



# 2026 Annual Survey



AMERICA'S WARRIOR PARTNERSHIP

---

# Survey Objective

- Measure a variety of factors relating to the **Community Integration Program**
- Assess the level of **hope** through the **Adult Hope Scale** among service members who participated in the survey and to better understand the drivers of hope and hopelessness among veterans
- Results of survey help us evaluate veteran's **strengths, needs, growth, and satisfaction** with their community and resources available
- Results are used to make respective programmatic and community adjustments to help us better support those we aim to serve
- The targeted population of this survey are those who have previously served in the **US Armed Forces**, but active-duty service members are welcomed to participate
- Survey is made available through **AWP's website** and distributed through our **partners** and other **AWP branches**

# Survey Completion

| Completion Rate    |            |             |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|
|                    | Count      | Percentage  |
| Complete           | 460        | 85%         |
| Partial            | 83         | 15%         |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>543</b> | <b>100%</b> |

The 2025 Annual Survey had an **85% success rate** in terms of completion

A total 744 responses were submitted, after cleaning the data, only 543 of surveys were determined to be valid for analysis

Responses that were not included:

- Test link responses
- Responses without enough data to analyze
- Unreliable submissions
  - BOTs or suspicious activity

# Significance of Sample Size

## Statistical Significance:

The survey sample size is sufficiently large enough to conduct analysis at 95% confidence level with a 3% margin of error

## Sample Size:

All survey participants in the analysis were current or former U.S. service members. The minimum number of survey participants needed was 213 – our survey had a total of 543 survey participants.

## Methodology:

To determine sample size sufficiency, the minimum number of participants needed was calculated by using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{z^2 * \hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})}{\epsilon^2}$$

n = minimum number sample size  
z = the z-score  
 $\hat{p}$  = population proportion  
 $\epsilon$  = the margin of error

**Service Member Population:** Based upon our definition of service members, **service member population** was calculated by taking the sum of veterans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024), reservist, and active-duty personnel (USAFacts, 2024) living in the United States.

**Population Proportion:** calculated by dividing the **total service member population** by the U.S. population (U.S. Census, QuickFacts)

| Service Member Population |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Active Duty               | 1,290,000         |
| Reservist                 | 767,238           |
| Veteran                   | 15,800,000        |
| <b>Total Population</b>   | <b>17,857,238</b> |

| Population Proportion        |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Service Member Populus       | 17,857,238    |
| U.S. Populus                 | 340,110,988   |
| <b>Population Proportion</b> | <b>0.0525</b> |

# Applying the Hope Scale

The **Hope Scale** is a psychological assessment tool designed to measure an individual's level of **hope**, which is defined as a **positive motivational state** based on two key components:

- **Agency / Will Power:** refers to an individual's sense of goal-directed energy and their belief in their ability to initiate and sustain action towards their goals
- **Pathways / Way Power:** refers to an individual's perceived capacity to generate successful plans and strategies to reach their desired goals

The **Adult Hope Scale (AHS)** assesses the level of **hope** among individuals who are 15 or older

- The AHS is a 12-item self-report questionnaire
- Respondents rate each item on an 8-point Likert-type scale ranging from "definitely false" to "definitely true"
- Agency and pathways subscales are calculated separately, and total hope score is derived from these calculations
- Higher scores on both subscales and the total score indicate a higher level of hope
- Scores range from 8 -64

## Hope Categories

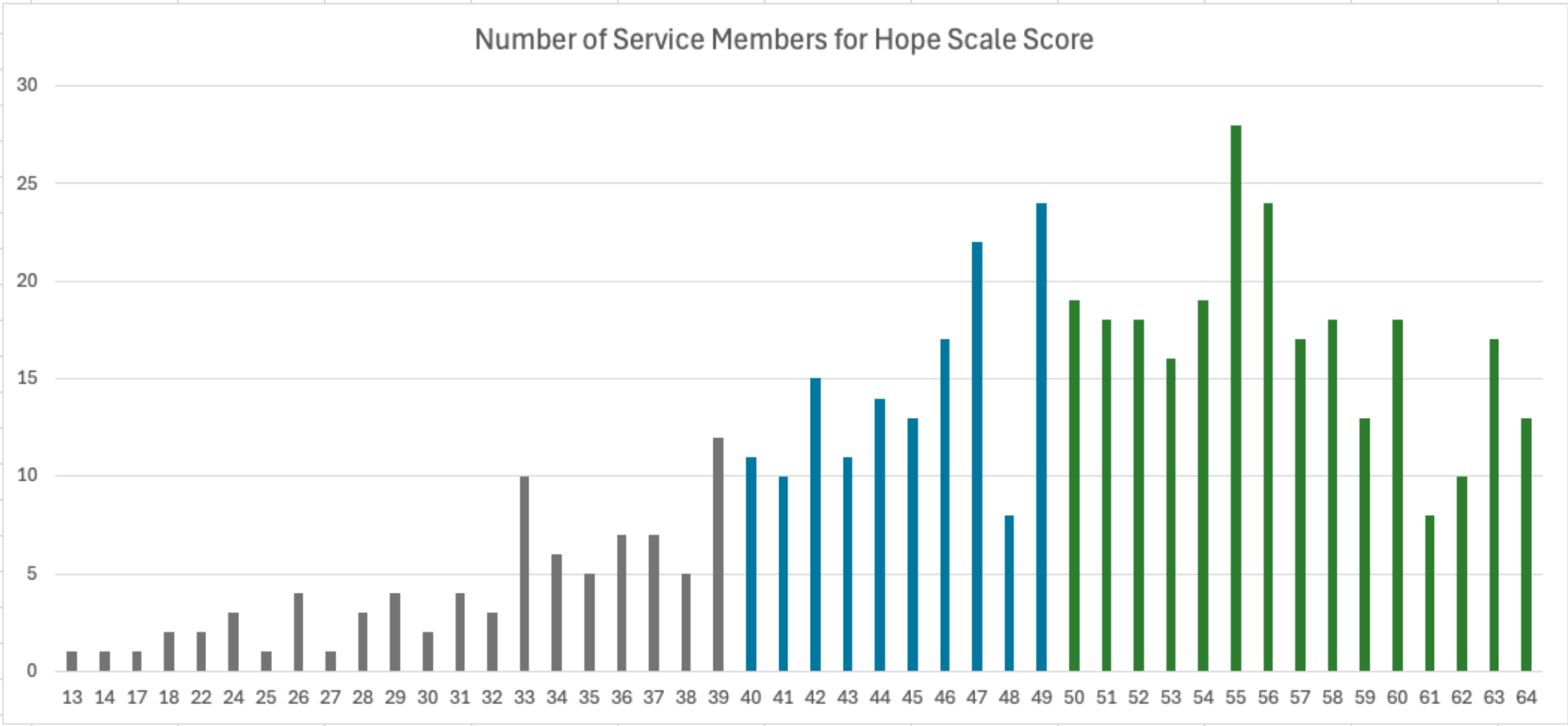
This analysis categorizes service members into three categories based upon their hope scale score: **stuck**, **in transition**, or **thriving**.

Those who score within the range of **stuck** are considered to have **low hope**, while those who score within the **in-transition** range are considered to have **moderate hope**, and those who score within the **thriving** range are considered to have **high hope**.

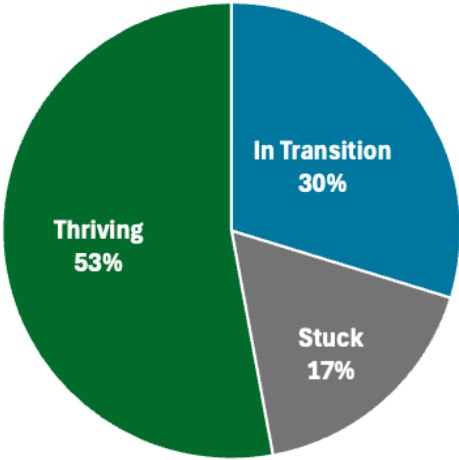
The range of scores for each category is as follows:

- **Stuck:** 8 - 39
- **In Transition:** 40 – 49
- **Thriving:** 50 - 64

# Hope Scale: Service Members



| Hope Score Range |       |
|------------------|-------|
| Minimum          | 13.00 |
| Average          | 48.82 |
| Maximum          | 64.00 |
| StdDev           | 9.99  |



# Participant Population

| Survey Population  |            |             |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|
|                    | Count      | Percentage  |
| Active Duty        | 12         | 2%          |
| Veteran            | 522        | 96%         |
| Reservist          | 9          | 2%          |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>543</b> | <b>100%</b> |

## Service Members Definition:

In this analysis, a **service member** is defined as any individual who is actively serving or have previously served the US Armed Forces, including the reserve component of the military. Service members encompass the following individuals:

