

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAT

CAF

CIDP

CIMVHR

GBA+

HIT

MCT

MST

NCM

PTSD

RTG

RCMP

VAC

VSP

WIIS-Canada

Key Insights

Career transition services are important and there are opportunities for government program development

Identifying the transferable skills of veterans can aid with the professional transition process. However, these transferable skills may be more implicit, especially when a veteran comes from a combat role. There are opportunities for Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to bridge the gap between veterans, their former military life, and their future civilian life.

Awareness of the gendered implications of veteran transition has increased, and programs and services are beginning to consider these differences in practice.

Research has identified the differentiated transition experiences of men and women. For example, women tend to be medically released more, suffer more from mental health issues upon release, enjoy less financial stability. Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), a tool to analyse the differentiated impact of policies on different groups, has recently been implemented by the government of Canada, and there is an increasing number of government agencies that use it in order to assess policies.

Civil society and the private sector fill the gaps left by policies.

Although GBA+ is being applied more widely in the Veterans Affairs Canada context, gender-based programming is often led by NGOs or civil society. As a result, many Veteran Service Providers (VSP) and associations, revolve around establishing peer support networks and mentorship. The programs offer rehabilitation activities and provide long term therapy to veterans in transition.

Military to civilian transition (MCT) is a cultural transition.

One of the core difficulties of transition is that veterans exit a very specific culture to join another. For example, core military values include discipline, teamwork, and selfless duty, while civilian values put an emphasis on individualism and freedom. As these two different sets of values appear to be antithetic to a certain extent, MCT involves a profound change. This transition often provoke

There are lessons and best practices to be learned from allies and partners regarding veteran transition.

Despite some differences for veteran transition between Canada, the United States, and NATO countries, research from Canada and the United States suggests that many of the challenges regarding military to civilian transition in Canada are also observed in the United States. This means that Canada can learn from best practices outside of its borders.

The Gender Dimension of Veteran Transition

: *Heather MacLellan, Veterans Affairs Canada.*

In starting her address, **Heather MacLellan** highlighted

Employment and Career Transition of Women Veterans

This panel gathered a plethora of perspectives on the professional aspect of the transition of

Currently, the veteran population is of 660,000 people, and between 4,000 and 5,000 servicemembers leave the CAF each year, most of whom are not in age to retire (the average age of transition being 37) and who are looking for new employment opportunities. However, VAC's programs over-emphasize mental health to the detriment of professional development and end up being under-utilized. Another challenge is the shift in the demographics of the veteran population, with the significant increase of women veterans that served in combat roles. This increase of women needs to be considered in a disaggregated way, as their experience of service differs from that of men. Studies have shown that women are more often exposed to cumulative stressors: they are more likely to develop PTSD and to experience guilt over their work-life balance; and they, on average, receive lower income earnings of 30% compared to their male counterparts following transition.

Taking into account this differentiated data, the Gender Mainstreaming in the Military Project studied programs for veterans and their impact on women. The indicators to assess the impact of 210 programs in 44 different VSPs were as follow: geographical location; the year they were founded; their funding structure; their budget; their administrative structure; whether or not they adopted a gender specific lens and possessed a cultural and minority component; the type of program it provided. The research found that 62 of the studied programs focused on career development; 59 followed the trend, also found in government services, of focusing principally on mental health; and 4 had a gender component, only one of which was about career services.

The takeaways of the study were that policies and programs are lagging behind the international commitment to conduct GBA+ and to mainstream gender; that the services available are not matching the changing demographics of the CAF; and that, while many gaps between service provisions remain, VSPs also face the problem of duplication of services/programs. This study therefore constitutes a call for more need-based and adaptive programs that have mainstreamed gender and that have adopted a holistic approach to transition.

The third panelist was **Rosemary Park**, the founder of the Servicewomen's Salute project and former servicemember who had left the military 24 years prior. As a woman who went through transition, Rosemary Park's experience is an example of what transition should not look like: marked by loneliness, invisibility, and a lack of coordination between resources and services.

Despite transitioning, servicewomen never fully leave the military, and this is where Servicewomen's Salute aims to intervene. It is the project of an association that provides peer support to

The fourth and last panelist was **Dwayne Cormier** of Hero In Transition (HIT) consulting. The focus of HIT consulting echoes the central theme of this workshop, that of mentoring and how it can help women veterans overcome transition-related difficulties.

Veteran-to-veteran mentorship can be very helpful in coping with issues of career assessment and career transition

To demonstrate the cross-national and gender differences, Dr. Dursun compared and contrasted findings on transition. In the United States, men are more likely to report combat related PTSD, while women are more likely to report sexual trauma or physical assault. In the United Kingdom, male veterans report their physical conditions more, while women are more likely to be unemployed post-transition, mainly to “look after families.” In Canada, while the overall rates of attrition are declining, medical releases are increasing and are more likely among women. The main reason for medical release is mental health, with men displaying higher rates of PTSD and women displaying higher rates of depression.

However, gender-specific, cross-national trends were identified. Within the first year of service, 20% of women were medically released, compared to 9% of men. While it is known that suicide rates are higher among transitioning veterans, there is also a gender dimension to it: men are 1.4% more likely to commit suicide than the general population, whereas women are 1.82% times more likely to commit suicide than the rest of society. Female are more likely to report being disabled, to care for the family after transition, are less likely to agree that their military skills are transferrable to civilian life, and are more likely to be dissatisfied with their situation post-transition.

The third panelist was **Gordon Wishart**, Senior Analyst at the Office of Veterans Ombudsman. As a gender focal point for the Veterans Ombudsman, his role is to use GBA+, an analytic

mandate of WIIS Global in Canada.

Perspectives on the Health of Women Veterans

Chaired by the Associate Scientific Director of CIMVHR, **Dr. Stéphanie Bélanger**, this panel discusses the overarching gender dimensions to transition

system, a seeding station, canning workshops, and collaboration with other organizations supporting victims of sexual violence. The overarching goal of the Garden is to help women regain confidence, self-worth, and independence.

The Garden has proven itself to help women by reducing their isolation, fostering their integration in civilian life, improving their relationship with children. However, the extent of this

