



July 2023

VA DISABILITY BENEFITS

Actions Needed to Further Examine Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Compensation

Why GAO Did This Study

Veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups comprised almost 24 percent of the total veteran population in 2017, according to a VA report. By 2045, this group of veterans will make up over 36 percent of all living veterans, according to VA projections.

Public Law 117-66 includes a provision for GAO to assess whether there are racial and ethnic disparities with respect to disability compensation, among other areas. This report examines the extent to which (1) VA has taken steps to collect and assess data about the racial and ethnic composition of veterans who may apply for disability compensation; and (2) racial and ethnic disparities exist in the provision of compensation, and what factors could contribute to disparate outcomes.

GAO reviewed relevant federal laws, regulations, and VA policies; analyzed VA's claims data by race, ethnicity, and sex from fiscal year 2010 through 2020 (the most recent full year of data available); and interviewed VA officials and representatives from a VA advisory group and selected veterans service organizations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations to VA, including that it develop a plan to address limitations with its race and ethnicity data, and to conduct a comprehensive assessment of disability compensation to identify the root causes that could contribute to racial and ethnic disparities. VA agreed with the recommendations.

View [GAO-23-106097](#). For more information, contact Elizabeth H. Curda at (202) 512-7215 or curdae@gao.gov.

VA DISABILITY BENEFITS

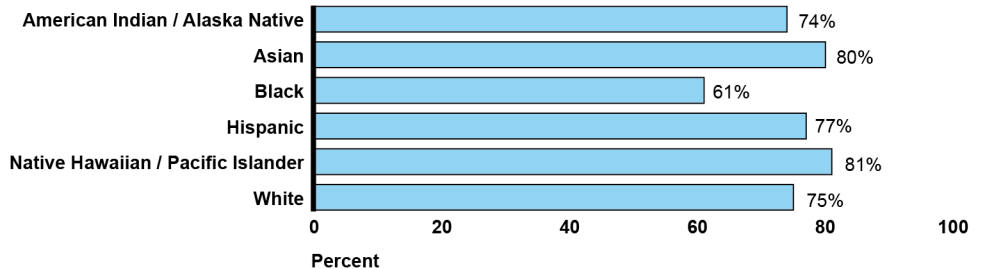
Actions Needed to Further Examine Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Compensation

What GAO Found

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has taken steps to improve how it collects race and ethnicity data to understand the experiences of veterans who may apply for disability compensation through the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). For example, VA created a working group that specifically focused on improving demographic data collection. VA's collection efforts could enhance the data available to VBA to assess racial and ethnic disparities in disability compensation. However, VA has not developed a documented plan for how it will improve the availability of data for certain racial and ethnic groups who may not be accessing VA services and benefits. Without a plan to identify and document concrete actions, VA will not have the data it needs to ensure veterans are treated equitably.

GAO's analysis of fiscal year 2010 through 2020 compared initial claims approval rates for all racial and ethnic groups to Non-Hispanic White (White) veterans—the largest group with decisions. GAO found that Non-Hispanic Black or African American (Black) veterans had the lowest approval rate among all groups (see figure). Similarly, GAO's analysis of selected medical conditions most frequently decided by VA found that differences in approval rates were particularly prominent between Black male and White male veterans, with Black male veterans' rates being 3 to 22 percentage points lower. These differences were prevalent for nine of the 10 conditions GAO analyzed such as tinnitus and posttraumatic stress disorder. VBA has conducted studies on racial and ethnic disparities in disability compensation for some conditions and found disparities. However, it has not comprehensively studied the root causes of the disparities it has found or potential disparities in the provisions of compensation more broadly. As a result, VA lacks the information it needs to ensure equitable decisions.

VA Disability Compensation Approval Rates for Initial Claims, by Race and Ethnicity (Fiscal Years 2010–2020)



Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | [GAO-23-106097](#)

Note: GAO grouped individuals of Hispanic ethnicity under that designation regardless of race.

Contents

Letter		1
	Background	5
	VA Has Taken Steps to Improve Its Collection of Race and Ethnicity Data, but Has Not Documented Its Plans to Address Limitations	10
	VA Approved Initial Disability Claims at Lower Rates for Black than White Veterans, but Has Not Comprehensively Studied Racial and Ethnic Disparities	14
	Conclusions	31
	Recommendations for Executive Action	31
	Agency Comments and Our Evaluation	32
Appendix I	Objectives, Scope, and Methodology	34
Appendix II	Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings	45
Appendix III	Comments from the Department of Veterans Affairs	159
Appendix IV	GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments	163
Tables		
	Table 1: VA Disability Compensation Approval Rates for Veterans with Initial Claims and Additional Claims, by Race and Ethnicity, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	19
	Table 2: VA Disability Compensation Approval Rates for Fully Developed Claims Program and Standard Claims Process by Race and Ethnicity, Fiscal Years 2015–2020	21
	Table 3: VA Disability Compensation Approval Rates for White and Black Male Veterans for Selected Medical Conditions, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	23
	Table 4: Most Common Conditions Decided by VA from Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation Claims, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	40

Table 5: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation Claims by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	46
Table 6: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation Claims Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	48
Table 7: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation Claims with Fewer Than Eight Conditions by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	53
Table 8: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation Claims with Eight or More Conditions by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	55
Table 9: VA Approval and Denial Rates Combining Veterans with Initial and Additional Disability Compensation Claims by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	57
Table 10: Proportions of Veterans Who Received VA Disability Compensation Combined Ratings for Initial Claims by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	59
Table 11: Proportions of Veterans Who Received VA Disability Compensation Combined Ratings for Initial Claims with Fewer Than Eight Conditions by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	61
Table 12: Proportions of Veterans Who Received VA Disability Compensation Combined Ratings for Initial Claims with Eight or More Conditions by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	63
Table 13: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Tinnitus by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	65
Table 14: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Hearing Loss by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	67
Table 15: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Limitation of Flexion of the Knee by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	69
Table 16: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings	

for Lumbosacral or Cervical Strain by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	71
Table 17: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Limited Motion of the Ankle by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	73
Table 18: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Limitation of Motion of the Arm by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	75
Table 19: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Paralysis of the Sciatic Nerve by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	77
Table 20: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Migraine by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	79
Table 21: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	81
Table 22: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Fully Developed Claims by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2015–2020	83
Table 23: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Fully Developed Claims with Fewer Than Eight Conditions by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2015–2020	85
Table 24: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Fully Developed Claims with Eight or More Conditions by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2015–2020	87
Table 25: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Tinnitus by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	89
Table 26: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Tinnitus Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	91
Table 27: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Hearing Loss by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	96
Table 28: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Hearing Loss Each Fiscal	

Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	98
Table 29: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Limitation of Flexion of the Knee by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	103
Table 30: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Limitation of Flexion of the Knee Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	105
Table 31: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Lumbosacral or Cervical Strain by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	110
Table 32: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Lumbosacral or Cervical Strain Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	112
Table 33: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Limited Motion of the Ankle by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	117
Table 34: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Limited Motion of the Ankle Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	119
Table 35: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Limitation of Motion of the Arm by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	124
Table 36: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Limitation of Motion of the Arm Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	126
Table 37: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Scars General by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	131
Table 38: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Scars General Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	133
Table 39: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation for Paralysis of Sciatic Nerve by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	138

Table 40: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Paralysis of Sciatic Nerve Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	140
Table 41: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Migraine by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	145
Table 42: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Migraine Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	147
Table 43: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	152
Table 44: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	154

Figures

Figure 1: Overview of VBA's Standard Claims Process and Fully Developed Claims Program for Initial Claims	6
Figure 2: Selected VA Offices Involved in Disability Compensation or Assessing Racial and Ethnic Disparities	8
Figure 3: Department of Veterans Affairs' Efforts to Improve Its Collection of Racial and Ethnic Data	12
Figure 4: VA Disability Compensation Approval Rates for Veterans' Initial Claims by Race and Ethnicity, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	15
Figure 5: VA Disability Compensation Approval Rates for Initial Claims for Black Veterans and White Veterans, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	17
Figure 6: VA Disability Compensation Approval Rates for Tinnitus Each Year, by Black and White Male Veterans, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	24
Figure 7: Race, Ethnicity, Sex, and Age of Veterans with VA Decisions on Initial Disability Claims, Fiscal Years 2010–2020	37

Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
I-DEA	Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
USVETS	United States Veterans Eligibility Trends and Statistics
VA	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
VASRD	Veterans Affairs Schedule for Rating Disabilities
VBA	Veterans Benefits Administration
VHA	Veterans Health Administration
VSO	veterans service organization

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July 26, 2023

The Honorable Jon Tester
Chairman
The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Mike Bost
Chairman
The Honorable Mark Takano
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
House of Representatives

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administers one of the largest federal disability compensation programs in the nation, providing more than \$112 billion in compensation to approximately 5.4 million veterans in fiscal year 2022.¹ Veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups comprised almost 24 percent of the total veteran population in the United States in 2017, according to VA's fiscal year 2020 Minority Veterans report.² VA projects that by 2045, this population of veterans will make up over 36 percent of all living veterans.

¹Veterans Benefits Administration, *Annual Benefits Report Fiscal Year 2022* (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 2023).

²VA refers to veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups as "minority and historically underserved veterans." For our report, we use the phrase veterans from "historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups." We use the same racial and ethnic categories VA uses, which are based on the 1997 U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) standards. These standards include two ethnic categories (Hispanic or Latino, and Not Hispanic or Latino) and five racial categories (American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White). For this report, we consider these groups to be historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups with the exception of Non-Hispanic White veterans.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, *Minority Veterans Report: Military Service History and VA Benefit Utilization Statistics. Data Governance and Analytics* (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 2020).

Policymakers and other key stakeholders have highlighted concerns about the experiences of veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups. While veterans' health disparities have been well-documented in the research literature, limited information is available about potential racial and ethnic disparities related to disability compensation. Recent directives from the White House may help to provide information on these disparities. In particular, Executive Order 13985, issued January 20, 2021, required federal agencies to conduct an equity assessment that examines whether underserved communities and their members face systemic barriers in accessing federal benefits and services, among other areas.³ In addition, Executive Order 14091, issued February 16, 2023, required specified federal agencies, including VA, to establish equity teams to coordinate the implementation of equity initiatives and support continued equity training and leadership development.⁴

[Public Law 117-66](#) includes a provision for us to assess whether there are racial and ethnic disparities with respect to veterans' compensation benefits, disability ratings, and fully developed claims for benefits.⁵ This report examines the extent to which (1) VA has taken steps to collect and assess data about the racial and ethnic composition of veterans who may apply for disability compensation; and (2) racial and ethnic disparities exist in the provision of VA's disability compensation, and what factors could contribute to disparate outcomes.

To address objective 1, we reviewed relevant federal laws, regulations, and executive orders. We also reviewed agency policies to determine what data VA collects and maintains about the racial and ethnic composition of veterans, including those who may apply for disability compensation. In addition, we reviewed relevant VA reports and plans, such as the agency's strategic plan and equity action plan. Further, we interviewed VA officials and reviewed documentation to identify the extent to which the agency has taken steps to collect and maintain data on

³Executive Order 13985 defines "underserved communities" to be populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. Exec. Order No. 13985, 86 Fed. Reg. 7,009 (Jan. 20, 2021).

⁴Exec. Order No. 14091, 88 Fed. Reg. 10,825 (Feb. 16, 2023).

⁵Pub. L. No. 117-66, § 1, 135 Stat. 1489, 1489-90 (2021). VA's Fully Developed Claims Program allows veterans submitting their initial claims to obtain a faster decision on their disability claim by submitting all required documentation.

potential disparities based on the race and ethnicity of veterans who may apply for disability compensation.

To address objective 2, we analyzed VBA's data on initial disability compensation claims to determine the number of veterans who had been granted service connection for benefits (approved) or denied service connection for benefits (denied) by race and ethnicity from fiscal years 2010 through 2020.⁶ We selected this time frame because it included the most recent full year of data available to capture the latest group of veterans who had at least a year to apply for benefits and receive a decision. In addition, our examination of race and ethnicity included data on veterans' sex to further explore any differences.⁷ We also analyzed additional claims submitted by veterans after their initial claims had been denied during this time period.⁸

We identified and analyzed the top 10 medical conditions, as determined by the number of VA decisions to approve or deny benefits as part of initial claims, from fiscal years 2010 through 2020.⁹ In addition, we analyzed the number of veterans with VA decisions on initial claims submitted through the Fully Developed Claims Program from fiscal years 2015 through 2020. These were the years with the most complete data, according to VA officials. Based on our electronic testing, review of agency documentation, and discussions with VA officials, we determined

⁶Initial claims are those where the veteran applied for disability compensation for the first time. VBA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. We identified a benefit as approved if VA approved one or more of the conditions within the claim. For our analysis of race and ethnicity based on OMB's standards as previously described, we refer to all veterans in this report by their racial or ethnic category. This includes Hispanic and five Non-Hispanic racial groups: American Indian or Alaska Native (American Indian/Alaska Native), Asian (Asian), Black or African American (Black), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), and White (White).

⁷VBA's data include binary sex categories for veterans—male and female; it does not include data on transgender or non-binary veterans.

⁸Veterans who are unsatisfied with the initial claim decision have three additional review options. Our additional analysis included two of these options—supplemental claims, in which the veteran provided new evidence, and higher-level reviews, in which the veteran requested a more senior VBA claims processor review the claim. We did not assess claims in which the veteran appealed to the Board of Veterans' Appeals. Additionally, our analysis included claims in which veterans applied for new conditions that were not part of their initial claims.

⁹We used VA diagnostic codes to identify these conditions. Diagnostic codes are numbers established in regulation and used by VA to identify the disability being evaluated.

that VBA's disability compensation data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this reporting objective.

Additionally, to determine what factors could contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in its disability compensation process, we reviewed relevant studies conducted by VA and interviewed agency officials. We also interviewed stakeholder representatives from VA's Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans and seven veterans service organizations (VSO) to obtain their perspectives on any potential racial and ethnic disparities in VA's disability claims process, and on areas where bias might enter VA's process.¹⁰ We selected a mix of VSOs that were recognized by VA to assist veterans with disability claims, including two larger VSOs.¹¹ We also selected VSOs that represent various racial and ethnic groups.

Further, we conducted a literature search of studies published from October 1, 2009 through March 24, 2023 and asked VA officials and the stakeholders to identify any relevant research and other information to help inform our understanding of racial and ethnic disparities in disability compensation.¹² Our key methods are presented in greater detail in appendix I.

We conducted this performance audit from June 2022 to July 2023 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings based on our audit objectives.

¹⁰The Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans advises the Secretary of VA and Congress on VA's administration of disability compensation and other benefits to veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups. The information gathered from our stakeholder interviews with the Advisory Committee and selected VSOs is not generalizable, but is useful for illustrating a range of views on potential racial and ethnic disparities with VA's disability compensation.

¹¹VA recognizes organizations to assist veterans in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of their disability claims.

¹²We selected this time frame to inform our understanding of any disparities we observed in our analysis of VA data from fiscal years 2010 to 2020 and more recent studies.

Background

VA Disability Compensation

Veterans with service-connected disabilities (i.e., injuries or illnesses incurred or aggravated during active duty military service) may receive monthly VA disability compensation payments based on the severity of their disability.¹³ VBA primarily relies on claims processors in its 57 regional offices to determine veterans' eligibility for disability compensation.¹⁴ VA's process for deciding eligibility begins when a veteran submits a claim to VA individually or through third-parties, including state, county, and independent VSOs. This claim can include one or more medical conditions such as posttraumatic stress disorder, hearing loss, or impairment of an arm or leg.

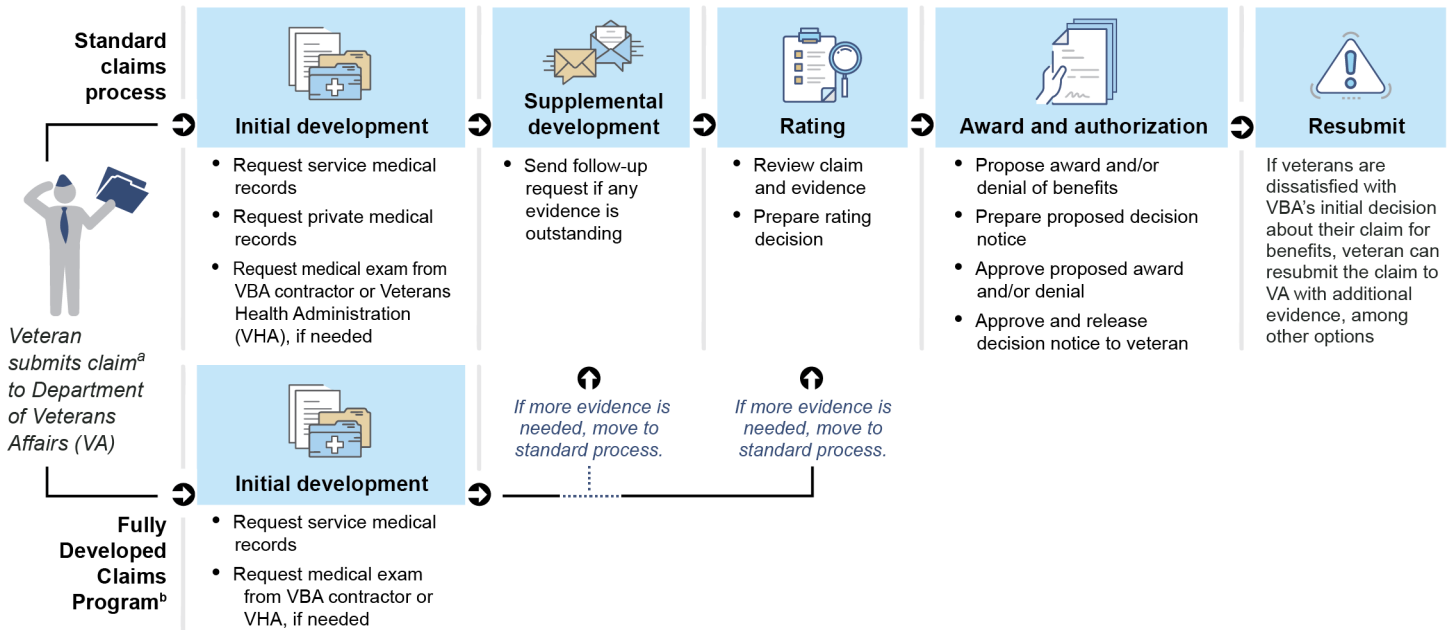
As shown in figure 1, veterans have two options for submitting claims: (1) they can go through VA's standard claims process; or (2) they can go through VA's Fully Developed Claims Program, which allows the veteran to receive a faster decision by bypassing the standard claims process. Veterans choosing to use the Fully Developed Claims Program must submit all necessary information—including all private medical records that are related to the claim and information about any health records that are available at a federal facility—and certify that no additional evidence might be needed to decide the claim.¹⁵ If the claims processor who reviews the veteran's disability claim determines additional non-federal records are needed to process this claim, they will move it to the standard claims process. If necessary to support and substantiate a claim, VA may request that a veteran undergo a medical exam. The exam is conducted by a VBA contract examiner or Veteran Health Administration (VHA) medical examiner.

¹³In this report, we refer to service-connected disabilities as "service-connected conditions" or "conditions."

¹⁴In 2016, VBA implemented the National Work Queue to centralize the distribution of claims to regional offices. Prior to this, a veteran's claim was generally processed by the veteran's local regional office. While veterans may file a claim at their local regional office, a claim can now be processed at a number of offices based on VBA's automated system for distributing claims workload nationally. For quality assurance purposes, VBA counts one of its sub-offices as a separate regional office, in addition to its 56 regional offices. As such, we refer to 57 offices.