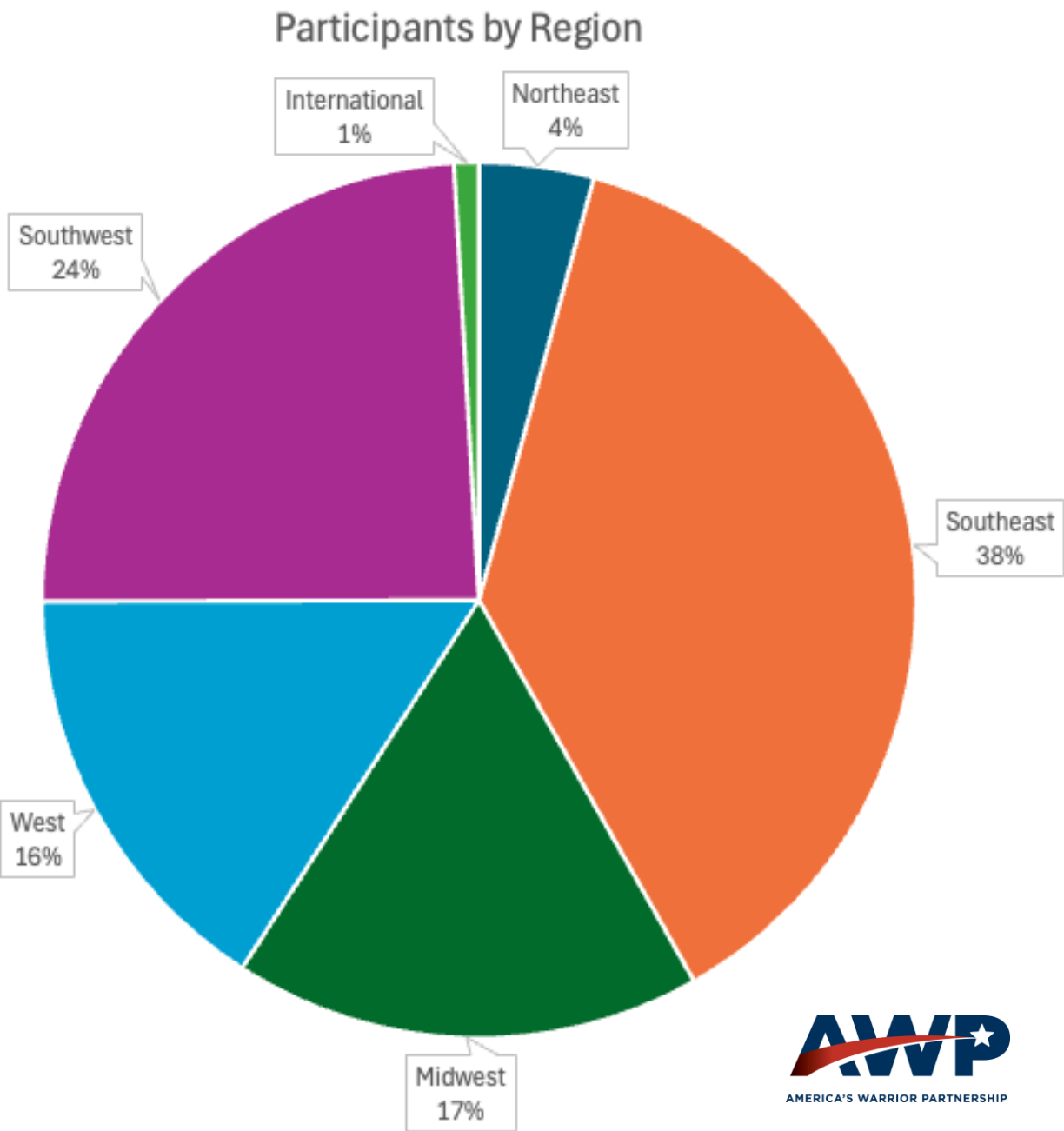
- **Active Duty:** individuals currently serving in the US Armed Forces
- **Veteran:** any individual who was on active duty in the past, regardless of discharge status
- **Reservist:** individuals who are currently or have previously served in a reserve component of the military but never mobilized, regardless of current reserve service stats (i.e., includes those who are full-time support, drilling, discharged, or retired)



# Participant Population

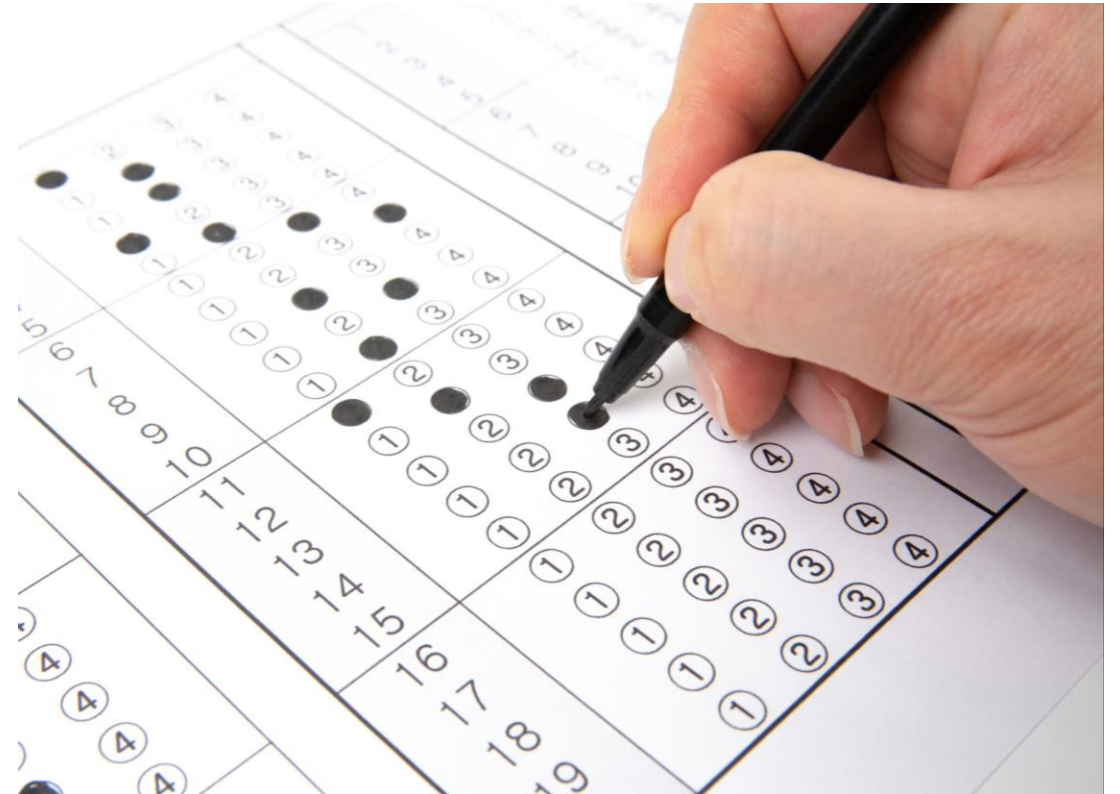
- Survey participants reside across **39 states**, with a small portion living outside of the U.S.
- The majority of survey participants are located in the **Southeast** and **Southwest**.
- Below are **key state demographics**:
  - South Carolina: ~ 20%
  - Texas: ~ 11%
  - Alaska & Indiana: ~10% each
  - Arizona & Florida: ~ 8% each
- These areas are close to our corporate and branch locations
- **All other states** make up around **5% or less** of the **participant population**

| Region        | Count | %    | Avg Hope Score |
|---------------|-------|------|----------------|
| Northeast     | 23    | 4%   | 48.38          |
| Southeast     | 204   | 38%  | 49.85          |
| Midwest       | 94    | 17%  | 49.18          |
| West          | 86    | 16%  | 48.39          |
| Southwest     | 131   | 24%  | 47.44          |
| International | 5     | 1%   | 45.25          |
| Grand Total   | 543   | 100% | 48.82          |



# Average Survey Participants

- The **average survey respondent** was a Post-9/11 Army Veteran
- Most of the survey participants were **enlisted** during their military career
- The majority of respondents were white males
- The **average length of military service** was **12 years**
- The **average age** of survey participants was **58**



# Basic Demographics:

## Participants by Gender

|        |     |      |
|--------|-----|------|
| Female | 160 | 29%  |
| Male   | 383 | 71%  |
| Total  | 543 | 100% |

## Marital Status

|                                 |            |             |
|---------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Divorced                        | 104        | 19%         |
| Married or domestic partnership | 355        | 66%         |
| Separated                       | 10         | 2%          |
| Single, never married           | 41         | 8%          |
| Widowed                         | 29         | 5%          |
| <b>Grand Total</b>              | <b>539</b> | <b>100%</b> |

## Age Category

|                        |            |             |
|------------------------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Younger than 50</b> | <b>158</b> | <b>29%</b>  |
| 20-30                  | 4          | 1%          |
| 30-40                  | 45         | 8%          |
| 40-50                  | 109        | 20%         |
| <b>Older than 50</b>   | <b>381</b> | <b>71%</b>  |
| 50-60                  | 126        | 23%         |
| 60-70                  | 157        | 29%         |
| 70 or older            | 98         | 18%         |
| <b>Grand Total</b>     | <b>539</b> | <b>100%</b> |

## Sexual Orientation

|                    |            |             |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| Bisexual           | 5          | 1%          |
| Gay                | 6          | 1%          |
| Heterosexual       | 502        | 93%         |
| Lesbian            | 5          | 1%          |
| Other              | 2          | < 1%        |
| Prefer not to say  | 19         | 4%          |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>539</b> | <b>100%</b> |



## Race & Ethnicity

|                           |      |
|---------------------------|------|
| White                     | 69%  |
| Black or African American | 8%   |
| American Indian           | 12%  |
| Alaskan Native            | < 0% |
| Asian                     | 1%   |
| Other Pacific Islander    | 1%   |
| Other                     | 4%   |
| Prefer not to answer      | 5%   |
| No Response               | 1%   |

