



# Unique Veteran Users Report FY 2014

Prepared by the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics  
March 2016

# Introduction

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) delivers a wide array of benefits and services to eligible Veterans, dependents, and survivors to help to ease the transition from the military to civilian life and to improve quality of life. These programs are overseen by three administrations:

- Veterans Health Administration (VHA) provides Health Care and Pharmacy services
- Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) provides Compensation and Pension disability benefits, Education Assistance, Life Insurance, Vocational Rehabilitation/employment services, and Home Loan Guaranty assistance
- National Cemetery Administration (NCA) provides memorial benefits including graves, markers, flags, medallions, and burial allowances

The National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (NCVAS) conducted a study of Veterans who have used at least one of 22 benefits or services provided by the VA during Fiscal Years 2005 through 2014. Veterans who used at least one benefit or service are termed 'users' and Veterans who did not are termed 'non-users'. Additionally, NCVAS highlighted some utilization characteristics of these Veterans. All year designations refer to Fiscal Years (FY).

Key questions addressed in this study are:

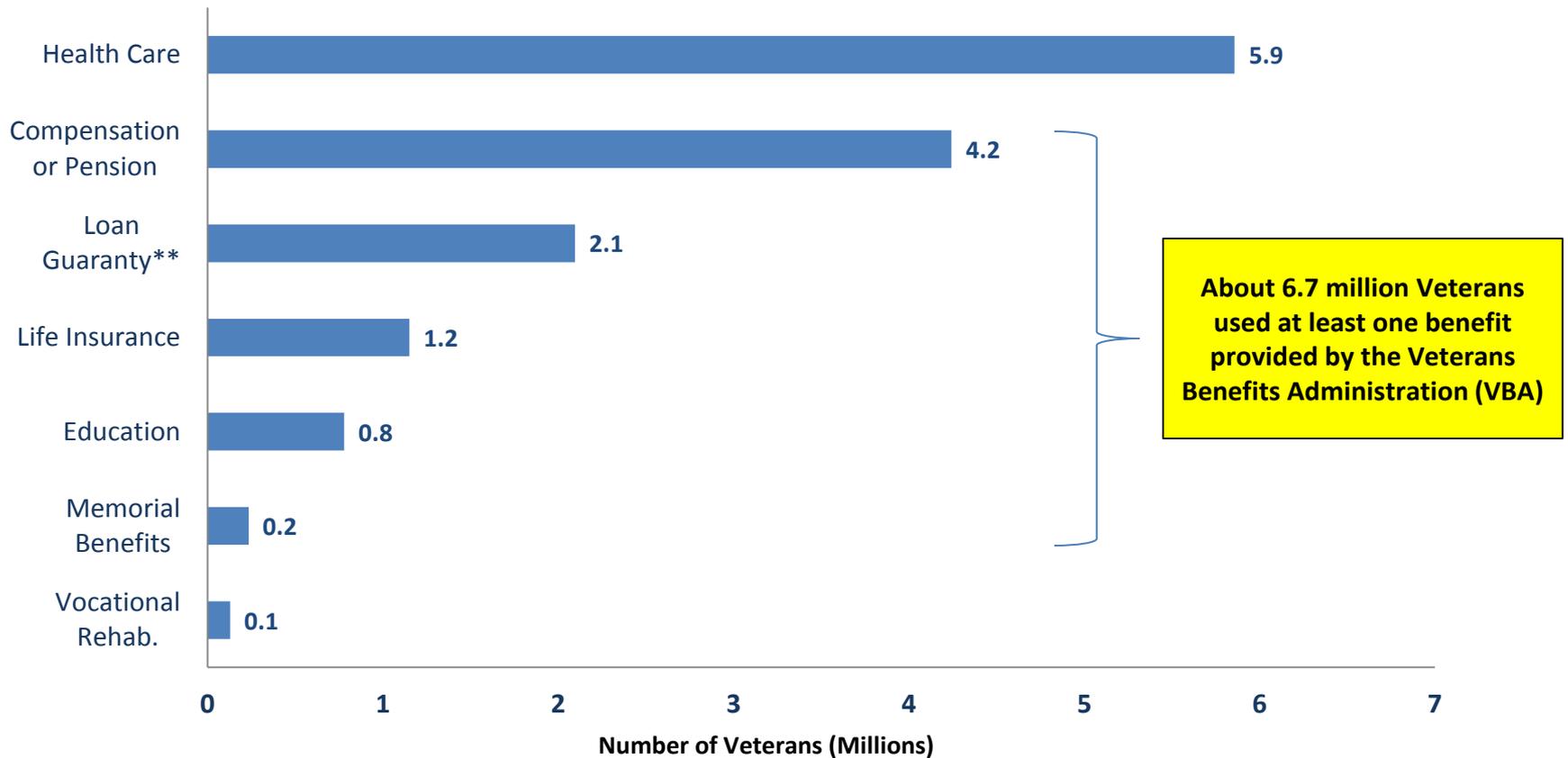
- How many Veterans used VA benefits? How many did not?
- Which programs do Veterans use most?
- What are the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of VA users and how do they differ from non-users?
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Military cohort
  - Race
  - Household income
  - Urban/Rural status (new in 2014)
    - A rural area is defined as any locale with a population of less than 2,500 people
- Compensation & Health Care
  - How many Veterans receive disability Compensation and/or use VA Health Care?
  - How many disabled Veterans do not use VA Health Care?
  - Is the number of disabled Veterans not using VA Health Care going up or down?

# Key Findings

- 43% (9.4 out of 22.0 million) of all Veterans used at least one VA benefit or service in FY 2014, which is up from 36% (9.1 out of 25.5 million) in FY 2005. Of these 9.4 million, 41% used multiple benefits which is up from 30% in 2005
- The percent of female Veterans who used VA benefits increased from 31% in 2005 to 40% in 2014
  - The corresponding rate among male Veterans in 2005 and 2014 was 36% and 43%, respectively.
- Health Care and/or Disability Compensation accounted for 75% of all VA use in FY 2014, up from 65% in FY 2005
  - 27% of all VA users only received Health care benefits in FY 2014
  - 68% of Veterans receiving Disability Compensation used VA Health Care in FY 2014, up from 57% in FY 2005
- Median age of male Veterans who used at least one VA benefit is 64; median age of male non-users is 55
- Median age of female Veterans who used at least one VA benefit is 45; median age of female non-users is 42
- Veterans above the sex-adjusted, median age are more likely to use VA benefits and services.
- Veteran users tend to have lower household incomes than non-users

Approximately 9.4 million Veterans used at least one VA benefit or service in FY 2014.  
41% of all VA users received benefits or services from multiple programs.\*

### VA Benefits Utilization by Program - Veterans only: FY 2014



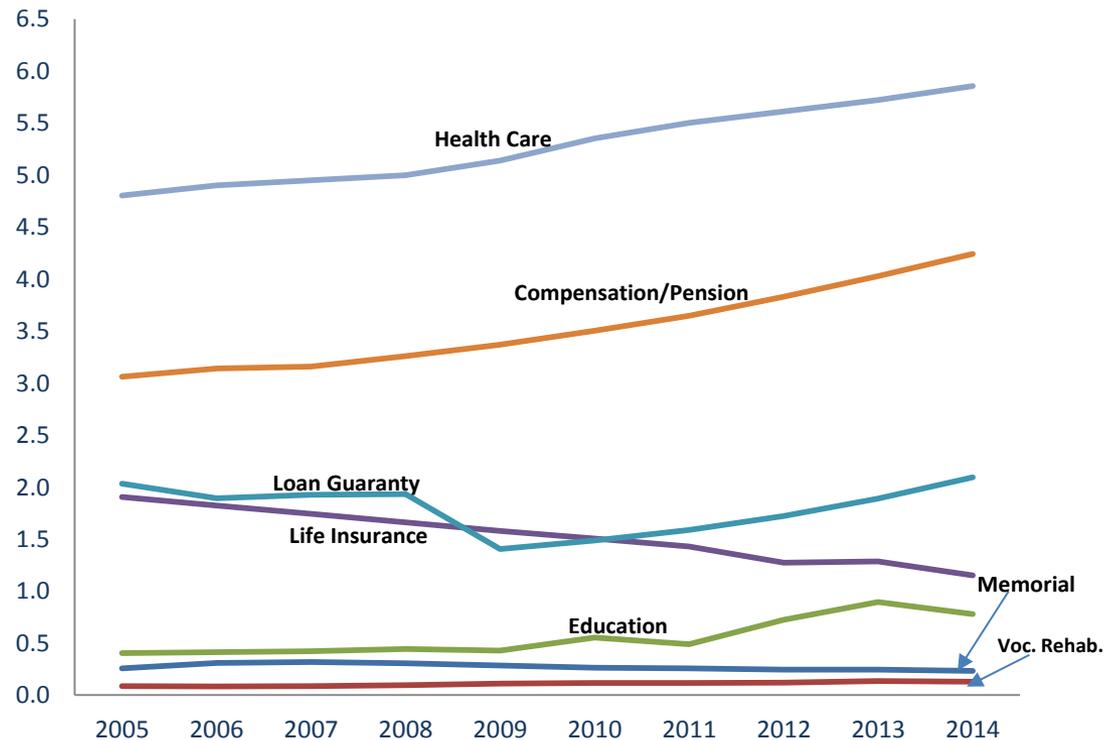
\* The numbers from the chart do not sum to the total number of VA users. Veterans who used multiple programs are counted in each individual program, but only once in the overall total.

\*\* Contains Veterans who received Special Housing Allowance or Special Adaptive Housing benefits.

## Health Care and Disability Compensation/Pension account for the majority of VA utilization and show significant growth since 2005.\*

- Health Care and Disability Compensation/Pension, the largest programs, increased by 22% and 39% respectively.
- Life Insurance utilization is declining steadily largely due to the advanced age of VA life insurance policy holders
- Home Loan Guaranty showed slight variation through 2008 and a sharp decrease in 2009 consistent with the overall housing market, but afterward has been recovering steadily
- Education benefit use was stable through 2010, but trends upward markedly after 2011, followed by subtle decline in 2014
- Memorial Benefit and Vocational Rehabilitation use have remained fairly steady

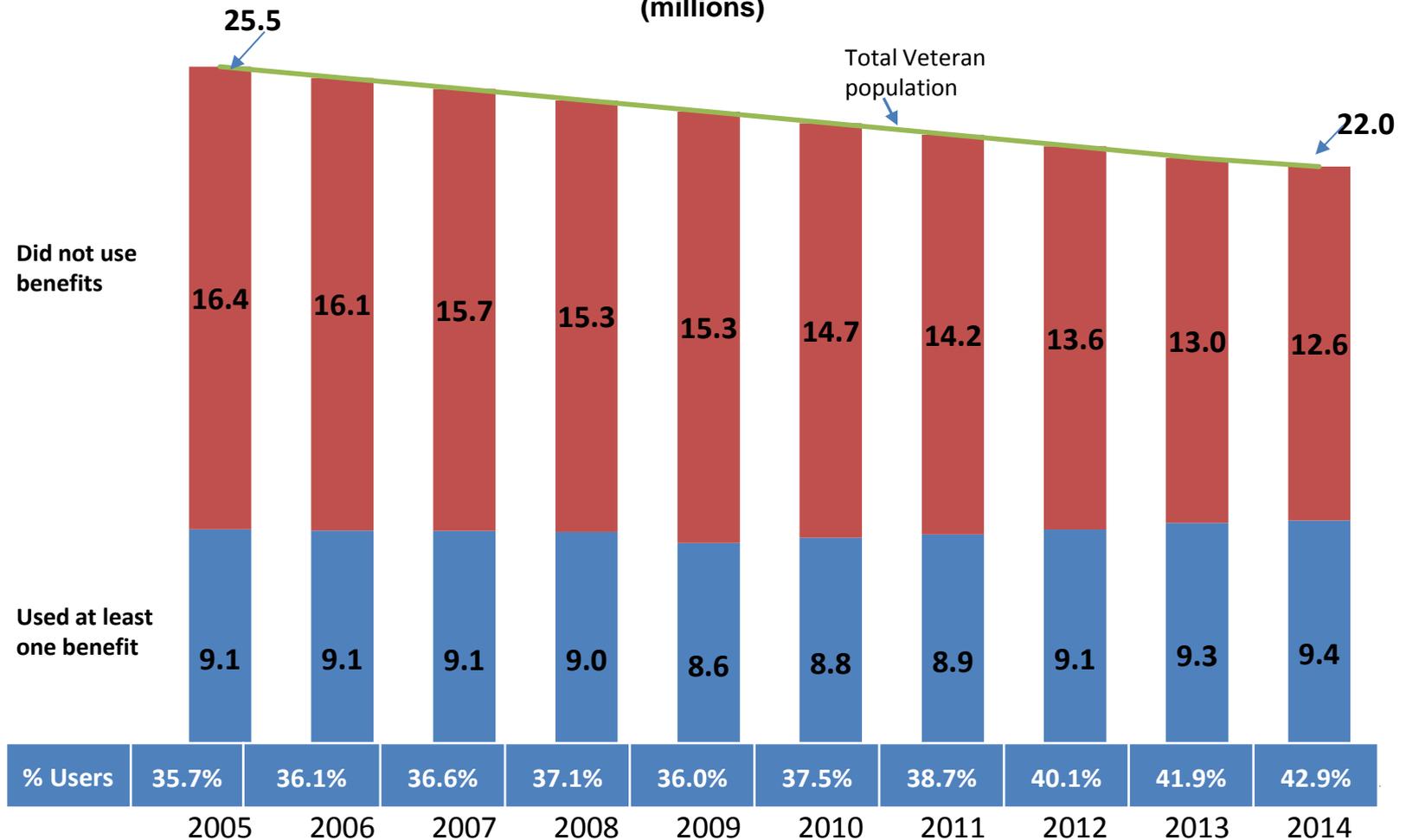
**Number of Users by Program: FY 2005-2014**



\* The numbers from the chart do not sum to the total number of VA users each year. Veterans who used multiple programs are counted in each individual program, but only once in the overall total.