¹⁵As part of the Fully Developed Claims Program, VA will request records from the federal facility indicated by the veteran and will schedule a medical exam if it is needed for the disability claim.

Figure 1: Overview of VBA's Standard Claims Process and Fully Developed Claims Program for Initial Claims



Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) procedures. | GAO-23-106097

^aA veteran can submit a claim that includes one or more medical conditions.

^bVA's Fully Developed Claims Program allows the veteran to receive a faster decision by bypassing the standard claims process. Veterans choosing to use this program must submit all necessary information—including all private medical records that are related to the disability claim and information about any health records that are available at a federal facility—and certify that no additional evidence might be needed to decide the claim.

With the standard claims process and Fully Developed Claims Program, the VBA rater (also referred to as the Rating Veterans Service Representative) will review the available evidence to evaluate the claim and determine if the conditions are connected to the veteran's military service. If so, the rater assigns a disability rating of 0 to 100 percent, in increments of 10 percentage points depending on the severity of the disability.¹⁶ The monthly disability compensation payment amount is

¹⁶The VBA rater uses criteria in the Veterans Affairs Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD or rating schedule) to assign disability ratings to veterans. A disability rating of 0 percent means that VA recognizes that the veteran's disability is connected to military service, but the condition is not severe enough to meet VA's requirements for disability payments based on that disability. For veterans with approval for more than one condition, VA calculates a rating (combined disability rating) by using a table that applies a formula for combining multiple ratings into a single rating.

determined by the veteran's disability rating and number of dependents, including a spouse.¹⁷ Veterans who are dissatisfied with VBA's initial claim decision have multiple options for having their decision reviewed. They can (1) submit a supplemental claim to VBA with additional evidence, (2) request a higher-level review in which a more senior employee reviews the claim, or (3) appeal their decision to VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals. The Board of Veterans' Appeals is separate from VBA and consists of veteran law judges who will review the evidence presented and issue a decision.

VA Disability Compensation and Other VA Benefits

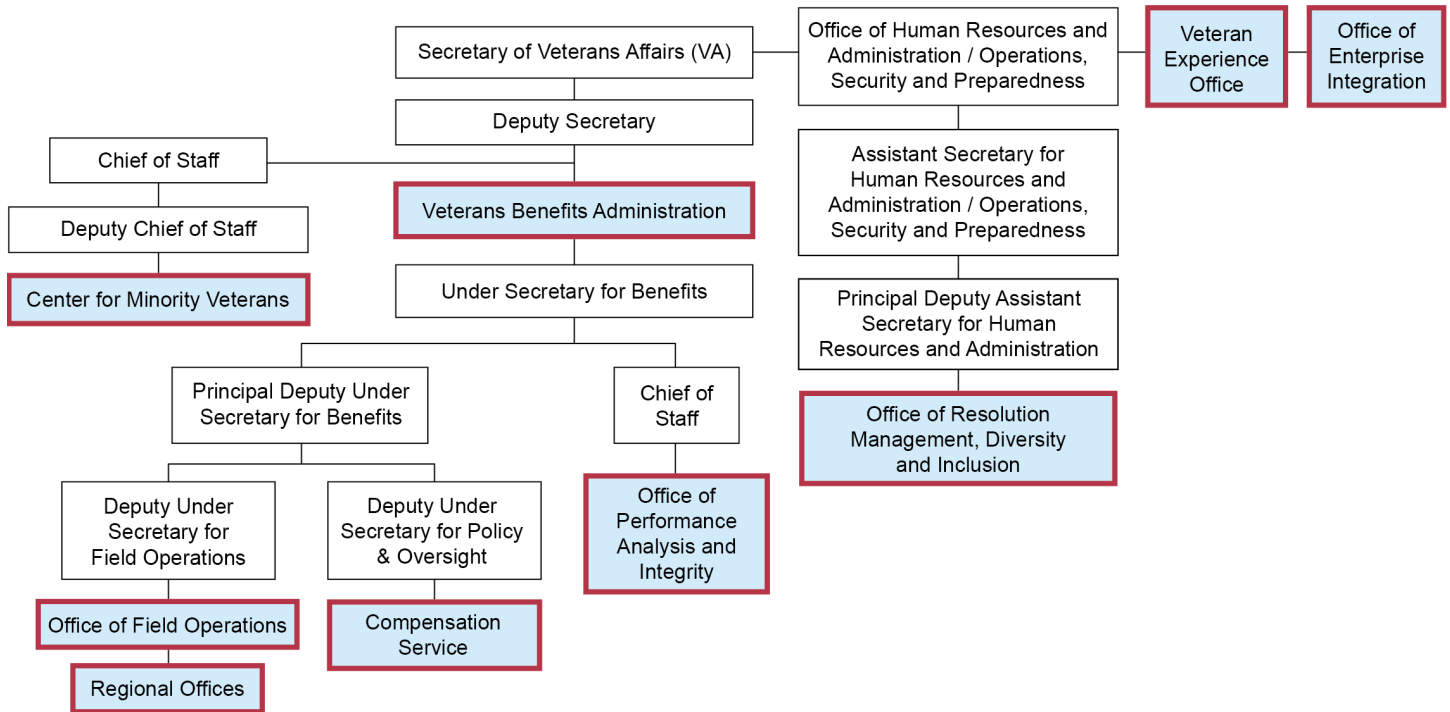
Veterans with a service-connected disability can receive other benefits. For example, veterans with a service-connected disability may receive health care benefits through VHA. These benefits can include free health care services related to the disability and no copay for other health care services depending on the severity of the veteran's assigned disability rating. In addition, veterans may receive traditional hospital services such as surgery, critical care, and mental health care, as well as other services such as home health and elder care. VHA benefits also include medical equipment, prosthetics, and prescriptions. In addition to health care, a veteran with a service-connected disability can receive other VA benefits offered through VBA, such as life insurance and home loans.

VA Offices That Play a Role in Administering Disability Compensation or Assessing Racial and Ethnic Disparities

VBA's Compensation Service is responsible for developing policies and procedures related to disability compensation. VBA's Office of Field Operations is responsible for ensuring equitable access to disability compensation to veterans. In addition, other offices within VA perform key agency-wide functions related to assessing racial and ethnic disparities to ensure veterans have equitable access to benefits and services. Figure 2 presents the organizational structure of VBA and the other key VA offices.

¹⁷See generally 38 U.S.C. Chapter 11. As of December 2022, basic monthly payments were, for example, about \$166 for a veteran with a 10 percent disability rating and no dependents, and about \$3,972 for a veteran with a 100 percent disability rating, a spouse, and one child. A veteran's employment status, earnings, and ability to work generally are not factored into the disability rating and subsequent base payment. The disability compensation payment is based on an average reduction in earning capacity across a group of individuals with similar physical or mental impairments.

Figure 2: Selected VA Offices Involved in Disability Compensation or Assessing Racial and Ethnic Disparities



Shaded offices are involved in disability compensation or assessing racial and ethnic disparities.

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) documentation. | GAO-23-106097

VBA offices that play a role in the provision of disability compensation include:

- VBA's Compensation Service: develops policies and procedures related to the delivery of disability compensation to veterans and ensures the quality and accuracy of claims processing and decisions.
- VBA's Office of Field Operations: provides operational oversight and ensures the equitable access to disability compensation to veterans through the district offices and 57 regional offices within the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.
- VBA's Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity: performs equity assessments, researches questions about the claims process and claims decisions, and maintains the data warehouse that enables the generation of recurring and ad hoc reports related to VBA decision-making.

VA-wide offices that play a role in assessing and ensuring equitable treatment of veterans include:

- VA's Office of Resolution Management, Diversity, and Inclusion: conducts equity assessments that examine the extent to which veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups face systemic barriers in accessing VA benefits and services.¹⁸
- VA's Center for Minority Veterans: advises the Secretary on the adoption and implementation of policies and programs that affect veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups and conducts outreach activities to promote the awareness and use of VA benefits and services.¹⁹
- VA's Office of Enterprise Integration: works to enhance VA's operations, inform decision-making and policy, and integrate internal agency-wide initiatives as well as those with other agencies through efforts such as data analysis.
- VA's Veterans Experience Office: captures and analyzes the voices of veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors and builds and delivers tools and products that translate customer experience data and insights into action.

The Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans (Advisory Committee), which is independent of VA and consists of veterans who represent their respective, historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups, also plays a role in helping veterans receive equitable treatment in the provision of benefits.

The Advisory Committee has reported on issues with VA's collection of race and ethnicity data for about 2 decades and recommended that VA

¹⁸This office also administers VA's Equal Employment Opportunity and Harassment Prevention programs, as well as the External Complaints Program that addresses veterans' civil rights complaints.

¹⁹38 U.S.C. § 317. By statute, the Director of the Center is the principal advisor to the Secretary on the adoption and implementation of policies and programs affecting veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups. The statute describes veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups as "minority" veterans. These minority veterans are defined in statute as Asian American, Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Pacific-Islander American.

make improvements.²⁰ For example, in its 2007 report to Congress, the Advisory Committee raised concerns about an agency-wide lack of race and ethnicity data, which is necessary for VA to identify the existence of differences in the delivery of services and benefits and to discern the nature of them.²¹ Subsequently, in 2008, the Advisory Committee noted that there was a perception among veterans that VA was not providing equal services to veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups.²² However, it noted that VA's ability to address such perceptions was hampered by the unavailability of data about the race and ethnicity of the veteran population being served. In its reports to Congress since then, the Advisory Committee has reiterated the importance of VA collecting data to assess racial and ethnic differences in disability compensation, and recommended that the agency take action to address these long-standing issues.

VA Has Taken Steps to Improve Its Collection of Race and Ethnicity Data, but Has Not Documented Its Plans to Address Limitations

VA has taken steps to improve how it collects race and ethnicity data that VBA and other VA offices can use to understand the composition of veterans who may apply for disability compensation and the outcomes they experienced. In VA's 2022–2028 Strategic Plan and 2022 Equity Action Plan, the agency emphasized the importance of collecting race and ethnicity data so it could become more inclusive of and equitable to veterans. However, VBA officials said that they do not collect race and ethnicity data about veterans as part of the disability claims process. According to VBA officials, they use race and ethnicity data that is collected by the Department of Defense (DOD) or through VA's United

²⁰The Advisory Committee advises the Secretary of VA and Congress on VA's administration of disability compensation and other benefits provided to veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups. In addition to the Advisory Committee's recommendations, GAO has previously recommended that VA assess the completeness and accuracy of its race and ethnicity data in electronic health records and implement corrective actions as necessary to resolve any identified deficiencies. See GAO, *VA Health Care: Opportunities Exist for VA to Better Identify and Address Racial and Ethnic Disparities*, [GAO-20-83](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 11, 2019).

²¹As of September 29, 2018, the Advisory Committee is required to provide biennial reports to the Secretary, who is required to submit the reports to Congress. Prior to this, these reports were provided annually to Congress. See *Annual Report: Report of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans*, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (July 1, 2007). Advisory Committee representatives we interviewed said that issues about VA's race and ethnicity data were raised since at least 2002 but that they did not make any recommendations.

²²*Annual Report: Report of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans*, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (July 1, 2008).

States Veterans Eligibility Trends and Statistics (USVETS) database.²³ These data are generally self-reported by veterans. In addition, VA may include non-VA sources to supplement veterans' race and ethnicity data, such as data the VA Office of Data Governance and Analytics purchases from commercial sources.²⁴

VA's 2022 Equity Action Plan has a goal to develop an agency data equity strategy to address long-standing issues with certain demographic data. As part of this effort, VA sought to assess barriers to accessing VA's services and benefits, including disability compensation. According to a VA official, this assessment found that veterans from certain racial groups, including American Indian/Alaska Native veterans and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander veterans, may not be applying for VA benefits and services. The official noted that there are limited available race data on veterans from these racial groups who are not currently using VA's benefits and services. For example, this official commented that some veterans from these racial groups may live in U.S. territories and other remote areas, which may limit VA's data and access to them. According to VA's Equity Action Plan, complete and consistent collection of demographic data would allow VA to make equitable, evidence-based policy decisions. In addition, the complete and consistent collection of these data could help inform VA's program planning, policy development, and service delivery to veterans, particularly veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups.

VA has implemented four key agency-wide efforts that could address limitations to collecting the underlying demographic data available to all of VA, including VBA, to assess any potential racial and ethnic disparities in disability compensation.²⁵ Figure 3 summarizes key VA efforts led by four groups: VA's Data Governance Council, the Office of Enterprise Integration, the VA-DOD Joint Data and Analytics Executive Committee, and the Center for Minority Veterans. VA officials said that these efforts are intended to help VA collect data to better understand any existing

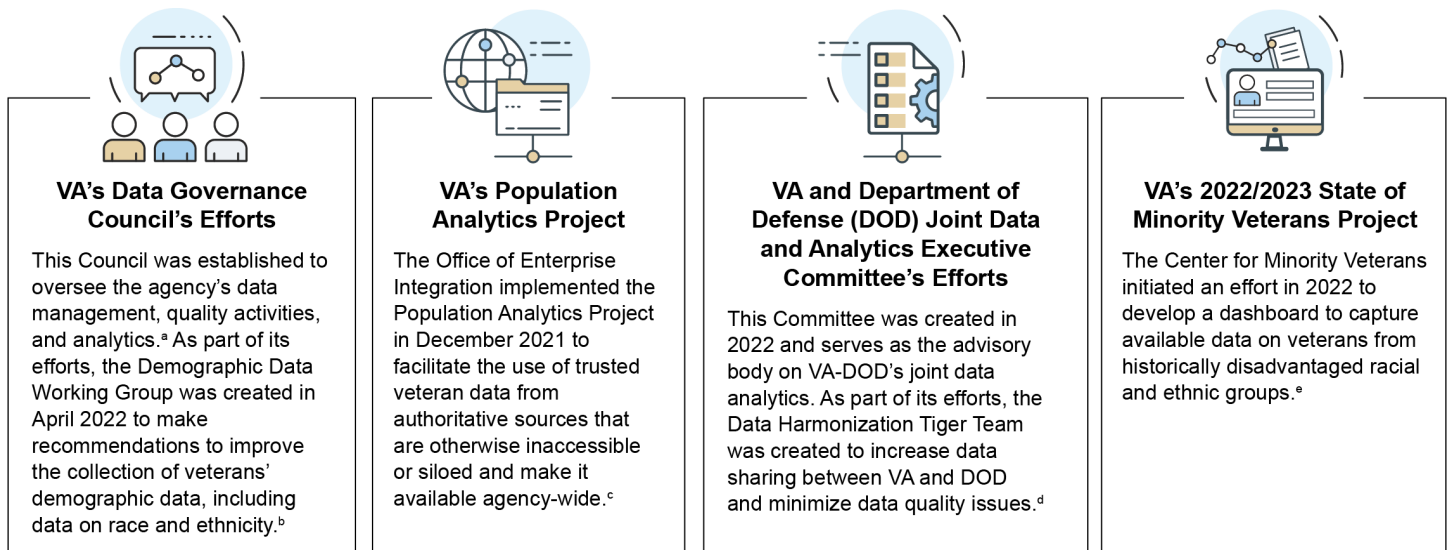
²³The USVETS database contains information on all U.S. veterans with regard to military history, demographics, socioeconomics, and utilization of VA benefits and services.

²⁴According to VA officials, data from non-VA sources is used to supplement VA's race and ethnicity data for statistical purposes and does not inform operational activities or eligibility determinations.

²⁵VA has other agency-wide efforts underway to look at equity of services and employment more broadly.

barriers veterans face in gaining access to services, as well as the experiences of veterans who do access these services.

Figure 3: Department of Veterans Affairs' Efforts to Improve Its Collection of Racial and Ethnic Data



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) documentation and interviews with officials. | GAO-23-106097

^aAccording to VA officials, the Data Governance Council is a governing body of agency leaders who approve and prioritize data-related efforts to ensure alignment with agency priority goals. It does not lead any projects or sponsor data collection efforts.

^bVA officials said the Demographic Data Working Group is under the Data Governance Council's Data Stewardship Sub-council, one of five sub-councils that supports the agency's data-related efforts. VA's Office of Enterprise Integration also helps to support and inform the development of recommendations for improving race and ethnicity data.

^cOfficials from VA's Office of Enterprise Integration said it implemented this initiative through the Data Governance Council.

^dThe Data Harmonization Tiger Team includes a sub-team that performs and reviews data analysis and develops recommendations for needed technology or policy changes.

^eThe Center for Minority Veterans is working with multiple VA offices to develop a dashboard (also referred to as a data instrument panel) to improve the collection of race data. As part of its efforts, the Center seeks to standardize the forms used by VA to collect this data, as well as data on sex, by 2024.

Although VA has undertaken such efforts, these efforts are new and it is unclear how they will address the data limitations VA has identified. VA has acknowledged that the data limitations for certain racial groups continues to hinder the agency's ability to identify barriers that prevent veterans from accessing services. For example, while VA's Data Governance Council's efforts aim to improve the collection of demographic data on race and ethnicity, VA officials said they still lack complete and consistent data on certain racial and ethnic groups not

enrolled in VA services. Also, VA's State of the Minority Veteran Project aims to present data currently available on veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups, but it does not address the underlying data collection issues. VA officials stated that looking into potential data issues for certain groups is important, particularly to help ensure that all veterans have access to VA benefits and services. VA officials said they plan to have conversations to identify ways to improve the agency's data for certain racial groups. However, they have not identified concrete actions and a time frame to do so as they are working on other broader data quality efforts.

The data equity strategy component of VA's Equity Action Plan states the importance of addressing long-standing issues with certain demographic data and providing this data on all veterans regardless of whether they use VA services. This data will allow VA to address gaps in demographic information and measure the quality and effectiveness of benefits and services to veterans. Developing a documented plan could help the agency clearly define detailed actions, time frames, and procedures for achieving this goal and addressing limitations to collecting data for the broader population of veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups. VA's Equity Action Plan does not include clearly defined and detailed information for these specific components. Without identifying and documenting concrete actions, VA will not be well-positioned to achieve its goals and will not have the data it needs to ensure the equitable treatment of veterans.

VA Approved Initial Disability Claims at Lower Rates for Black than White Veterans, but Has Not Comprehensively Studied Racial and Ethnic Disparities

Black Veterans Had Lower Approval Rates than White Veterans

Approval Rates for Initial Claims

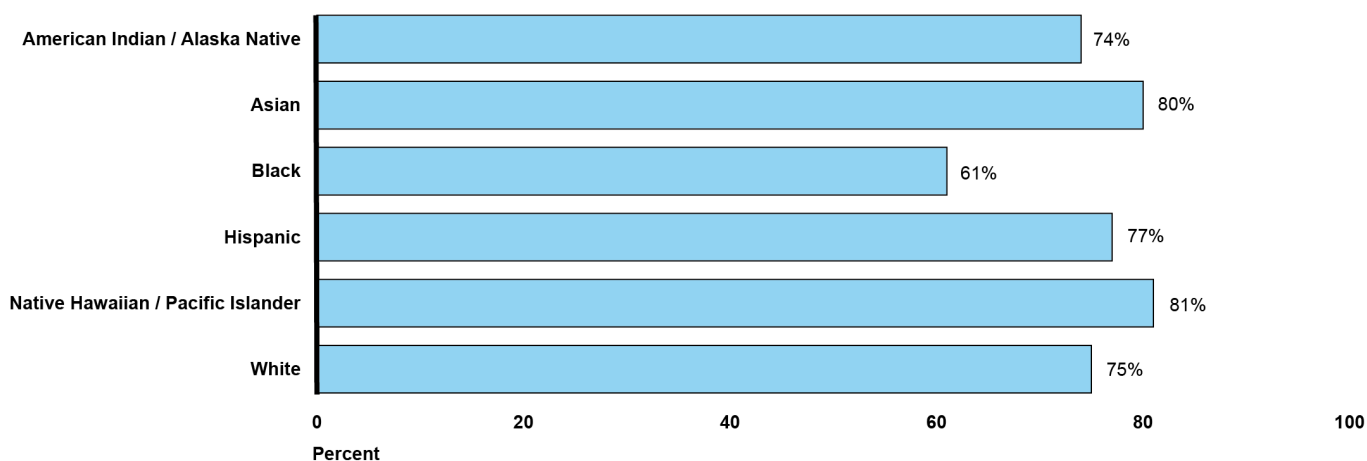
From fiscal years 2010 through 2020, VA approved a lower rate of initial disability compensation claims for Black veterans compared to claims from White veterans.²⁶ Specifically, VA approved 61 percent of claims from Black veterans compared to 75 percent of claims from White veterans—a gap of 14 percentage points (see fig. 4).²⁷ For our descriptive analysis, we use the term “gap” to describe differences in approval rates that were at least 4 percentage points lower when comparing the rates of veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups to White veterans. We defined the approval rate as “similar” if the rate was within +/- 3 percentage points of the White veteran approval rate.