---

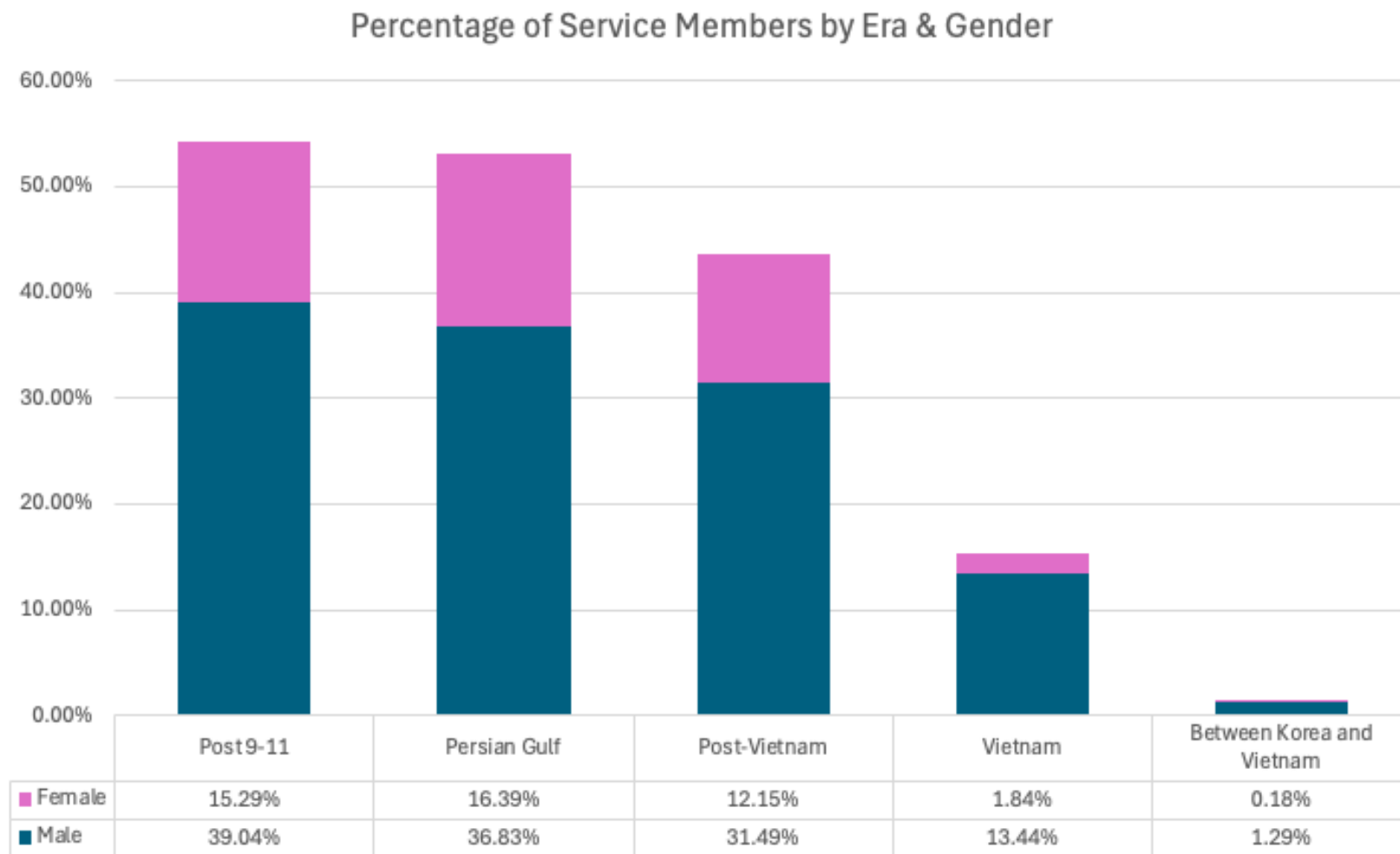
## Hispanic / Latino Participants

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Non-Hispanic       | 90% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 10% |

---

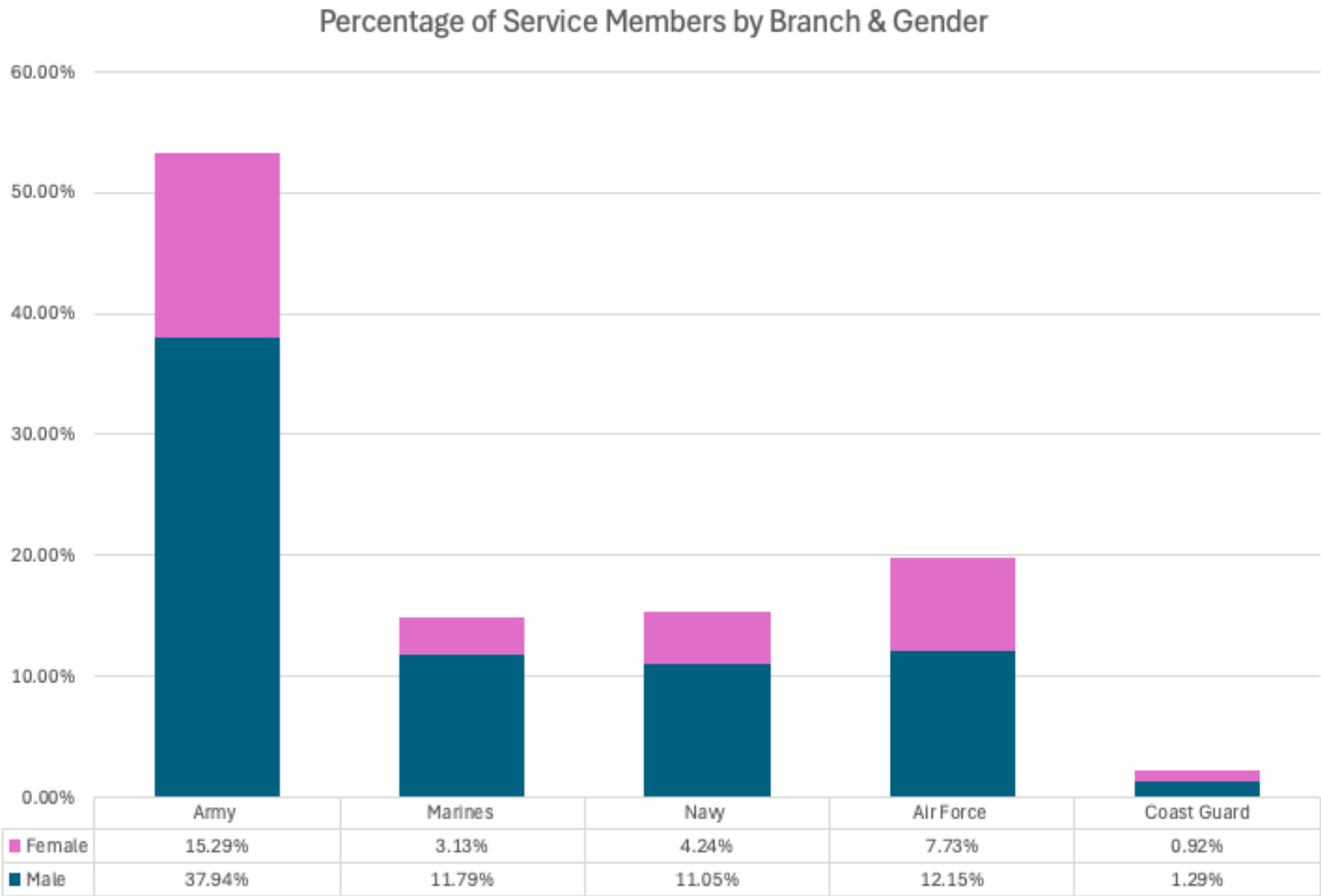
# Military Demographics: Era of Service

| Era of Service            |        |
|---------------------------|--------|
| Post 9-11                 | 54.33% |
| Persian Gulf              | 53.22% |
| Post-Vietnam              | 43.65% |
| Vietnam                   | 15.29% |
| Between Korea and Vietnam | 1.47%  |



# Military Demographics: Branch of Service

| Branch      | Total  |
|-------------|--------|
| Army        | 53.22% |
| Marines     | 14.92% |
| Navy        | 15.29% |
| Air Force   | 19.89% |
| Coast Guard | 2.21%  |



# Military Demographics: Service Statistics

Enlisted service members comprised of 83% of service members who participated in the survey while officers only accounted for 17% of service member participants

Officers scored 4% higher on average on the **hope scale**

Service members who participated in the survey reported an **average of 12 years of service** and were **post-active duty** by an **average of 26 years**

| Years of Service |     |
|------------------|-----|
| Minimum          | < 1 |
| Average          | 12  |
| Maximum          | 42  |
| StdDev           | 10  |

| Post Active Duty |     |
|------------------|-----|
| Minimum          | < 1 |
| Average          | 26  |
| Maximum          | 66  |
| StdDev           | 16  |

# Military Demographics: Service Status

| Service Status       |            |             |                |
|----------------------|------------|-------------|----------------|
|                      | Count      | %           | Avg Hope Score |
| Discharged           | 227        | 42%         | 47.84          |
| Medically Discharged | 27         | 5%          | 49.31          |
| Retired              | 85         | 16%         | 52.16          |
| Active Duty          | 12         | 2%          | 48.27          |
| Unknown              | 192        | 35%         | 48.50          |
| <b>Grand Total</b>   | <b>543</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>48.82</b>   |

| Discharge Status     |            |             |                |
|----------------------|------------|-------------|----------------|
|                      | Count      | %           | Avg Hope Score |
| General              | 27         | 5%          | 44.12          |
| Honorable            | 481        | 94%         | 49.08          |
| Other than Honorable | 5          | 1%          | 44.60          |
| <b>Grand Total</b>   | <b>543</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>48.82</b>   |



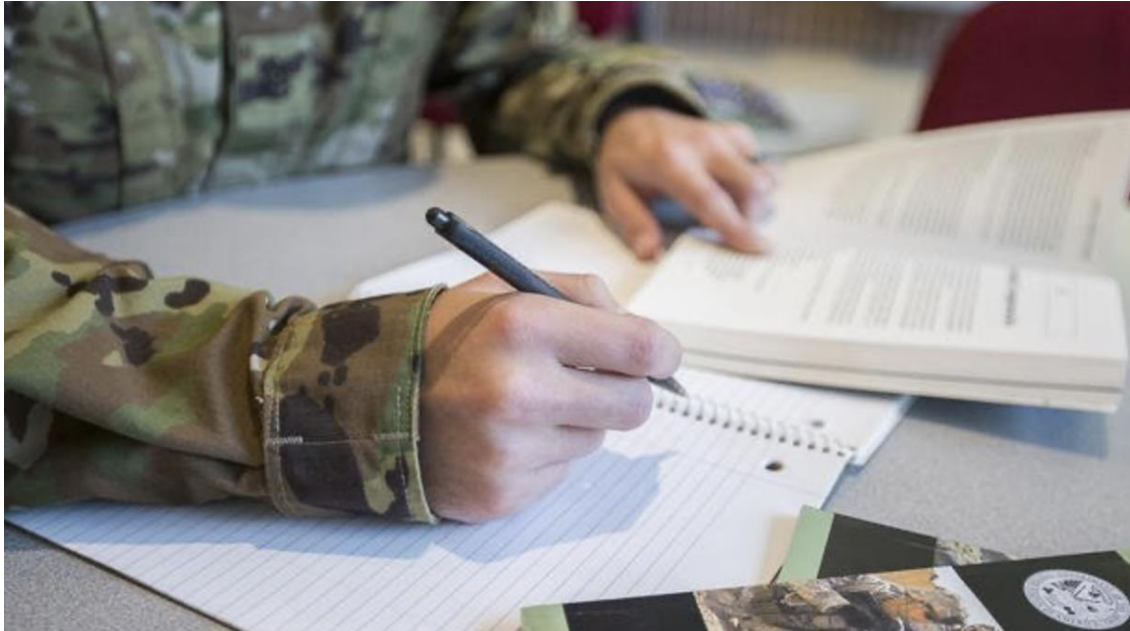
# Military Demographics: Deployment Statistics