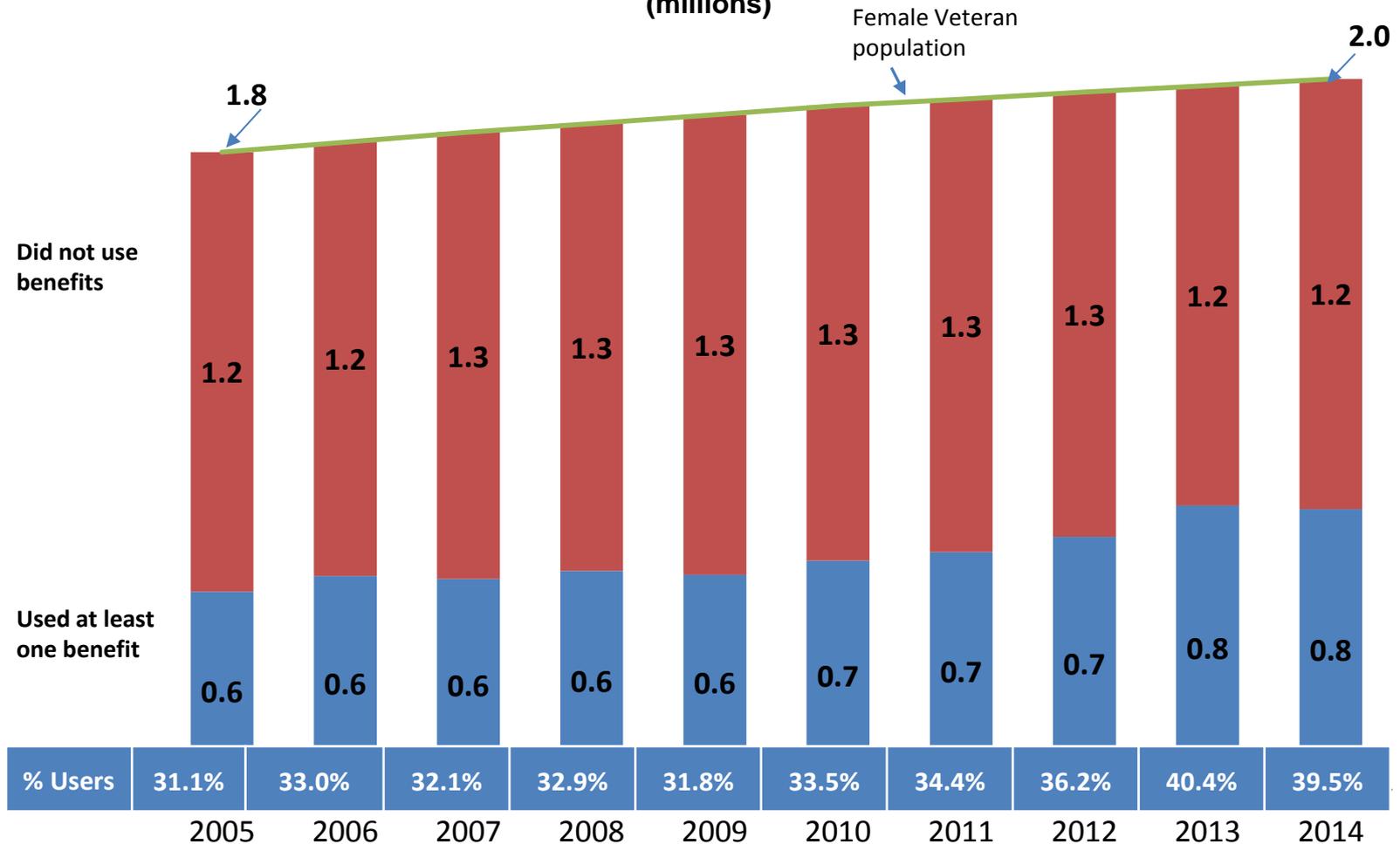
The number of Veterans using VA benefits increased slightly in recent years despite more than a 14% decline in the total Veteran population since 2005.

**Benefit Use Among All Veterans  
FY 2005-2014  
(millions)**



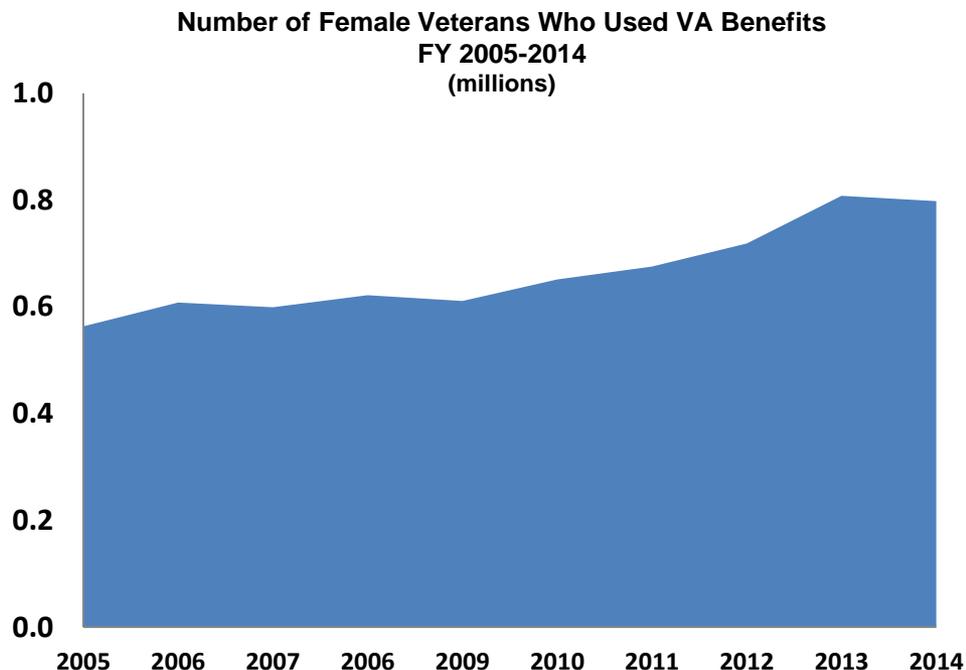
The number of female Veterans has grown by less than 12% while the number of female Veterans using VA benefits has grown by almost 42% since 2005.

**Benefit Use Among Female Veterans  
FY 2005-2014  
(millions)**



The rate of growth in the number of female Veterans who used VA is almost 4 times the rate of growth of the overall female Veteran population.

- Number of female Veterans grew at an average annual rate of 1.2% between FY 2005 and 2014, while the number who used VA benefits has grown at a rate of **4.0%**
- The utilization rate of VA benefits among female Veterans increased from 31.1% in 2005 to 39.5% in 2014
- Number of female users increased by 41.6% since 2005 while the overall number of female Veterans increased by only 11.5%
- Female Veterans made up 8.5% of all users in 2014, up from 6.2% in 2005



**Veterans who Used VA Benefits and Services  
by Gender FY 2005-2014**

GENDER	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	% change FY13 to FY14
<b>Number of VA Users</b>	<b>9,122,460</b>	<b>9,075,984</b>	<b>9,061,658</b>	<b>9,024,457</b>	<b>8,632,414</b>	<b>8,820,122</b>	<b>8,938,744</b>	<b>9,113,125</b>	<b>9,346,942</b>	<b>9,431,622</b>	<b>0.9%</b>
<b>Male</b>	8,559,091	8,467,983	8,462,504	8,402,714	8,021,492	8,168,920	8,263,341	8,394,620	8,539,072	8,633,699	1.1%
<b>Female</b>	563,369	608,001	599,154	621,743	610,922	651,202	675,403	718,505	807,870	797,923	-1.2%

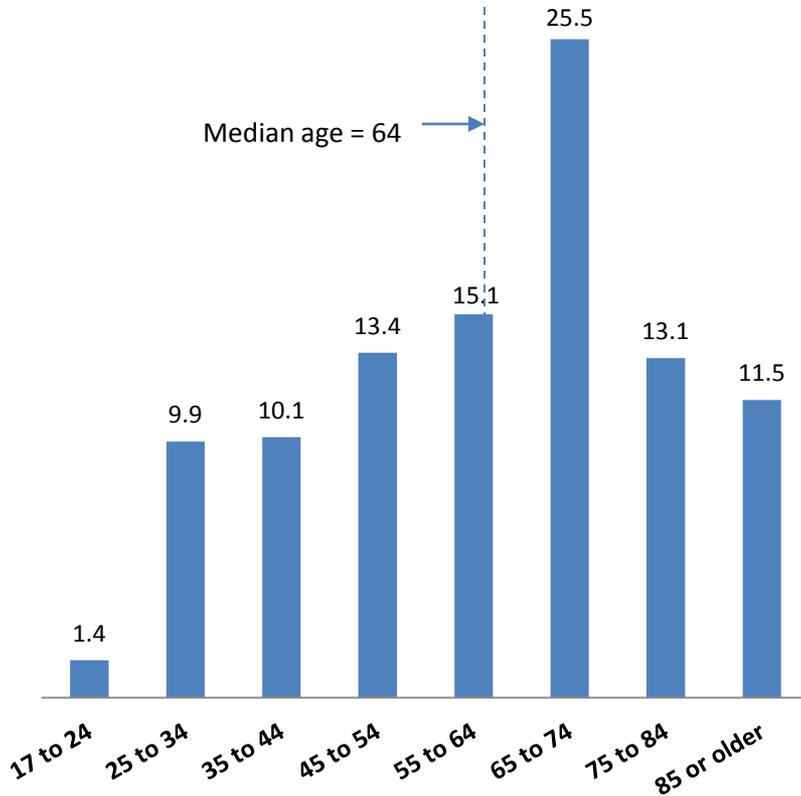
Source: U.S. Veterans Eligibility Trends and Statistics, 2014

Prepared by the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics

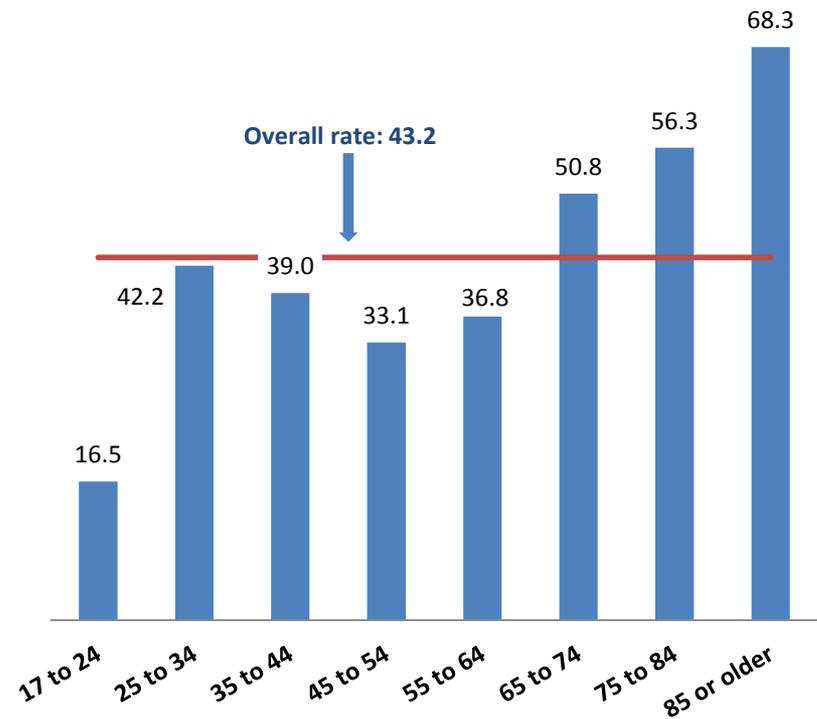
Male Veterans over the age of 65 were more likely to use benefits than younger Veterans.