²⁶We compared the outcomes for historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups to those of White veterans—the largest group of veterans who received VA disability decisions on initial claims from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. We also examined outcomes for race and ethnicity based on VA’s sex categories for veterans (male and female) to further explore any differences in the data. Differences in disability compensation claims approval rates do not necessarily mean that VA made incorrect decisions and many factors can affect outcomes. According to a VA official, VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition. For example, if a veteran submitted a claim for 10 medical conditions, VA would consider the claim as approved if one or more of the 10 conditions were approved.

²⁷VA decided initial disability compensation claims for over 486,000 Black veterans (about 390,000 male and 96,000 female), from fiscal years 2010 through 2020, as compared to almost 2 million disability claims for White veterans (1.8 million male and almost 163,000 female). Of the veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups, VA decided the largest number of initial disability compensation claims for Black veterans.

There were differences when separating these approval rates further for Black veterans by sex: VA approved 67 percent of claims for Black female veterans, compared to 60 percent for Black male veterans. See appendix II, tables 5 through 8, for data on the population of veterans who received decisions on initial disability compensation claims included in the analysis by race, ethnicity, and sex.

Figure 4: VA Disability Compensation Approval Rates for Veterans’ Initial Claims by Race and Ethnicity, Fiscal Years 2010–2020



Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. According to a VA official, VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. We categorized the veterans into six mutually exclusive categories. These are Hispanic and five Non-Hispanic racial groups: American Indian or Alaska Native (American Indian/Alaska Native), Asian (Asian), Black or African American (Black), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), and White (White). We categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race.

Additionally, the data shown do not reflect veterans categorized by VA as: (1) “multiple race/unknown race”—veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown,” and (2) “other”—veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups. These veterans comprised over 1 percent of our total veteran population and VA data did not include additional information on a specific racial or ethnic category.

Our analysis found VA generally approved initial disability claims at similar or higher rates for American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Hispanic, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander veterans as compared to White

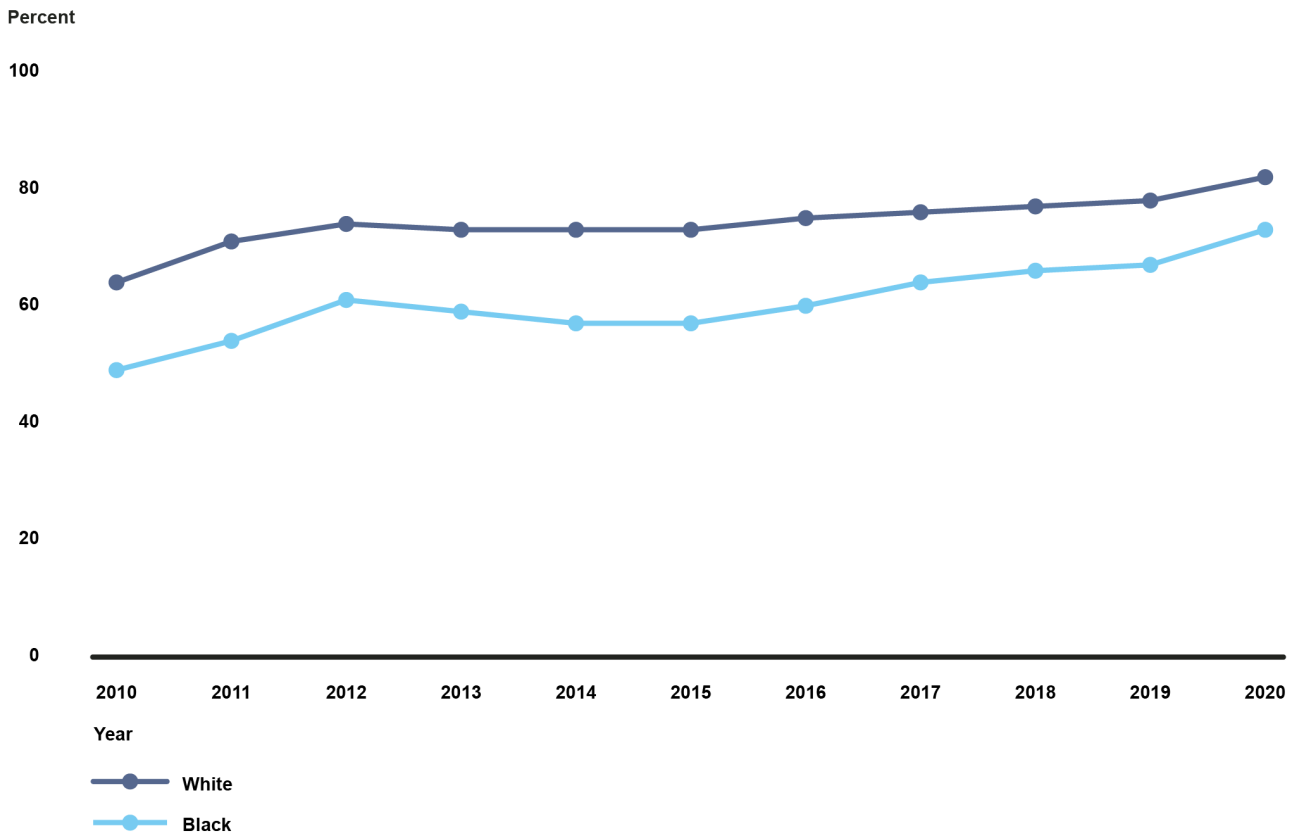
veterans.²⁸ For example, VA approved Asian veterans at higher rates compared to White veterans—at 80 percent and 75 percent, respectively. Further, VA also approved 74 percent of claims for Native American/Alaska Native veterans—a similar rate to White veterans.²⁹

The gap in VA approval rates for initial claims between Black and White veterans persisted each year from fiscal years 2010 through 2020, although the gap narrowed during this period (see fig. 5). Specifically, the gap between White veterans and Black veterans narrowed from 16 percentage points in fiscal year 2011 to 9 percentage points in fiscal year 2020. The VA approval rates for American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Hispanic, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander veterans were, generally, similar to or higher than the rates for White veterans each year. See appendix II, table 6.

²⁸As previously discussed, VA assessed the barriers the broader veteran population faced in accessing VA's services and benefits as part of its 2022 Equity Action Plan and identified potential data-related issues for certain racial groups. These racial groups included American Indian/Alaska Native veterans and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander veterans. For the subset of veterans who filed an initial claim and for the time period of our data analysis, we did not identify any data reliability issues with these groups that affected our data analysis. We generally found these data reliable for our purposes. See app. I for additional detail regarding our data analysis.

²⁹VA decided initial disability compensation claims for over 90,000 Asian veterans and over 29,000 American Indian/Alaska Native veterans from fiscal years 2010 through 2020.

Figure 5: VA Disability Compensation Approval Rates for Initial Claims for Black Veterans and White Veterans, Fiscal Years 2010–2020



Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. According to a VA official, VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. The data show approval rates for Non-Hispanic White veterans (White) and Non-Hispanic Black or African American veterans (Black).

Approvals for Initial Claims with Fewer Than Eight Conditions or Eight or More Conditions

Our analyses of initial disability claim approval rates from fiscal year 2010 through 2020 found that the size of the gaps varied between Black and White veterans, depending on whether the claims included fewer than eight conditions or eight or more conditions.³⁰ Specifically, we found that VA approved 46 percent of the initial claims with fewer than eight

³⁰Differences in disability compensation claims approval rates based on number of conditions do not necessarily mean that VA made incorrect decisions, and many factors can affect outcomes.

conditions submitted by Black veterans compared to 67 percent of those submitted by White veterans—a gap of 21 percentage points. For initial claims with eight or more conditions, VA approved 83 percent of claims submitted by Black veterans compared to 91 percent of White veterans—a gap of 8 percentage points.

Our analysis also found that VA approved American Indian/Alaska Native veterans at a lower rate compared to White veterans for initial claims with fewer than eight conditions—with approval rates of 63 percent and 67 percent respectively. VA approval rates for American Indian/Alaska Native veterans were similar to White veterans for initial claims of eight or more conditions. VA approved initial claims at similar or higher rates for Asian, Hispanic, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander veterans as compared to White veterans regardless of the number of conditions included in the claim. See appendix II, tables 7 and 8 on the population of veterans who received decisions on initial disability compensation claims with fewer than eight conditions and eight or more conditions included in the analysis by race, ethnicity, and sex.

Approval Rates with Additional Claims

To determine if differences remained for veterans who submitted additional claims after initially being denied, we analyzed claims outcomes for these veterans. We found that the gap in claims approval rates for Black veterans as compared to White veterans narrowed, but did not close (see table 1).³¹ For example, with the additional claims, the gap in approval rates narrowed from 14 percentage points to 9 percentage points when comparing Black veterans to White veterans. For American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Hispanic, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander veterans, the approval rates either remained similar to or were above the approval rate for White veterans.

³¹For our examination of additional claims, we identified the veterans whose initial disability compensation claims had been denied and also submitted additional claims. These claims included new conditions or the same previously denied conditions with new supporting evidence. We added the veterans whose additional claims were approved to those whose initial claims were approved to determine the revised approval rate. See app. I for more information on our methodology.

Table 1: VA Disability Compensation Approval Rates for Veterans with Initial Claims and Additional Claims, by Race and Ethnicity, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

	Initial Claims		With Additional Claims	
	Approved (%)	Difference Compared to White Veterans (Percentage Points)	Approved (%)	Difference Compared to White Veterans (Percentage Points)
American Indian/Alaska Native	74	-1	80	0
Asian	80	5	86	6
Black	61	-14	71	-9
Hispanic	77	2	84	4
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	81	6	87	7
White	75	N/A	80	N/A

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. According to a VA official, VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. For our examination of additional claims, we identified veterans whose initial claims were denied and who then submitted additional claims for new conditions or the same previously denied conditions with new supporting evidence. We added the veterans whose additional claims were approved to those whose initial claims were approved to determine the revised approval rate. We categorized the veterans into six mutually exclusive categories. These are Hispanic and five Non-Hispanic racial groups: American Indian or Alaska Native (American Indian/Alaska Native), Asian (Asian), Black or African American (Black), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), and White (White). We categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race.

Additionally, the data shown does not reflect veterans categorized by VA as: (1) “multiple race/unknown race”—veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown,” and (2) “other”—veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups. These veterans comprised over 1 percent of our total veteran population and VA data did not include additional information on a specific racial or ethnic category.

Combined Disability Ratings for Approved Initial Claims

We conducted analyses of combined disability ratings for veterans whose initial claims had been approved and generally did not identify gaps for veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups as compared to White veterans.³² We found that White veterans had

³²When VA approves multiple conditions as part of a claim, VA calculates a rating (combined disability rating) using a formula for combining multiple ratings into a single rating. To compare combined disability ratings among racial and ethnic groups, we calculated the proportion of each group that received each percentage rating from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. We then examined the proportion of veterans in each group who received the highest ratings levels to identify any disparities since veterans receive higher payments at higher disability percentages. For example, in 2023, a single veteran would receive a monthly payment of about \$3,622 with a combined rating of 100 percent, but would receive a monthly payment of about \$166 with a combined rating of 10 percent.

proportionally fewer ratings at the 90 and 100 percent levels and had proportionally more ratings at the 10 percent level when compared to veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups.³³ See appendix II, tables 10 through 12, for data on the combined ratings received by veterans for initial claims.

Approvals for Fully Developed Claims Decisions

Our analysis of claims decided by VA from fiscal years 2015 through 2020 found that gaps in approval rates between Black veterans and White veterans differed depending on whether the Black veteran submitted the application for the initial claim through the Fully Developed Claims Program or through the standard process.³⁴ For example, we found that VA approved 57 percent of fully developed claims submitted by Black veterans compared to 73 percent of White veterans—a gap of 16 percentage points. By contrast, VA approved 84 percent of claims submitted by Black veterans through the standard claims process as compared to 90 percent of White veterans—a gap of 6 percentage points. Our analysis also found that the approval rates for American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Hispanic, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander veterans were similar or above that of White veterans regardless of whether the claims were submitted through the Fully Developed Claims Program or through the standard claims process (see table 2). For more details, see appendix II, table 22.

³³We also conducted analyses of individual disability ratings for veterans whose medical conditions had been approved as part of their initial claims. VA assigns an individual disability rating to each approved condition in a claim. We generally did not identify disparities when comparing individual ratings for veterans in any of the historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups to White veterans. We analyzed the top 10 conditions that VA most frequently decided as part of its initial claims decisions from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. We also identified which conditions included disability evaluations based on pain. We did not identify any rating disparities regarding race and ethnicity for these conditions. See app. I for a description of the conditions that included evaluations based on pain and how we identified those conditions. Also, see app. II, tables 13 through 21 for data on individual ratings received by veterans as part of initial claims.

³⁴According to VA officials, fiscal years 2015 through 2020 included the most complete data to analyze fully developed claims.

Table 2: VA Disability Compensation Approval Rates for Fully Developed Claims Program and Standard Claims Process by Race and Ethnicity, Fiscal Years 2015–2020

	Fully Developed Claims Approval Rate (%)	Fully Developed Claims Moved to Standard Claims Approval Rate (%)	Standard Claims Approval Rate (%)
American Indian/Alaska Native	71	66	91
Asian	76	70	93
Black	57	53	84
Hispanic	74	69	92
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	75	73	93
White	73	69	90

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. According to a VA official, VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. Veterans choosing to use the Fully Developed Claims Program must submit all necessary information and certify that no additional evidence might be needed to decide the claim. If the claims processor who reviews the veteran’s disability claim determines additional non-federal records are needed to process this claim, they will move the claim to the standard claims process for a decision. Veterans can also choose to submit claims through the standard process.

We categorized the veterans into six mutually exclusive categories. These are Hispanic and five Non-Hispanic racial groups: American Indian or Alaska Native (American Indian/Alaska Native), Asian (Asian), Black or African American (Black), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), and White (White). We categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race.

Additionally, the data shown does not reflect veterans categorized by VA as: (1) “multiple race/unknown race”—veterans reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown,” and (2) “other”—veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups. These veterans comprised above 1 percent of our total veteran population and VA data did not include additional information on a specific racial or ethnic category.

Our analysis of differences in approval rates for veterans applying through the Fully Developed Claims Program, as compared to the standard claims process, further found that gaps between Black and White veterans depended on whether the claims included fewer than eight conditions or eight or more conditions. Specifically, when we analyzed disability compensation claims with fewer than eight conditions, we found that gaps in approval rates remained regardless of whether Black veterans submitted claims through the Fully Developed Claims Program or through the standard claims process. For example, we found that VA approved 48 percent of the fully developed claims with fewer than eight conditions submitted by Black veterans compared to 69 percent for

White veterans—a gap of 21 percentage points. Similarly, VA approved 58 percent of claims with fewer than eight conditions submitted by Black veterans through the standard claims process compared to 76 percent for White veterans—a gap of 18 percentage points.

In contrast, when we analyzed claims with eight or more conditions, we found a 10 percentage point gap for Black veterans as compared to White veterans who applied through the Fully Developed Claims Program. However, the approval rates were similar when both Black and White veterans applied through the standard process and not the Fully Developed Claims Program. Our analysis also found that, in general, the approval rates for Asian and Hispanic veterans were similar to White veterans regardless of the number of conditions in the claims and whether the claims were submitted through the Fully Developed Claims Program or through the standard claims process.³⁵ For more details, see appendix II, tables 23 and 24.

VA Approved Disability Compensation for Selected Medical Conditions at Lower Rates for Black Male Veterans than for White Male Veterans

At the selected medical condition level, we found lower approval rates for Black male veterans compared to White male veterans from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. Specifically, we found gaps in approval rates for Black male veterans for nine of the top 10 medical conditions most frequently decided by VA as part of initial claims we examined during this time period (see table 3).³⁶ Of these, the largest gaps in approval rates were for disability compensation due to hearing loss or due to posttraumatic stress disorder, 22 and 13 percent respectively. See appendix II, tables 25 through 44, for data on the population of veterans

³⁵Our analysis found gaps when comparing the approval rates for American Indian/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander veterans with White veterans for claims submitted through the Fully Developed Claims Program with fewer than eight conditions. For example, VA approved 65 percent of fully developed claims for American Indian/ Alaska Native veterans as compared to 69 percent for White veterans, but there were no gaps for claims submitted through the standard claims process. Our analysis did not find any gaps for veterans from either racial group as compared to White veterans for claims with eight or more conditions submitted through the Fully Developed Claims Program or through the standard claims process.

³⁶Our analysis of the 10 conditions did not find similar gaps in approval rates for all Black veterans or other racial and ethnic groups, but rather for Black male veterans. As such, we compared Black male veterans to White male veterans, the largest group in our data. See app. II, Tables 25 through 44, for data on the VA approval rates for veterans from these groups for each of the conditions.

who received decisions on these 10 conditions from fiscal years 2010 through 2020 by race, ethnicity, and sex.³⁷

Table 3: VA Disability Compensation Approval Rates for White and Black Male Veterans for Selected Medical Conditions, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

Medical Condition, including VA Diagnostic Code	White Male Veterans Approval Rate (%)	Black Male Veterans Approval Rate (%)	Difference in Rates (Percentage Points)
Hearing Loss (6100)	45	23	22
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (9411)	56	43	13
Migraine (8100)	69	57	12
Lumbosacral or Cervical Strain (5237)	54	44	10
Paralysis of the Sciatic Nerve (8520)	57	50	7
Limitation of Motion of the Arm (5201)	60	53	7
Tinnitus (6260)	76	70	6
Limitation of Flexion of the Knee (5260)	65	59	6
Limited Motion of the Ankle (5271)	61	55	6
Scars General (7805)	91	88	3

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval percentages for service connection of the 10 conditions we analyzed based on those with the greatest number of disability compensation decisions as part of initial claims from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. The data show approval rates for Non-Hispanic White male veterans (White) and Non-Hispanic Black or African American male veterans (Black).