**Average length of deployment:** 480 days / 1.3 years

- **69%** of service members surveyed were **deployed**
- Of those, **78%** were deployed in a **combat zone**
- **71%** of service members who were deployed **reported being in imminent danger or under hostile fire during their deployment**, regardless of being in a combat zone
- **67%** reported **being exposed to dead, dying, or wounded people** during their time of service
- Interestingly, these factors did not contribute significantly to hope level or hope category
- The longer survey participants were deployed, seemed to increase their hope

| Deployment Length vs. Hope Score |            |             |                |
|----------------------------------|------------|-------------|----------------|
| Years Deployed                   | Count      | %           | Avg Hope Score |
| < 1                              | 157        | 47%         | 48.92          |
| 1- 2                             | 124        | 37%         | 49.31          |
| 2- 3                             | 31         | 9%          | 52.41          |
| 3- 4                             | 11         | 3%          | 53.00          |
| 4- 5                             | 7          | 2%          | 47.50          |
| 5 <                              | 5          | 1%          | 53.00          |
| <b>Grand Total</b>               | <b>335</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>49.55</b>   |





### Average Hope Scale By Degree

|                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| No Bachelor's Degree        | 47.62 |
| Bachelor's Degree or Higher | 52.9  |

### Education Benefits Usage

|                    | Count      | %           |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| I don't know       | 11         | 2%          |
| No                 | 204        | 38%         |
| Yes                | 317        | 60%         |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>532</b> | <b>100%</b> |

## Military Demographic: Education Overview

- Over **80%** of **service members** who responded to the survey **continued their education** through trade school or college after completing high school or obtaining a GED diploma
- Around **51%** of **service members** who responded to the survey **hold a bachelor's degree or higher** and around **19%** are **currently pursuing a degree or further job training**
- Service members who hold a bachelor's degree or higher are over **10% more hopeful** and more likely to score within the *in transition* or *thriving* category on the hope scale
- For service members who responded to the survey question, well **over half used their education benefits**

# Military Demographics: Highest Level of Education Completed

| Education Status of Service Members                                                   |            |             |              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|
|                                                                                       | Count      | %           |              |
| <b>No College Degree</b>                                                              | <b>184</b> | <b>34%</b>  | <b>46.27</b> |
| Non-Applicable                                                                        | 2          | 0%          | 52.00        |
| Regular high school diploma or GED                                                    | 100        | 19%         | 45.05        |
| Business, technical or vocational school training leading to a certificate or diploma | 82         | 15%         | 47.77        |
| <b>Undergraduate Degree</b>                                                           | <b>226</b> | <b>42%</b>  | <b>48.75</b> |
| Associate's degree                                                                    | 83         | 15%         | 45.65        |
| Bachelor's degree                                                                     | 143        | 27%         | 50.37        |
| <b>Graduate Level Degree</b>                                                          | <b>127</b> | <b>24%</b>  | <b>52.71</b> |
| Master's degree                                                                       | 102        | 19%         | 51.92        |
| Professional or doctorate degree beyond                                               | 25         | 5%          | 56.35        |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                                                                    | <b>537</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>48.82</b> |

# Military Demographics: Pursing Further Education

| Degree Pursuit of All Service Members                                                 |     |      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|
| Not currently pursuing any higher education                                           | 432 | 81%  |
| High School Diploma, GED, or Training                                                 | 34  | 6%   |
| Regular high school diploma or GED                                                    | 3   | 1%   |
| Business, technical or vocational school training leading to a certificate or diploma | 31  | 6%   |
| Associate's degree                                                                    | 19  | 4%   |
| Bachelor's Degree or Higher                                                           | 50  | 9%   |
| Bachelor's degree                                                                     | 28  | 5%   |
| Master's degree                                                                       | 17  | 3%   |
| Professional or doctorate degree beyond a bachelor's degree                           | 5   | 1%   |
| Grand Total                                                                           | 535 | 100% |

# Military Demographics: Employment



| Employment Status |     |      |
|-------------------|-----|------|
| Full-time         | 225 | 42%  |
| Part-time         | 43  | 8%   |
| Unemployed        | 266 | 50%  |
| Grand Total       | 534 | 100% |

The **average age** of service members who participated in the survey was **58**, and nearly **47%** are over the age of **60**, which could explain the high unemployment rate observed. Approximately **55%** of those who reported being unemployed were **retired**.

Service members who are **employed** either part-time or full-time **scored 8% higher on the hope scale** than unemployed service members

**75%** of **employed service** members consider their job a career

- Service members or veterans **consider their job a career** were **6% more hopeful** on the hope scale score

**77%** of survey participants feel their employer supports them as a former military personnel

- However, less than half reported that their employer takes full advantage of their military leadership, training and experience

Those who agree or strongly agree that **their life has a sense of purpose and meaning** were on **average 20% more hopeful** than those who disagree or strongly disagree, pointing to the important of purpose not only for a job, but overall well-being.

# Military Demographics: Unemployment

| Employment Status                       |            |             |                |
|-----------------------------------------|------------|-------------|----------------|
|                                         | Count      | %           | Avg Hope Score |
| Unable to work due to injury or illness | 74         | 28%         | 39.95          |
| Able to work but choose not to work     | 5          | 2%          | 43.00          |
| Full-time student                       | 10         | 4%          | 48.30          |
| Seeking employment or work              | 32         | 12%         | 43.66          |
| Retired                                 | 145        | 55%         | 50.51          |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                      | <b>266</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>46.58</b>   |

| Length of Job Search |           |             |                |
|----------------------|-----------|-------------|----------------|
|                      | Count     | %           | Avg Hope Score |
| 0-3 months           | 16        | 50%         | 43.25          |
| 3-6 months           | 2         | 6%          | 44.50          |
| 6-9 months           | 1         | 3%          | 38.00          |
| 9-12 months          | 2         | 6%          | 46.50          |
| Over a year          | 11        | 34%         | 44.09          |
| <b>Grand Total</b>   | <b>32</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>43.66</b>   |

**Over half** of the service members surveyed who were unemployed are retired

Unfortunately, **28%** are unemployed because they are **unable to work due to injury or illness**

- Those who are unable to work were, on average, **15% less hopeful** than those who are full-time students, seeking employment, who chose not to work, or who are retired

**43%** of **service members seeking employment** have been looking for work for six months or longer. Veterans' main consideration for a job or position include **making money, purpose in life, and family**.

# Housing Status of Service Members

| Housing Status                                               |       |      |                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------|------|----------------|
|                                                              | Count | %    | Avg Hope Score |
| Own                                                          | 380   | 73%  | 50.54          |
| Rent                                                         | 94    | 18%  | 44.31          |
| Transitional Housing                                         | 39    | 7%   | 44.87          |
| Participating in a VA Housing Program (e.g., HUD VASH, SSVF) | 11    | 2%   | 43.00          |
| Temporarily living with family or friends                    | 17    | 3%   | 48.00          |
| Temporary or transitional housing                            | 11    | 2%   | 42.18          |
| Homeless                                                     | 10    | 2%   | 41.33          |
| Grand Total                                                  | 523   | 100% | 48.82          |

- Approximately **73% of service members** who participated in the survey **own** their place of residence, while about **18% rent**
- Those who **own their homes** are more likely to score within the *thriving* or *in transition* category compared to other participants
- Service members reported having an average of 2.7 people in their household and 1.4 dependents

# Financial Security

- Only **55%** of service members reported they felt **financially secure**, while **45%** felt **did NOT feel financially secure**
  - Service members who felt financially secure were **16% more hopeful**
- **38%** of service members reported having a **household income** level of **\$100,000 or more** per year
  - Service members with a household income of **\$100,000 or more** were **18% more hopeful**, and **hope increased by an average 7-8% per income level over \$60,000**, suggesting an increase in income leads to better quality of life
- Around **75%** of service members surveyed **receive VA disability**, and nearly **11%** receive supplemental **income from public-assisted programs** outside of their disability claim
- Despite over half the service members surveyed reporting financial security, **89%** expressed they **experienced financial stress** within the past 12 months
  - 18% were worried about being able to afford their next meal
  - 20% were worried about being able to make their next mortgage or rent payment
  - 15% were worried about becoming homeless
- Just over **88%** reported they had access to reliable transportation
  - While only 12% reported not having access to reliable transportation, being able to reliably access transport **services increased hope by 14%**

# Access to Healthcare

Of service members who participated in the survey, **87%** reported having healthcare coverage or insurance, and approximately **83%** are enrolled in VA Care

Nearly **71%** of service members reported they have **utilized the VA** for physical and/or mental healthcare services

- **83%** were **satisfied** with the **physical healthcare services received at the VA** while approximately **81%** that were **satisfied** with the **mental healthcare services** received at the VA

While **75%** of service members surveyed reported that they **receive VA disability**, the pathway to access care and utilize their disability claim has challenges

- The majority of VA disability claims took longer than 6 months to be resolved with **46%** of claims taking **more than a year to be resolved**
- **15%** of service members reported they have a disability claim pending
- **44%** who utilize the **VA** for **physical health services** had an appointment **postponed in the past 12 months**
- **24%** who utilize the **VA** for **mental healthcare services** had an appointment **postponed in the past 12 months**
- This suggest while veterans have health coverage and are usually satisfied with the healthcare services, accessibility may still be an issue

| Distance to the Nearest VA |       |      |                |
|----------------------------|-------|------|----------------|
|                            | Count | %    | Avg Hope Score |
| Less than 10 miles away    | 116   | 22%  | 49.44          |
| 10 - 20 miles away         | 211   | 41%  | 48.58          |
| 20 miles or more           | 173   | 33%  | 48.79          |
| Unknown                    | 19    | 4%   | 48.32          |
| Grand Total                | 519   | 100% | 48.82          |



# Access to Healthcare Continued...

**85%** of service members reported they are currently or have previously been treated for a medical condition

Despite nearly **87%** of service members having healthcare coverage and access to the VA, **36%** reported they have untreated health conditions and another **17%** were not sure if they have untreated health conditions, implying a level of uncertainty in their health and wellbeing. **So why aren't service members seeking treatment?**

**1 out of 5** service members has opted out of a healthcare visit or declined to seek healthcare in the past **due to related costs**

Of the **36%** of service members **with untreated health conditions**, most **did not seek treatment** because they were unable to find a healthcare provider they like, their work/personal schedule doesn't allow for time off, or due to related costs.

