

# State Veteran Benefit Utilization

## 2013 California Women Veteran Survey

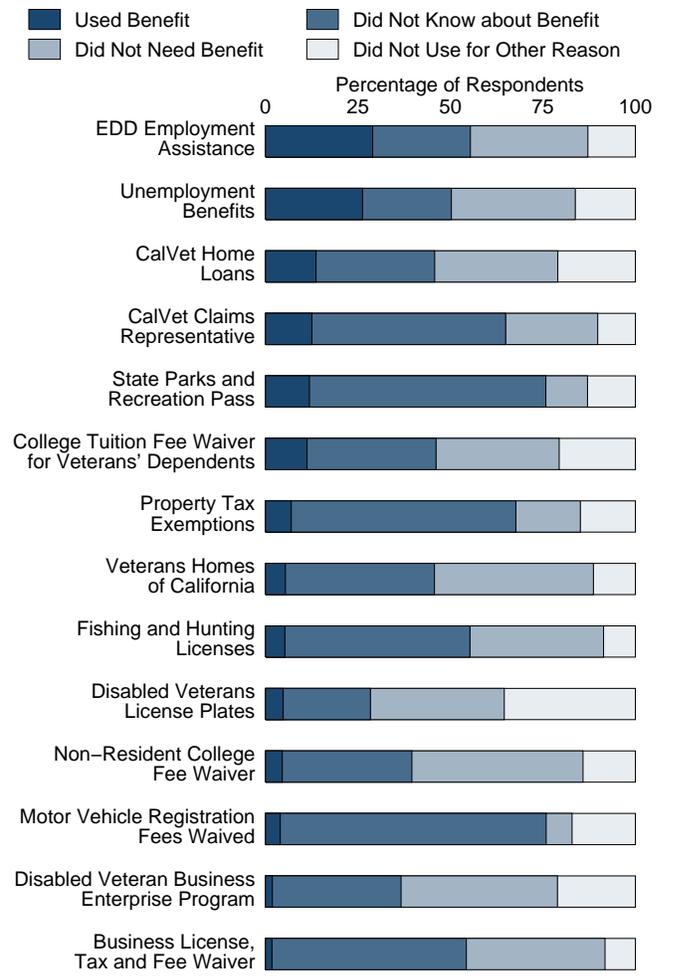
The military service of California's women veterans entitles them to a number of state benefits including employment assistance, property tax exemptions, and tuition fee waivers for dependents. In order to use these benefits and services, however, veterans need to be aware of their existence. Results from the 2010 National Survey of Veterans suggest that a majority of veterans may not be familiar with the benefits that are available to them.<sup>1</sup> This Short Subject presents results from the 2013 California Women Veteran Survey, which asked respondents about their use and knowledge of a variety of veteran benefits and services offered by the state of California.<sup>2</sup>

### UTILIZATION OF STATE VETERAN BENEFITS

Figure 1 presents data about 2013 survey respondents' use, knowledge, and need of 14 benefits and services available to veterans in California. The benefits are sorted according to the percentage of respondents who reported using each. The two most commonly used state veteran benefits were California's Employment Development Department (EDD) Employment Assistance and Unemployment Benefits. Fewer than 15 percent reported using any of the other benefits listed in Figure 1 and the two least commonly used benefits, the Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Program and Business License, Tax, and Fee Waiver, were used by fewer than 2 percent.

The 2013 survey asked those individuals who reported not using a given benefit to indicate the primary reason why not. In general, the two most common reasons given were that the individual did not know about the benefit or that she did not need it. Knowledge of all state veteran benefits is relatively low even for those benefits most used by respondents. In fact, with the exception of the two most commonly used benefits, respondents were more likely to report not knowing about a benefit than to report using it. The benefits or services that were least known to respondents included

**Figure 1. Use, knowledge, and need of state veteran benefits varies**



Motor Vehicle Registration Fees Waived and the State Parks and Recreation Pass.

Many respondents reported not using a given state benefit because they did not need it. Such a response makes sense for some respondents because many of the benefits and services included in Figure 1 target a specific subpopulation of California veterans. For example, the benefit respondents were most likely to report not needing, the Non-Resident College Fee Waiver, is aimed at veteran students who are not

already considered residents of the state according to the policies of the public university systems in California.

Figure 1 also includes an "other" category that combines several additional reasons for not using state benefits. For example, some respondents in the "other" category reported that they did not qualify for a given benefit or service. This reason was most common for benefits given to disabled veterans. Others reported trying to use a benefit but having challenges receiving it. This reason was relatively rare, however, with fewer than 5 percent of respondents giving it for the vast majority of benefits and services.

