

# Social connection is key to achieving better health outcomes for veterans with hearing loss



The silence after service can be deafening. Incidence of hearing loss among veterans is higher than that of non-veterans and can compound other issues – especially with regard to social isolation. Read on to learn about why veterans are at unique risk for certain conditions, how social connection can improve both physical and mental health for veterans, and to what degree technology can strengthen connections – leading to better health outcomes.

## Tinnitus and hearing loss

Are the top 2 health conditions among military veterans treated at VA medical centers.<sup>1</sup>

# 2.7 million

The word "million" is written in a large, bold, purple font. The letter "i" in "million" is replaced by a silhouette of a soldier standing with a rifle. The letter "l" is replaced by a silhouette of a soldier kneeling with a rifle. The letter "o" is replaced by a silhouette of a soldier kneeling with a rifle.

More than **2.7 million** veterans receive disability benefits or are being treated for hearing loss and/or tinnitus.<sup>2</sup>

## Male veterans are:

- **13.3%** less likely to have excellent or good hearing
- **41.38%** more likely to report little-to-moderate trouble hearing
- **38.46%** more likely to report a lot of hearing difficulty or deafness
- **23%** more likely to report having balance problems

**...than non-veterans<sup>3</sup>**



## The link between hearing loss/tinnitus and social isolation is well-documented.

In a study of veterans with tinnitus,<sup>4</sup>

**72%** **60%** **58%**

72% were diagnosed with anxiety

60% were diagnosed with depression

58% had both anxiety AND depression

### Disability and loneliness ...

... are the biggest predictors of having suicidal thoughts for veterans – outpacing PTSD and other mental illness factors.<sup>6</sup>

**76%**

76% of people who treated their hearing loss reported an increase in their quality of life.<sup>5</sup>

## Conversely, the health benefits of strong social connections are undeniable.


### Veterans who reported having strong social connections had:

- lower lifetime depression
- lower likelihood of lifetime suicide ideation
- lower rates of lifetime use of mental health services<sup>7</sup>

Maintaining strong social connections can actually **boost your immune system AND reduce inflammation.**<sup>8</sup>

**50%**

Healthy social connections can increase the likelihood of longevity by as much as 50%.<sup>9</sup>



## Staying connected to what matters most in life has never been easier.

Technology offers many ways for veterans with hearing loss to boost their social connectedness. Examples of such technologies range from social networks to online video conferencing apps and even captioned telephones.

Veterans can now self-certify their hearing loss to get a captioned telephone and service\* at no cost\*\* from Hamilton® CapTel®, sponsor of the Heroes With Hearing Loss® program.

Learn more about the Heroes With Hearing Loss program at [HeroesWithHearingLoss.org](https://HeroesWithHearingLoss.org)

Self-certify to get a captioned telephone at [HeroesWithHearingLoss.org/self-certify](https://HeroesWithHearingLoss.org/self-certify)

### References:

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- <sup>3</sup> Jacqueline W. Lucas, M.P.H., and Carla E. Zelaya, Ph.D., "Hearing Difficulty, Vision Trouble, and Balance Problems Among Male Veterans and Non-veterans." National Health Statistics Reports, June 2020 [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr142-508.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr142-508.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> "Veteran Statistics." Hearing Health Foundation, Sept. 2012 <https://hearinghealthfoundation.org/veterans>
- <sup>5</sup> "Attitudes and Actions Towards Hearing Health: Summary Report of U.S. Adults Ages 18+." ASHA, 2021 <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/bhsm/2021/asha-bhsm-2021-report.pdf>
- <sup>6</sup> Bill Hathaway, "For Suicidal Veterans, Loneliness is the Deadliest Enemy," Yale News, Sept. 2017 <https://news.yale.edu/2017/09/28/suicidal-veterans-loneliness-deadliest-enemy>
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- <sup>9</sup> Julianne Holt-Lunstad et. al, "Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review." PLOS Medicine, July 2010 <https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316&type=printable>

\*The captioning service is provided at no cost to the user.

\*\*Independent third-party professional certification or veteran self-certification is required.

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