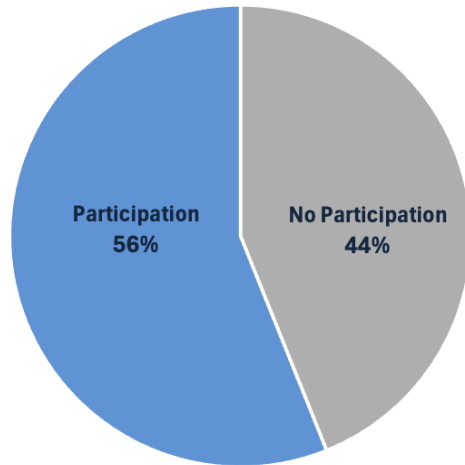
**28%** of service members reported they did not seek treatment for other reasons. Notably, navigating the bureaucracy of healthcare systems, unsuccessful treatments in the past, awaiting referrals or appointments, or because they were unable to find transportation to a medical facility and frustrations with the VA were reported.

| Why Service Members Are Not Seeking Medical Care                                         |       |            |                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------|----------------|
|                                                                                          | Count | Percentage | Avg Hope Score |
| Fear of doctors                                                                          | 13    | 7.07%      | 44.1           |
| Unable to access healthcare provider due to distance or cost                             | 23    | 12.50%     | 43.5           |
| Unable to find healthcare provider that I like or find proper treatment for my condition | 40    | 21.74%     | 44.2           |
| Work/personal schedule doesn't allow for time off                                        | 30    | 16.30%     | 47.6           |
| Prefer not to answer                                                                     | 45    | 24.46%     | 47.7           |
| Other - Write In                                                                         | 33    | 17.93%     | 47.6           |

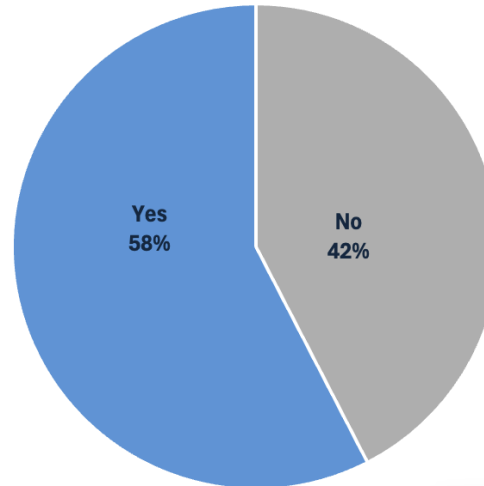


# Military Demographics: Wellness

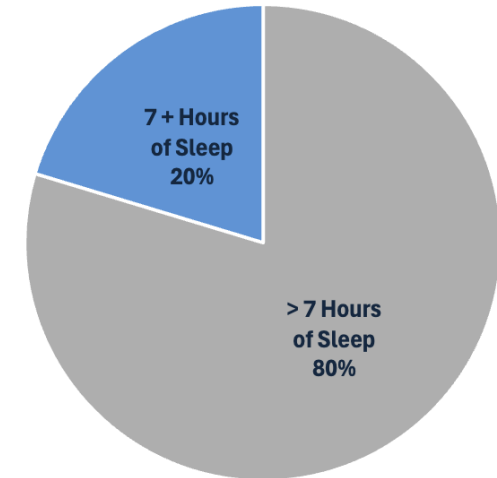
Spiritual or Religious Activities



Regular Exercise



Recommended Hours of Sleep



Over half (**56%**) of service members who **participated in spiritual or religious**. Those who achieved the recommended **minimum number of hours of sleep per night** were **13% more hopeful**, and those who reported engaging in **regular exercise** were over **12% more hopeful**.

## Other Wellness:

Around **47%** of service members reported **consuming alcohol weekly**, and approximately **21%** reported **nicotine use**

# Resource Seeking

Service members were asked about resources they were seeking within their community

Resources needed by service members varied among gender, hope level, and type of residential area an individual lived.

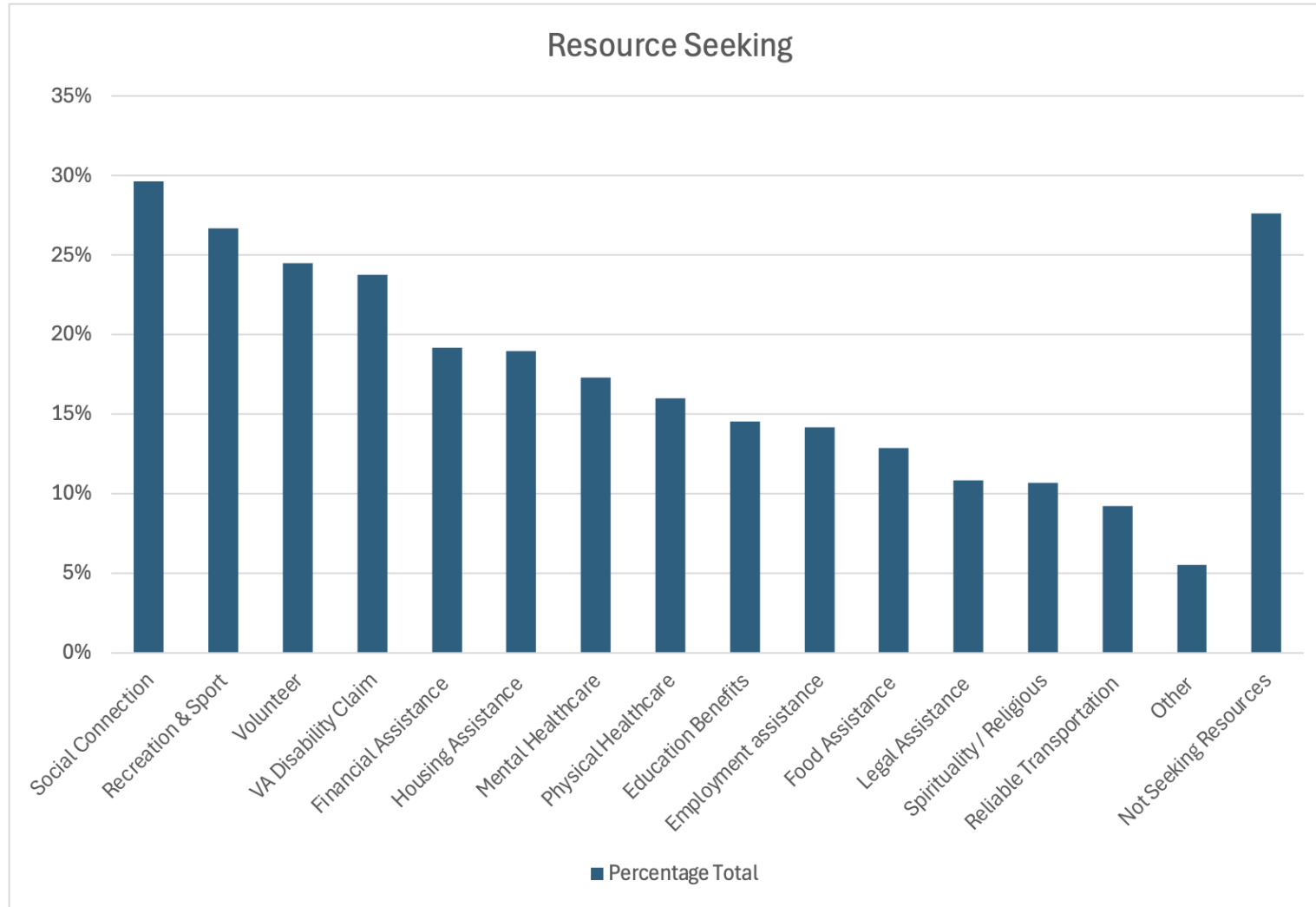
Around a quarter of service members surveyed were not seeking resources or assistance, however for those who were, **connecting with other service members and their families was the top resource requested.**

Service members who felt as though they had the resources they needed to care for themselves were **20% more hopeful.**

## Surveyed Resources Needed:

- Employment assistance
- Legal assistance
- Reliable transportation
- Financial assistance
- House assistance
- Food assistance
- Access to physical health care services
- Access to mental health care services
- Education benefits
- Help with filing a disability claim with the VA
- Spiritual resources & support
- Opportunities for recreational or other physical activities
- Opportunities to connect with other military/veteran service members and families/caregivers
- Volunteer opportunities
- Other

# Top Resources Needed by Service Members



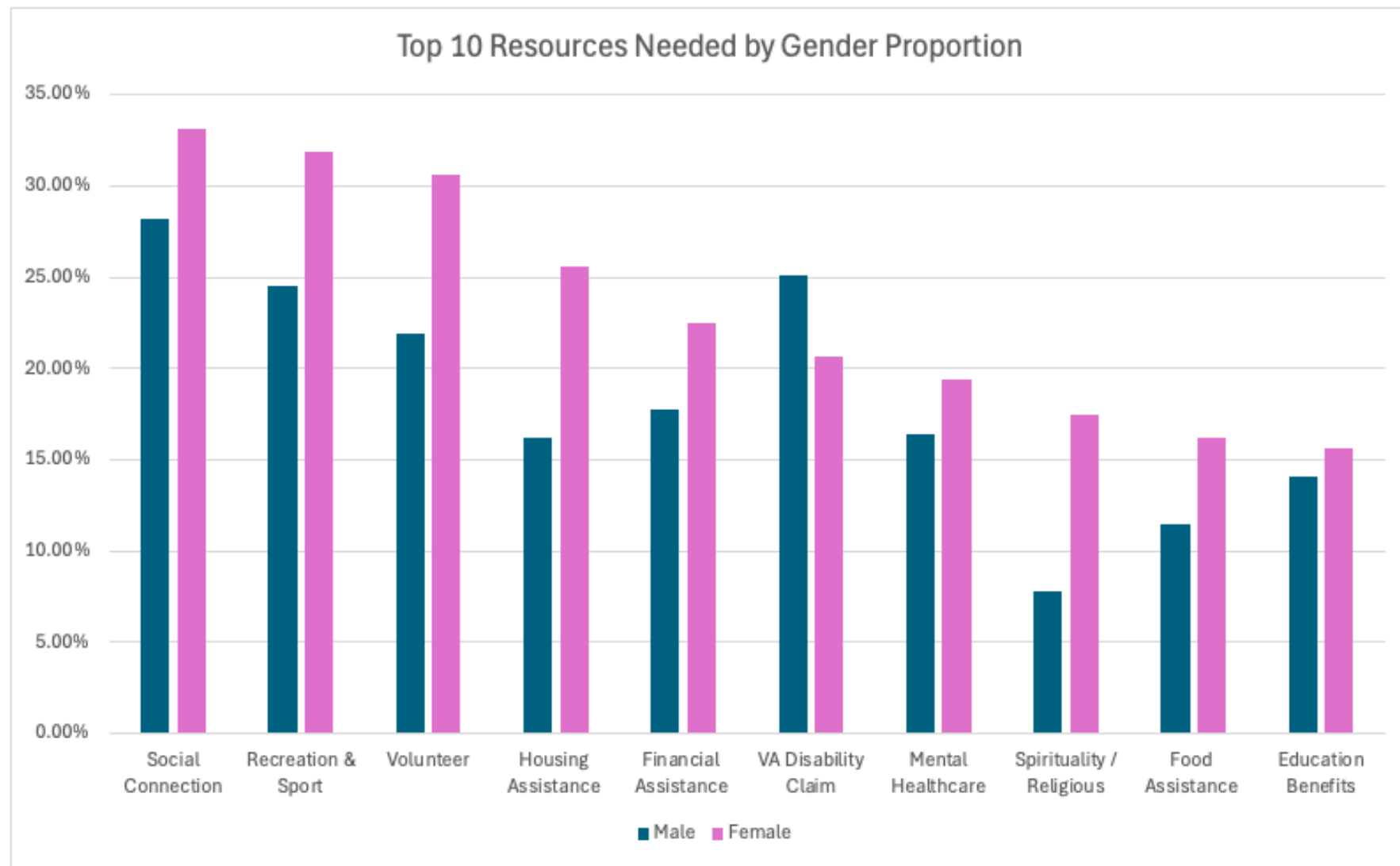
Over 70% of service members surveyed were seeking access to resources or services