## Male Veteran Users FY 2014

**Age Distribution of Male Users**  
(in percent)



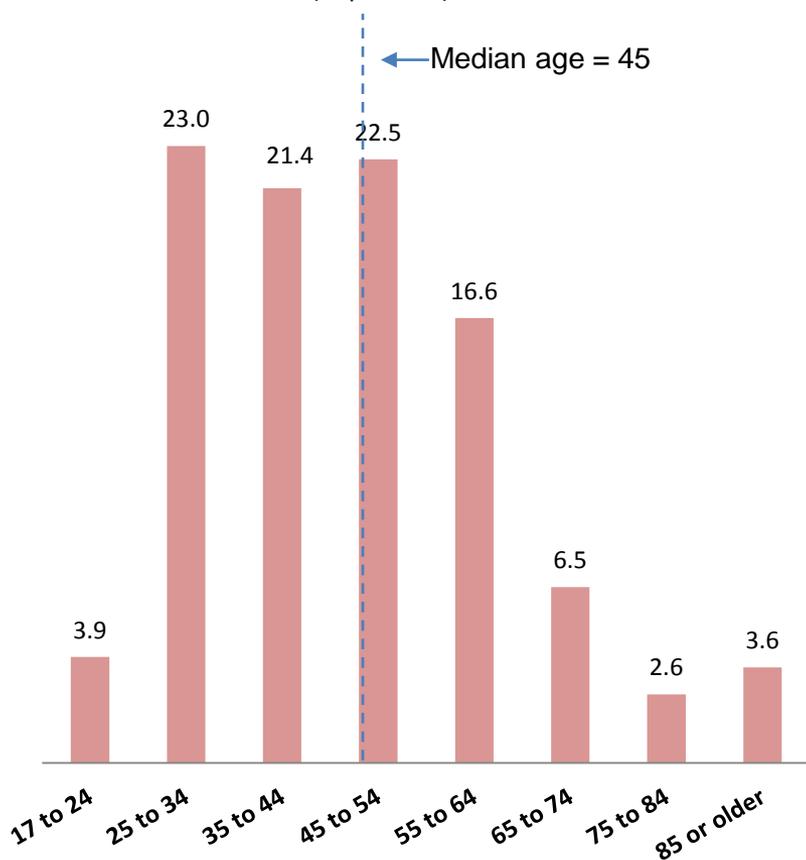
**Probability of Male Veterans to Use a VA Benefit by Age Group**  
(in percent)



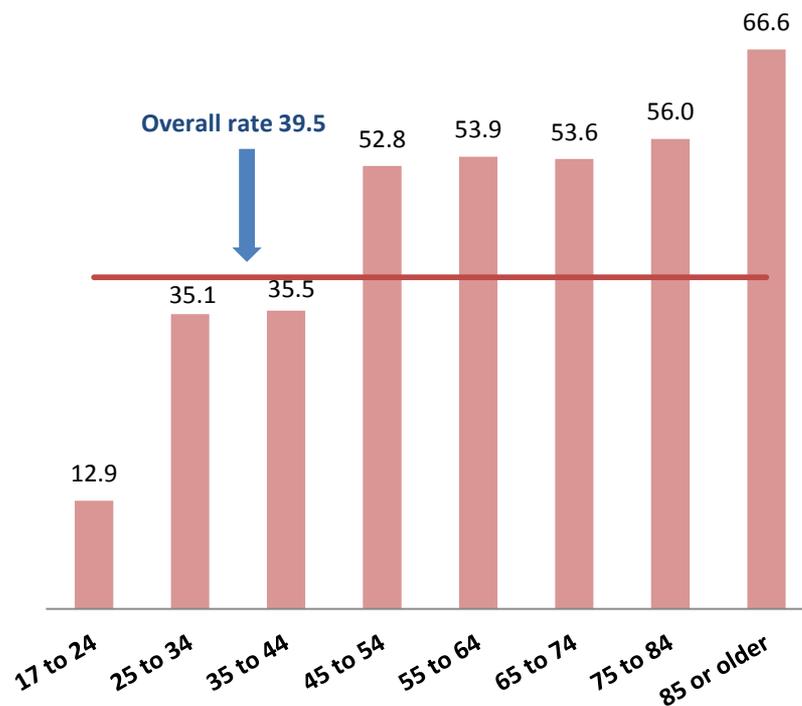
Female Veterans tend to be younger and slightly less likely to use VA benefits than male Veterans.

## Female Veterans FY 2014

Age Distribution of Female Users  
(in percent)

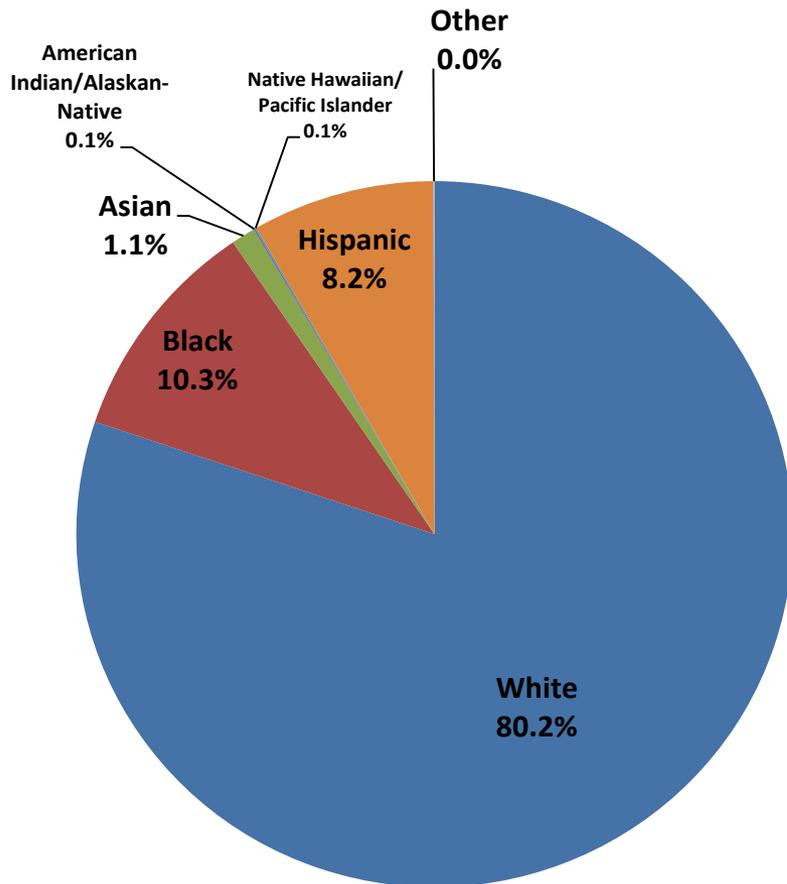


Probability of Female Veterans to Use a VA Benefit  
by Age Group  
(in percent)

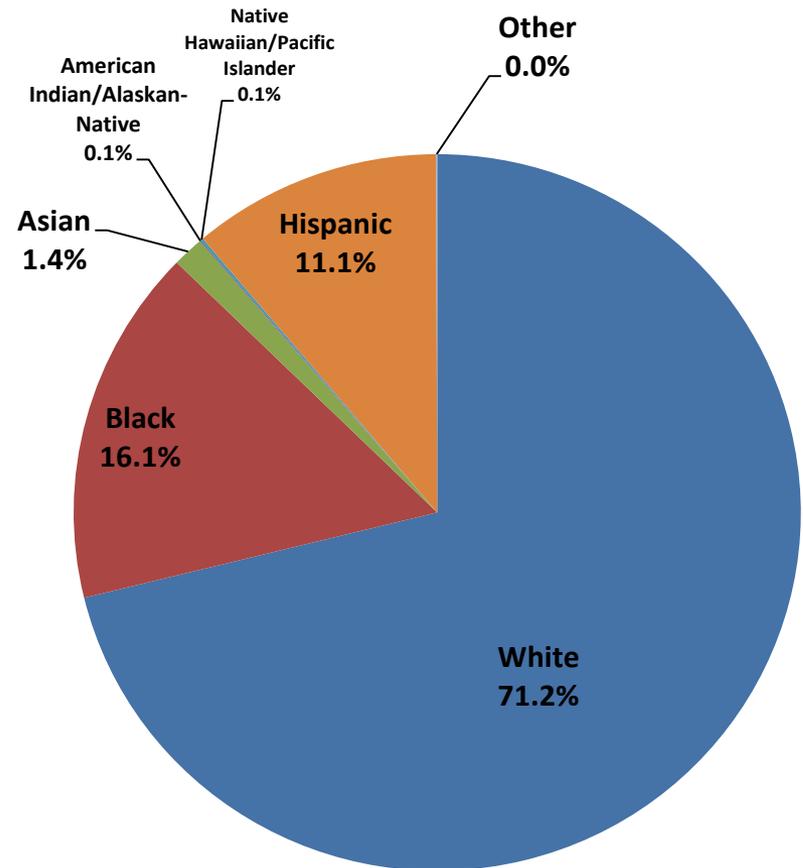


Females who used VA benefits were more racially diverse than male users.

Male Users FY 2014



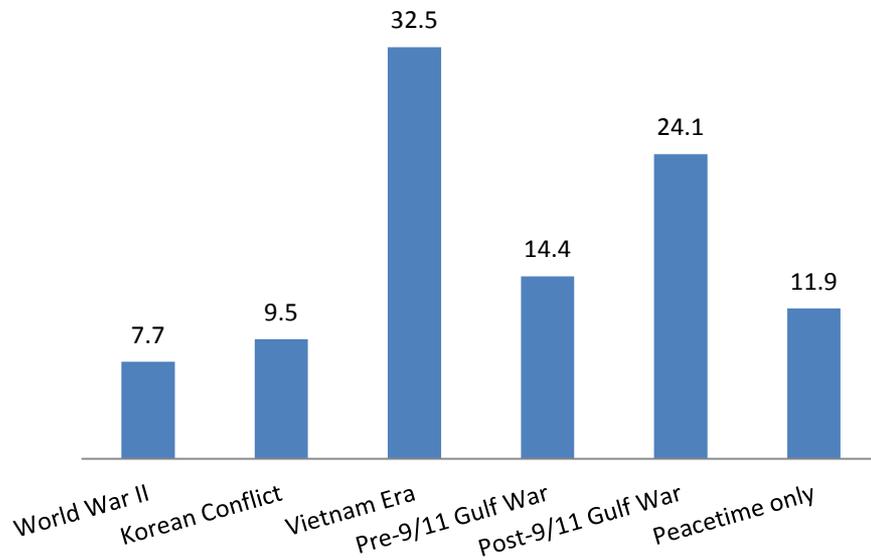
Female Users FY 2014



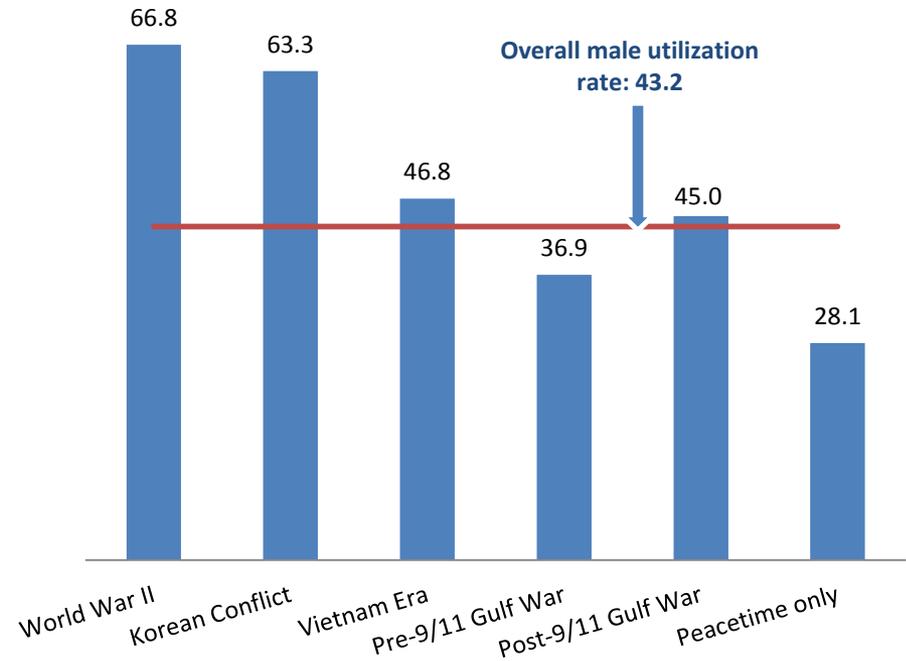
Most male VA users served during the Vietnam era; however, Veterans who served during World War II and Korean Conflict were more likely to use VA benefits than other cohorts.

## Male Veterans FY 2014

Distribution of Male VA Benefit Users by Period of Military Service  
(in percent)



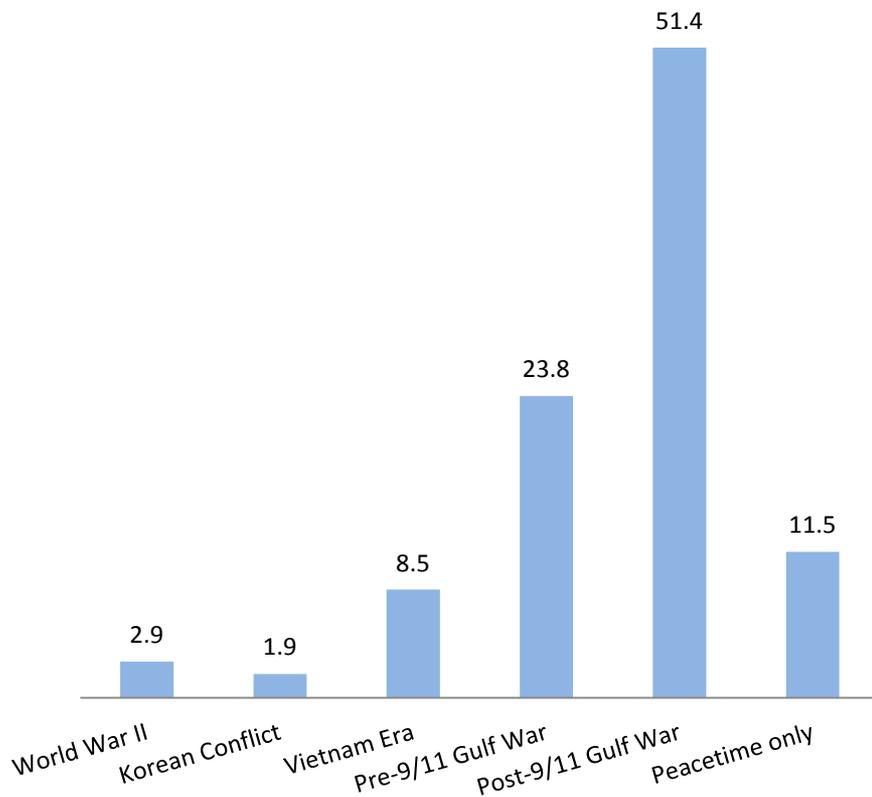
Probability of Male Veterans to Use a VA Benefit  
by Period of Military Service:  
(in percent)