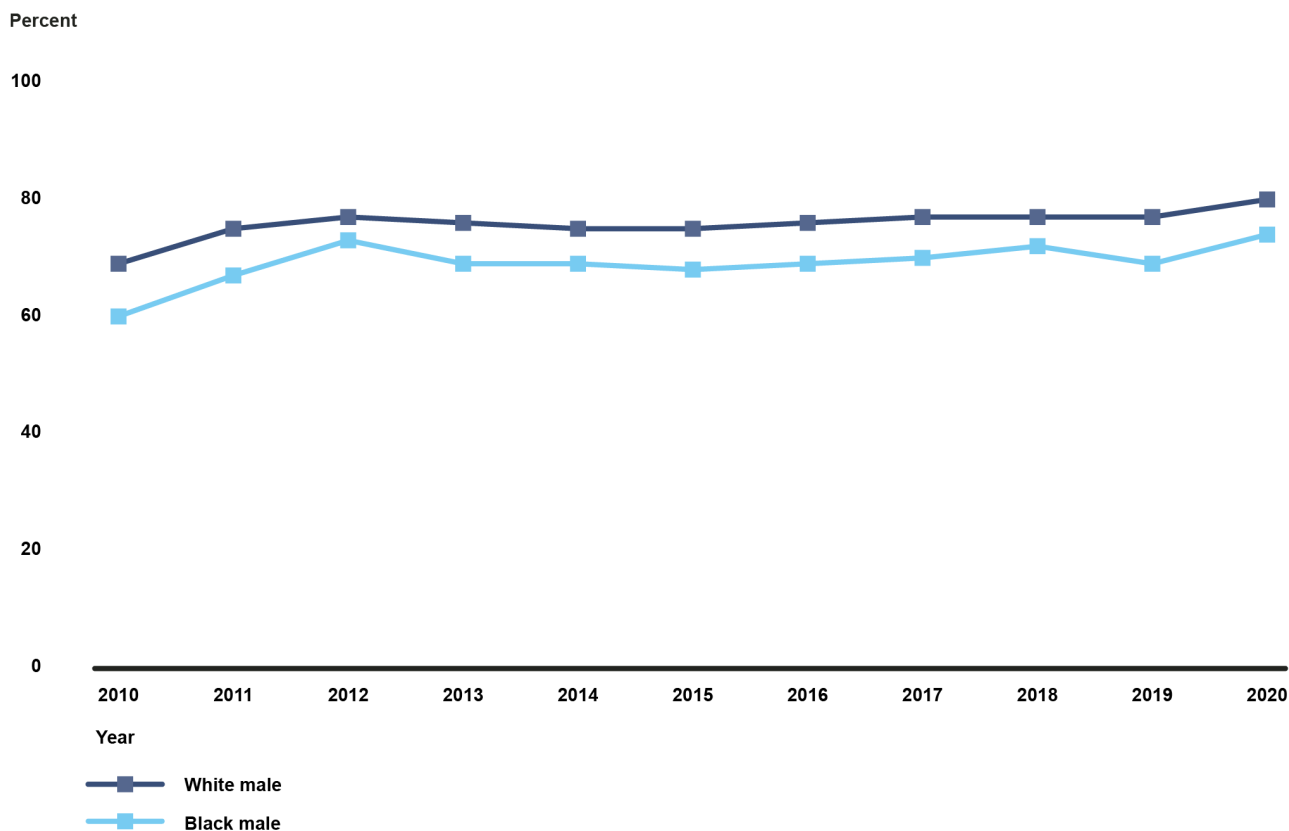
VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. Conditions are listed in order of difference from highest to lowest. We also listed diagnostic code numbers, which are established in regulation and used by VA to identify the disability being evaluated.

For nine of the 10 conditions in table 3, gaps in approval rates between the Black male veterans and White male veterans remained each year from fiscal years 2010 through 2020, although, in general, the gaps did

³⁷VA approved some of the selected conditions with a difference of at least four percentage points lower—as compared to White male veterans—with veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups other than Black male veterans. For example, VA approved disability compensation due to paralysis of the sciatic nerve for Black female veterans at lower rates than White male veterans—approved at 50 percent compared to 57 percent respectively.

narrow for seven of these conditions.³⁸ For example, our analysis of approval rates for tinnitus, the condition with the most VA compensation decisions over the years analyzed, found that the gap between White male veterans and Black male veterans narrowed from 9 percentage points in fiscal year 2010 to 6 percentage points in fiscal year 2020 (see fig. 6). See appendix II, tables 26 through 44, for data on these conditions each year by race, ethnicity, and sex.

Figure 6: VA Disability Compensation Approval Rates for Tinnitus Each Year, by Black and White Male Veterans, Fiscal Years 2010–2020



Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval rates for service connection for Tinnitus (diagnostic code 6260) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an

³⁸The gap in approval rates did not narrow for Limitation of Motion of the Arm (5201) and Limitation of Motion of the Ankle (5271). The approval rates for Scars, General (7805) remained similar between Black male veterans and White male veterans in all but 4 of the 10 years we analyzed.

illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. The data show approval rates for Non-Hispanic White male veterans (White) and Non-Hispanic Black or African American male veterans (Black).

Similar to our analysis of the VA approval rates for claims, we generally found that VA approved individual conditions for American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Hispanic, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander veterans at similar or higher rates, regardless of the veterans’ sex, as compared to White veterans. For example, our analysis of VA approvals for tinnitus found that Asian veterans were approved at a higher rate (82 percent)—compared to White veterans (76 percent). In another example, American Indian/Alaska Native veterans were approved for tinnitus at the same rate as White veterans.

Selected Stakeholders Identified Potential Factors Influencing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Disability Compensation

Representatives from VA’s Advisory Committee and selected VSOs we interviewed offered their viewpoints about the factors that could contribute to any disparate outcomes in disability compensation.³⁹ These factors included the following:

Lack of awareness about or reluctance to get help. Representatives from all seven VSOs and the Advisory Committee we interviewed said that veterans are generally more successful in getting their initial claims processed by VA when they receive assistance from a recognized VSO. However, some representatives also said that veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups may not be aware that VSOs can help them complete and submit their claim.

³⁹In this report, we generally refer to “disparities,” as VA has used it, to describe instances where there may be inequalities faced by veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups. Also, the information presented is not intended to represent an exhaustive list of factors. Additionally, as part of our review, we did not assess the potential factors stakeholders identified that could contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in disability compensation. We also did not look at barriers to entry to applying for disability compensation.

Experiences with Some Veterans Service Organizations

"I've tried to encourage friends [representing veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups] to participate [in meetings with veterans service organizations] but they have not felt comfortable."

"Some Black veterans may find that [larger nationally recognized veterans service] organizations do not take their issues seriously, or feel that they are being talked out of trying to file a claim. [For example] I had a friend who sought a psychiatric evaluation through one of these organizations, only to be told that his posttraumatic stress disorder stemmed from growing up [in an urban area], not from his service in Iraq and Afghanistan."

Source: Statements from stakeholder interviews. | GAO-23-106097

Medical Documentation

"Veterans [from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups] can have issues documenting what happened to them while they were in the service and accessing what records do exist. Medical records were not always electronic."

"[I] wish someone would have told me to keep my medical records updated. No one tells veterans [particularly veterans from historically racial and ethnic groups] the importance of keeping your medical records updated and the implications [for benefits and services]."

Source: Statements from stakeholder interviews. | GAO-23-106097

Also, representatives from three VSOs and the Advisory Committee said that some veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups might not feel comfortable seeking assistance from VSOs that have limited racial and ethnic representation among their membership and representatives who assist veterans with their claims. Additionally, other VSO representatives we interviewed noted that veterans on reservations or in remote locations may not be able to access a VSO if the veterans live far from the VSO's location. Also, these veterans may face challenges getting to a VA facility to have a medical exam conducted as part of the disability compensation process, according to representatives from two VSOs. Further, a representative from one VSO stated that having VSO representatives who can both speak the same language as the veteran and who can explain the disability claims process is critical.

Missing records or incomplete medical documentation.

Representatives from six VSOs and the Advisory Committee we interviewed stated that veterans, including those from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups, may not have the service or medical records they need to submit as part of a disability claim. For example, representatives from two VSOs and of the Advisory Committee stated that older service and medical records may be missing for veterans who served in earlier periods. Also, representatives noted that doctors do not always include critical medical information in veterans' records. Further, because the Fully Developed Claims Program requires veterans to submit all paperwork upfront, this might pose a challenge for veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups who might not have this information.⁴⁰ For example, a representative from the Advisory Committee noted that this program places all the responsibility on the veteran and that some veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups may lack the resources to submit the required documents.

⁴⁰As previously noted, VA's Fully Developed Claims Program allows veterans to receive a faster decision by bypassing the standard claims process. Veterans applying through this option must submit all necessary information and certify that no additional evidence might be needed to decide the claim. If the claims processor who reviews the veteran's disability claim determines additional non-federal records are needed to process this claim, they will move the claim to the standard claims process for a decision.

Potential Bias in Medical Exams

"[Medical examiners] have a hard time realizing that we're [veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups] in real pain and deserve the same quality of treatment as everyone else."

"The medical community historically has disregarded African Americans' reports of pain – or has viewed African Americans complaining of pain as drug-seeking. As such, African Americans often do not receive the compensation they deserve because their complaints aren't taken seriously and noted in their medical records."

Source: Statements from stakeholder interviews. | GAO-23-106097

Veterans' Claims Application

"Disability examiners looking at a veteran's claim without any identifiers would still see the claimant's name and could make assumptions from that."

"If the veteran identifies [certain locations] as their address [on their claim application], one may conclude that they are Native American and live on a reservation."

Source: Statements from stakeholder interviews. | GAO-23-106097

Military Treatment

"Dishonorable discharges happened a lot in the military [for veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups] and can have lifelong impact."

"Servicemembers from [historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups] are disciplined more."

Source: Statements from stakeholder interviews. | GAO-23-106097

Potential for bias. Representatives from three VSOs and the Advisory Committee we interviewed stated that any time human judgement is involved, there is the potential for bias. In particular, representatives from these VSOs said that the medical examination VA requires a veteran to undergo as part of the disability claims process is an area in which potential bias could be a factor. Also, existing literature documents disparities in medical conditions among veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups. For example, research has shown that prevalence and severity rates of posttraumatic stress disorder are higher for Black and Hispanic veterans compared with White veterans, and some studies suggest Black veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder experience poorer clinical outcomes compared to White veterans.

While veterans' racial and ethnicity information is not part of the disability compensation application process, representatives from three VSOs and the Advisory Committee stated that a claims processor could infer a veteran's race and ethnicity based on the claimant's name or address. They noted that racial data also could be included in a veteran's medical records that are submitted with a claim.

Military Discharge status and different treatment. Representatives from six VSOs and the Advisory Committee said that some veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups experienced discrimination or segregation while in the military, or received disparate disciplinary treatment. In particular, one study we reviewed noted some racial and ethnic disparities in the rate of veterans who experience military justice or face disciplinary action such as a less-than-honorable discharge from the military.⁴¹ In addition, a fiscal year 2022 report by the Army to Congress on racial disparities noted that Black soldiers are overrepresented among recipients of administrative separations in lieu of court-martial and for misconduct, among other key findings.⁴² In general,

⁴¹COL (Ret). Christensen, Don, and Tsilker, Yelena, *Racial Disparities in Military Justice: Findings of Substantial and Persistent Racial Disparities within the United States Military Justice System* (May 2017).

⁴²Department of the Army, *Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, Section 549F Department of the Army's Report to Congress on Racial Disparities in Military Justice and Discipline Processes and Military Personnel Policies* (Feb., 23, 2023).

to receive disability compensation, the veteran's character of discharge or service must be under other than dishonorable conditions (e.g., honorable, under honorable conditions, general).

VA Has Taken Some Action to Assess Disparities, but Has Not Comprehensively Studied the Factors That Could Contribute to Them

VA officials acknowledged some of the contributing factors that stakeholders identified and discussed VA's actions to help address some of them. For example, VBA officials said that they have begun developing equity dashboards to provide information on veterans' outcomes and access across VBA benefits and services by race, ethnicity, and sex. VBA officials said this effort will undergo a phased deployment in fiscal year 2023. Officials said the first phase, which includes developing an initial proposal of equity measures and performing a feasibility assessment, was completed in April 2023 and is currently under leadership review for concurrence and approval. According to an official, this initial dashboard for disability compensation included measures for application rates, approval rates, and average benefits by age, race, gender, geography, and period of service. VBA is also considering whether it will add veterans' use of third parties, an indicator of equitable access identified by the Office of Resolution Management, Diversity & Inclusion, to its dashboard.

VA's Disability Compensation Process

"I went through the process and [a veterans service organization] helped me with [filing my claim]. It's reassuring to know they are careful with the record."

"My brother is trying to file a claim but has said never mind, they are not going to help me."

Source: Journey Map, Pacific Region Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Veteran Experience, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Veteran Experience Office. | GAO-23-106097

Other VA offices have also performed assessments to better understand the broad experiences of veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups. For example, in 2021 and 2022, the Veterans Experience Office performed two separate assessments (also referred to as journey maps) examining the experiences of Native American and Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander veterans with VA services and programs. While these two assessments did not focus specifically on disability compensation, they may contain useful information about these groups' experiences with the disability compensation process. According to the Veterans Experience Office officials, they provide their research results to all relevant VA offices; however, it is up to each individual office to review and implement any suggestions or recommendations.⁴³ VBA officials said that they considered the feedback from the assessments and have taken steps to engage veterans.⁴⁴ For example, VBA and VA's Office of Tribal Government Relations have partnered to conduct tribal claims clinics,

⁴³Veteran Experience Office officials said that they do not track or follow up on whether any individual offices do so.

⁴⁴We did not assess VBA's actions to incorporate recommendations from VA's Veterans Experience Office.

which provide information to tribal communities on how to access benefits.

VBA has conducted several studies to assess disparities in disability compensation. Examples of VA's efforts include:

- In 2009, VBA contracted for research to examine the primary factors that contributed to differences in disability compensation awards. However, the study's focus was limited to three factors that could affect disability compensation: number of service-connected conditions, degree of disability per condition, and individual unemployability.⁴⁵ The study found that veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups, on average, apply for more medical conditions and that their conditions, on average, are in the more disabling categories, among other key results.⁴⁶
- From 2017 to 2018, VBA contracted for research to study racial disparities in posttraumatic stress disorder approval rates for Black veterans. In particular, VBA reported that this research found that approval rates for posttraumatic stress disorder were lower for Black veterans as compared to other veterans, but it did not identify the root causes of the differences in these approval rates.⁴⁷
- In fiscal year 2022, VBA officials said that they contracted for research to examine disparities among veterans filing their first mental health claim between October 1, 2016 and June 30, 2020 by race, ethnicity, and sex. In late 2022, VBA officials said that the preliminary results of this study found that Black veterans were 10 percent less likely than White veterans to be approved disability compensation for mental health conditions. VBA officials said VHA completed its peer review in January 2023, and VBA has contracted for a root cause analysis to finalize the results. As part of this review, VBA officials said the contractor performing the root cause analysis will examine third-party

⁴⁵According to the study, the amount of compensation a veteran receives is related to these three factors. Veterans can receive Individual Unemployability benefits if they meet certain criteria related to their ability to work resulting from a service-connected disability.

⁴⁶As previously noted, the VA rater assigns a disability rating of 0 to 100 percent, in increments of 10 percentage points depending on the severity of the disability. The monthly disability compensation payment amount is determined by the veteran's disability rating and number of dependents, including a spouse.

⁴⁷According to VA, a selection effect may have contributed to lower rates because Black veterans have higher application rates for posttraumatic stress disorder than other veterans.

assistance provided by recognized VSOs to veterans filing disability claims.⁴⁸

Although VA has undertaken these various efforts to conduct research, the agency has not performed a comprehensive assessment of disability compensation to identify factors that could contribute to any disparities in approval rates. VA has acknowledged the importance of research in ensuring equitable treatment for veterans. VBA officials stated that in fiscal year 2022, they hired two evaluation analysts to improve their capacity for equity assessments. In addition, VBA officials said that they received budgetary guidance from the Office of Management and Budget for fiscal year 2024 to increase staff and resources to develop and maintain an internal capacity for program evaluation and research methods. VBA did not have a clear plan for what research these new staff would conduct or for what additional work contractors may perform. Without further examination, it is unclear how much the factors identified in this report and others cited by the stakeholders we interviewed, can help explain the racial and ethnic disparities we observed in compensation benefits and their root causes.

VA officials said they will be forming an equity leadership team through VA's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (I-DEA) Council to understand why veterans who belong to historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups are approved for disability compensation at lower rates than White veterans, among other areas.⁴⁹ VA is in the early stages of forming this team and did not have clear plans for when and how they would carry out this effort. According to Executive Order 14091, specified federal agencies are required to establish equity teams to coordinate the implementation of equity initiatives and ensure that their respective agencies are delivering equitable outcomes.

According to VA's 2022 Equity Action plan, the agency has a goal to improve access and advance outcomes for veterans by identifying and eliminating barriers that prevent the equitable access to services and benefits. While assessing for disparities is a good first step, without a comprehensive review of the potential factors causing disparities and a

⁴⁸According to VBA officials, the 2017-2019 research they contracted for considered the impact of entities recognized by VA, but the preliminary findings were inconclusive and not peer reviewed.

⁴⁹VA's I-DEA Council, which is comprised of subject matter experts and representatives from across VA administrations and offices, is a governance body established to advance agency policies and initiatives and ensure they align with the VA Secretary's strategic goals and priorities.

plan for addressing any root causes, VA runs the risk of not meeting its goal to eliminate barriers to equitable access to benefits.

Conclusions

VA serves a racially and ethnically diverse mix of veterans. While VA has taken some steps to collect and assess data on the racial and ethnic composition of veterans, the agency lacks a plan detailing specific steps and time frames for ensuring the completeness of the data for all racial and ethnic groups. Without identifying concrete actions in a documented plan, VA will not be well-positioned to achieve its goals and to hold itself accountable for ensuring it has sufficient data to assess whether it is treating veterans equitably.

Our analysis found that Black veterans' approval rates were consistently lower than White veterans—both at the claims level and medical condition level. In addition, the size of the gap in approval rates for Black veterans compared to White veterans is larger for claims with fewer than eight conditions—more than double—than it is for claims with eight or more conditions. While VA has begun to assess disparities for certain conditions, such as posttraumatic stress disorder, it has not conducted a comprehensive evaluation of claims disparities. Further, VA has not studied the potential contributing factors to disparities it has found.

The racial and ethnic disparities we observed suggest that opportunities exist for VA to further assess these issues, identify root causes, and implement a plan to address the challenges veterans encounter. Such an assessment could help VA to better understand the diverse needs of the veterans it serves and thus achieve its goal of ensuring the equitable treatment of all veterans. Further, the new equity leadership team VA plans to form presents an opportunity for the agency to pull together relevant VA components to develop and implement a strategy to identify and address the causes of any disparities in decision outcomes for disability compensation claims.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making the following three recommendations to VA:

The Secretary of VA should develop a documented plan that details specific actions, time frames, and procedures to address the limitations it has identified with its race and ethnicity data for veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups. (Recommendation 1)

The Secretary of VA should conduct a comprehensive assessment of disability compensation to identify the root causes that could contribute to any racial and ethnic disparities. Such an assessment could be

completed internally or contracted out by VA. Also, it could include factors we identified in this report and any other factors VA considers relevant. (Recommendation 2)

The Secretary of VA should, after completing a comprehensive assessment of disability compensation, develop a plan to guide and coordinate VA's actions to address the identified root causes of any racial and ethnic disparities. (Recommendation 3)

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of our report to VA for review and comment. In its comments, reproduced in appendix III, VA concurred with all of our recommendations and stated it has plans in place to implement them. In addition, VA also provided general and technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

With respect to the recommendation that VA develop a documented plan to address the limitations of its race and ethnicity data, VA stated that it is developing recommendations for VA-wide data collection standards to ensure consistency and alignment with federal requirements, industry standards, and best practices. As VA carries out its efforts, it will be important that the agency works to address the data limitations that hinder its ability to identify potential barriers that prevent veterans from accessing services.