## Top Five Resources Needed:

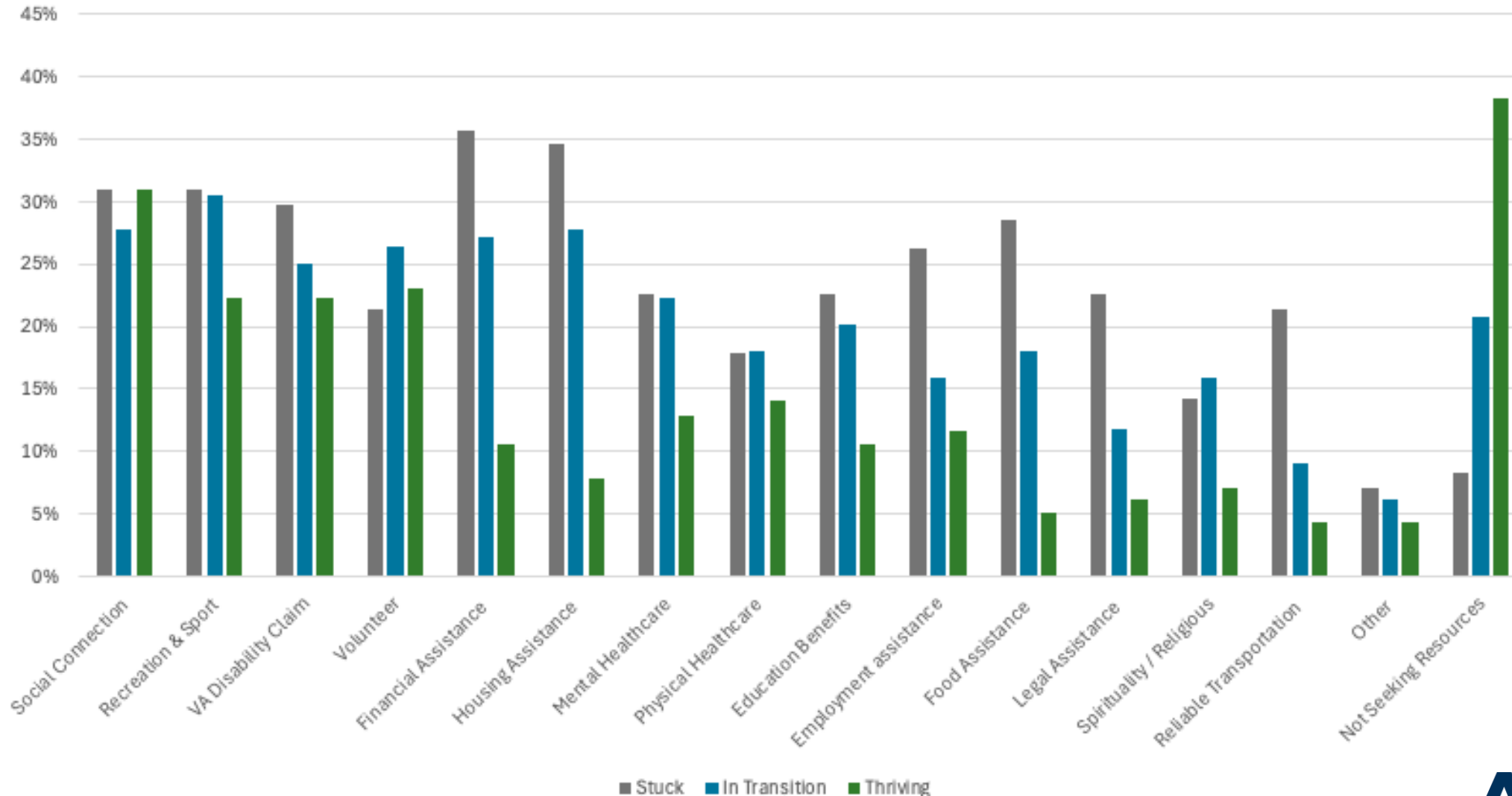
1. Opportunities to connect with other military/veteran service members and families/caregivers
2. Opportunities for recreational or other physical activities
3. Volunteer opportunities
4. Filing a disability claim with the VA
5. Financial Assistance

# Resource Seeking by Gender

While more males responded to the survey, women were more likely to be seeking resources

