Experiences:** Some veterans reported positive experiences accessing VA and nonprofit benefits, particularly when they were familiar with the system and had their Certificate of Discharge (DD-214) readily available. However, others encountered significant barriers. Some veterans described the state and county systems as “a void,” indicating a lack of support or responsiveness.
- **Information Gaps and Access Barriers:** Although many financial resources are available, veterans often do not know how to access them, especially during the critical period immediately following discharge.
- **Financial Instability and Systemic Gaps:** Veterans reported little to no stabilization support. Existing programs often overlook essential needs such as moving expenses, securing housing, or bridging income gaps. These challenges are particularly burdensome for women with children or caregiving responsibilities. *“I was over the income limit by \$12 and got nothing.”*
- **Fragmented Access to Benefits:** Intake processes at various agencies frequently fail to screen for veteran status, resulting in missed opportunities to connect veterans with the benefits specifically designed for them.
- **Need for Navigation Support:** Veterans spoke highly of Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) and caseworkers who assist with navigating benefit systems, completing paperwork, and managing eligibility requirements. *“Everything is there. But if you don’t know about it, you won’t get it.”*
- **High Wait Times:** Veterans often face immediate income loss upon discharge while navigating complex benefit applications and job searches, with some reporting wait times of up to six months for services.
- **Educational and Career Strengths:** The system performs well in providing educational support, including full coverage for bachelor’s degrees and comprehensive financial assistance.
- **Access Barriers:** Despite being qualified, many veterans are discouraged from pursuing financial assistance due to the complexity of the application processes.

## SUPPORT SERVICES/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Experience of a Sense of Connection and Belonging in the Veteran Community:** Of the 257 respondents, 48% reported experiencing a sense of connection and belonging within the veteran community, while 34% reported not experiencing a sense of connection.

Experience of a sense of connection and belonging in the veteran community (Respondents: 257)



# RESULTS

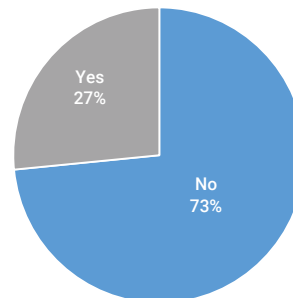
## FINDINGS FROM THE VETERAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOCUS AREAS



### Participation Levels of Veterans in Community Groups with Other Veterans:

The majority of the 290 veterans surveyed are not currently engaged in veteran community groups, while 73% indicated they are not part of any community groups, and only 27% reported being involved in such groups.

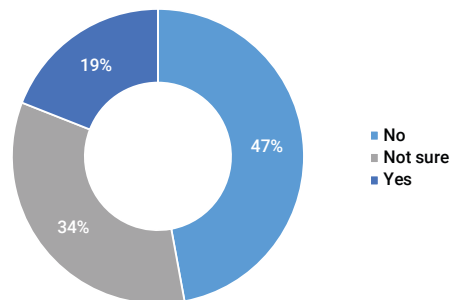
Part of any community groups with other veterans in Palm Beach County (Respondents: 290)



### Opinion About the Presence of Enough Outreach to Engage:

Of the 257 respondents, 47% felt there was not enough outreach to engage veterans who may feel isolated, while 34% said they were unsure.

Opinion about presence of enough outreach to engage veterans who may feel isolated (Respondents:257)



### Community and Provider Conversations:

- **Support Exists but Does Not Reach Everyone:** The veterans said that peer gatherings, senior communities, and trusted VSOs offer valuable connection and guidance, but often fail to engage younger veterans and women. Existing social networks, such as coffee socials and specialized support groups for PTSD and caregivers, play a valuable role in fostering informal connections.
- **Women Veterans Feel Overlooked and Invisible:** Some women veterans feel ignored in programs and services designed to support veterans and are frequently assumed to be spouses or caregivers rather than service members. *"When people think 'veteran,' they see a man. Everything is built for male veterans."*
- **Stigma, Mistrust, And Safety Concerns:** Fears of judgment, institutional retaliation, and emotional or physical safety concerns when accessing traditional veteran programs were also reported.
- **Mixed Opinions About Peer Support and Connection:** Respondents said that though some support exists, there is a gap. Some avoid being in groups due to personal barriers, past trauma, sensory sensitivities, and limited social bandwidth. *"We don't come to you because we don't trust you. You don't understand our needs."*
- **Generational Disconnects In Veteran Engagement:** Traditional support spaces such as the VFW and American Legion were viewed as outdated, male-dominated, and not welcoming to younger or female veterans. *"The old way doesn't work for the young vets. We need to evolve."*



