DATA BRIEF:

Women Veteran Entrepreneurs

This brief provides highlights from the 2020 National Survey of Military-Affiliated Entrepreneurs focusing on female veteran entrepreneurs. These findings are based on the data collected from 432 female veteran entrepreneurs, which represents 27% of the respondents that answered the gender question of the 2020 survey. This study monitors trends in the activity, needs, and economic, social, and policy barriers of military-affiliated entrepreneurs in the United States. This annual survey and forthcoming public dataset will be an enduring source of current insights for public and private sector leaders, policymakers, and community-based organization on systemic barriers to and drivers of entrepreneurial success among female veterans and their family members. To learn more about this study and other briefs, publications, and presentations visit ivmf.syracuse.edu/nsmae-series.

Entrepreneurship Characteristics

**TOP MOTIVATIONS TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female (48%)</th>
<th>Male (31%)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>Helping society/supporting community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>Maintain personal freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>The chance to implement own ideas/creating something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>The opportunity to be financially independent/increase personal income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>Make own decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Having more free time/flexible hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>Improving quality of life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EMPLOYMENT / SELF-EMPLOYMENT STATUS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female (FEMALES)</th>
<th>Male (MALES)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>Working full-time for an organization other than own business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Working part-time for an organization other than own business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>Working for own business full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>Working for own business part-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ATTITUDES & PERSPECTIVES**

- 61% of female veteran owned businesses are FORMALLY OR INFORMALLY CERTIFIED BY A NATIONAL, STATE, LOCAL CERTIFYING BODY (78% male)
- Of those female veterans that have certified businesses 52% FIND THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS DIFFICULT (56% male)

- 59% of female veteran owned businesses are FORMALLY OR INFORMALLY CERTIFIED BY A NATIONAL, STATE, LOCAL CERTIFYING BODY (78% male)
- Of those female veterans that have certified businesses 52% FIND THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS DIFFICULT (56% male)

- 51% Committed to achieving growth, even if it means lower profits
- 40% Willing to take on new loans in order to grow the firm
- 36% Willing to bring in new owners in order to grow the firm

**MILITARY SKILLS & ATTRIBUTES THAT APPLY TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

- Work ethic/self-discipline (55%)
- Teamwork (39%)
- Leadership & management skills (37%)
- Perseverance (36%)
- Mental toughness (32%)
- Ability to get things done (28%)

**INTEREST IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PRIOR TO MILITARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female (FEMALES)</th>
<th>Male (MALES)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47% Moderately/extremely interested</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27% Slightly/somewhat interested</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26% Not at all interested</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WOULD RATHER GROW THE FIRM THAN KEEP IT AT PRESENT SIZE**

- 61% WOULD RATHER GROW THE FIRM THAN KEEP IT AT PRESENT SIZE

**WOMEN VETERAN ENTREPRENEURS**

According to the survey, 48% of female veterans are interested in entrepreneurship, compared to 35% of male veterans. The top motivations for female veterans include helping society/supporting community (48%) and maintaining personal freedom (36%). Over half of female veteran-owned businesses (59%) are formally or informally certified by a national, state, or local certifying body. However, 52% of female veterans find the certification process difficult (56% male).
**Barriers to Entrepreneurship**

**Female Veteran Entrepreneurs**

**TOP PROBLEMS OR BARRIERS IN PURSUING OR ACHIEVING BUSINESS GOALS**

- **39%** Lack of initial capital
- **29%** Lack of mentors for business
- **27%** Irregular income
- **24%** Lack of experience or exposure to other business owners
- **22%** Current economic situation

**Transition Difficulty & Key Challenges**

- **69%** Female veteran entrepreneurs indicated that they needed time to figure out what to do in their civilian life (49% male)
- 49% had difficulty with the transition from military to civilian life (43% male)
- 47% indicated that adjusting to civilian life was difficult (39% male)
- 47% felt they had sense and purpose after military (54% male)

**Major Factors of Female Veteran Entrepreneurs that Impact Starting a Business**

**MARKETING & SALES**

- **63%** Didn’t know how to do the following:
  - Market their business (51% male)
  - Sell their products or services to a national market (51% male)
  - Develop a website or social media presence for their business (39% male)

**ECONOMIC**

- **71%** Didn’t know the following:
  - How to apply for grants (67% male)
  - Where/how to apply for a business loan (52% male)
  - How to identify sources of funding to start their business (48% male)

**SOCIAL & HUMAN CAPITAL**

- **53%** Had difficulty finding a local business incubator or nonprofit that helps business owners (45% male)
- **50%** Lacked formal help to start their business (36% male)
- **39%** Lacked experience or exposure to someone who has run a business (29% male)

**Denial of Credit**

- **48%** of female veteran entrepreneurs were turned down by lender or creditor when applying for financing

