



National Alliance to
END HOMELESSNESS

To: Editorial writers, columnists, reporters and other interested parties
From: National Alliance to End Homelessness
Subject: Update to Veterans Report
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Contact Information: Catherine An – 202-942-8297, can@naeh.org

On Veterans Day, the National Alliance to End Homelessness will release an update to the veterans report: [*Vital Mission: Ending Homelessness Among Veterans*](#). New data from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) shows that while the number of homeless veterans seems to have decreased, the need for more proactive intervention and action grows.

The Alliance will host a conference call for press on Monday, Nov. 9 at 11 a.m. ET to review the newest information and policy initiatives used to combat veterans homelessness. For more information about the call, please contact the Alliance.

What do the numbers mean?

A quick look at the data may suggest that veterans homelessness is an improving problem. This year's data show that there are **131,000 homeless veterans** in America on any given night. Last year, the number was **154,000**.

Unfortunately, the change in these numbers is largely attributed to methodology, and not the effectiveness of veterans services or programs. While we applaud the VA for their improved efforts to obtain more accurate data, we also acknowledge that the problem of veterans homelessness persists.

The numbers also reflect the most recent demographic data, which confirms that:

- There are an increasing number of female veterans.
- Homeless veterans tend to be middle-aged.
- The racial demographics of homeless veterans mirror that of the general homeless population.

What is being done?

A number of bills focusing on the plight of homeless veterans have been drafted and circulated by lawmakers, but the Alliance is advocating for comprehensive legislation that would address the many, varied needs of those returning home from conflict.

The Congress and the Administration should:

- Create a homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing program within the VA;
- Expand supportive housing for veterans – housing coupled with intensive medical and behavioral health services;
- Ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing for low-income veterans;
- Improve existing solution-focused homelessness programs within the VA.

Background information on homeless veterans

Veterans have long represented a sizable percentage of the homeless population – approximately one-fifth of all homeless people. Homeless veterans have served in a number of conflicts, including Vietnam, Korea, and World War II.

Veterans who end up homeless often return from conflict with post-war challenges including emotional or mental distress and physical disability. These challenges can manifest in disease and illness, such as substance abuse and addiction, which can prevent or inhibit them from re-assimilating into civilian society. Veterans also tend to be burdened with significant housing costs. Many veterans pay 50+ percent of their monthly salary to housing costs.

Female Veterans

This is particularly relevant for women, who are a growing segment of the veteran population. Compared with male veterans, there is a higher proportion of female veterans with severe housing cost burden.

According to the 2008 American Community Survey data, only six percent of veterans age 35+ are women, but 22 percent of veterans age 18 – 34 are women.

A growing body of research indicates that female veterans have a higher risk of homelessness than their male counterparts.

A number of reasons explain why female veterans are a greater risk of homelessness, including higher incidence of sexual assault and victimization, which is linked to higher rates of PTSD. In addition female veterans have lower incomes and are more likely to have children.