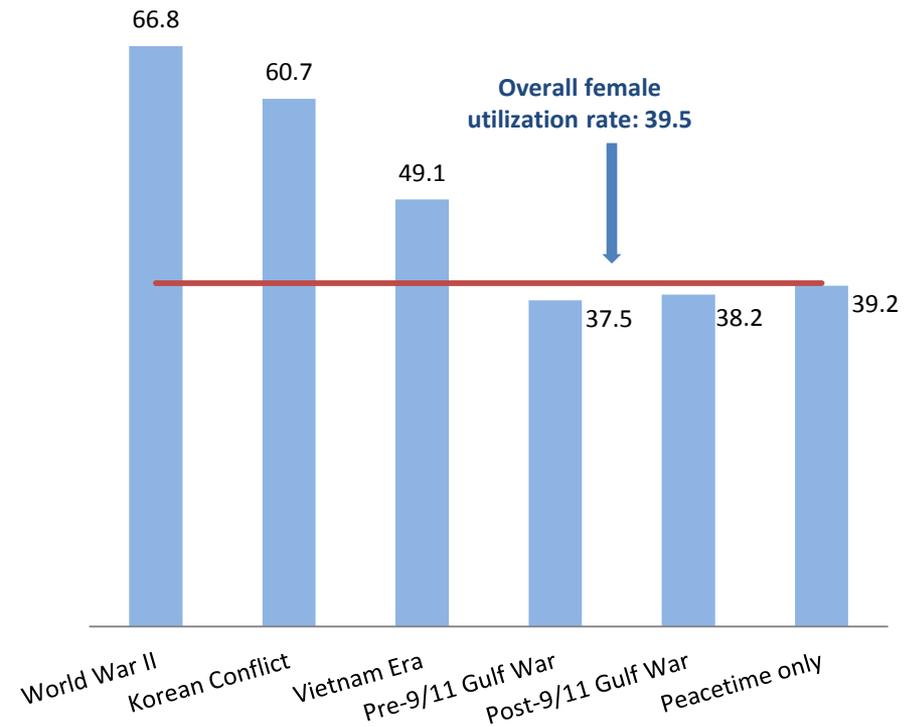
Most female Veteran users served during the Post-9/11 Gulf War era; however, Veterans who served during the World War II, Korean Conflict, and Vietnam eras were more likely to use than other cohorts.

## Female Veterans FY 2014

Distribution of Female VA Benefit Users by Period of Military Service  
(in percent)



Probability of Female Veterans to Use a VA Benefit  
by Period of Military Service  
(in percent)

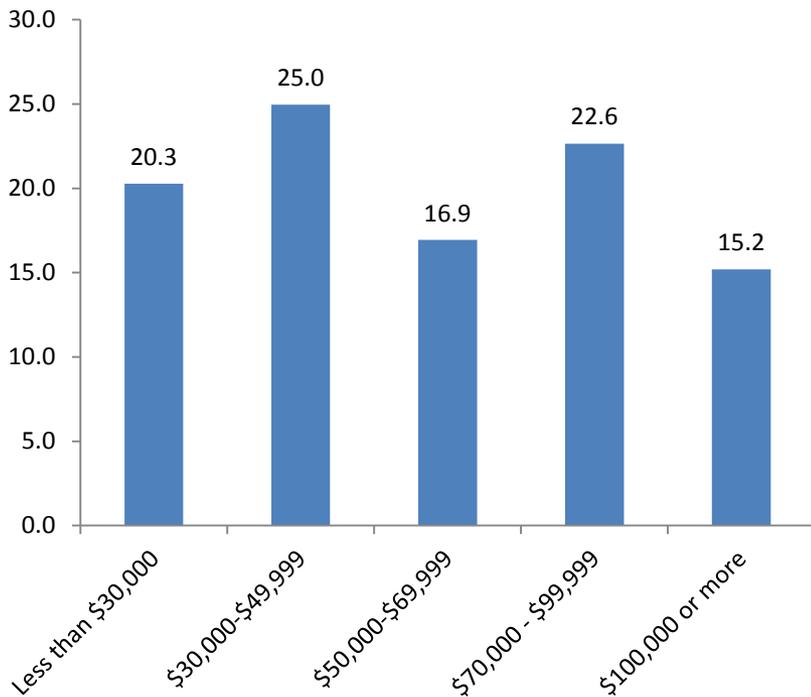


45% of VA users have household incomes below \$50,000 compared to 40% of Veterans who did not use VA benefits in 2014.

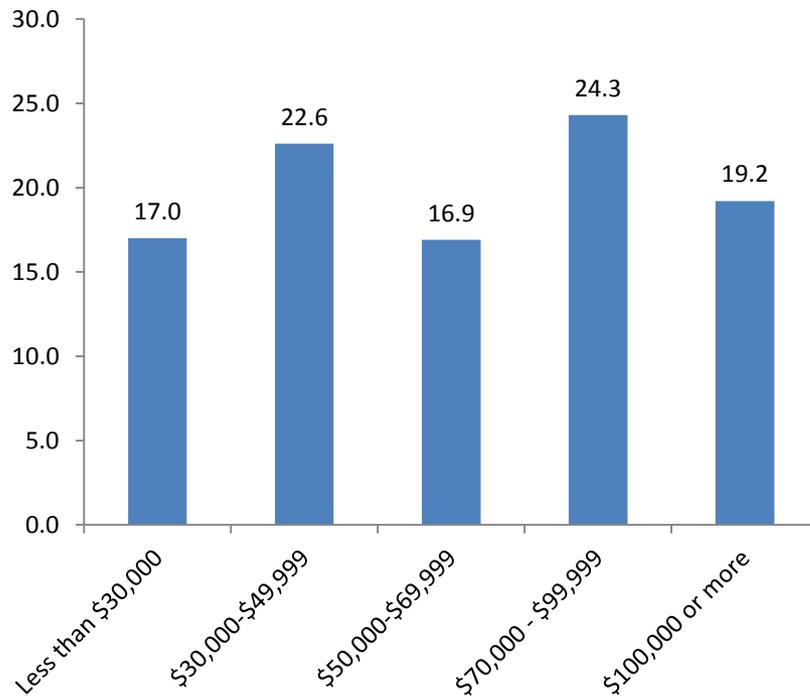
## Distribution of Household Income: FY 2014 (in percent)

**According to American Community Survey 2014, the median household income among Veterans in the US is \$56,899**

### VA Users



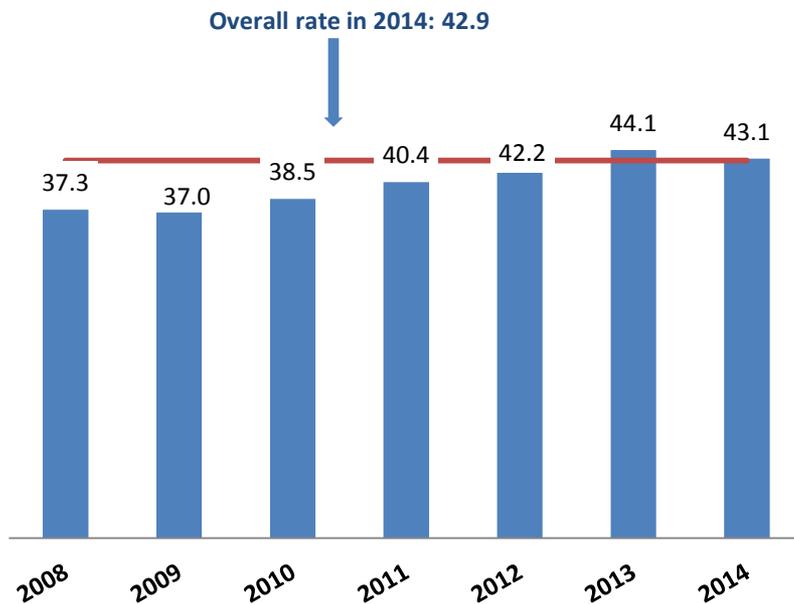
### VA Non-users



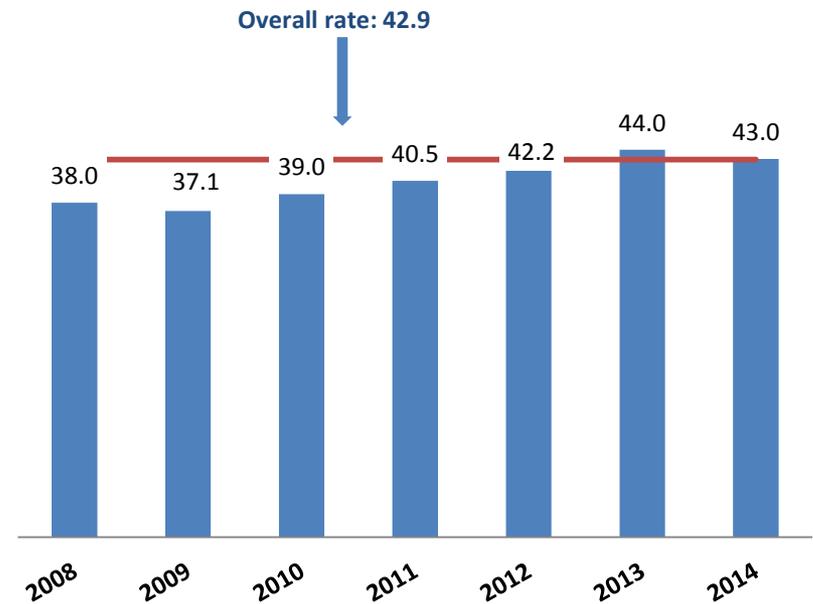
The trend in overall VA utilization of any benefit does not differ by whether the Veteran lives in an urban or rural area.

## Veteran Users by Urban/Rural status

Probability of Rural Veterans to Use a VA Benefit by Year (in percent)

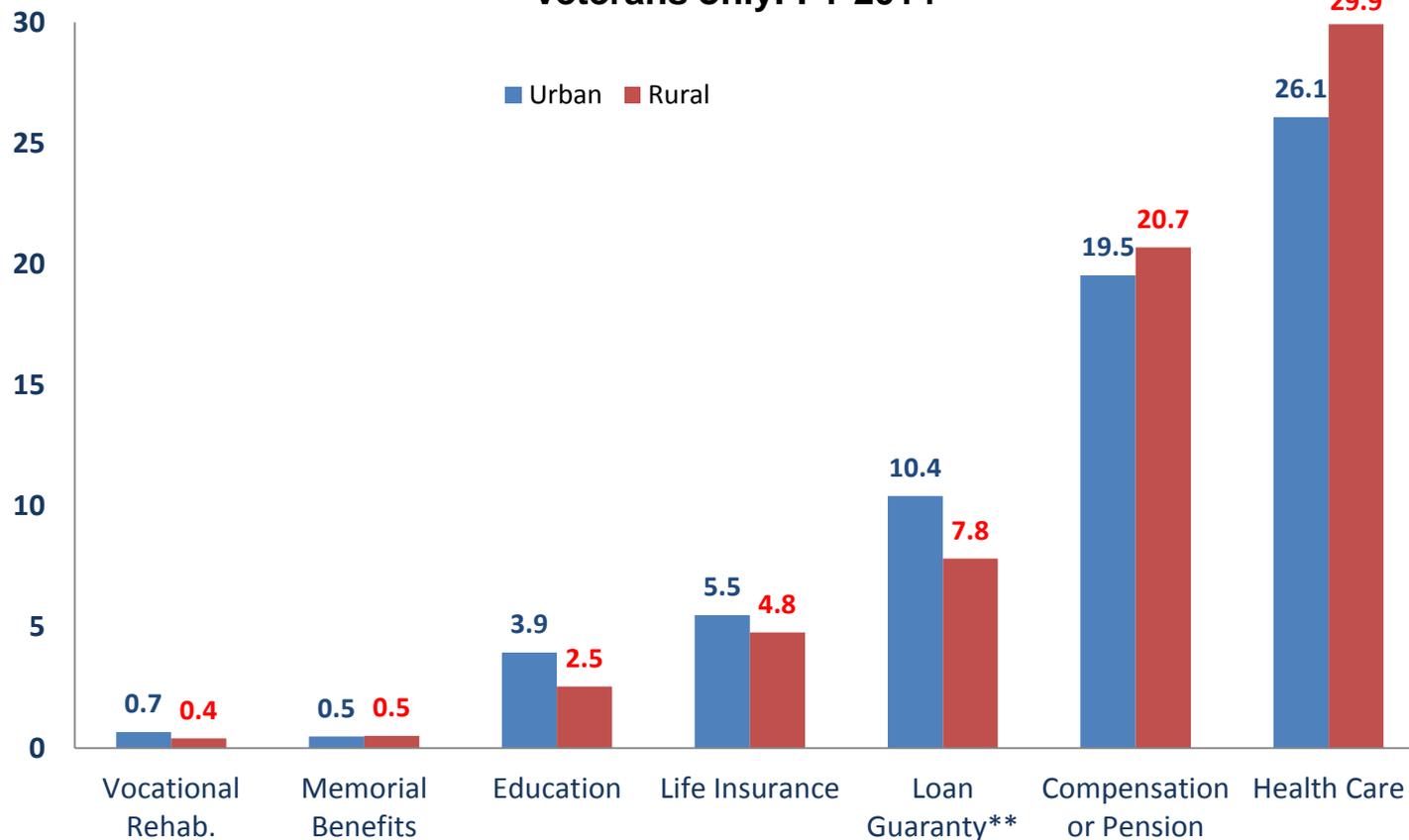


Probability of Urban Veterans to Use a VA Benefit by Year (in percent)



Veterans who live in rural areas are more likely to use VA for disability benefits and health care.