VA also stated that it agrees with the need to conduct a comprehensive assessment of disability compensation to identify the root causes that could contribute to any disparities. VA noted such analysis poses challenges given the complexity of the data and underlying issues. For example, VA said that while its own analysis of disparities is consistent with GAO's finding that Black veterans had lower approval rates for disability claims than White veterans, it said that Black veterans apply at materially higher rates than White veterans. We recognize that many factors can contribute to differences in approval rates and believe that a comprehensive assessment of those identified in our report, and others, will position VA to make any changes needed to address underlying issues. According to VA, VBA will contract for a study to identify barriers in the disability compensation process. Also, VBA stated it is establishing an Equity Assurance Office to address benefit disparity issues, among other things. In addition, VA stated that it will develop a plan to guide and

coordinate its actions to address root causes for any identified racial and ethnic disparities.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and other interested parties. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-7215 or curdae@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix IV.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Elizabeth H. Curda". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small "8" above the "t" in "Curda".

Elizabeth H. Curda
Director, Education, Workforce, and Income Security

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The objectives of this report were to examine the extent to which (1) the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has taken steps to collect and assess data about the racial and ethnic composition of veterans who may apply for disability compensation; and (2) racial and ethnic disparities exist in the provision of VA's disability compensation, and what factors could contribute to disparate outcomes. This appendix provides information on the key methods we used to answer these objectives, including a review of VA documentation, an analysis of VA's data, a literature search, and interviews with VA and stakeholders.

We conducted this performance audit from June 2022 to July 2023 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Analysis of VA Disability Compensation Data

To determine what, if any, racial and ethnic disparities exist in the provision of VA's disability compensation, we analyzed VA data on veterans with decisions on initial claims—that is, claims where the veteran was applying for disability compensation for the first time. The Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity provided data on all disability compensation claim decisions issued by VBA from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. We selected this time frame because it included the most recent full year of data available to capture the latest group of veterans who had at least a year to apply for benefits and receive a decision, as well as demographic data on race and ethnicity associated with the veterans who received claim decisions. Specifically, our data included the full population of veterans with claim decisions from VA over this time period. We also analyzed a subset of this data on fully developed claims from fiscal years 2015 through 2020,

which were the years with the most complete data that tracked fully developed claims according to VA officials.¹

Specifically, VBA's Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity provided files with data from its Enterprise Data Warehouse, VA/Department of Defense Identity Repository, and the United States Veterans Eligibility Trends and Statistics (USVETS) database administered by VA's Office of Enterprise Integration.² The VA data included the following information, which we used for our analysis:

- the participant identification number VA used to identify each veteran,
- the veteran's Social Security Number,
- the benefit claim identification number,
- the end product code,³
- the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities diagnostic code used to identify the condition,⁴
- the VA decision to approve or deny benefits,

¹VA's Fully Developed Claims Program allows the veteran to receive a faster decision by bypassing the standard claims process. Veterans choosing to use this program must submit all necessary information—including all private medical records that are related to the disability claim and information about any health records that are available at a federal facility—and certify that no additional evidence might be needed to decide the claim. According to VA officials, while records for fully developed claims are found in the data starting in 2010, they noted that the data looked to be most complete starting around 2015.

²The Enterprise Data Warehouse is VBA's central repository for all veteran demographic, military service, benefit determination, and payment data. The VA/Department of Defense Identity Repository database is an electronic repository of military personnel's military history, payroll information and their dependents' data, which is provided to VA by the Department of Defense. The USVETS database contains information on all U.S. veterans with regard to military history, demographics, socioeconomics, and utilization of VA benefits and services.

³The end product system is the primary workload monitoring and management tool that VBA used to process actions for different benefit types. VBA assigns a code known as an end product code that is based on the type of claimed benefit and action needed (e.g., compensation, pension, and survivor benefits). VBA uses the end product code associated with a claim to control for all development, rating, and any award actions needed to resolve the claimed issue and any related issues.

⁴Diagnostic code numbers are established in regulation and used by VA to identify the disability being evaluated.

- the disability percentage rating for approved conditions,
- the combined disability rating showing the veteran’s total disability rating at the time of the decision, and
- the veteran’s race, ethnicity, and sex.⁵

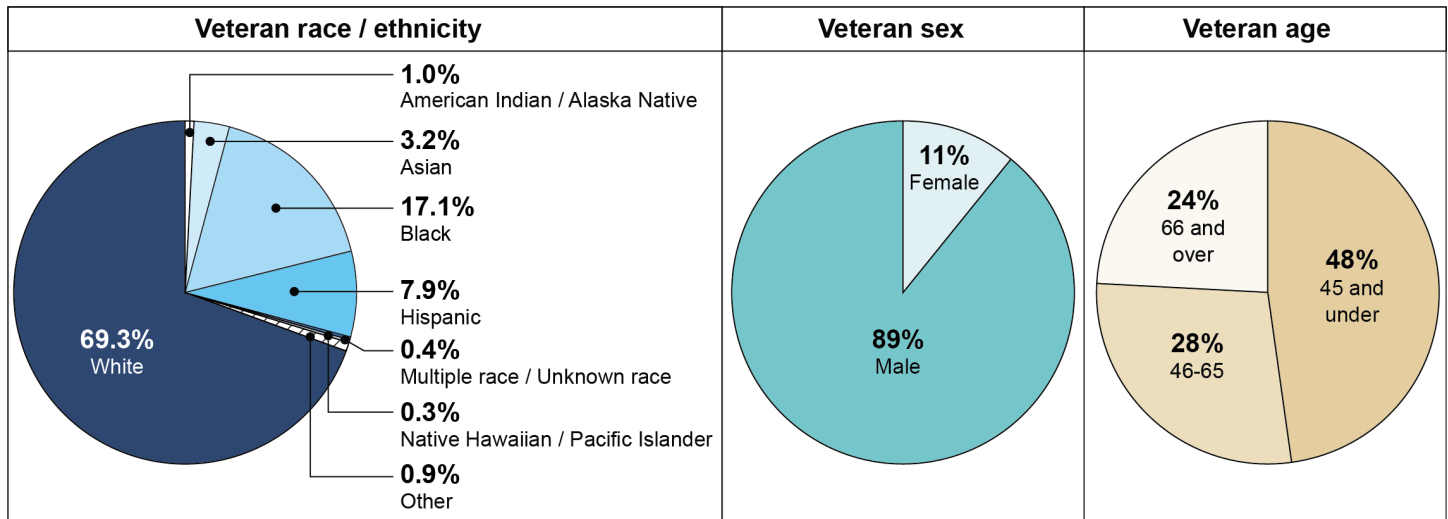
We assessed the reliability of the data we received from VA by conducting electronic testing for missing data and errors, reviewing agency documentation, and interviewing VA officials about the data and their limitations. The data provided by VA included a limitation that had implications for our analysis. Specifically, through our electronic testing, we identified about 7,500 veterans who were missing ethnicity data from among the over 2.8 million veterans for whom VA issued decisions on initial claims. This accounts for about 0.3 percent of our total veteran population and would have minimal effect on the analysis of veteran outcomes. We determined that these data were sufficiently reliable for our purpose of calculating the approval rates for veterans with claims decisions, and our analysis of subsequent disability ratings assigned by VA.

To identify the veterans with claim decisions, we used the veteran’s participant identification number, Social Security Number, and claim identification number to link the data files provided by VBA’s Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity. Doing so allowed us to create a combined data set that included veteran-level demographic data, including race and ethnicity, claims with a VA claim decision status of “closed,” and the conditions included in each claim. Further, we used end product codes—010 and 110 series—to identify those veterans who had VA decisions on initial claims. We identified more than 2.8 million veterans for whom VA decided initial claims from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. We categorized these veterans by ethnicity—Hispanic or

⁵In this report, we use the same racial and ethnic categories VA uses, which are based on the 1997 U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) standards on race and ethnicity. These standards use two ethnic categories (Hispanic or Latino, and Not Hispanic or Latino) and five racial categories (American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White). We categorized the veterans into six mutually exclusive categories. These are Hispanic and five Non-Hispanic racial groups: American Indian or Alaska Native (American Indian/ Alaska Native), Asian (Asian), Black or African American (Black or African American), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), and White (White). We categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. VA’s data also includes categories for “Multiple race/unknown race” and “Other.” Additionally, VBA’s data include binary sex categories for veterans—male and female; it does not include data on transgender or non-binary veterans.

Non-Hispanic—and by the following racial categories provided by VBA’s Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity in the data: American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Multiple Race/Unknown Race, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Other, and White. We categorized the approximately 7,500 veterans who were missing ethnicity data in their respective Non-Hispanic race categories. In addition, approximately 80 veterans appeared in the data as Asian Pacific Islander Unspecified. We categorized these veterans as Multiple Race/Unknown Race. Finally, data on approximately 5,700 veterans did not include any information on race or ethnicity, and we excluded them from our population. Further, data on over 10,000 veterans included multiple records of initial claims and we excluded these veterans as well since we could not determine which claim was initial. See figure 7 for demographic information on the veteran population we included in our analysis of initial disability claim decisions from fiscal year 2010 through 2020.

Figure 7: Race, Ethnicity, Sex, and Age of Veterans with VA Decisions on Initial Disability Claims, Fiscal Years 2010–2020



Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. We categorized the veterans into six mutually exclusive categories. These are Hispanic and five Non-Hispanic racial groups: American Indian or Alaska Native (American Indian/Alaska Native), Asian (Asian), Black or African American (Black), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), and White (White). We categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race.

Additionally, our data analysis included veterans categorized by VA as: (1) “multiple race/unknown race”—veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown,” and (2) “other”—veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups. Further, the Veterans Benefits Administration’s data include binary sex categories for veterans—male and female; it does not include data on transgender or non-binary veterans.

Analysis of VA’s Claims Data

We used the resulting dataset to identify the number of veterans who were granted service connection for benefits (approved) or denied service connection for benefits (denied) by VBA.⁶ We identified a benefit as approved if VA approved one or more of the conditions within the claim. We analyzed the outcomes for veterans who first applied for disability compensation and those whose initial claims were denied:

- Initial claims: As previously discussed, we identified veterans who applied for disability compensation for the first time using end product code series 010 and 110.⁷
- Additional claims: We further identified veterans who submitted claims after their initial claims had been denied using end product code series 020, 030, and 040. We analyzed VA decisions on claims that included (a) new conditions, (b) higher level reviews where a veteran or veteran’s representatives requested a new review of previously denied claims by a senior reviewer, and (c) conditions that previously had been denied where veterans submitted new evidence for consideration. We did not assess veterans’ appeals of denied claims to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals.

We identified the total number of veterans, by race, ethnicity, and sex, who were approved or denied each year from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. Our assessment of initial claims also included an analysis of claims with fewer than eight conditions and claims with eight or more conditions.⁸ To calculate the total number of veterans with decisions to approve or deny benefits for additional claims, we examined decision outcomes for veterans whose initial claims had been denied and who submitted subsequent claims. To identify the number of veterans with approved additional claims, we only counted those veterans as approved once,

⁶VBA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service.

⁷Each end product code series includes a third digit of 0 through 9 that we included in our analyses. For example, the 010 series includes 010, 011, 012, and so on. Our data analyses included data from end product codes 010 through 019 and 110 through 119.

⁸VA uses end product code series 010 to identify those claims with eight or more conditions, and series 110 to identify those claims with fewer than eight conditions. Our analysis reflects this division available in the data.

using the earliest approved claims by year of the claim decision. Specifically, once a veteran received VA approval for a claim, we counted that veteran as approved, and did not analyze any subsequent claim decisions for those approved veterans.

We also analyzed a third claim type: those initial claims that veterans submitted through the Fully Developed Claims Program from fiscal years 2015 through 2020. Using a special issue flag provided by the Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity, we identified veterans from the initial claims population who had submitted claims through the Fully Developed Claims Program. For this analysis, we categorized all the veterans with initial claims decisions over the time period covered into three distinct populations of veterans where the claims were (1) decided through the Fully Developed Claims Program; (2) submitted through the Fully Developed Claims Program, but were decided as standard claims; and (3) submitted through the standard claims process. We identified the total number of veterans who were approved or denied for each of these three populations. Similar to our analysis of initial claims, we also included an analysis of claims with fewer than eight conditions and those with eight or more conditions.

With the initial claims, additional claims (as defined above), and fully developed claims, we calculated the percentage of veterans who were approved claims for each of the claim types, by race, ethnicity, and sex. Specifically, we divided the number of veterans who were approved claims by the total number of veterans for whom VA made a claim decision. We then compared approval percentages to discern any differences between veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups and White veterans, who were the largest group in our population.⁹ We use the term “gap” to describe differences in approval rates that were at least four percentage points lower when comparing the rates of veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups to White veterans. We defined the approval rate as “similar” if the rate was within +/- 3 percentage points of the White veteran approval rate.

Analysis of Selected Medical Conditions Data

Using VA diagnostic codes, we identified the top 10 conditions by number of VA disability compensation claim decisions for the population of

⁹VA refers to these veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups as “minority and historically underserved veterans.” This designation does not include White veterans. For our report, we use the phrase veterans from “historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups.”

veterans who had initial claims from fiscal years 2010 through 2020 (see table 4).

Table 4: Most Common Conditions Decided by VA from Veterans’ Initial Disability Compensation Claims, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

Most Common Conditions, including Diagnostic Code	Number of VA Decisions
1. Tinnitus (6260)	1,523,547
2. Hearing Loss (6100)	1,444,957
3. Limitation of Flexion of the Knee (5260)*	948,617
4. Lumbosacral or Cervical Strain (5237)*	880,405
5. Limited Motion of the Ankle (5271)*	658,329
6. Limitation of Motion of the Arm (5201)*	586,038
7. Scars, General (7805)*	419,200
8. Paralysis of the Sciatic Nerve (8520)*	398,887
9. Migraine (8100)*	392,352
10. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (9411)	376,259

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

*Indicates that the Disability Benefits Questionnaire for the condition includes an explicit reference to an assessment of pain as part of the form.

Note: Diagnostic code numbers are established in regulation and used by VA to identify the disability being evaluated. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. Each disability claim submitted by a veteran can include one or more condition. VA decides whether to approve service connection for each of the conditions included as part of a claim. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. We selected 10 conditions for our analysis based on those with the greatest number of decisions to approve or deny disability compensation as part of initial claims from fiscal years 2010 through 2020.

As part of the analysis, we also identified conditions from our list of most frequently decided conditions that included pain as part of the disability assessment. We examined the Disability Benefits Questionnaire forms used for each condition to identify an explicit reference to assessment of pain as part of the form.¹⁰ From this examination, we identified the following conditions: Limitation of Flexion of the Knee (5260), Lumbosacral or Cervical Strain (5237), Limited Motion of the Ankle (5271), Limitation of Motion of the Arm (5201), Scars General (7805), and

¹⁰For our analysis, we used VA’s Disability Benefits Questionnaire forms, which were developed as a specific means to collect the medical information required to process veterans’ disability claims. VA uses specific forms tailored to the types of conditions.

Migraine (8100).¹¹ We submitted our list of conditions to VA to confirm we had correctly identified the conditions that did and that did not explicitly include pain as part of the assessment on the questionnaire. VA officials identified one more condition for inclusion: Paralysis of the Sciatic Nerve (8520).¹²

With each of these selected conditions that were included with initial claims, we identified the total number of veterans by race, ethnicity, and sex who were approved or denied, from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. Further, we identified the number of veterans with additional claims that included the selected conditions. To calculate the total number of veterans with decisions to approve or deny benefits for conditions included with additional claims, we only counted those veterans as approved once with the earliest approved condition by the year of the decision. Specifically, once a veteran received VA approval for a condition, we counted that veteran as approved for that condition, and did not analyze any subsequent condition decisions for those veterans.

We calculated the percentage of veterans who were approved for each of the selected conditions, by race, ethnicity, and sex. Specifically, we divided the number of veterans who were approved for each of the conditions by the total number of veterans for whom VA made a decision on that condition. For each of the 10 conditions, we then compared approval percentages between veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups and White veterans, who were the largest group in our population.

Analysis of Disability Ratings

For veterans who were approved benefits for initial disability compensation claims, we analyzed data for any differences in combined ratings based on race, ethnicity, and sex.¹³ Specifically, we compared combined ratings of veterans from each historically disadvantaged racial

¹¹Diagnostic code numbers assigned to conditions are established in regulation and used by VA to identify the disability being evaluated.

¹²In addition to the Disability Benefits Questionnaire, VA officials said that they use all medical evidence to assess the severity of a disability, including the presence of pain. For example, when the presence of pain is part of the evaluating criteria, an objective medical assessment of that pain is necessary. Officials also noted that numerous conditions can cause pain and VA selects the most appropriate diagnostic code that incorporates that pain as part of the evaluative criteria.

¹³For veterans with approval for more than one condition, VA calculates a rating (combined disability rating) using a table that applies a formula for combining multiple ratings into a single rating.

and ethnic group to those of White veterans. Our analysis included outcomes for veterans with claims for eight or more conditions, and those with fewer than eight conditions. To compare combined ratings, we calculated the proportion of each population group at each rating level. For example, we calculated the proportion of White veterans with combined ratings of 10 percent, combined ratings of 20 percent, and so on. We identified any differences between veterans from each historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic group and White veterans at the highest ratings levels.

We also compared the individual ratings assigned to veterans who were approved for each of the selected conditions for any differences based on race, ethnicity, and sex. Similar to our analysis of combined ratings, we compared the individual ratings of each historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic group for each condition and compared them to those of White veterans. We calculated the proportion of each population group at each rating level.¹⁴ We identified any differences between veterans from each historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic veteran group and White veterans at the highest ratings levels.

Literature Search

We conducted a literature search to help inform our understanding of potential factors that could contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in disability compensation. We searched a variety of databases for peer-reviewed studies from October 1, 2009 through March 24, 2023.¹⁵ This time frame was selected to help identify any relevant studies that would help to inform our understanding of any disparities we observed in our analysis of VA data from fiscal years 2010 through 2020 and more recent studies. We used the following search terms to identify relevant studies: “disability benefits,” “disability compensation,” “disability claims,” “compensation benefits,” “compensation claims,” and “compensation.”¹⁶

¹⁴VA assigns ratings to approved conditions based on ratings established in regulation. For example, VA may assign ratings for migraines (diagnostic code 8100) as low as 0 percent to as high as 50 percent. In certain compensation cases, VA may approve a rating that is outside the rating schedule. For example, under VA regulations, a rating outside the schedule may be applied in exceptional cases where a scheduled rating would be inadequate. 38 C.F.R. § 3.321(b).

¹⁵We performed searches in ProQuest (a multidisciplinary database that includes health and social sciences peer-reviewed studies), Dialog databases, Hein online, Scopus, PubMed, VA Office of Health Equity publications and research, and Westlaw secondary sources.

¹⁶In addition, we used other terms in our search, such as “veterans affairs” (or “VA”), “veterans administration,” “veteran health administration,” and “Department of Defense” (or “DOD”).

We also included permutations of terms such as “racial,” “ethnic,” “disparities,” and “discrimination.”

We identified five peer-reviewed studies related to racial and ethnic disparities. We also identified additional studies through recommendations provided by stakeholders we interviewed and by cross referencing sources in the studies we identified. We incorporated and cited any relevant studies as appropriate. The types of studies identified by stakeholders varied and included articles or published papers. To identify studies by VA on racial and ethnic disparities in disability compensation, we asked relevant VA offices about any past and current work that would be relevant for our review. These VA offices include VBA, the Office of Resolution Management, Diversity & Inclusion, the Veterans Experience Office, and the Center for Minority Veterans. Specifically, we reviewed relevant research or other information, including various analyses and presentations, to better understand what is known about possible factors that could explain any disparate outcomes.