**Disability Related Barriers of Female Veteran Entrepreneurs**

- **80%** Have a service-connected disability
- **56%** Do not feel supported by medical & disability service providers
- **54%** Indicate that service-connected disability creates obstacles in business ownership

**Participants reported difficulty with:**

- **Navigating the resources in local community**
- **47%**

- **Don’t have anyone on whom they could rely on for help for the business**
- **34%**

- **Lack of support from community to start a business**
- **33%**

**Has a particular lender or creditor turned down any request you made for credit, or not given as much credit as you applied for?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES, TURNED DOWN</th>
<th>YES, NOT AS MUCH CREDIT</th>
<th>NO, NOT TURNED DOWN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEMALE</strong></td>
<td><strong>MALE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Female Veteran Entrepreneurs

**Ability to financially sustain with income from current business**

- **46%** were not able to financially sustain themselves with just their business
  - Females: 26%
  - Males: 54%
  - Yes
  - 24% 21% Partially
  - 46% 23% No, not at this time
  - 4% 2% No, and do not intend to do so

**SOURCES OF CAPITAL**

- **91%** Female Veteran Entrepreneurs needed capital to start/grow their business
- **9%** Female Veteran Entrepreneurs did not need capital to start/grow their business

Top three sources of capital used in 2019 are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal/family savings of owner(s)</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal credit card(s)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business credit card(s)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Credit Card

- 55% of business debt is on credit cards (40% male)
- 61% pay an interest rate that is higher than 10% (36% male)
- 23% pay an interest rate between 20-29.99% (7% male)

**Support and Resources for Entrepreneurship**

**Entrepreneurship Resource Needs of Female Veteran Entrepreneurs in Local Communities**

- **59%** were not aware of the Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) funds
- **43%** did not know about third-party certification resources
- **81%** know about SBA resources (SBDC, WBDC, VBOC, etc.) in their local area
- **39%** did not know about government contracting resources and support
- **39%** did not know about credit and financing resources and support
- **29%** did not know about marketing resources and support

**OF THOSE THAT KNEW:**
- 11% indicate the resource need improvement,
- 42% indicate this resource is sufficient, and
- 46% indicate this resource is outstanding

**OF THOSE THAT KNEW:**
- 41% indicate the resource need improvement,
- 41% indicate this resource is sufficient, and
- 18% indicate this resource is outstanding

**OF THOSE THAT KNEW:**
- 43% indicate the resource need improvement,
- 39% indicate this resource is sufficient, and
- 17% indicate this resource is outstanding

**OF THOSE THAT KNEW:**
- 43% indicate the resource need improvement,
- 39% indicate this resource is sufficient, and
- 17% indicate this resource is outstanding

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COVID-19 Pandemic

Female Veteran Entrepreneurs

Preparedness for Entrepreneurship

59% 

FEEL THAT MILITARY HAS PREPARED THEM for their business challenges associated with COVID-19 pandemic (67% males)

89% were able to adapt their business during the pandemic

- 80% were been to accommodate (themselves or their employees) to work from home
- 79% indicate they lost business due to the pandemic
- 78% believe their business/venture will be able to survive the pandemic

Closure during COVID-19:

70% INDICATE THAT THEY DO NOT ANTICIPATE CLOSING THEIR BUSINESS (67% MALES)

OF THOSE FEMALE VETERAN ENTREPRENEURS THAT ANTICIPATE CLOSING:

- 13% CAN OPERATE FOR LESS THAN 3 MONTHS
- 53% CAN OPERATE BETWEEN 3-12 MONTHS
- 34% CAN OPERATE MORE THAN A YEAR

Top resource needs during COVID-19 for female veteran entrepreneurs:

- 35% General funding (financing, loans, grants)
- 29% Government contracting assistance
- 25% Social media/website assistance
- 23% Emergency funding
- 21% Assistance with adjusting marketing efforts

ARE AWARE OF THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THEM/THEIR BUSINESS DURING THE PANDEMIC (67% MALES)

CARES ACT’S PAYROLL PROTECTION PROGRAM (PPP):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approved and received funding</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved, waiting for funding</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied, pending approval</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible, have not applied yet</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turned down</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
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CARES ACT’S ECONOMIC INJURY DISASTER LOAN (EIDL):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turned down</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Support during the pandemic for female veteran entrepreneurs:

49% 

female veteran entrepreneurs believe that their business HAS NOT BEEN SUPPORTED by the local government during the pandemic

51% Believe that their business has NOT been supported by the federal government

66% Believe that their business has NOT been supported by the state government

49% Believe that their business has NOT been supported by the local community

What does entrepreneurship success look like to you?

“Being able to make a difference in 1-100 or more people’s lives is success for me.”

- Army Female Veteran Entrepreneur & Business Owner