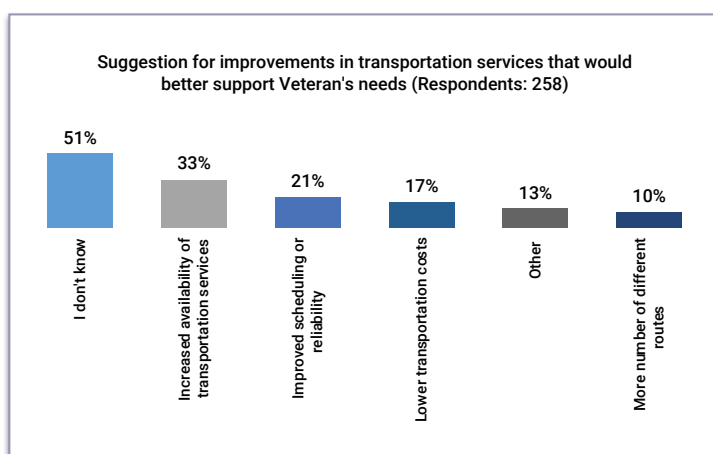
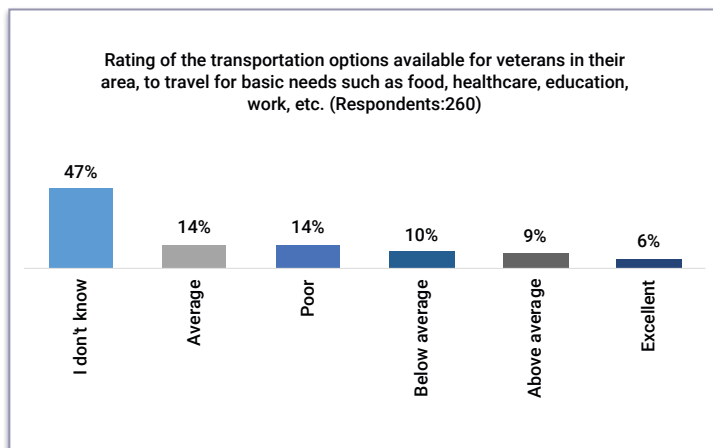
### TRANSPORTATION

#### Results from the survey

**Rating of Transportation Options Available for Veterans in Their Area:** Of the 260 respondents, 47% said they did not know about transportation options, while some said they thought the options were average or poor (14%).

#### Opinion About Improvements in Transportation Services to Better Support Veteran Needs:

When asked for suggestions for improvement, 51% were unsure how transportation services for veterans could be improved, while the others suggested: need for increased availability of transportation services (33%), improved scheduling or reliability (21%), lower transportation costs (17%).



#### Community and Provider Conversations:

- **Support Exists but Does Not Reach Everyone:** The veterans said that peer gatherings, senior communities, and trusted VSOs offer valuable connection and guidance, but often fail to engage younger veterans and women. Existing social networks, such as coffee socials and specialized support groups for PTSD and caregivers, play a valuable role in fostering informal connections.
- **Access to Transportation Leads to Access to Benefits:** The assessment did not find challenges spoken outright. Transportation challenges were implied in veterans' stories of past instability - transportation interconnects with housing needs and survival, particularly for those who are unhoused or waiting for benefits.
  - Similarly, transportation emerged as a limited yet important theme in the providers' conversations, highlighting similar access challenges due to a lack of transportation.
  - VA transportation services are primarily focused on medical access, including transfers between VA facilities.
- **Transportation Barriers Based on Geography:** The conversations highlighted larger structural issues, especially in rural or underserved areas where transit routes are sparse and funding for alternative options such as ride-share programs may be limited.