**Rate of VA Utilization by Program and Urban/Rural Status -  
Veterans only: FY 2014**



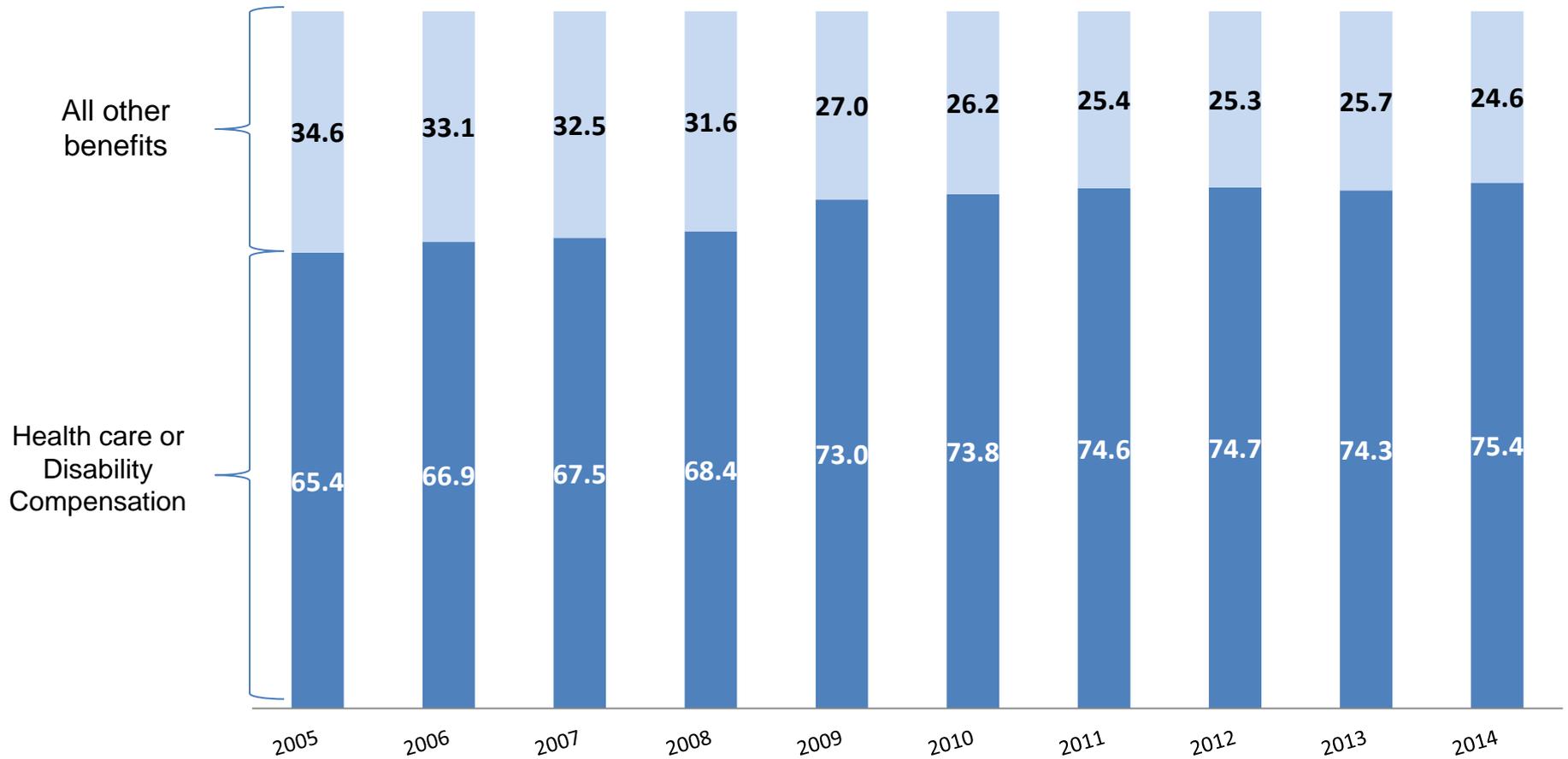
*\*\* Contains Veterans who received Special Housing Allowance or Special Adaptive Housing benefits.*

# Health Care and Disability Compensation

Health Care and Disability Compensation benefits account for the largest share of VA utilization.

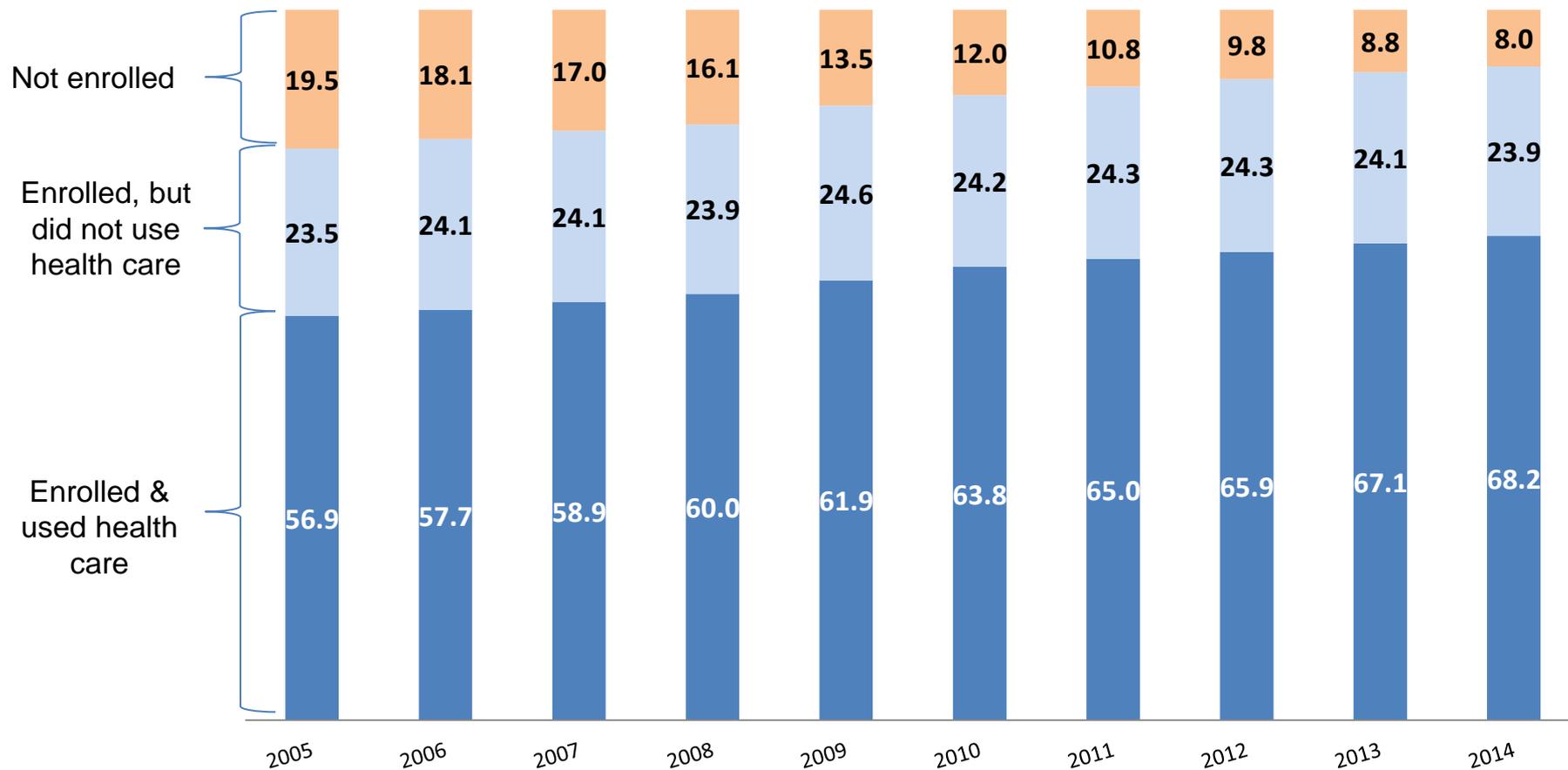
### Utilization by Health Care or Compensation and all other benefits

(in percent)



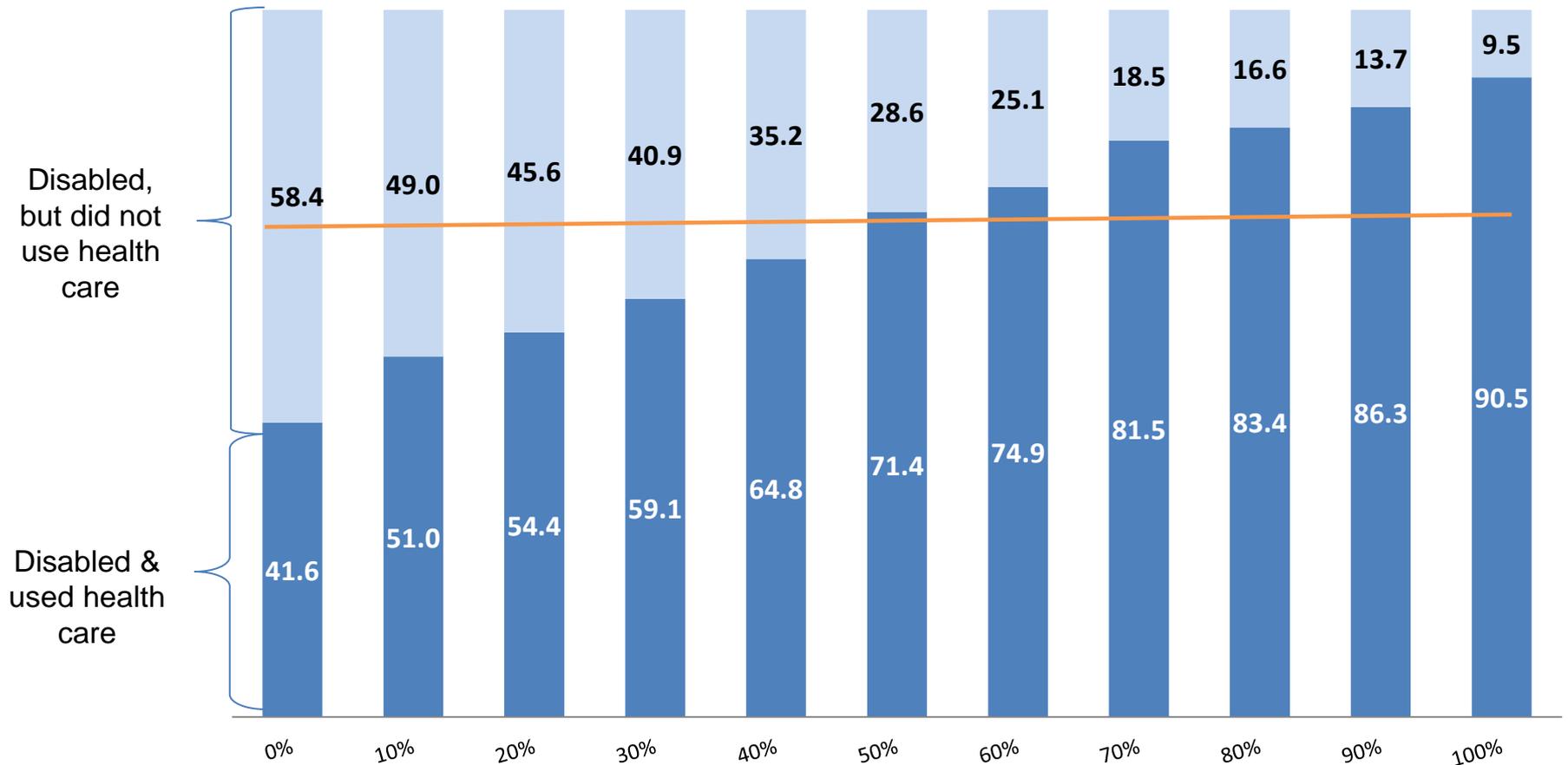
Service-connected disabled Veterans using VA Health Care increased from 57% in 2005 to over 68% in 2014. Over 90% of disabled Veterans were enrolled in VHA Health Care system in 2014.