VA and Stakeholder Interviews

We interviewed VA officials about steps the agency had taken to collect and to assess data it could use to better understand the racial and ethnic composition of veterans who apply for disability compensation. We also interviewed representatives of VA’s Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans (Advisory Committee) to obtain information about their work with VA, including past recommendations to the Secretary of VA related to racial and ethnic disparities in the provision of VA’s disability compensation.¹⁷ In addition, we obtained the Advisory Committee’s perspectives, as well as the perspectives of seven VSOs, on veterans’ experience with VA’s disability claims (both for standard claims and fully developed claims) and potential areas where bias may enter VA’s process.¹⁸ We selected a mix of VSOs that were recognized by VA to

¹⁷The Advisory Committee advises the Secretary of VA and Congress on VA’s administration of disability compensation and other benefits provided to veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups.

¹⁸The information gathered from our stakeholder interviews is not generalizable, but is useful in illustrating a range of views on potential racial disparities with VA’s disability compensation.

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

assist veterans with disability claims, including two larger VSOs.¹⁹ We also selected five VSOs that represent various racial and ethnic groups.²⁰

¹⁹VA recognizes organizations to assist veterans in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of their disability claims.

²⁰Representatives from recognized VSOs who help veterans file claims must undergo a VA accreditation process. Non-accredited VSOs do not help file claims for veterans, but do help to educate veterans about benefits, provide other types of assistance, and may work with VA to identify areas for improvement in serving veterans, among other things.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

This appendix contains tables showing our analysis of the extent to which racial and ethnic disparities exist in the provision of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) disability compensation. In addition, our examination of race and ethnicity included sex to further explore differences in the data.¹ We reviewed initial disability compensation claim decisions, which are claims where the veteran was applying for disability for the first time, from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. In addition to claims decision data, we analyzed a subset of this data on fully developed claims from fiscal years 2015 through 2020, which contain the most complete data on fully developed claims according to VA officials. Our analyses of disparities do not establish the presence or absence of unlawful discrimination. For additional details on the methodology for our data analysis, see appendix I.

¹VBA's data include binary sex categories for veterans—male and female; it does not include data on transgender or non-binary veterans.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Claim Approvals and Denials for Initial Disability Compensation Claims

Table 5: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation Claims by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	24%	76%	4,763	1,160	3,603
	Male	27%	73%	24,261	6,519	17,742
	All	26%	74%	29,024	7,679	21,345
Asian	Female	19%	81%	13,432	2,498	10,934
	Male	21%	79%	76,805	15,939	60,866
	All	20%	80%	90,237	18,437	71,800
Black/African American	Female	33%	67%	96,299	31,750	64,549
	Male	40%	60%	390,162	156,302	233,860
	All	39%	61%	486,461	188,052	298,409
Hispanic	Female	20%	80%	33,476	6,634	26,842
	Male	23%	77%	191,023	44,401	146,622
	All	23%	77%	224,499	51,035	173,464
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	38%	62%	1,018	383	635
	Male	39%	61%	11,480	4,501	6,979
	All	39%	61%	12,498	4,884	7,614
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	21%	79%	1,669	353	1,316
	Male	19%	81%	6,477	1,206	5,271
	All	19%	81%	8,146	1,559	6,587
Other	Female	21%	79%	4,447	923	3,524
	Male	28%	72%	20,035	5,672	14,363
	All	27%	73%	24,482	6,595	17,887
White	Female	23%	77%	162,731	38,199	124,532

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
Male	26%	74%	1,815,773	466,169	1,349,604
All	25%	75%	1,978,504	504,368	1,474,136

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. Each claim can have more than one medical condition. VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 6: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation Claims Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2010	Female	Denied	67	28%	265	22%	1,894	45%	362	28%	15	56%	22	34%	50	40%	2,783	33%
		Approved	172	72%	930	78%	2,345	55%	941	72%	12	44%	42	66%	74	60%	5,641	67%
		All	239	100%	1,195	100%	4,239	100%	1,303	100%	27	100%	64	100%	124	100%	8,424	100%
	Male	Denied	577	41%	1,720	21%	10,007	52%	2,815	35%	260	57%	71	27%	406	45%	37,486	36%
		Approved	844	59%	6,318	79%	9,142	48%	5,278	65%	194	43%	188	73%	503	55%	66,600	64%
		All	1,421	100%	8,038	100%	19,149	100%	8,093	100%	454	100%	259	100%	909	100%	104,086	100%
	All	Denied	644	39%	1,985	21%	11,901	51%	3,177	34%	275	57%	93	29%	456	44%	40,269	36%
		Approved	1,016	61%	7,248	79%	11,487	49%	6,219	66%	206	43%	230	71%	577	56%	72,241	64%
		All	1,660	100%	9,233	100%	23,388	100%	9,396	100%	481	100%	323	100%	1,033	100%	112,510	100%
FY 2011	Female	Denied	59	27%	200	21%	1,439	40%	309	28%	9	29%	26	38%	39	36%	2,077	28%
		Approved	160	73%	731	79%	2,149	60%	805	72%	22	71%	43	62%	70	64%	5,249	72%
		All	219	100%	931	100%	3,588	100%	1,114	100%	31	100%	69	100%	109	100%	7,326	100%
	Male	Denied	407	33%	1,284	20%	8,253	48%	2,388	30%	180	53%	51	21%	291	36%	29,111	30%
		Approved	834	67%	5,074	80%	9,071	52%	5,452	70%	159	47%	196	79%	521	64%	69,227	70%
		All	1,241	100%	6,358	100%	17,324	100%	7,840	100%	339	100%	247	100%	812	100%	98,338	100%
	All	Denied	466	32%	1,484	20%	9,692	46%	2,697	30%	189	51%	77	24%	330	36%	31,188	30%
		Approved	994	68%	5,805	80%	11,220	54%	6,257	70%	181	49%	239	76%	591	64%	74,476	70%
		All	1,460	100%	7,289	100%	20,912	100%	8,954	100%	370	100%	316	100%	921	100%	105,664	100%
FY 2012	Female	Denied	96	27%	186	19%	2,003	33%	423	22%	18	29%	14	17%	49	28%	2,686	23%
		Approved	265	73%	780	81%	4,147	67%	1,507	78%	44	71%	68	83%	126	72%	9,051	77%
		All	361	100%	966	100%	6,150	100%	1,930	100%	62	100%	82	100%	175	100%	11,737	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White			
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %		
FY 2013	Male	Denied	448	25%	1,154	21%	10,719	41%	2,893	25%	213	43%	75	20%	295	30%	35,041	26%	
		Approved	1,332	75%	4,281	79%	15,586	59%	8,911	75%	279	57%	298	80%	693	70%	100,533	74%	
		All	1,780	100%	5,435	100%	26,305	100%	11,804	100%	492	100%	373	100%	988	100%	135,574	100%	
	All	Denied	544	25%	1,340	21%	12,722	39%	3,316	24%	231	42%	89	20%	344	30%	37,727	26%	
		Approved	1,597	75%	5,061	79%	19,733	61%	10,418	76%	323	58%	366	80%	819	70%	109,584	74%	
		All	2,141	100%	6,401	100%	32,455	100%	13,734	100%	554	100%	455	100%	1,163	100%	147,311	100%	
	Female	Denied	148	24%	282	22%	3,569	34%	720	23%	34	26%	25	14%	111	34%	4,560	25%	
			Approved	462	76%	985	78%	6,874	66%	2,455	77%	95	74%	149	86%	214	66%	13,576	75%
			All	610	100%	1,267	100%	10,443	100%	3,175	100%	129	100%	174	100%	325	100%	18,136	100%
Male		Denied	793	28%	1,958	25%	18,654	42%	5,289	26%	341	45%	142	19%	667	34%	55,973	27%	
		Approved	2,062	72%	5,945	75%	25,348	58%	14,938	74%	419	55%	594	81%	1,276	66%	150,693	73%	
		All	2,855	100%	7,903	100%	44,002	100%	20,227	100%	760	100%	736	100%	1,943	100%	206,666	100%	
All	Denied	941	27%	2,240	24%	22,223	41%	6,009	26%	375	42%	167	18%	778	34%	60,533	27%		
	Approved	2,524	73%	6,930	76%	32,222	59%	17,393	74%	514	58%	743	82%	1,490	66%	164,269	73%		
	All	3,465	100%	9,170	100%	54,445	100%	23,402	100%	889	100%	910	100%	2,268	100%	224,802	100%		
FY 2014	Female	Denied	118	25%	265	22%	3,583	38%	717	24%	44	32%	45	27%	83	31%	4,095	25%	
		Approved	358	75%	943	78%	5,933	62%	2,287	76%	95	68%	119	73%	185	69%	12,234	75%	
		All	476	100%	1,208	100%	9,516	100%	3,004	100%	139	100%	164	100%	268	100%	16,329	100%	
	Male	Denied	762	29%	1,563	23%	18,327	44%	4,855	26%	318	40%	135	21%	602	36%	51,878	27%	
		Approved	1,890	71%	5,140	77%	23,301	56%	13,889	74%	486	60%	501	79%	1,089	64%	139,065	73%	
		All	2,652	100%	6,703	100%	41,628	100%	18,744	100%	804	100%	636	100%	1,691	100%	190,943	100%	
	All	Denied	880	28%	1,828	23%	21,910	43%	5,572	26%	362	38%	180	23%	685	35%	55,973	27%	
		Approved	2,248	72%	6,083	77%	29,234	57%	16,176	74%	581	62%	620	78%	1,274	65%	151,299	73%	
		All	3,128	100%	7,911	100%	51,144	100%	21,748	100%	943	100%	800	100%	1,959	100%	207,272	100%	

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2015	Female	Denied	155	27%	302	22%	4,250	38%	834	23%	44	24%	49	24%	110	28%	4,700	26%
		Approved	425	73%	1,049	78%	6,996	62%	2,723	77%	140	76%	154	76%	281	72%	13,653	74%
		All	580	100%	1,351	100%	11,246	100%	3,557	100%	184	100%	203	100%	391	100%	18,353	100%
	Male	Denied	807	29%	1,855	25%	20,954	45%	5,625	26%	376	39%	185	22%	736	35%	55,734	28%
		Approved	1,976	71%	5,608	75%	26,008	55%	15,829	74%	588	61%	656	78%	1,383	65%	146,422	72%
		All	2,783	100%	7,463	100%	46,962	100%	21,454	100%	964	100%	841	100%	2,119	100%	202,156	100%
	All	Denied	962	29%	2,157	24%	25,204	43%	6,459	26%	420	37%	234	22%	846	34%	60,434	27%
		Approved	2,401	71%	6,657	76%	33,004	57%	18,552	74%	728	63%	810	78%	1,664	66%	160,075	73%
		All	3,363	100%	8,814	100%	58,208	100%	25,011	100%	1,148	100%	1,044	100%	2,510	100%	220,509	100%
FY 2016	Female	Denied	126	26%	208	17%	3,454	35%	742	22%	46	48%	37	18%	100	21%	3,965	24%
		Approved	351	74%	1,004	83%	6,496	65%	2,679	78%	50	52%	173	82%	370	79%	12,447	76%
		All	477	100%	1,212	100%	9,950	100%	3,421	100%	96	100%	210	100%	470	100%	16,412	100%
	Male	Denied	615	26%	1,443	22%	16,559	41%	4,679	23%	326	49%	144	18%	627	29%	46,398	26%
		Approved	1,710	74%	5,228	78%	23,802	59%	15,541	77%	345	51%	648	82%	1,523	71%	134,931	74%
		All	2,325	100%	6,671	100%	40,361	100%	20,220	100%	671	100%	792	100%	2,150	100%	181,329	100%
	All	Denied	741	26%	1,651	21%	20,013	40%	5,421	23%	372	49%	181	18%	727	28%	50,363	25%
		Approved	2,061	74%	6,232	79%	30,298	60%	18,220	77%	395	51%	821	82%	1,893	72%	147,378	75%
		All	2,802	100%	7,883	100%	50,311	100%	23,641	100%	767	100%	1,002	100%	2,620	100%	197,741	100%
FY 2017	Female	Denied	119	24%	193	16%	3,314	31%	724	19%	47	61%	37	20%	108	19%	3,749	22%
		Approved	379	76%	1,047	84%	7,421	69%	3,046	81%	30	39%	150	80%	472	81%	12,915	78%
		All	498	100%	1,240	100%	10,735	100%	3,770	100%	77	100%	187	100%	580	100%	16,664	100%
	Male	Denied	601	24%	1,439	20%	16,046	38%	4,653	22%	314	46%	112	16%	604	27%	45,954	24%
		Approved	1,876	76%	5,749	80%	26,658	62%	16,920	78%	365	54%	573	84%	1,655	73%	143,501	76%
		All	2,477	100%	7,188	100%	42,704	100%	21,573	100%	679	100%	685	100%	2,259	100%	189,455	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
All	Denied	720	24%	1,632	19%	19,360	36%	5,377	21%	361	48%	149	17%	712	25%	49,703	24%	
	Approved	2,255	76%	6,796	81%	34,079	64%	19,966	79%	395	52%	723	83%	2,127	75%	156,416	76%	
	All	2,975	100%	8,428	100%	53,439	100%	25,343	100%	756	100%	872	100%	2,839	100%	206,119	100%	
FY 2018	Female	Denied	93	21%	200	15%	3,095	29%	675	17%	42	56%	32	18%	94	17%	3,615	22%
		Approved	354	79%	1,148	85%	7,468	71%	3,272	83%	33	44%	146	82%	474	83%	13,116	78%
		All	447	100%	1,348	100%	10,563	100%	3,947	100%	75	100%	178	100%	568	100%	16,731	100%
	Male	Denied	599	25%	1,315	18%	14,489	36%	4,337	21%	339	43%	103	15%	571	24%	41,944	23%
		Approved	1,812	75%	5,823	82%	26,093	64%	16,775	79%	450	57%	573	85%	1,803	76%	140,927	77%
		All	2,411	100%	7,138	100%	40,582	100%	21,112	100%	789	100%	676	100%	2,374	100%	182,871	100%
	All	Denied	692	24%	1,515	18%	17,584	34%	5,012	20%	381	44%	135	16%	665	23%	45,559	23%
		Approved	2,166	76%	6,971	82%	33,561	66%	20,047	80%	483	56%	719	84%	2,277	77%	154,043	77%
		All	2,858	100%	8,486	100%	51,145	100%	25,059	100%	864	100%	854	100%	2,942	100%	199,602	100%
FY 2019	Female	Denied	110	24%	228	16%	3,136	29%	673	15%	45	46%	41	23%	104	15%	3,689	20%
		Approved	358	76%	1,154	84%	7,820	71%	3,755	85%	52	54%	138	77%	594	85%	14,346	80%
		All	468	100%	1,382	100%	10,956	100%	4,428	100%	97	100%	179	100%	698	100%	18,035	100%
	Male	Denied	570	23%	1,296	17%	14,035	34%	4,255	19%	400	40%	95	15%	542	22%	42,351	22%
		Approved	1,958	77%	6,410	83%	27,290	66%	17,961	81%	595	60%	542	85%	1,959	78%	148,959	78%
		All	2,528	100%	7,706	100%	41,325	100%	22,216	100%	995	100%	637	100%	2,501	100%	191,310	100%
	All	Denied	680	23%	1,524	17%	17,171	33%	4,928	18%	445	41%	136	17%	646	20%	46,040	22%
		Approved	2,316	77%	7,564	83%	35,110	67%	21,716	82%	647	59%	680	83%	2,553	80%	163,305	78%
		All	2,996	100%	9,088	100%	52,281	100%	26,644	100%	1,092	100%	816	100%	3,199	100%	209,345	100%
FY 2020	Female	Denied	69	18%	169	13%	2,013	23%	455	12%	39	39%	25	16%	75	10%	2,280	16%
		Approved	319	82%	1,163	87%	6,900	77%	3,372	88%	62	61%	134	84%	664	90%	12,304	84%
		All	388	100%	1,332	100%	8,913	100%	3,827	100%	101	100%	159	100%	739	100%	14,584	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	340	19%	912	15%	8,259	28%	2,612	15%	1,434	32%	93	16%	331	14%	24,299	18%
	Approved	1,448	81%	5,290	85%	21,561	72%	15,128	85%	3,099	68%	502	84%	1,958	86%	108,746	82%
	All	1,788	100%	6,202	100%	29,820	100%	17,740	100%	4,533	100%	595	100%	2,289	100%	133,045	100%
All	Denied	409	19%	1,081	14%	10,272	27%	3,067	14%	1,473	32%	118	16%	406	13%	26,579	18%
	Approved	1,767	81%	6,453	86%	28,461	73%	18,500	86%	3,161	68%	636	84%	2,622	87%	121,050	82%
	All	2,176	100%	7,534	100%	38,733	100%	21,567	100%	4,634	100%	754	100%	3,028	100%	147,629	100%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. Each claim can have more than one condition. VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 7: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation Claims with Fewer Than Eight Conditions by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	40%	60%	2,232	885	1,347
	Male	37%	63%	15,014	5,525	9,489
	All	37%	63%	17,246	6,410	10,836
Asian	Female	32%	68%	5,802	1,876	3,926
	Male	32%	68%	40,219	12,877	27,342
	All	32%	68%	46,021	14,753	31,268
Black/African American	Female	54%	46%	45,027	24,355	20,672
	Male	54%	46%	241,126	130,383	110,743
	All	54%	46%	286,153	154,738	131,415
Hispanic	Female	34%	66%	14,316	4,906	9,410
	Male	34%	66%	106,031	35,808	70,223
	All	34%	66%	120,347	40,714	79,633
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	50%	50%	606	306	300
	Male	42%	58%	10,092	4,211	5,881
	All	42%	58%	10,698	4,517	6,181
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	37%	63%	681	255	426
	Male	32%	68%	2,842	906	1,936
	All	33%	67%	3,523	1,161	2,362
Other	Female	35%	65%	2,039	715	1,324
	Male	36%	64%	13,526	4,811	8,715
	All	36%	64%	15,565	5,526	10,039
White	Female	37%	63%	82,561	30,935	51,626

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
Male	32%	68%	1,283,875	415,700	868,175
All	33%	67%	1,366,436	446,635	919,801

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. Each claim can have more than one condition. VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO’s analysis uses VA’s end product codes, which categorizes initial claims by those with fewer than eight conditions and those with eight or more conditions. The end product code associated with a claim is used to control for all development, rating, and any award actions needed to resolve the claimed issue and any related issues. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 8: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation Claims with Eight or More Conditions by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	11%	89%	2,531	275	2,256
	Male	11%	89%	9,247	994	8,253
	All	11%	89%	11,778	1,269	10,509
Asian	Female	8%	92%	7,630	622	7,008
	Male	8%	92%	36,586	3,062	33,524
	All	8%	92%	44,216	3,684	40,532
Black/African American	Female	14%	86%	51,272	7,395	43,877
	Male	17%	83%	149,036	25,919	123,117
	All	17%	83%	200,308	33,314	166,994
Hispanic	Female	9%	91%	19,160	1,728	17,432
	Male	10%	90%	84,992	8,593	76,399
	All	10%	90%	104,152	10,321	93,831
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	19%	81%	412	77	335
	Male	21%	79%	1,388	290	1,098
	All	20%	80%	1,800	367	1,433
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	10%	90%	988	98	890
	Male	8%	92%	3,635	300	3,335
	All	9%	91%	4,623	398	4,225
Other	Female	9%	91%	2,408	208	2,200
	Male	13%	87%	6,509	861	5,648
	All	12%	88%	8,917	1,069	7,848
White	Female	9%	91%	80,170	7,264	72,906

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
Male	9%	91%	531,898	50,469	481,429
All	9%	91%	612,068	57,733	554,335

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. Each claim can have more than one condition. VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO’s analysis uses VA’s end product codes, which categorizes initial claims by those with fewer than eight conditions and those with eight or more conditions. The end product code associated with a claim is used to control for all development, rating, and any award actions needed to resolve the claimed issue and any related issues. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 9: VA Approval and Denial Rates Combining Veterans with Initial and Additional Disability Compensation Claims by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Denied		Approved		Total Number of Veterans
		Veteran Number	Veteran %	Veteran Number	Veteran %	
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	851	18%	3,912	82%	4,763
	Male	4,990	21%	19,271	79%	24,261
	All	5,841	20%	23,183	80%	29,024
Asian	Female	1,746	13%	11,686	87%	13,432
	Male	11,132	14%	65,673	86%	76,805
	All	12,878	14%	77,359	86%	90,237
Black/African American	Female	22,654	24%	73,645	76%	96,299
	Male	118,173	30%	271,989	70%	390,162
	All	140,827	29%	345,634	71%	486,461
Hispanic	Female	4,579	14%	28,897	86%	33,476
	Male	31,518	17%	159,505	84%	191,023
	All	36,097	16%	188,402	84%	224,499
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	319	31%	699	69%	1,018
	Male	4,202	37%	7,278	63%	11,480
	All	4,521	36%	7,977	64%	12,498
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	Female	236	14%	1,433	86%	1,669
	Male	819	13%	5,658	87%	6,477
	All	1,055	13%	7,091	87%	8,146
Other	Female	700	16%	3,747	84%	4,447
	Male	4,475	22%	15,560	78%	20,035
	All	5,175	21%	19,307	79%	24,482
White	Female	29,217	18%	133,514	82%	162,731

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Denied		Approved		Total Number of Veterans
	Veteran Number	Veteran %	Veteran Number	Veteran %	
Male	371,010	20%	1,444,763	80%	1,815,773
All	400,227	20%	1,578,277	80%	1,978,504

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: This table combines the VA approval rates for veterans with initial claims and veterans with additional claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. Each claim can have more than one condition. VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved least one claimed medical condition for service connection. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. For the examination of additional claims, GAO identified the veterans whose initial claims had been denied and then submitted additional claims, such as claims that included new conditions or the same previously denied conditions with new supporting evidence. GAO added the veterans whose additional claims were approved to those whose initial claims were approved to determine the revised approval rate. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of the race the veterans also identified. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups..