# RESULTS

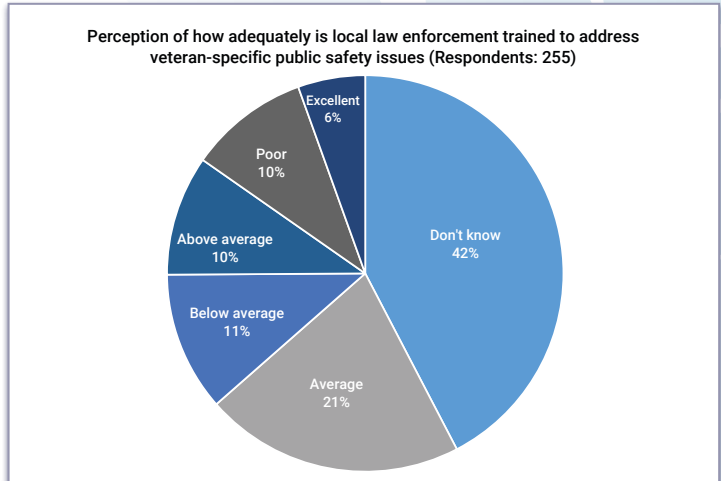
## FINDINGS FROM THE VETERAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOCUS AREAS



### PUBLIC SAFETY

#### *Results from the survey*

**Perception of How Adequately Local Law Enforcement is Trained to Address Veteran-Specific Public Safety Issues:** Out of the 255 veterans that responded, 42% reported not knowing, indicating uncertainty or lack of awareness, while 6% said their training is excellent, and 10% said above average.



**Other Public Safety Issues Related to Veterans That Should be Addressed:** When asked a follow-up question about what other public safety issues related to veterans should be addressed, the veterans voiced deep concern over a few areas:

- Untreated mental health conditions like PTSD, anxiety, depression, and suicide ideation, compounded by stigma, mislabeling, and inadequate crisis response.
- Critical need for better-trained first responders, de-escalation techniques, and department-based veteran liaisons to avoid escalation and ensure dignity, not criminalization.
- System navigation remains a barrier, especially for older veterans.
- Community misconception and lack of compassion.
- Environmental stressors, especially for those with PTSD, like fireworks, noise, and unsafe public spaces also triggered distress.

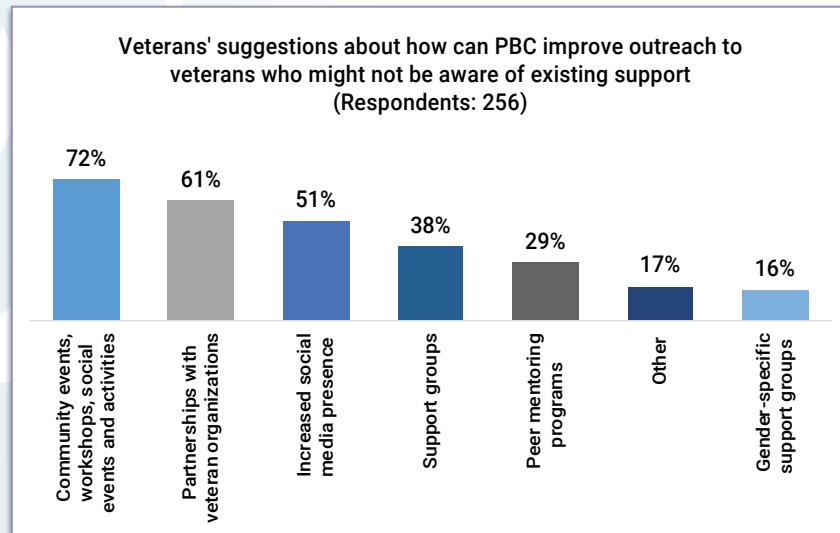
#### ***Community and Provider Conversations:***

- Public safety as a background issue, not a standalone concern and was deeply interwoven with other pressing challenges, especially housing, trauma, and mental health.
- Unstable housing conditions such as disruptive neighbors, living near unauthorized tenants, or experiencing prolonged homelessness emerged as sources of stress and insecurity.
- It was also found that an absence of gender-specific safety and care translates into vulnerability, especially when women feel unsafe in male-dominated shelters or mixed-gender service spaces.
- Mental health implications of isolation and the elevated suicide risk among veterans, especially those who become first responders post-service, were reported. *“Veterans go from one battlefield to another—as first responders—and that’s where suicide risk is highest.”*
- Some respondents also said that veterans may show or express distress in ways that require specialized crisis support, not traditional law enforcement responses.