### Service-connected Disabled Veterans Receiving Compensation by VHA Enrollment and Utilization Status (in percent)



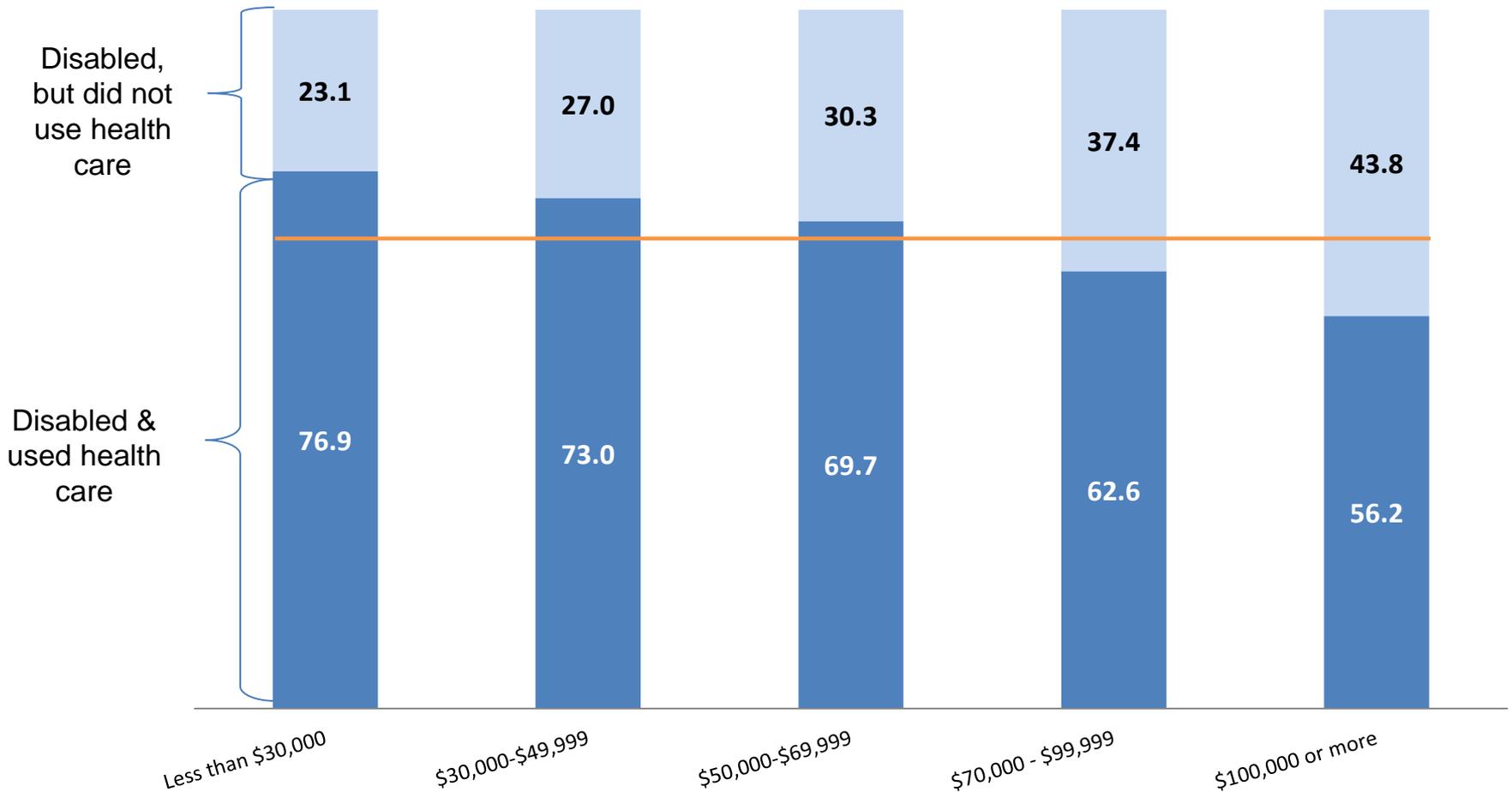
Likelihood of Service-connected disabled Veterans seeking VA Health Care generally increases with the Veteran's disability rating.

### Veterans Receiving Compensation and VA Health Care Use by Service-connected Disability Rating: FY 2014 (in percent)



As a disabled Veteran's household income increases, the likelihood to use VA Health Care decreases.

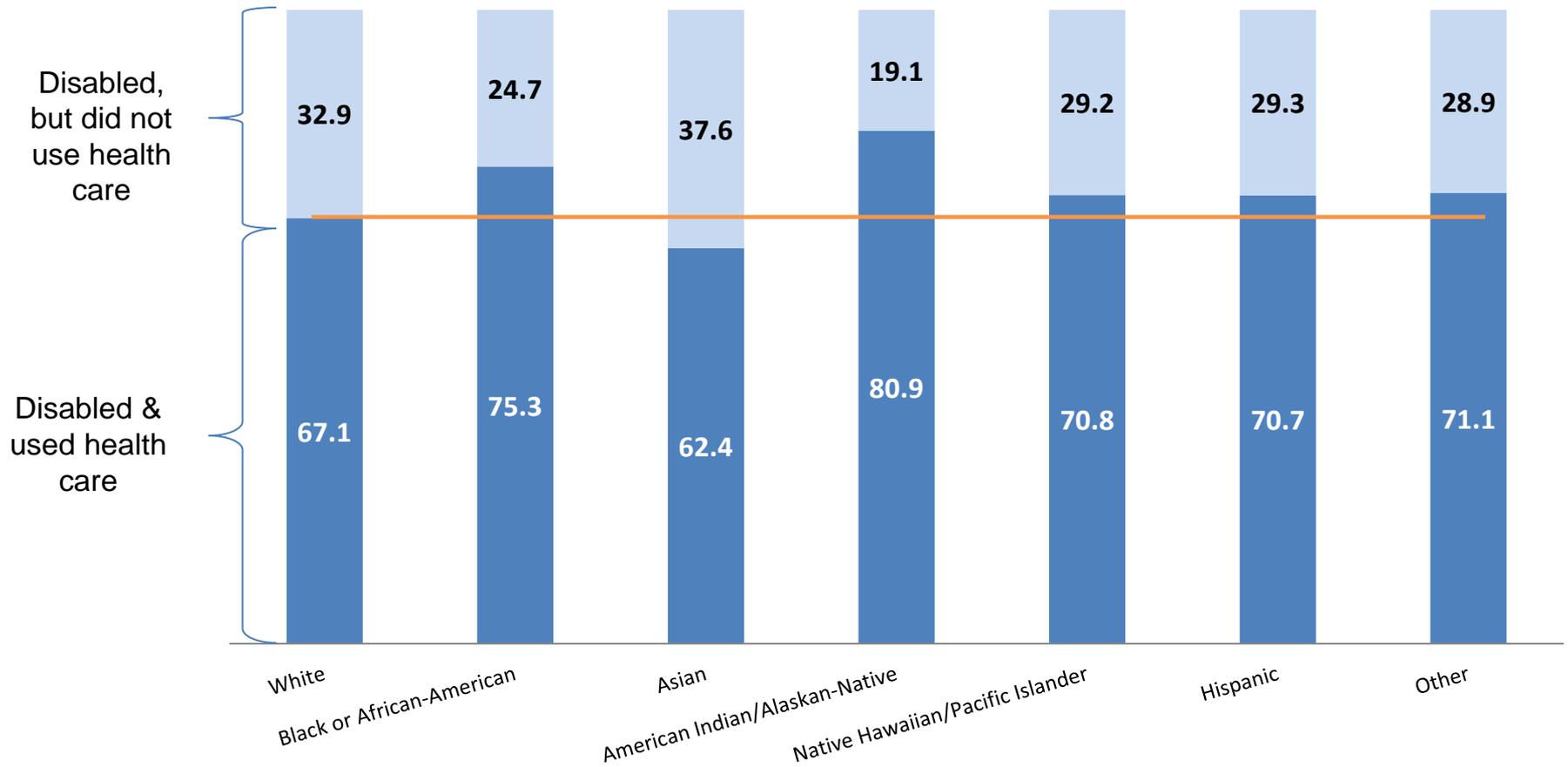
### Service-connected Disabled Veterans Receiving Compensation and VA Health Care Use by Household Income: FY 2014 (in percent)



Source: U.S. Veterans Eligibility Trends and Statistics, 2014  
Prepared by the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics

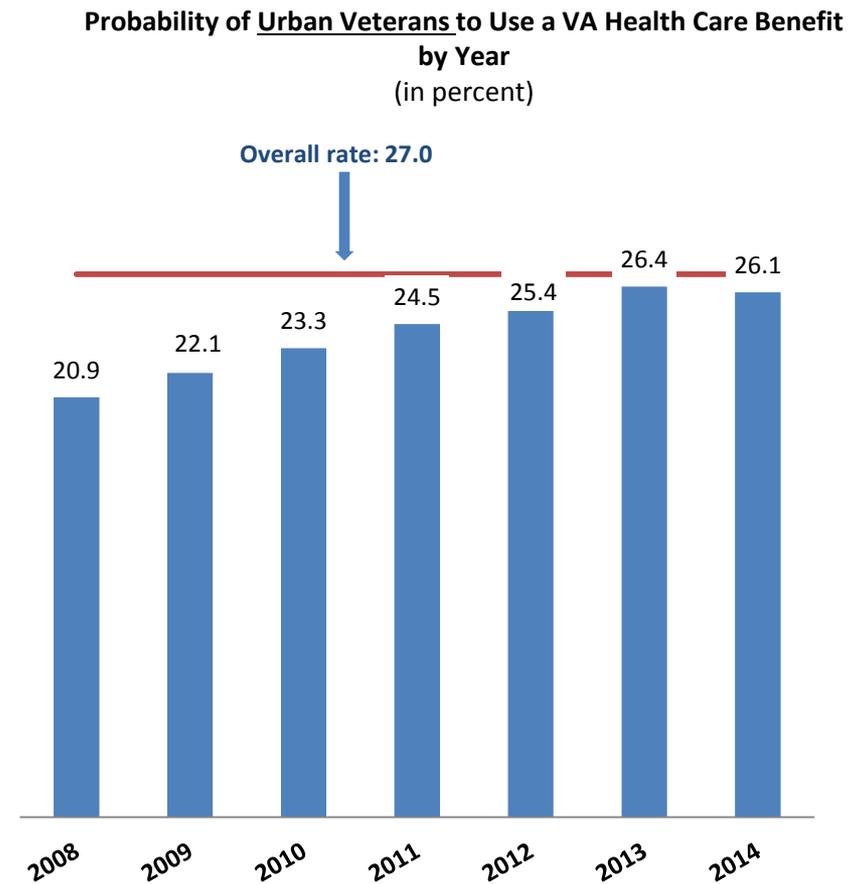
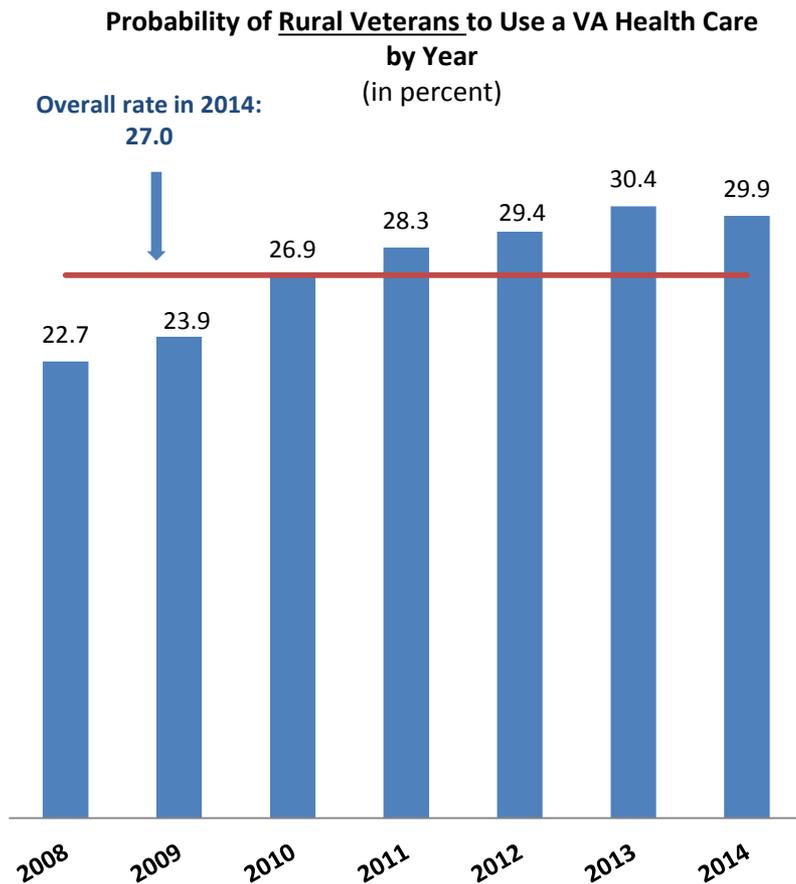
The likelihood of a disabled Veteran to seek treatment from a VA Health Care facility varies with race and ethnicity; however, rates for AI/AN and Black Veterans are significantly higher than the overall rate of utilization.

### Service-connected Disabled Veterans Receiving Compensation and VA Health Care use by Race/Ethnicity: FY 2014 (in percent)



Between 2008 and 2014, Veterans who reside in rural areas have been more likely use VA Health care than those who reside in urban areas.