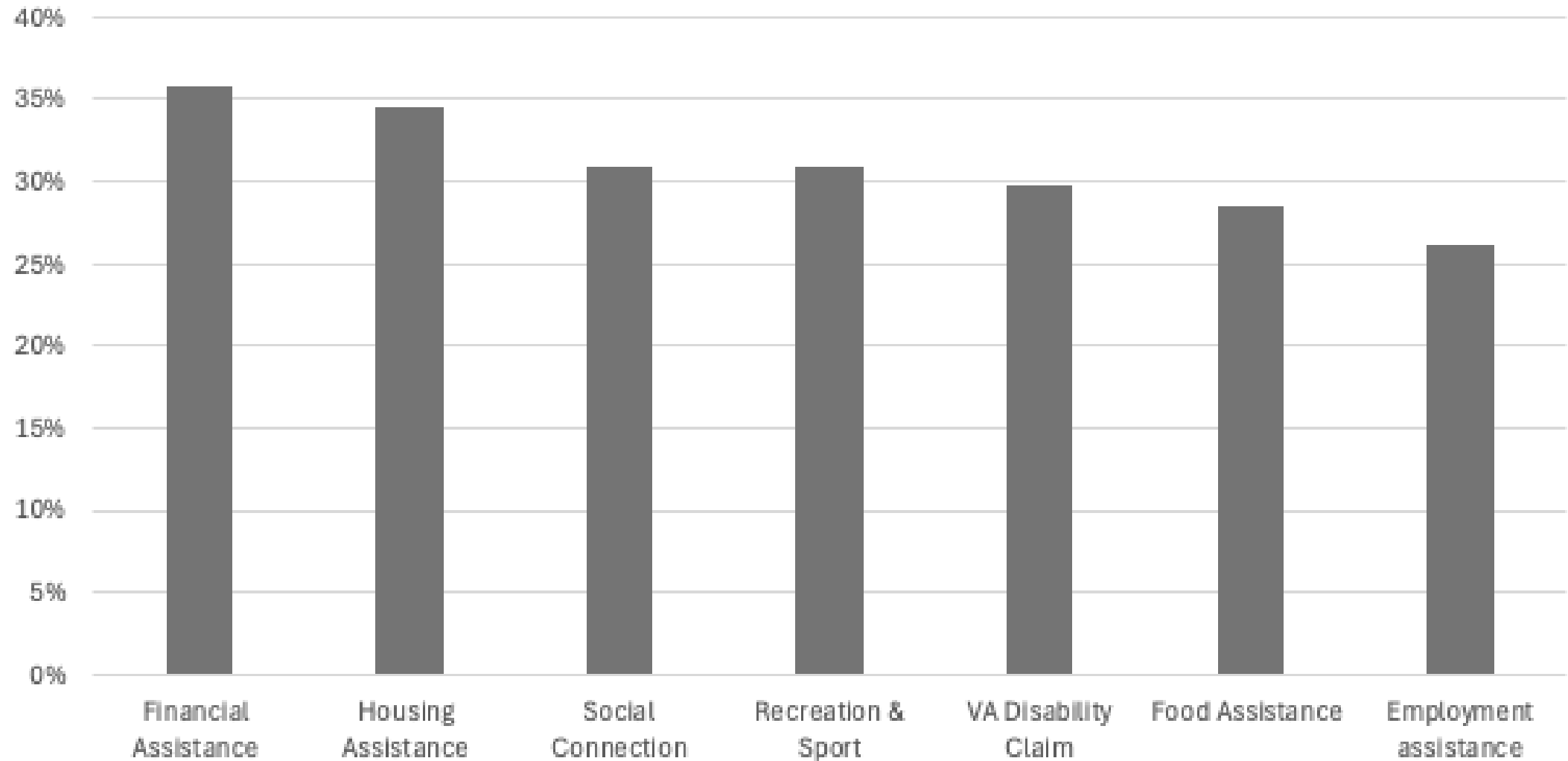


Hope Category vs. Resource Needed

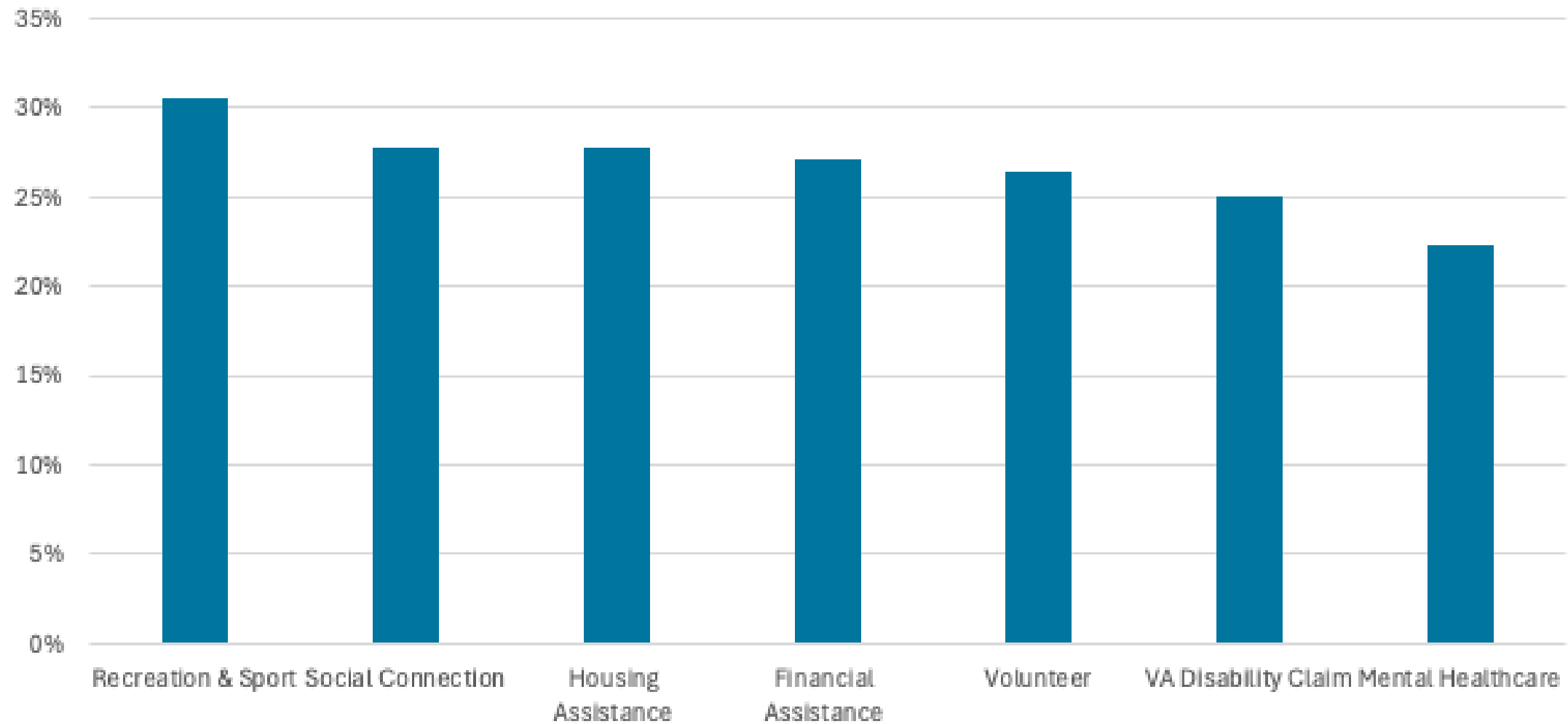


Needs vary among service members based on how hopeful or hopeless they feel

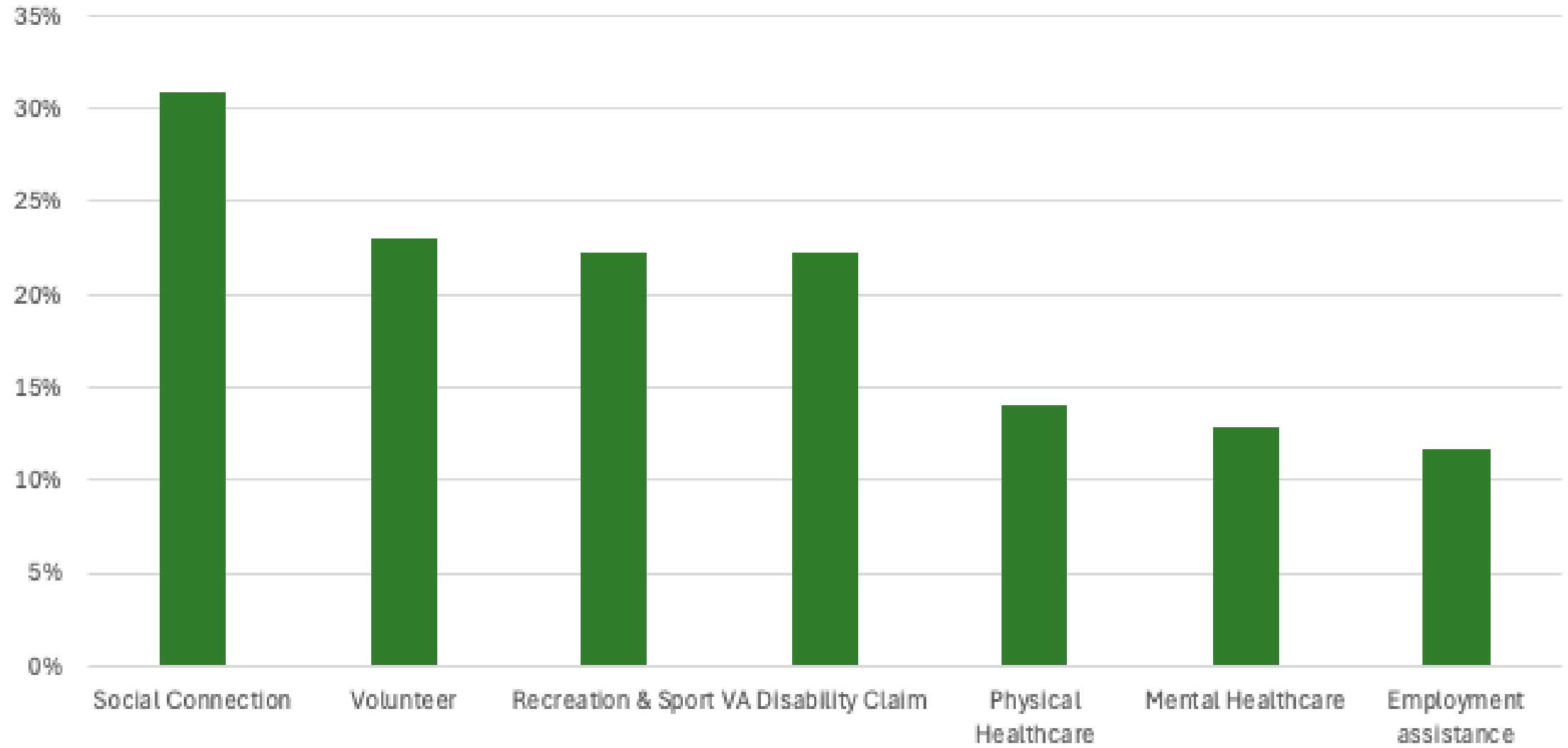
## Top 7 Resources Needed vs. Stuck



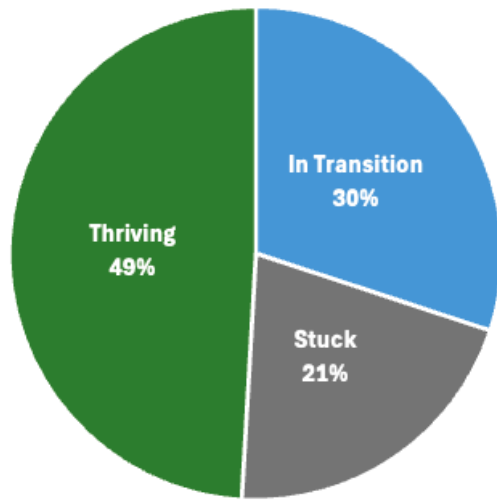
## Top 7 Resources Needed vs. In Transition



