

Office of Health Equity

Veterans Health Administration

Department of Veterans Affairs



ADDRESSING VETERAN MOBILITY LIMITATIONS WITH VA VIDEO CONNECT AND OTHER VIRTUAL SOLUTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

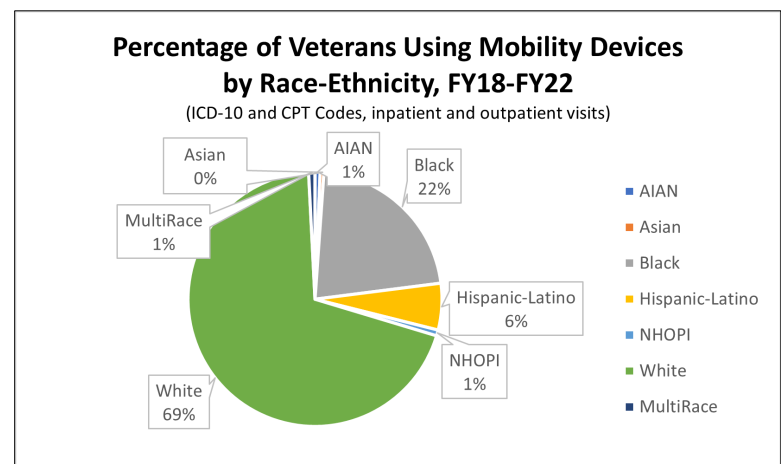
The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) serves a Veteran population that is racially and ethnically diverse. Equitable access to high-quality care for all Veterans is a major tenet of the VA healthcare mission. The VHA [Office of Health Equity](#) (OHE) champions the elimination of health disparities and achievement of health equity for all Veterans.

OHE supports efforts across VA to reduce health disparities by targeting interventions aimed at Veteran groups at higher risk for poor health outcomes.

VETERANS AND MOBILITY LIMITATIONS

About 6.4 million Veterans are active users of VHA care. Hundreds of thousands of Veterans use mobility devices such as canes, walkers, and wheelchairs or have reduced mobility. Some Veterans receive prosthetics due to injuries during military service. The use of mobility devices or prosthetics may create mobility limitations for Veterans. Veterans with these limitations may experience barriers to accessing care. From FY2018-FY2022, the number of Veterans at VHA inpatient and outpatient visits using a mobility device or having reduced mobility varied by race

and ethnicity. White Veterans using mobility devices were 69%, and Hispanic-Latino Veterans represented 6% of all Veterans using devices. These numbers are similar to the percentage of Veterans within the overall Veteran population, which is 74% and 8%, respectively. However, the percentage of Black Veterans using mobility devices or having reduced mobility during these five-years period was 22%, which is much higher than their representation within the overall Veteran population at 12%. The percentage of Veterans whose race and ethnicity do not appear in the chart was less than 1% of mobility device users and those with reduced mobility.



Source: VA Corporate Data Warehouse ¹



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VIRTUAL RESOURCES FOR VETERANS

The VA [Office of Connected Care](#) uses virtual technologies to expand Veterans' access to care. My HealthVet, VA Telehealth and VA Mobile are Connected Care programs that may eliminate barriers to accessing care for Veterans with mobility limitations. [My HealthVet](#) online portal and app can be used to refill prescriptions, create tracking lists, and get health information via factsheets, videos, and more. [VA Telehealth](#) and [VA Video Connect](#) (VVC) technology enables Veterans to identify a preference for visit type and location to connect with their VA care team from home in addition to their local clinic or hospital. [VA Mobile](#) gives Veterans tools to manage and extend their care beyond office visits using many mobile applications (apps) easily accessed online and with iOS and Android mobile devices. Some apps are specifically tailored for Veterans and Clinicians. Other apps are tailored for caregivers and family. VVC is a secure video conferencing app that allows Veterans to have live, virtual visits with VA health care providers, including specialists, and even provides opportunities to conduct parts of the physical exam remotely. VA Video Connect became available nationwide in 2017. Private visits between providers and Veterans take place in a virtual medical room. Veterans can get help learning to use VVC by talking with their care team, watching videos, and/or reading training materials.

For more information visit: <https://www.va.gov/healthequity/> and <https://connectedcare.va.gov/>

References

1. US Department of Veterans Affairs. System of Records Notice 97VA10P1: Consolidated Data Information System-VA. 76 FR 25409. May 4, 2011. Amended March 3, 2015.
2. National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics, Veteran Population Projection Model 2016. Tables available at: https://www.va.gov/vetdata/veteran_population.asp
3. VHA Office of Rural Health February 2021. Available at: <https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/aboutus/ruralvets.asp>

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Connected Care programs and technologies offer solutions to Veterans with mobility limitations but other factors that contribute to disparities and access barriers should be considered. VHA care providers may need to examine circumstances or social determinants among the Black Veterans as rates of use of mobility devices are much higher for these Veterans. Also, 4.7 million Veterans live in rural and highly rural areas and more than half of them are enrolled in VHA. However, it is estimated that 27% do not access the internet at home. Geography, mobility limitations, and the lack of equipment and internet access may pose barriers to virtual care. The VA; however, offers Veterans solutions such as the Digital Divide Program and Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations (ATLAS).

VA Video Connect Sessions (phone and web)