### VA Health Care Utilization Rates Urban/Rural status



# Comparison of VA Users and Non-Users FY 2014

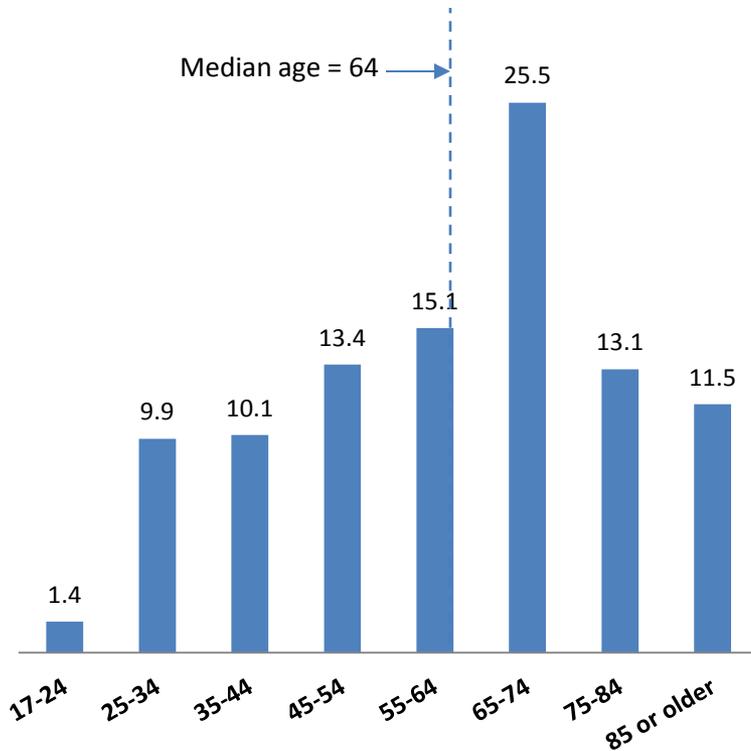
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Used VA Benefits: 9,431,622  
Did not use VA Benefits: 12,567,485

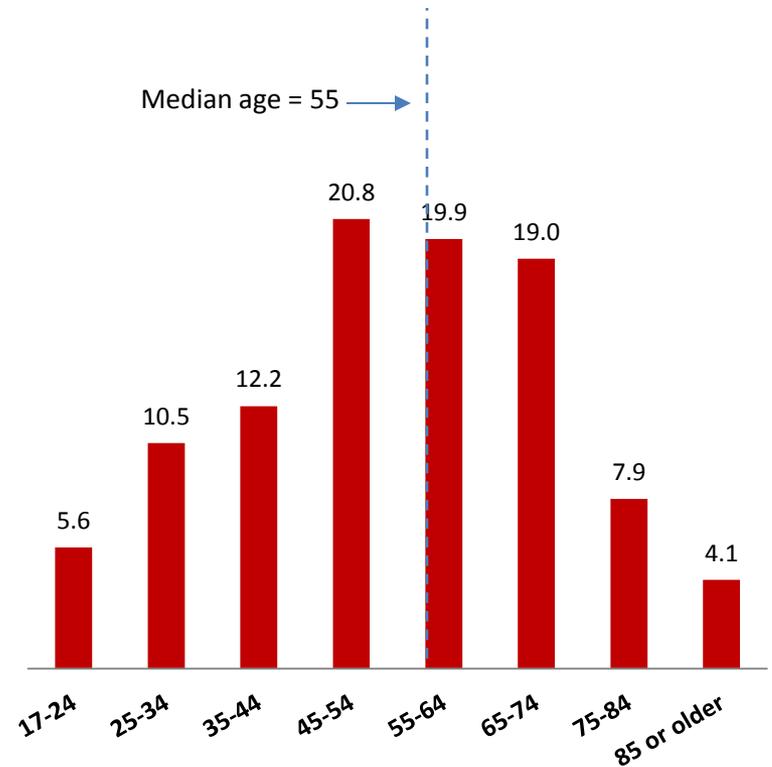
Male Veterans who used VA benefits tend to be older than non-users. The median age for male users is 64 years, compared to a median age of 55 years for non-users.

### Age Distribution Male Veterans: FY 2014 (in percent)

#### Male VA Users

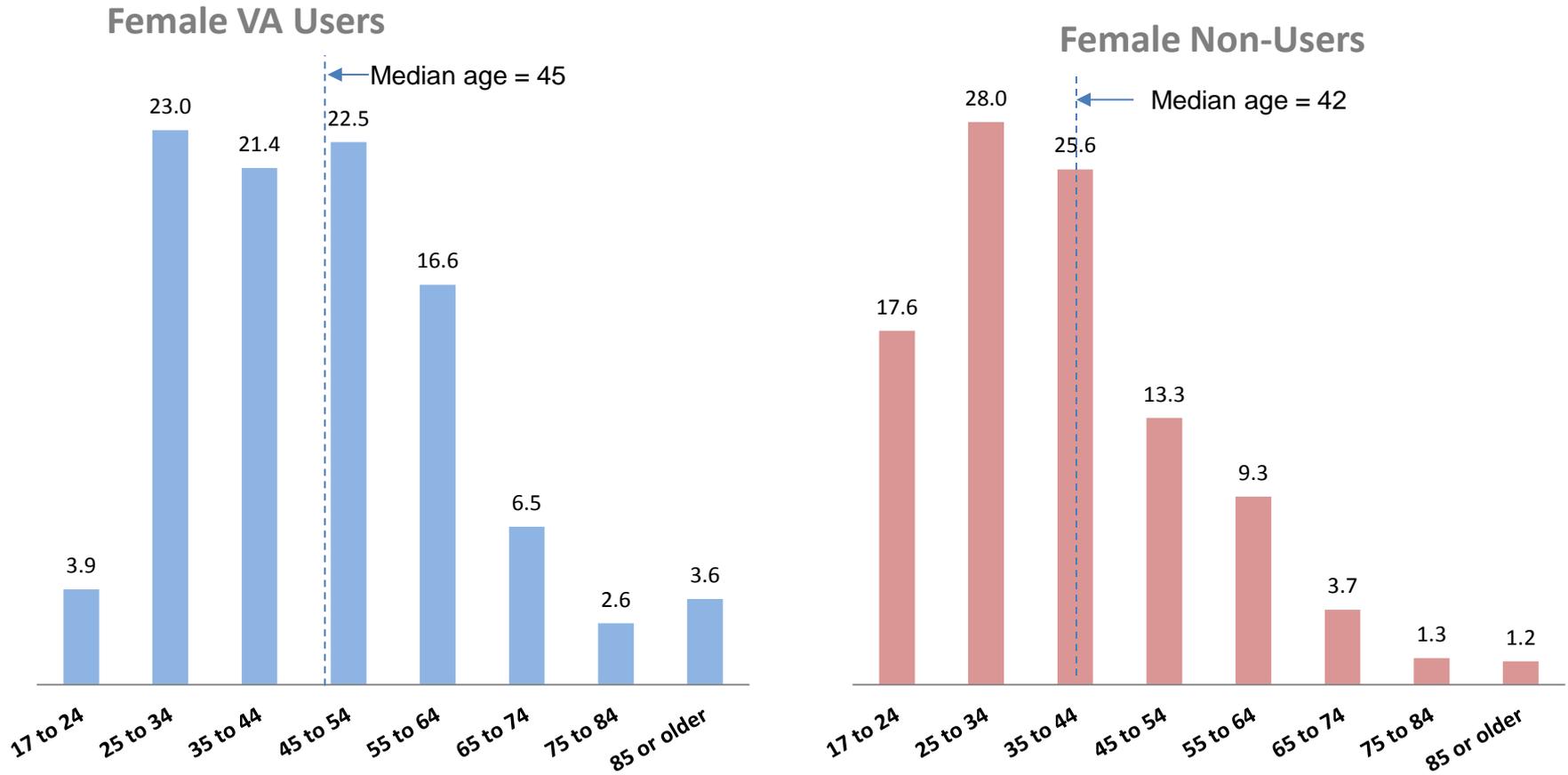


#### Male Non-Users



Age distribution of VA users and non-users among female Veterans is similar, but, female users tend to be slightly older.

### Age Distribution of Female Veterans: FY 2014 (in percent)

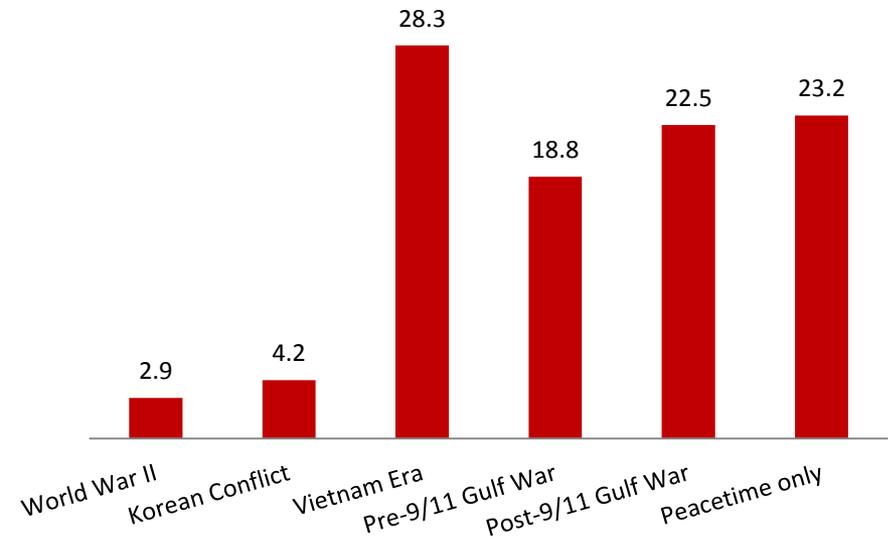
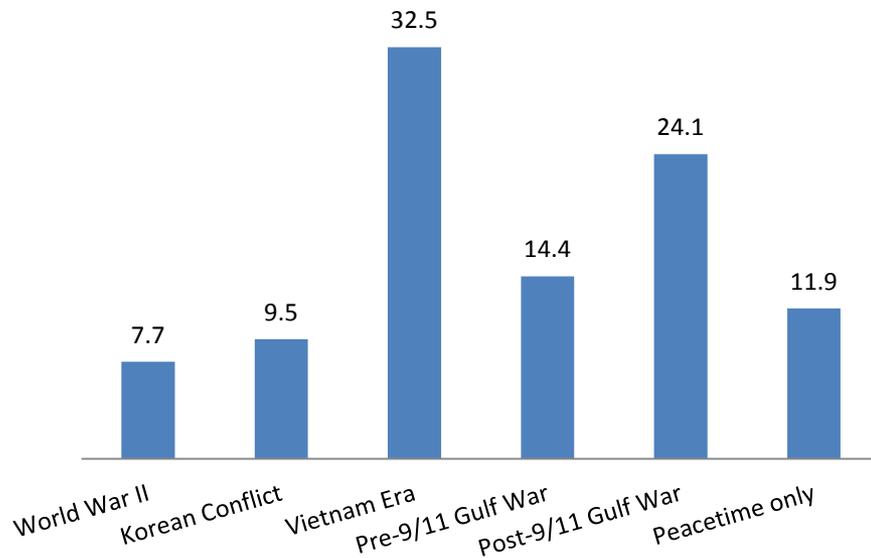


The majority of male Veterans who used VA served during the Vietnam era. The majority of non-users served during Peacetime or the Vietnam era.

**Period of Military Service: FY 2014**  
(in percent)

**Male VA Users**

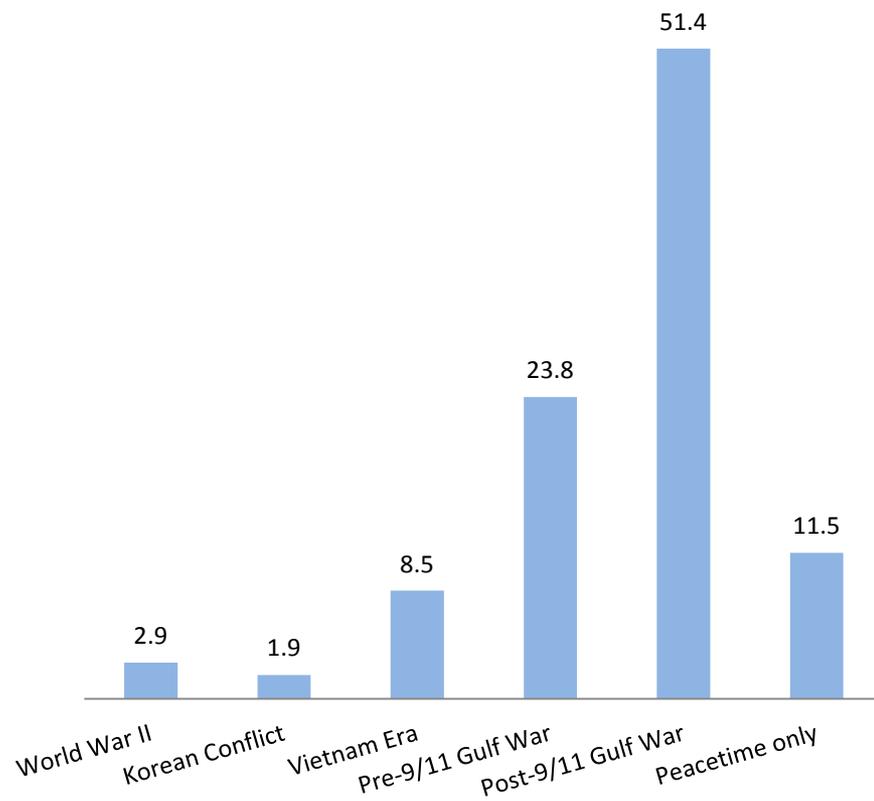
**Male Non-Users**



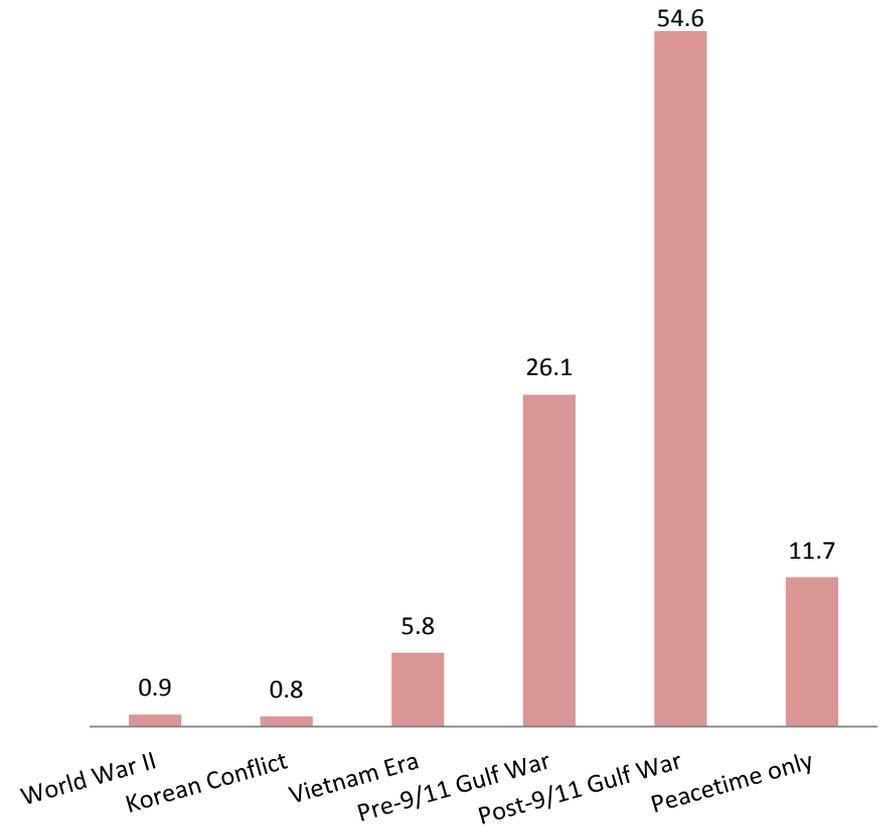
There is no remarkable difference in the distribution of female Veterans by military service cohort between VA users and non-users.