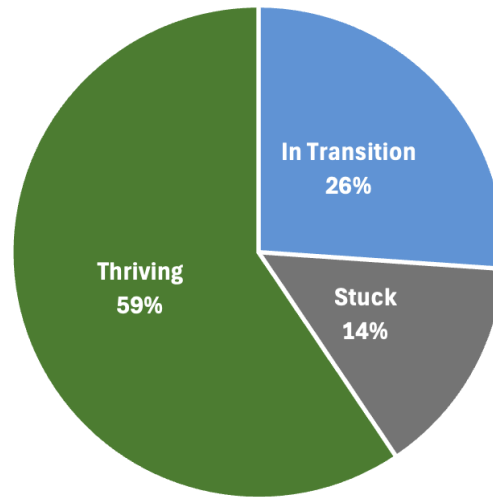
## Top 7 Resources Needed vs. Thriving



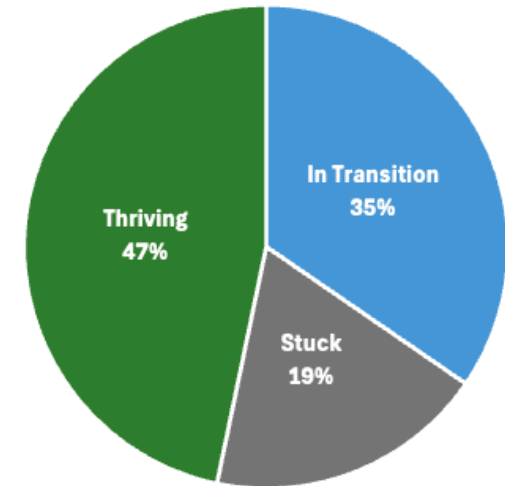
# Area vs. Hope Category



**Rural**



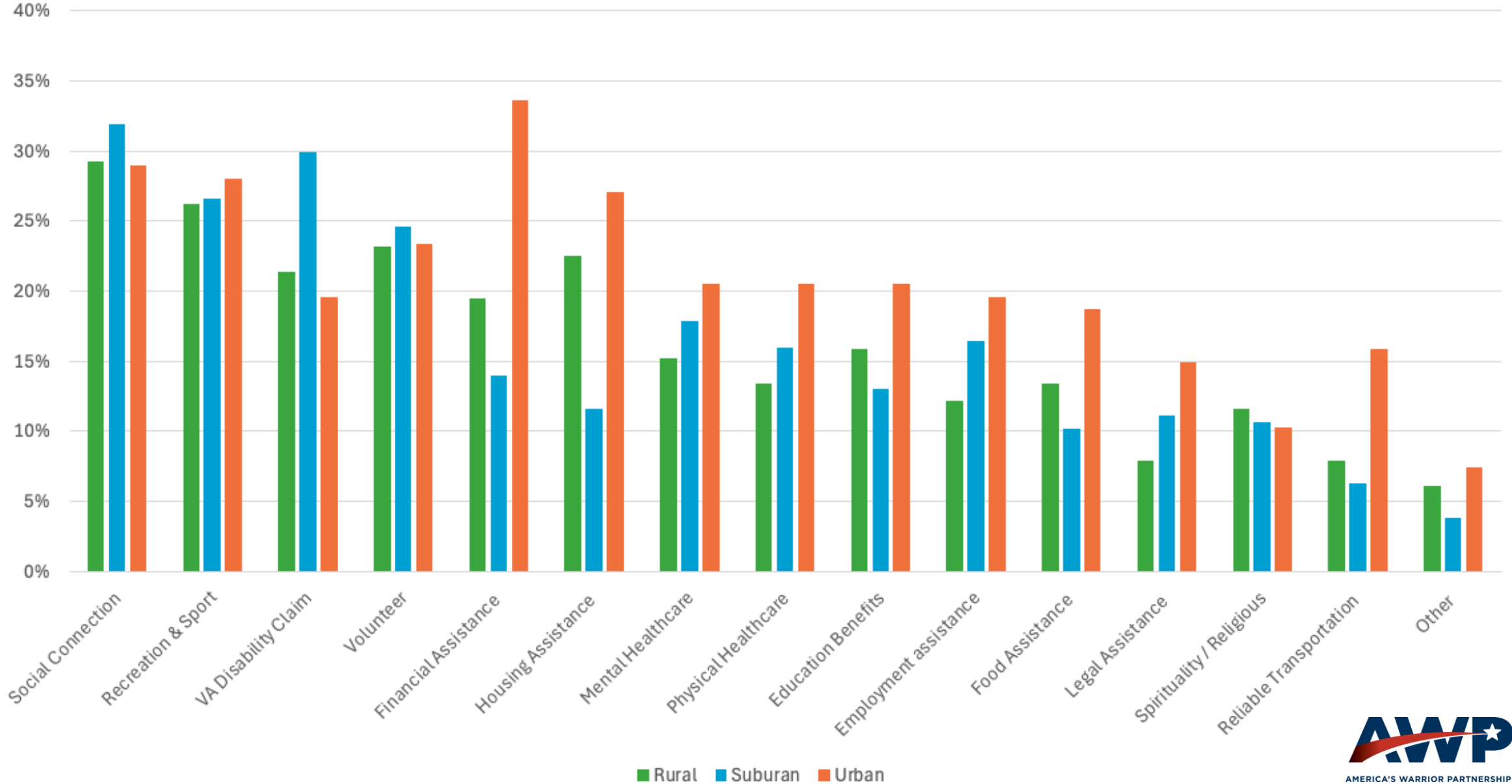
**Suburban**



**Urban**

Veterans are more likely to score within the **thriving** range on the **hope scale** in **suburban areas** compared to rural or urban areas. Higher levels of hope in suburban areas are linked to a better balance of economic support, high-quality resources, and environmental predictability. By functioning as a middle ground between urban intensity and rural isolation, suburban areas often provide residents with great access to well-funded education and stable social networks that foster long-term optimism (Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2013). As a result, resources needed vary by rural, suburban, and urban areas. Communities that fall within these categories can better serve veterans and their families by focusing on providing more services and programs based on these sought-after resources.

## Resources Needed by Area



---

# Area vs. Need for Resources

Veterans in urban centers consistently report higher needs across nearly every functional category compared to those in rural or suburban areas. However, regardless of geography, four specific resources emerge as the most critical:

1. **Social Connection:** This ranks as the top overall need, suggesting that social isolation is a universal challenge across the veteran population
2. **Recreation & Sport:** Veterans are actively seeking opportunities to remain physically engaged and rebuild the unique sense of camaraderie experiences during the military
3. **VA Disability Claims:** The high demand in this area indicates that navigating the complexities of filing or increasing disability claims remain a challenge for all Veterans
4. **Volunteer Opportunities:** Across all settings, Veterans demonstrate a strong and consistent desire to continue serving their communities

# Connection & Community

Participants were surveyed on a number of questions relating to community, outreach, and interpersonal relationships.

Most service members were looking for opportunities to connect with other service members and their families – which aligns with **AWP's Community Integration Model** and our organization's aim to provide veterans with a greater sense of community to foster connection and meaningful relationships.



# Interpersonal Relationships & Purpose

Participants were asked a series of mirroring questions to measure **interpersonal relationships** and rate how true a statement was on an eight likert-scale range from *definitely false* to *definitely true*. The **average hope score** of mirroring questions was calculated to generate a more accurate measures the following categories were analyzed.

## Meaningful Relationships & Connection

- I have meaningful relationships & friendships
- I find it hard to connect to other emotional

## Support System

- I have a family that loves me
- I often feel like I don't have anyone to count on
- I have people I can count on or will help me

## Connected to Community

- I am part of a community
- I don't feel like I belong to a community

## Overall Interpersonal Relationship

- Measured all questions

| Interpersonal Relationship |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|
|                            | Avg Hope Score |
| Definitely False           | 39.73          |
| Mostly False               | 41.62          |
| Somewhat False             | 43.52          |
| Slightly False             | 43.55          |
| Slightly True              | 44.78          |
| Somewhat True              | 47.66          |
| Mostly True                | 51.09          |
| Definitely True            | 55.16          |

Overall, Veterans who answered *definitely true* when inquired about **interpersonal relationship inquires** were on **average 33% more hopeful** than those who did not have strong interpersonal relationships (*definitely false*)

Participants who reported *definitely true* when inquired if they have **meaningful relationships and friendships** were **35% more hopeful** than those who reported *definitely false*

Participants who reported *definitely true* when inquired about a **support system** were **28% more hopeful** than those who reported *definitely false*

Participants who reported *definitely true* when inquired about being **connected to a community** were **35% more hopeful** than those who reported *definitely false*

# Veteran Serving Organizations & Service Members Sense of Community

When inquired about community participation, **57% of service members** reported they participate or help organize events within in their community → those who reported participation were on average **4% more hopeful**

- **53%** of service members are **currently or have previously received information or support** with veteran service providers in their community
- **65%** of service members **feel as though their community is invested** in active military members and/or **veterans**
- **67%** feel as though service members can **thrive in their community**
- **59%** feel there is a **strong network** for active military/veterans in their community, and were **13% more hopeful**.
- **72%** felt they had the **resources** they **needed**
- **55%** feel as though VSOs in their community **improved their community's understanding of active military and veteran issues**
- **56%** reported VSOs **connected them to other veterans** in their community
- **52%** feel VSOs in their community **helped them feel more connected** to their community



# How are we engaging with service members and survey participants?



**80%** of all survey participants have **received information or assistance** from **military / veteran organizations** within their community. Of these individuals, **66% first learned** about programs and services being offered in their community via some form of **outreach**, including:

- Public advertisement or notice
- Social media or web searches
- Being approached by a staff member
- Referrals

Those who received information about services and programs scored **nearly 4% higher** on the **hope scale**, implying the importance of outreach to increase hope

Just under **80%** of service members who reported being neutral or satisfied with their community's ability to provide information and resources were almost **12% more hopeful**, pointing to not only the importance of **outreach and engagement**, but the level of quality in which VSOs are able to accomplish these efforts.



# What is driving hope?

Results of the survey indicate that **53%** of **service members** who participated in the survey are **hopeful and thriving**, while **30%** are in transition and are **moderately hopeful**

Around **17%** of service members observed had **low hope** and needed further support

The most impactful factors for driving hope are:

- **Interpersonal Support:** This is the single strongest predictor of high hope
- **Financial Security:** Those who feel financially secure have a significantly higher average hope score compared to those who did not, representing a over a **16% gap**
- **Health Coverage:** Health insurance or health coverage accounts for a **15%** difference in hope levels and implies having access to healthcare improve overall well-being
- **Sleep & Wellness:** Veterans achieving recommended sleep levels have a **13% higher hope score** than those who do not

# So how do we increase hope and how do we better support Veterans?

Based on the survey data, there is a clear **Hope Gap** that communities can bridge by focusing on specific high-impact areas. While **80%** of veterans have received some form of assistance, those who reported higher levels of hope were more likely to be engaged in community events and feel a strong sense of purpose. To provide better resources, communities should shift from a purely transaction service delivery to a holistic, engagement-driven support.

**Prioritize social and recreational connection** – the data consistently shows that **social connection** and **recreation & support** are the most sought-after resources.

**Address the rural-urban resource gap** – the data indicates that Suburban Veterans are more likely to thrive and the types of resources needed geographically vary

- **Rural communities** – need a higher focus on **social connection** and **volunteer** opportunities
- **Suburban communities** – higher demand for **VA disability claim support** and **recreation**
- **Urban** – higher demand for **financial assistance** and **housing assistance**

**Target Support for *In Transition* Veterans** – About **30%** of survey participants scored within the *In Transition* range on the hope scale. This group has specific resource-seeking patterns that communities can proactively address, such as **housing & finances, mental health, and employment**.

**Optimize Outreach Strategies** – Survey data indicate that **66%** of veterans heard about services through outreach efforts, rather than actively searching. Don't wait for veterans to find you. Outreach-driven engagement leads to higher hope scores than when a veteran needs to search for programs themselves.

The strongest predictor of high hope is not just the presence of health or financial benefits, but a veteran's sense of meaning and purpose. Communities that provide avenues for volunteering and community leadership are likely to see the greatest impact.

# Citations

*Decline in Armed Forces Population While Personnel Readiness Remains High*. [Press release]. U.S. Department of Defense. Retrieved from <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release-Article/Article/3696765/defense-department-report-shows-decline-in-armed-forces-population-while-person/>

Okulicz-Kozaryn, A. (2013). City life: Rankings (livability) versus perceptions (satisfaction). *Social indicators research*, 110(2), 433-451.

USAFacts. (2024, November 12). *How many people are in the U.S. military? A demographic overview*. Retrieved from <https://usafacts.org/articles/how-many-people-are-in-the-us-military-a-demographic-overview/>

U.S. Census Bureau. (2024, October 16). *Veterans Day 2024: November 11*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2024/veterans-day.html>

U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). *QuickFacts United States*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045224>

U.S. Department of Defense. (2024, April 11). *DOD's 2023 Demographics Report Indicates More Women, Fewer Separations*. [News story]. U.S. Department of Defense. Retrieved from U.S. Department of Defense. (2024, April 5). *Defense Department Report Shows*