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Disability Ratings for All Initial Disability Compensation Claims and Selected Conditions

Table 10: Proportions of Veterans Who Received VA Disability Compensation Combined Ratings for Initial Claims by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Total Number of Veterans	% rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	3,533	-	12%	7%	9%	9%	9%	11%	11%	12%	9%	9%
	Male	17,185	0%	22%	9%	9%	9%	7%	10%	9%	9%	7%	9%
	All	20,718	0%	20%	8%	9%	9%	7%	10%	10%	10%	8%	9%
Asian	Female	10,173	0%	12%	8%	9%	10%	8%	10%	11%	11%	10%	11%
	Male	57,475	0%	17%	8%	8%	9%	8%	11%	10%	11%	9%	10%
	All	67,648	0%	16%	8%	8%	9%	8%	11%	10%	11%	9%	10%
Black/African American	Female	64,776	0%	11%	6%	8%	8%	8%	10%	11%	12%	12%	14%
	Male	232,570	0%	20%	9%	8%	8%	7%	9%	9%	9%	8%	11%
	All	297,346	0%	18%	8%	8%	8%	8%	9%	10%	10%	9%	12%
Hispanic	Female	25,639	0%	11%	7%	8%	9%	8%	11%	12%	12%	11%	11%
	Male	140,816	0%	19%	8%	8%	9%	7%	10%	10%	10%	9%	9%
	All	166,455	0%	18%	8%	8%	9%	7%	11%	10%	10%	9%	10%
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	662	-	14%	8%	10%	13%	10%	11%	13%	10%	6%	6%
	Male	6,492	0%	35%	13%	10%	8%	6%	7%	5%	4%	3%	10%
	All	7,154	0%	33%	12%	10%	8%	7%	8%	6%	4%	3%	10%
	Female	1,276	-	9%	7%	8%	10%	8%	9%	12%	12%	12%	12%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		Total Number of Veterans	% rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Male	4,953	0%	14%	7%	7%	8%	6%	10%	10%	11%	12%	14%
	All	6,229	0%	13%	7%	8%	8%	7%	10%	11%	11%	12%	14%
Other	Female	3,314	0%	10%	6%	8%	9%	8%	12%	12%	13%	11%	9%
	Male	13,704	0%	24%	10%	9%	9%	7%	10%	9%	8%	6%	8%
	All	17,018	0%	22%	9%	9%	9%	7%	10%	9%	9%	7%	8%
White	Female	119,197	0%	14%	7%	9%	10%	9%	11%	11%	11%	9%	9%
	Male	1,287,383	0%	28%	10%	9%	9%	7%	9%	8%	7%	6%	8%
	All	1,406,580	0%	26%	10%	9%	9%	7%	9%	8%	7%	6%	9%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that no veteran in the data received that disability rating. Each cell with a percentage indicates one or more veterans received that disability rating. All percentages in the cells are rounded to the closest percentage point. For veterans with approval of service connection for more than one medical condition, VA calculates a rating (combined disability rating) using a formula for combining multiple ratings into a single rating. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO calculated the proportion of each racial and ethnic group that received each percentage rating on an initial claim from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 11: Proportions of Veterans Who Received VA Disability Compensation Combined Ratings for Initial Claims with Fewer Than Eight Conditions by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Total Number of Veterans	% rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	1,338	-	23%	12%	14%	10%	11%	10%	11%	5%	2%	2%
	Male	9,374	0%	34%	13%	11%	10%	7%	8%	7%	4%	1%	5%
	All	10,712	0%	32%	13%	11%	10%	8%	9%	8%	4%	1%	4%
Asian	Female	3,756	0%	23%	14%	13%	12%	10%	10%	10%	4%	2%	3%
	Male	26,665	0%	29%	13%	11%	11%	8%	10%	8%	4%	1%	3%
	All	30,421	0%	28%	13%	12%	11%	9%	10%	9%	4%	1%	3%
Black/African American	Female	22,619	0%	22%	11%	14%	10%	12%	9%	11%	5%	2%	3%
	Male	114,997	0%	32%	13%	11%	9%	8%	8%	8%	4%	1%	5%
	All	137,616	0%	31%	12%	12%	9%	9%	8%	8%	4%	1%	5%
Hispanic	Female	9,366	0%	22%	12%	13%	12%	10%	10%	11%	6%	2%	2%
	Male	69,933	0%	32%	13%	11%	10%	7%	9%	8%	4%	1%	3%
	All	79,299	0%	31%	12%	11%	11%	8%	9%	8%	4%	1%	3%
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	312	-	21%	8%	14%	16%	11%	11%	10%	5%	2%	3%
	Male	5,415	0%	39%	14%	10%	7%	6%	7%	4%	2%	1%	10%
	All	5,727	0%	38%	14%	10%	8%	6%	7%	4%	2%	1%	9%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	427	-	19%	14%	15%	12%	9%	10%	10%	6%	2%	3%
	Male	1,908	0%	27%	12%	11%	11%	9%	10%	9%	5%	2%	3%
	All	2,335	0%	25%	12%	12%	11%	9%	10%	9%	5%	2%	3%
Other	Female	1,285	0%	20%	10%	13%	12%	10%	11%	11%	8%	2%	2%
	Male	8,458	0%	34%	13%	11%	10%	7%	8%	7%	3%	1%	5%
	All	9,743	0%	32%	13%	11%	10%	7%	9%	8%	4%	2%	5%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		Total Number of Veterans	% rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
White	Female	50,848	0%	25%	12%	14%	11%	10%	9%	10%	5%	2%	3%
	Male	840,595	0%	39%	13%	10%	9%	6%	7%	5%	3%	1%	6%
	All	891,443	0%	38%	13%	10%	9%	6%	7%	6%	3%	1%	6%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that no veteran in the data received that disability rating. Each cell with a percentage indicates one or more veterans received that disability rating. All percentages in the cells are rounded to the closest percentage point. For veterans with approval of service connection for more than one medical condition, VA calculates a rating (combined disability rating) using a formula for combining multiple ratings into a single rating. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO calculated the proportion of each racial and ethnic group that received each percentage rating on an initial claim from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 12: Proportions of Veterans Who Received VA Disability Compensation Combined Ratings for Initial Claims with Eight or More Conditions by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Total Number of Veterans	% rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	2,195	-	6%	3%	6%	8%	8%	12%	12%	17%	14%	14%
	Male	7,811	0%	7%	4%	6%	8%	7%	11%	11%	15%	15%	15%
	All	10,006	0%	7%	4%	6%	8%	7%	12%	11%	16%	15%	15%
Asian	Female	6,417	-	5%	4%	7%	9%	7%	11%	12%	15%	16%	15%
	Male	30,810	0%	6%	4%	6%	7%	7%	12%	12%	16%	15%	15%
	All	37,227	0%	6%	4%	6%	8%	7%	12%	12%	16%	15%	15%
Black/African American	Female	42,157	0%	5%	3%	5%	7%	7%	10%	11%	15%	17%	19%
	Male	117,573	0%	8%	4%	6%	7%	6%	10%	11%	14%	15%	17%
	All	159,730	0%	7%	4%	6%	7%	6%	10%	11%	15%	16%	18%
Hispanic	Female	16,273	0%	5%	4%	5%	8%	7%	11%	12%	16%	16%	16%
	Male	70,883	0%	7%	4%	6%	8%	7%	12%	12%	15%	16%	16%
	All	87,156	0%	6%	4%	5%	8%	7%	11%	12%	15%	16%	16%
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	350	-	8%	8%	7%	10%	8%	11%	15%	14%	10%	9%
	Male	1,077	-	12%	6%	8%	11%	9%	11%	10%	12%	11%	10%
	All	1,427	-	11%	6%	8%	11%	9%	11%	11%	13%	11%	10%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	849	-	4%	3%	5%	9%	7%	9%	13%	15%	17%	17%
	Male	3,045	0%	6%	4%	5%	6%	5%	10%	11%	15%	17%	21%
	All	3,894	0%	5%	3%	5%	7%	5%	10%	12%	15%	17%	20%
Other	Female	2,029	-	4%	3%	5%	8%	7%	13%	12%	17%	16%	14%
	Male	5,246	0%	9%	5%	7%	9%	7%	12%	12%	14%	13%	12%
	All	7,275	0%	7%	5%	6%	8%	7%	13%	12%	15%	14%	12%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		Total Number of Veterans	% rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
White	Female	68,349	0%	5%	4%	6%	9%	8%	12%	12%	16%	15%	13%
	Male	446,788	0%	7%	5%	6%	9%	7%	12%	12%	15%	14%	13%
	All	515,137	0%	7%	5%	6%	9%	7%	12%	12%	15%	14%	13%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that no veteran in the data received that disability rating. Each cell with a percentage indicates one or more veterans received that disability rating. All percentages in the cells are rounded to the closest percentage point. For veterans with approval of service connection for more than one medical condition, VA calculates a rating (combined disability rating) using a formula for combining multiple ratings into a single rating. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO calculated the proportion of each racial and ethnic group that received each percentage rating on an initial claim from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 13: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Tinnitus by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	1,396	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	10,770	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	12,166	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian	Female	3,969	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	33,448	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	37,417	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Black/African American	Female	21,378	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	106,540	0%	100%	-	-	-	0%	-	-	-	-	-
	All	127,918	0%	100%	-	-	-	0%	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	Female	10,522	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	86,884	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%
	All	97,406	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	245	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	4,119	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	4,364	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	515	-	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	3,114	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	3,629	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	Female	1,350	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	7,948	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	9,298	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
White	Female	45,423	0%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	813,807	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	-	-	0%	-
	All	859,230	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	-	-	0%	-

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that no veteran in the data received that disability rating. Each cell with a percentage indicates one or more veterans received that disability rating. All percentages in the cells are rounded to the closest percentage point. These data show proportion of veterans approved for service connection and received individual ratings for Tinnitus (diagnostic code 6260) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO calculated the proportion of each racial and ethnic group that received each percentage rating from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 14: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Hearing Loss by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	189	94%	5%	1%	-	-	1%	-	-	-	-	1%
	Male	4,480	80%	7%	4%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%
	All	4,669	80%	7%	4%	2%	2%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%
Asian	Female	481	93%	5%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%
	Male	10,325	87%	6%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	All	10,806	87%	6%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Black/African American	Female	2,496	93%	4%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	-	0%
	Male	30,728	84%	7%	3%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	All	33,224	85%	7%	3%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Hispanic	Female	1,030	94%	4%	1%	0%	0%	-	-	-	0%	0%	-
	Male	25,918	84%	6%	3%	2%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	All	26,948	85%	6%	3%	2%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	36	67%	14%	3%	3%	6%	3%	-	-	-	-	6%
	Male	3,581	54%	15%	8%	6%	6%	4%	1%	1%	1%	0%	4%
	All	3,617	54%	15%	8%	6%	6%	4%	1%	1%	1%	0%	4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	78	90%	6%	4%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	949	90%	5%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	-	1%
	All	1,027	90%	5%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	-	0%
Other	Female	123	93%	6%	-	-	-	1%	-	-	-	-	1%
	Male	3,496	75%	9%	5%	3%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
	All	3,619	75%	9%	5%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
White	Female	7,366	92%	4%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	-	0%
	Male	440,398	76%	9%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
	All	447,764	76%	9%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that no veteran in the data received that disability rating. Each cell with a percentage indicates one or more veterans received that disability rating. All percentages in the cells are rounded to the closest percentage point. These data show proportion of veterans approved for service connection and received individual ratings for Hearing Loss (diagnostic code 6100) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO calculated the proportion of each racial and ethnic group that received each percentage rating from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 15: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Limitation of Flexion of the Knee by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	882	9%	90%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	3,663	8%	91%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	4,545	8%	91%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian	Female	2,865	8%	92%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	14,831	10%	89%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	17,696	10%	90%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Black/African American	Female	18,941	5%	94%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%
	Male	56,722	6%	93%	1%	0%	-	-	0%	-	-	-	-
	All	75,663	6%	94%	1%	0%	-	-	0%	-	-	-	0%
Hispanic	Female	7,615	6%	94%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	37,244	6%	94%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	44,859	6%	94%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	109	8%	92%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	367	12%	88%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	476	11%	89%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	383	9%	90%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	1,573	6%	93%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	1,956	6%	93%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	Female	1,010	3%	97%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	2,678	4%	95%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	3,688	4%	96%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
White	Female	29,310	8%	92%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	219,329	8%	92%	0%	0%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	-
	All	248,639	8%	92%	0%	0%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	-

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that no veteran in the data received that disability rating. Each cell with a percentage indicates one or more veterans received that disability rating. All percentages in the cells are rounded to the closest percentage point. These data show proportion of veterans approved for service connection and received individual ratings for Limitation of Flexion of the Knee (diagnostic code 5260) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO calculated the proportion of each racial and ethnic group that received each percentage rating from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 16: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Lumbosacral or Cervical Strain by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	1,034	9%	69%	19%	1%	2%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	3,659	6%	67%	23%	1%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	4,693	7%	68%	22%	1%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian	Female	3,503	6%	66%	24%	1%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	15,347	6%	64%	25%	1%	4%	0%	-	-	-	-	-
	All	18,850	6%	64%	24%	1%	3%	0%	-	-	-	-	-
Black/African American	Female	19,047	5%	63%	27%	1%	4%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	48,667	5%	62%	27%	1%	4%	0%	-	-	-	-	0%
	All	67,714	5%	62%	27%	1%	4%	0%	-	-	-	-	0%
Hispanic	Female	8,854	5%	66%	24%	1%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	36,614	5%	64%	26%	1%	4%	0%	-	-	-	-	0%
	All	45,468	5%	65%	25%	1%	4%	0%	-	-	-	-	0%
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	145	9%	71%	18%	1%	1%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	461	10%	68%	19%	1%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	606	10%	69%	18%	1%	2%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	460	5%	63%	28%	0%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	1,466	6%	61%	27%	1%	4%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	1,926	6%	62%	27%	1%	4%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	Female	1,189	6%	71%	20%	1%	3%	0%	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	2,782	5%	67%	24%	1%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	3,971	5%	68%	23%	1%	3%	0%	-	-	-	-	-

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
White	Female	35,334	7%	70%	21%	1%	2%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	219,185	6%	67%	23%	1%	3%	0%	-	-	0%	-	0%
	All	254,519	7%	67%	22%	1%	3%	0%	-	-	0%	-	0%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that no veteran in the data received that disability rating. Each cell with a percentage indicates one or more veterans received that disability rating. All percentages in the cells are rounded to the closest percentage point. These data show proportion of veterans approved for service connection and received individual ratings for Lumbosacral or Cervical Strain (diagnostic code 5237) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO calculated the proportion of each racial and ethnic group that received each percentage rating from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 17: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Limited Motion of the Ankle by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	549	25%	72%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	2,524	21%	75%	4%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	3,073	22%	75%	4%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian	Female	2,168	21%	76%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	11,282	22%	75%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	13,450	21%	75%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Black/African American	Female	11,210	16%	81%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	39,236	16%	80%	4%	-	-	0%	-	-	-	-	-
	All	50,446	16%	80%	4%	-	-	0%	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	Female	5,104	17%	80%	2%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%
	Male	26,555	17%	80%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	31,659	17%	80%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	73	27%	73%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	284	26%	71%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	357	26%	72%	2%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	293	21%	75%	4%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	1,281	20%	76%	5%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	1,574	20%	75%	4%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	Female	585	15%	82%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	1,694	16%	80%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	2,279	16%	81%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
White	Female	19,563	22%	75%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	149,360	21%	75%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	168,923	21%	75%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that no veteran in the data received that disability rating. Each cell with a percentage indicates one or more veterans received that disability rating. All percentages in the cells are rounded to the closest percentage point. These data show proportion of veterans approved for service connection and received individual ratings for Limited Motion of the Ankle (diagnostic code 5271) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO calculated the proportion of each racial and ethnic group that received each percentage rating from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 18: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Limitation of Motion of the Arm by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	429	15%	4%	78%	1%	1%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	2,460	13%	5%	80%	2%	1%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	2,889	13%	5%	80%	2%	1%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian	Female	1,577	12%	5%	81%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	10,068	12%	6%	80%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	11,645	12%	6%	80%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Black/African American	Female	8,920	9%	4%	85%	2%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	33,662	9%	4%	85%	2%	1%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	42,582	9%	4%	85%	2%	1%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	Female	3,994	10%	3%	85%	2%	1%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	25,362	10%	3%	85%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	29,356	10%	3%	85%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	35	31%	6%	63%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	188	26%	6%	65%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	223	27%	6%	65%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	205	11%	5%	80%	2%	1%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	1,138	10%	4%	83%	2%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	-
	All	1,343	10%	5%	83%	2%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-
Other	Female	512	9%	2%	88%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	1,976	9%	2%	87%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	All	2,488	9%	2%	87%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
White	Female	15,944	15%	5%	79%	1%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	148,033	13%	5%	80%	1%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	0%
	All	163,977	13%	5%	80%	1%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	0%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that no veteran in the data received that disability rating. Each cell with a percentage indicates one or more veterans received that disability rating. All percentages in the cells are rounded to the closest percentage point. These data show proportion of veterans approved for service connection and received individual ratings for Limitation of Motion of the Arm (diagnostic code 5201) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO calculated the proportion of each racial and ethnic group that received each percentage rating from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 19: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Paralysis of the Sciatic Nerve by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	271	4%	76%	18%	-	1%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	1,315	3%	73%	22%	-	2%	-	1%	-	-	-	-
	All	1,586	3%	73%	21%	-	2%	-	1%	-	-	-	-
Asian	Female	881	4%	75%	18%	-	2%	-	0%	-	-	-	-
	Male	4,139	4%	74%	18%	-	2%	-	0%	-	0%	-	-
	All	5,020	4%	75%	18%	-	2%	-	0%	-	0%	-	-
Black/African American	Female	5,277	4%	76%	18%	-	1%	-	0%	-	0%	-	-
	Male	16,471	3%	73%	21%	-	2%	-	0%	-	0%	-	-
	All	21,748	3%	74%	21%	-	2%	-	0%	-	0%	-	-
Hispanic	Female	2,279	3%	78%	18%	-	1%	-	0%	-	0%	-	-
	Male	11,152	3%	75%	20%	-	2%	-	0%	-	0%	-	-
	All	13,431	3%	75%	20%	-	2%	-	0%	-	0%	-	-
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	29	-	69%	31%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	221	2%	59%	26%	-	9%	-	4%	-	-	-	-
	All	250	2%	60%	26%	-	8%	-	4%	-	-	-	-
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	115	3%	74%	22%	-	2%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	427	3%	76%	19%	-	2%	-	0%	-	-	-	-
	All	542	3%	76%	19%	-	2%	-	0%	-	-	-	-
Other	Female	275	3%	78%	18%	-	2%	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	894	2%	73%	22%	-	2%	-	0%	-	-	-	-
	All	1,169	2%	74%	21%	-	2%	-	0%	-	-	-	-