### VARIATION IN BENEFIT UTILIZATION

Figure 2 presents information on the percentage of respondents to the 2013 survey who used at least 1 of the 14 state veteran benefits and services listed in Figure 1. Overall, 58 percent used at least 1 benefit.

This rate is broken out according to a series of demographic and service-related characteristics. Benefit use did not vary much according to education or the presence of children. However, respondents who were unemployed, non-white, and/or identified as LGBT were more likely to report using at least one benefit than were their counterparts.

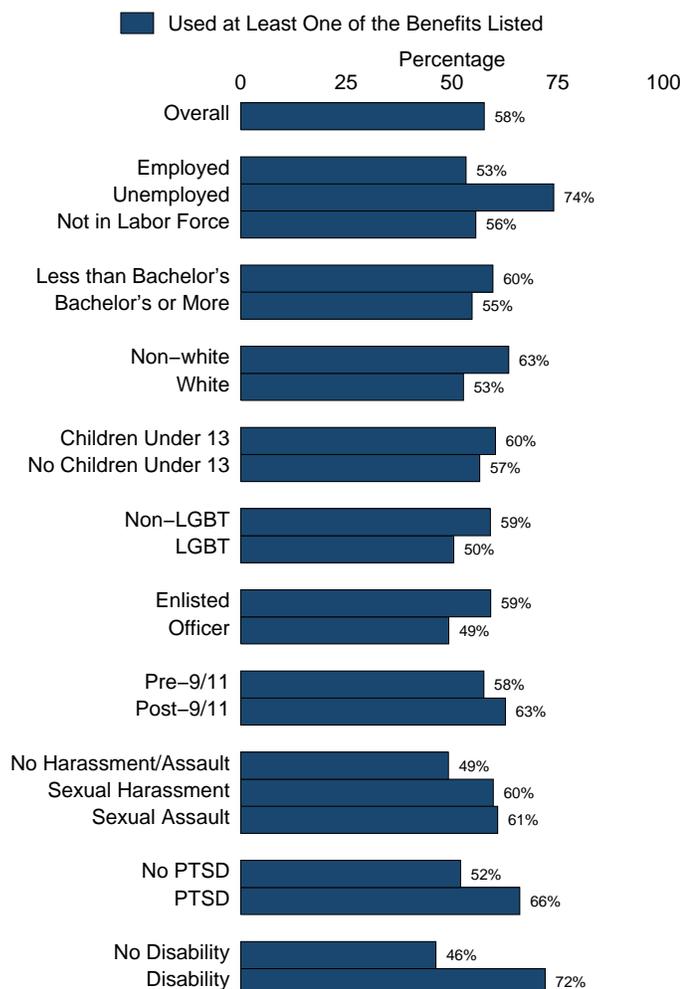
There is considerable variation in utilization with respect to rank upon initial separation, experiences with sexual harassment and assault while serving, Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD), and the presence of service-connected disabilities. Enlisted members and those who experienced sexual harassment/assault, PTSD, or a service-connected disability were all more likely to report using at least one benefit.

These results are positive in that they suggest the veterans who might be more likely to be helped by state veteran benefits are also more likely to use them. In analyses not presented here, however, there is evidence to suggest that some of the same groups are also less likely to be aware of state veteran benefits and services. For example, enlisted members and those who were unemployed were less likely than their respective counterparts to report knowledge of at least half of the benefits and services listed in Figure 1.

### ENDNOTES

1. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2010). "National Survey of Veterans, Active Duty Service Members, Demobilized National Guard and Reserve Members, Family Members, and Surviving Spouses."
2. The 2013 California Women Veteran Survey was carried out between September and December of 2013. A total of 1,040 individuals volunteered to participate in the survey and 847 chose to answer questions on state veteran benefits. The values reported here are estimates and subject to multiple sources of error. Because the sample is based on volunteers who self-selected to participate rather than a probability sample, no estimates of sampling error can be calculated. The data have not been weighted to reflect the demographic characteristics of the California women veteran population.

**Figure 2. Use of state veteran benefits varies across some demographic and service-related characteristics**



*This Short Subject was requested by the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls ([www.women.ca.gov](http://www.women.ca.gov)) and the California Department of Veterans Affairs Women Veterans Division ([www.calvet.ca.gov/calvet-programs/women-veterans](http://www.calvet.ca.gov/calvet-programs/women-veterans)).*

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