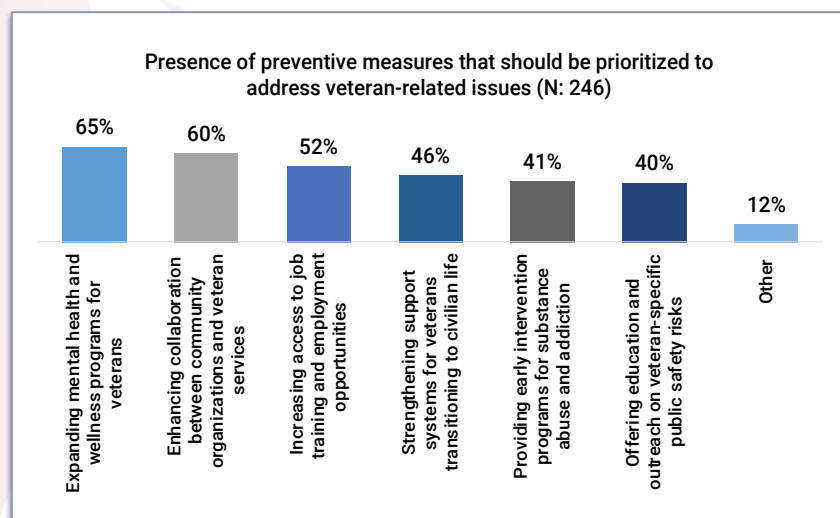




Through the survey, 256 veterans respondents suggested several ways PBC could improve outreach to those who may not be aware of existing support. The majority (72%) recommended hosting community events, workshops and social activities to foster engagement and connection. Additionally, 61% supported forming partnerships with veteran organizations and 51% suggested increasing PBC's social media presence to enhance visibility.



When asked about the preventive measures that respondents believe should be prioritized to address veteran-related issues, the top priority cited by respondents was expanding mental health and wellness programs for veterans (65%), followed closely by enhancing collaboration between community organizations and the VA (60%).





We extend our gratitude to the entire veterans community of Palm Beach County for their unwavering support and engagement. We are especially thankful to the VSAB Board, West Palm Beach Veterans Affairs, regional universities, veterans' social media and networking groups, and our dedicated partners, including United Way, Stand Down, 211 Palm Beach and Treasure Coast, and many others for their invaluable collaboration throughout this Needs Assessment.

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We are deeply appreciative of all the respondents who generously shared their time, insights, and lived experiences. Your contributions have been instrumental in helping us gain a clearer understanding of the needs and priorities of veterans in our community.



Number of respondents to the survey from each ZIP code and location.

Zip code	Number of survey respondents (Total 306)	City / Location
33430	2	Belle Glade
33434	1	Boca Raton
33428	11	Boca Raton
33431	5	Boca Raton
33433	3	Boca Raton
33429	2	Boca Raton
33432	2	Boca Raton
33486	1	Boca Raton
33426	8	Boynton Beach
33435	7	Boynton Beach
33437	6	Boynton Beach
33436	5	Boynton Beach
33424	1	Boynton Beach
33472	1	Boynton Beach
33444	2	Delray Beach
33484	12	Delray Beach
33446	4	Delray Beach
33445	4	Delray Beach / Boynton Beach
33458	5	Jupiter
33478	5	Jupiter
33477	6	Jupiter
33460	12	Lake Worth
33461	12	Lake Worth
33463	9	Lake Worth
33462	10	Lantana
33470	9	Loxahatchee
33408	3	North Palm Beach / West Palm Beach
33476	2	Pahokee
33480	2	Palm Beach
33418	5	Palm Beach Gardens
33414	12	Royal Palm Beach / Wellington
33076	1	Small part of Palm Beach County (Mostly Broward County)
33469	3	Tequesta
33449	1	Wellington
33467	16	Wellington/Greenacres
33417	14	West Palm Beach
33415	8	West Palm Beach
33409	20	West Palm Beach
33401	5	West Palm Beach
33413	5	West Palm Beach
33412	4	West Palm Beach
33403	2	West Palm Beach
33402	1	West Palm Beach
33416	1	West Palm Beach
33405	1	West Palm Beach
33410	7	West Palm Beach/Palm Beach Gardens
33404	11	West Palm Beach/Palm Beach Shores
33407	13	West Palm Beach/Riviera Beach
33411	24	West Palm Beach/Royal Palm Beach / Wellington



# **Palm Beach County Community Services**

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Board of County Commissioners

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