**Period of Military Service: FY 2014**  
(in percent)

**Female VA Users**

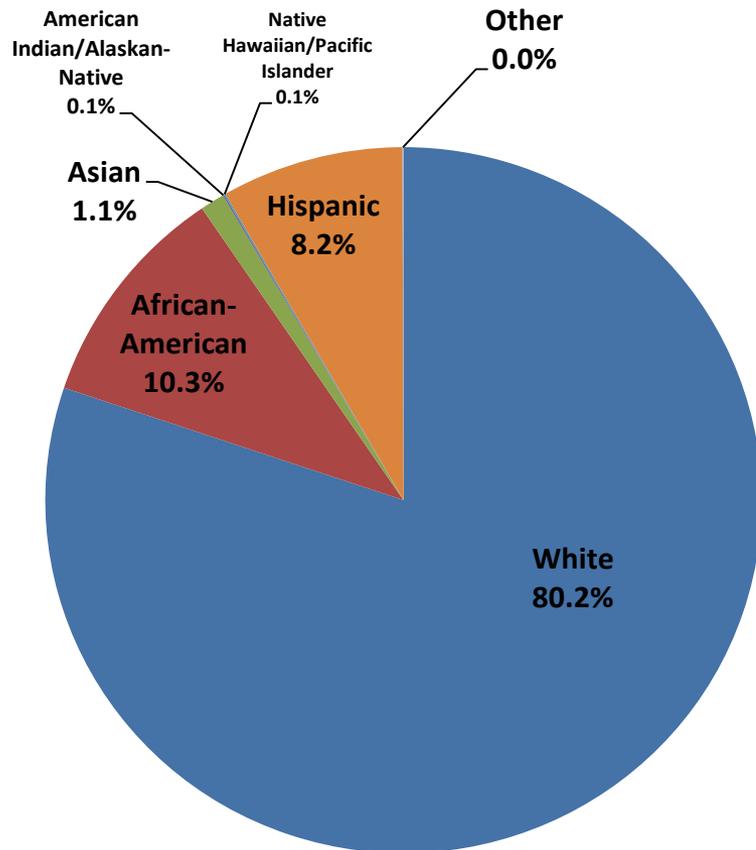


**Female Non-Users**

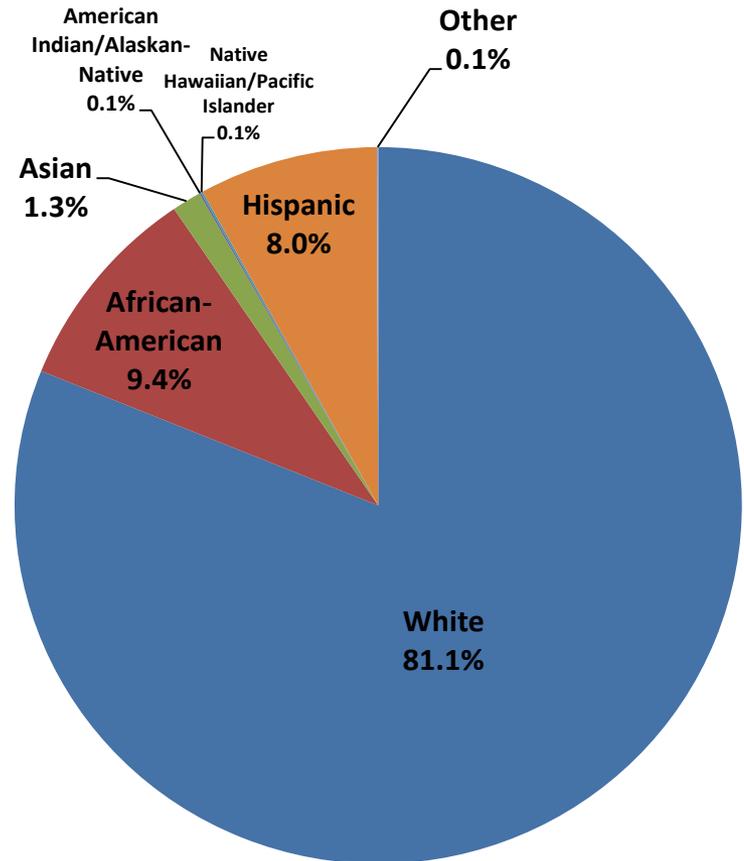


For male users and non-users there is very little difference in race and ethnicity distribution

Male Users FY 2014

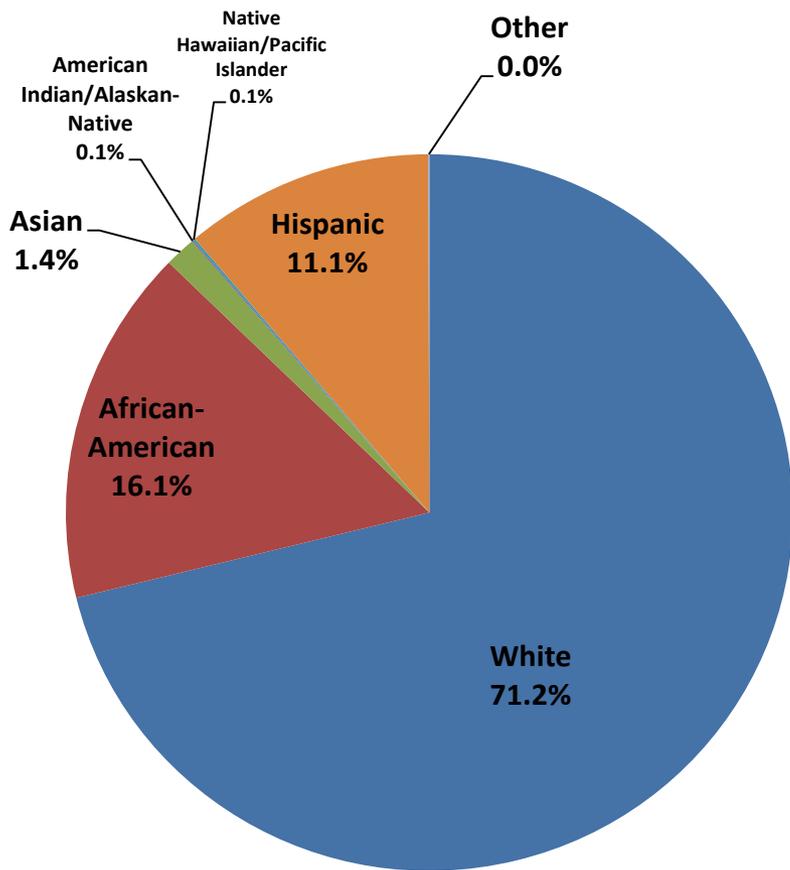


Male Non-users FY 2014

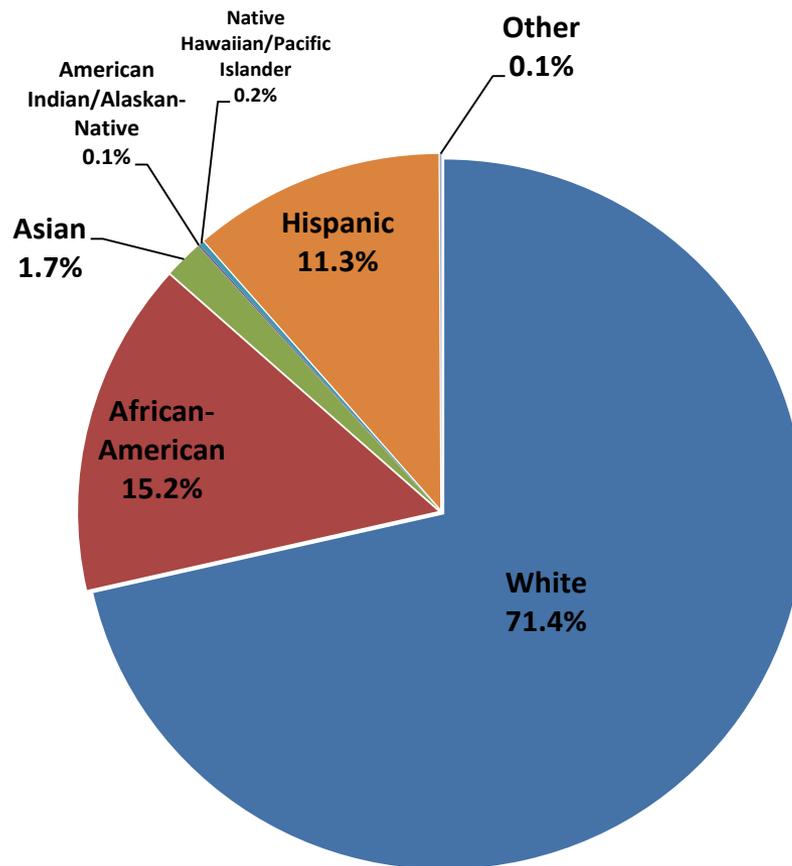


The racial distribution of users and non-users is almost the same among female Veterans.

Female Users FY 2014



Female Non-users FY 2014



# Data Sources

A Veteran user is defined as any Veteran who received or used at least one VA benefit or service during the fiscal year. Veteran spouses, Veteran dependents, and active military service members who used VA benefits and services were not included in the analysis. Each Veteran is only counted once in the overall total even if he/she used multiple programs.

- **Health Care:** All Veterans who received either VA inpatient care, VA outpatient care, purchased (fee basis) care, VA long-term services and support, or VA pharmacy care were included. VA Health Care enrollees who did not seek care from VA during the current year were not included. Veterans who only sought care from a VHA Vet Center were not included.
- **Memorial Affairs:** All Veterans who were interred in a National, State, Interior, or Military cemeteries, or Veterans who were interred in private cemeteries and requested headstones/markers from VA were included. Due to data unavailability, Veterans who only received Presidential Memorial Certificates or a flag were not included.
- **Compensation & Pension:** All Veterans who received VA disability compensation or pension payments were included. Veterans who received Special Adaptive Housing benefits were also included in the analysis. Veterans with pending or denied claims were not included.
- **Education:** All Veterans who received benefits for Chapter 30, 32, 33, 1606, and 1607 education programs were included.
- **Vocational Rehabilitation:** All Veterans who participated in various stages of the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program were included.
- **Loan Guaranty:** All Veterans who had an active, new or re-financed VA-guaranteed home loan were included.
- **Life Insurance:** All Veterans who had an active VA life insurance policy or were in receipt of a benefit from a policy that was administered or supervised by VA were included. VA insurance programs included in the analysis were National Service Life Insurance (NSLI), United States Government Life Insurance (USGLI), Veterans' Special Life Insurance (VSLI), Veterans' Reopened Insurance (VRI), Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (S-DVI), Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI), Traumatic Injury Protection (TSGLI), and Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI). The analysis does not include Service-members' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Family Service-members' Group Life Insurance (FSGLI).

# Methodology and Assumptions

- Records from each utilization source were combined using the Veteran's Social Security Number (SSN) as the primary identifier
- Veteran records from each input source were verified against official Social Security Administration data to validate SSN, name, date of birth, and gender
- Missing SSN or SSNs determined to be incorrect by SSA were omitted from the analysis
- Estimates for Veterans who did not use any VA benefits or services were derived using the *United States Veterans Eligibility Trends & Statistics 2014* (USVETS) database and VetPop2014. Counts from USVETS were adjusted to be consistent with total population estimates from VetPop14
  - The methodology used to validate Veterans' records in USVETS was revised. This revisions resulted in an increase in the number of validated records. Thus, the number of VA users from 2005-2012 has been revised to reflect these changes.
  - The adjustment was applied to aggregate counts of non-users, non-enrolled, and age 45 or older, who are Veterans whose records are most incomplete
- Some data elements were not available for all Veteran records. A minimum of 70% coverage was assumed to be an appropriate sample of all Veteran users to create frequency distributions.
  - 0.01 percent of user records had unknown gender. Of those, 99% were age 55 or older and assumed to be male
  - Race/ethnicity information is available only in aggregate estimates at the national level

# Contact Information

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For general inquiries, please email us at [VANCVAS@va.gov](mailto:VANCVAS@va.gov)