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
White	Female	10,252	4%	77%	17%	-	2%	-	0%	-	0%	-	0%
	Male	86,848	3%	71%	22%	0%	3%	-	1%	-	0%	-	0%
	All	97,100	3%	72%	22%	0%	3%	-	1%	-	0%	-	0%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that no veteran in the data received that disability rating. Each cell with a percentage indicates one or more veterans received that disability rating. All percentages in the cells are rounded to the closest percentage point. These data show proportion of veterans approved for service connection and received individual ratings for Paralysis of the Sciatic Nerve (diagnostic code 8520) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO calculated the proportion of each racial and ethnic group that received each percentage rating from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 20: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Migraine by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	956	54%	6%	-	30%	-	10%	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	2,479	58%	5%	-	29%	0%	8%	-	-	-	-	-
	All	3,435	56%	5%	-	29%	0%	9%	-	-	-	-	-
Asian	Female	2,968	55%	7%	-	29%	-	10%	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	9,769	60%	6%	-	26%	-	9%	-	-	-	-	-
	All	12,737	58%	6%	-	26%	-	9%	-	-	-	-	-
Black/African American	Female	18,972	48%	6%	0%	35%	-	12%	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	34,308	55%	5%	0%	30%	0%	10%	-	-	-	-	0%
	All	53,280	53%	5%	0%	31%	0%	11%	-	-	-	-	0%
Hispanic	Female	7,787	53%	5%	0%	31%	-	11%	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	22,560	58%	4%	0%	28%	0%	10%	-	-	-	-	-
	All	30,347	57%	5%	0%	28%	0%	10%	-	-	-	-	-
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	129	55%	9%	-	30%	-	5%	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	211	60%	5%	-	30%	-	5%	-	-	-	-	-
	All	340	58%	7%	-	30%	-	5%	-	-	-	-	-
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	413	55%	6%	-	30%	-	9%	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	1,062	60%	5%	-	28%	-	7%	-	-	-	-	-
	All	1,475	59%	5%	-	29%	-	8%	-	-	-	-	-
Other	Female	1,101	53%	6%	-	28%	-	13%	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	1,562	59%	5%	-	27%	-	9%	-	-	-	-	-
	All	2,663	57%	5%	-	27%	-	11%	-	-	-	-	-

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
White	Female	32,514	53%	7%	0%	31%	0%	9%	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	128,392	60%	5%	0%	26%	0%	8%	-	0%	-	-	-
	All	160,906	59%	6%	0%	27%	0%	8%	-	0%	-	-	-

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that no veteran in the data received that disability rating. Each cell with a percentage indicates one or more veterans received that disability rating. All percentages in the cells are rounded to the closest percentage point. These data show proportion of veterans approved for service connection and received individual ratings for Migraine (diagnostic code 8100) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO calculated the proportion of each racial and ethnic group that received each percentage rating from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 21: Proportions of Veterans with Initial Claims Who Received VA Disability Compensation Individual Ratings for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	463	1%	2%	-	24%	-	36%	-	33%	-	-	4%
	Male	2,095	1%	3%	0%	26%	-	36%	-	28%	-	-	5%
	All	2,558	1%	3%	0%	26%	-	36%	-	29%	-	-	5%
Asian	Female	1,043	1%	3%	0%	25%	0%	35%	-	31%	-	-	5%
	Male	6,718	2%	4%	-	27%	-	35%	-	27%	-	-	4%
	All	7,761	1%	4%	0%	27%	0%	35%	-	28%	-	-	4%
Black/African American	Female	7,045	1%	2%	-	20%	-	37%	0%	33%	-	-	6%
	Male	27,092	2%	3%	0%	26%	-	36%	-	28%	-	-	5%
	All	34,137	2%	3%	0%	25%	-	37%	0%	29%	-	-	5%
Hispanic	Female	3,100	1%	2%	-	21%	-	37%	.	36%	-	-	5%
	Male	17,263	1%	3%	-	25%	0%	36%	.	30%	-	-	4%
	All	20,363	1%	3%	-	24%	0%	36%	-	31%	-	-	5%
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	65	-	3%	-	26%	-	42%	-	28%	-	-	2%
	Male	393	2%	3%	-	32%	-	28%	-	26%	-	-	9%
	All	458	2%	3%	-	31%	-	30%	-	26%	-	-	8%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	162	-	3%	-	26%	-	36%	-	31%	-	-	4%
	Male	687	1%	3%	-	27%	-	35%	-	27%	-	-	6%
	All	849	1%	3%	-	27%	-	35%	-	28%	-	-	6%
Other	Female	400	1%	2%	-	22%	-	37%	-	35%	-	-	5%
	Male	1,095	2%	4%	-	25%	-	32%	0%	31%	-	-	6%
	All	1,495	2%	3%	-	24%	-	33%	0%	32%	-	-	5%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		Total number of veterans	% Rating										
			0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
White	Female	13,766	1%	3%	0%	25%	0%	36%	0%	30%	-	-	6%
	Male	122,292	2%	4%	0%	31%	0%	35%	0%	25%	-	-	4%
	All	136,058	2%	4%	0%	30%	0%	35%	0%	25%	-	-	5%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that no veteran in the data received that disability rating. Each cell with a percentage indicates one or more veterans received that disability rating. All percentages in the cells are rounded to the closest percentage point. These data show proportion of veterans approved for service connection and received individual ratings for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (diagnostic code 9411) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO calculated the proportion of each racial and ethnic group that received each percentage rating from fiscal years 2010 through 2020. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Approval and Denial Rates for Fully Developed Claims

We analyzed data on fully developed claims from fiscal years 2015 through 2020, which contain the most complete data tracking fully developed claims, according to VA officials.

Table 22: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Fully Developed Claims by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2015–2020

		Decided as fully developed claims		Moved to standard claims process		Standard claims process		Decided as fully developed claims		Moved to standard claims process		Standard claims process	
		Number of veterans with submitted claims	Number of veterans	Number of veterans	Number of veterans	Percent denied	Percent approved	Percent denied	Percent approved	Percent denied	Percent approved	Percent denied	Percent approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	2,858	1,177	683	998	30%	70%	36%	64%	8%	92%		
	Male	14,312	7,099	3,343	3,870	28%	72%	34%	66%	10%	90%		
	All	17,170	8,276	4,026	4,868	29%	71%	34%	66%	9%	91%		
Asian	Female	7,865	3,131	1,455	3,279	22%	78%	30%	70%	5%	95%		
	Male	42,368	18,810	8,473	15,085	25%	75%	29%	71%	7%	93%		
	All	50,233	21,941	9,928	18,364	24%	76%	30%	70%	7%	93%		
Black/African American	Female	62,363	24,150	15,269	22,944	40%	60%	46%	54%	11%	89%		
	Male	241,754	114,136	60,981	66,637	44%	56%	48%	52%	17%	83%		
	All	304,117	138,286	76,250	89,581	43%	57%	47%	53%	16%	84%		
Hispanic	Female	22,950	8,927	4,498	9,525	24%	76%	30%	70%	7%	93%		
	Male	124,315	57,493	24,764	42,058	26%	74%	31%	69%	9%	91%		
	All	147,265	66,420	29,262	51,583	26%	74%	31%	69%	8%	92%		
	Female	630	343	167	120	47%	53%	49%	51%	18%	82%		
	Male	8,631	5,678	2,172	781	37%	63%	39%	61%	33%	67%		

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		Number of veterans with submitted claims	Decided as fully developed claims	Moved to standard claims process	Standard claims process	Decided as fully developed claims		Moved to standard claims process		Standard claims process	
			Number of veterans	Number of veterans	Number of veterans	Percent denied	Percent approved	Percent denied	Percent approved	Percent denied	Percent approved
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	All	9,261	6,021	2,339	901	37%	63%	40%	60%	31%	69%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	1,116	410	212	494	28%	72%	30%	70%	9%	91%
	Male	4,226	1,673	720	1,833	25%	75%	26%	74%	7%	93%
	All	5,342	2,083	932	2,327	25%	75%	27%	73%	7%	93%
Other	Female	3,446	1,338	709	1,399	24%	76%	25%	75%	6%	94%
	Male	13,692	7,109	3,017	3,566	28%	72%	31%	69%	13%	87%
	All	17,138	8,447	3,726	4,965	28%	72%	30%	70%	11%	89%
White	Female	100,779	42,441	21,607	36,731	28%	72%	33%	67%	8%	92%
	Male	1,080,166	599,916	216,531	263,719	27%	73%	31%	69%	11%	89%
	All	1,180,945	642,357	238,138	300,450	27%	73%	31%	69%	10%	90%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: VA's Fully Developed Claims Program allows the veteran to receive a faster decision by bypassing the standard disability claims process. Veterans must submit all necessary information, such as all private medical records that are related to the claim, and certify they have done so. The claims processor who reviews the veteran's claim may move the fully developed claim to the standard claims process for a decision if additional non-federal records are needed to process this claim. Veterans can also choose to submit claims through the standard process. A claim can have one or more medical conditions. VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of the race the veterans also identified. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 23: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Fully Developed Claims with Fewer Than Eight Conditions by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2015–2020

		Number of veterans with submitted claims	Decided as fully developed claims	Moved to standard claims process	Standard claims process	Decided as fully developed claims	Moved to standard claims process	Standard claims process			
			Number of veterans	Number of veterans	Number of veterans	Percent denied	Percent approved	Percent denied	Percent approved	Percent denied	Percent approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	1,289	691	393	205	40%	60%	48%	52%	24%	76%
	Male	8,671	5,262	2,235	1,174	34%	66%	41%	59%	26%	74%
	All	9,960	5,953	2,628	1,379	35%	65%	42%	58%	26%	74%
Asian	Female	3,114	1,627	775	712	33%	67%	39%	61%	16%	84%
	Male	21,912	12,495	5,243	4,174	32%	68%	38%	62%	19%	81%
	All	25,026	14,122	6,018	4,886	32%	68%	38%	62%	19%	81%
Black/African American	Female	27,944	14,377	8,984	4,583	53%	47%	58%	42%	37%	63%
	Male	143,398	82,723	40,728	19,947	51%	49%	56%	44%	43%	57%
	All	171,342	97,100	49,712	24,530	52%	48%	56%	44%	42%	58%
Hispanic	Female	9,326	4,888	2,451	1,987	34%	66%	40%	60%	20%	80%
	Male	65,973	38,862	15,427	11,684	32%	68%	38%	62%	21%	79%
	All	75,299	43,750	17,878	13,671	32%	68%	38%	62%	21%	79%
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	407	242	120	45	53%	47%	58%	43%	29%	71%
	Male	7,806	5,324	1,926	556	37%	63%	40%	60%	41%	59%
	All	8,213	5,566	2,046	601	38%	62%	41%	59%	40%	60%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	420	209	111	100	41%	59%	41%	59%	29%	71%
	Male	1,742	956	378	408	33%	67%	34%	66%	22%	78%
	All	2,162	1,165	489	508	35%	65%	35%	65%	23%	77%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

			Decided as fully developed claims	Moved to standard claims process	Standard claims process	Decided as fully developed claims		Moved to standard claims process		Standard claims process	
		Number of veterans with submitted claims	Number of veterans	Number of veterans	Number of veterans	Percent denied	Percent approved	Percent denied	Percent approved	Percent denied	Percent approved
Other	Female	1,445	756	351	338	34%	66%	36%	64%	16%	84%
	Male	8,705	5,271	2,004	1,430	33%	67%	37%	63%	23%	77%
	All	10,150	6,027	2,355	1,768	33%	67%	37%	63%	22%	78%
White	Female	49,338	26,800	13,340	9,198	38%	62%	42%	58%	22%	78%
	Male	744,377	490,842	159,402	94,133	30%	70%	36%	64%	24%	76%
	All	793,715	517,642	172,742	103,331	31%	69%	36%	64%	24%	76%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: VA's Fully Developed Claims Program allows the veteran to receive a faster decision by bypassing the standard disability claims process. Veterans must submit all necessary information, such as all private medical records that are related to the claim, and certify they have done so. The claims processor who reviews the veteran's claim may move the fully developed claim to the standard claims process for a decision if additional non-federal records are needed to process this claim. Veterans can also choose to submit claims through the standard process. A claim can have one or more medical conditions. VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of the race the veterans also identified. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 24: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Fully Developed Claims with Eight or More Conditions by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2015–2020

		Number of veterans with submitted claims	Decided as fully developed claims	Moved to standard claims process	Standard claims process	Decided as fully developed claims	Moved to standard claims process	Standard claims process			
			Number of veterans	Number of veterans	Number of veterans	Percent denied	Percent approved	Percent denied	Percent approved	Percent denied	Percent approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	1,569	486	290	793	15%	85%	20%	80%	3%	97%
	Male	5,641	1,837	1,108	2,696	13%	87%	19%	81%	3%	97%
	All	7,210	2,323	1,398	3,489	13%	87%	19%	81%	3%	97%
Asian	Female	4,751	1,504	680	2,567	11%	89%	19%	81%	2%	98%
	Male	20,456	6,315	3,230	10,911	11%	89%	16%	84%	3%	97%
	All	25,207	7,819	3,910	13,478	11%	89%	16%	84%	3%	97%
Black/African American	Female	34,419	9,773	6,285	18,361	20%	80%	29%	71%	5%	95%
	Male	98,356	31,413	20,253	46,690	23%	77%	32%	68%	6%	94%
	All	132,775	41,186	26,538	65,051	22%	78%	31%	69%	6%	94%
Hispanic	Female	13,624	4,039	2,047	7,538	12%	88%	17%	83%	3%	97%
	Male	58,342	18,631	9,337	30,374	13%	87%	19%	81%	4%	96%
	All	71,966	22,670	11,384	37,912	13%	87%	19%	81%	3%	97%
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	223	101	47	75	31%	69%	26%	74%	12%	88%
	Male	825	354	246	225	27%	73%	33%	67%	12%	88%
	All	1,048	455	293	300	27%	73%	32%	68%	12%	88%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	696	201	101	394	14%	86%	18%	82%	4%	96%
	Male	2,484	717	342	1,425	14%	86%	18%	82%	3%	97%
	All	3,180	918	443	1,819	14%	86%	18%	82%	3%	97%
Other	Female	2,001	582	358	1,061	12%	88%	14%	86%	3%	97%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Number of veterans with submitted claims	Decided as fully developed claims	Moved to standard claims process	Standard claims process	Decided as fully developed claims		Moved to standard claims process		Standard claims process		
		Number of veterans	Number of veterans	Number of veterans	Percent denied	Percent approved	Percent denied	Percent approved	Percent denied	Percent approved	
	Male	4,987	1,838	1,013	2,136	15%	85%	19%	81%	6%	94%
	All	6,988	2,420	1,371	3,197	14%	86%	18%	82%	5%	95%
White	Female	51,441	15,641	8,267	27,533	13%	87%	19%	81%	3%	97%
	Male	335,789	109,074	57,129	169,586	12%	88%	18%	82%	3%	97%
	All	387,230	124,715	65,396	197,119	12%	88%	18%	82%	3%	97%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: VA's Fully Developed Claims Program allows the veteran to receive a faster decision by bypassing the standard disability claims process. Veterans must submit all necessary information, such as all private medical records that are related to the claim, and certify they have done so. The claims processor who reviews the veteran's claim may move the fully developed claim to the standard claims process for a decision if additional non-federal records are needed to process this claim. Veterans can also choose to submit claims through the standard process. A claim can have one or more medical conditions. VA considers a claim approved if the agency approved at least one claimed medical condition for service connection. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of the race the veterans also identified. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Approval and Denial Rates for Top 10 Individual Conditions

Table 25: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Tinnitus by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	25%	75%	1,848	456	1,392
	Male	24%	76%	14,179	3,444	10,735
	All	24%	76%	16,027	3,900	12,127
Asian	Female	19%	81%	4,915	950	3,965
	Male	18%	82%	40,567	7,170	33,397
	All	18%	82%	45,482	8,120	37,362
Black/African American	Female	25%	75%	28,636	7,298	21,338
	Male	30%	70%	151,868	45,908	105,960
	All	29%	71%	180,504	53,206	127,298
Hispanic	Female	20%	80%	13,216	2,703	10,513
	Male	20%	80%	108,287	21,590	86,697
	All	20%	80%	121,503	24,293	97,210
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	35%	65%	375	130	245
	Male	40%	60%	6,852	2,749	4,103
	All	40%	60%	7,227	2,879	4,348
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	21%	79%	648	135	513
	Male	16%	84%	3,714	605	3,109
	All	17%	83%	4,362	740	3,622
Other	Female	20%	80%	1,686	337	1,349
	Male	26%	74%	10,738	2,818	7,920
	All	25%	75%	12,424	3,155	9,269
White	Female	23%	77%	59,096	13,765	45,331

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
Male	24%	76%	1,065,233	253,781	811,452
All	24%	76%	1,124,329	267,546	856,783

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Tinnitus (diagnostic code 6260) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 26: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Tinnitus Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2010	Female	Denied	13	29%	54	22%	199	34%	74	30%	2	100%	2	20%	8	50%	522	30%
		Approved	32	71%	189	78%	386	66%	176	70%	-	0%	8	80%	8	50%	1,209	70%
		All	45	100%	243	100%	585	100%	250	100%	2	100%	10	100%	16	100%	1,731	100%
	Male	Denied	215	35%	515	17%	1,620	40%	866	27%	93	53%	25	25%	139	40%	15,081	31%
		Approved	405	65%	2,598	83%	2,384	60%	2,319	73%	84	47%	74	75%	206	60%	33,649	69%
		All	620	100%	3,113	100%	4,004	100%	3,185	100%	177	100%	99	100%	345	100%	48,730	100%
	All	Denied	228	34%	569	17%	1,819	40%	940	27%	95	53%	27	25%	147	41%	15,603	31%
		Approved	437	66%	2,787	83%	2,770	60%	2,495	73%	84	47%	82	75%	214	59%	34,858	69%
		All	665	100%	3,356	100%	4,589	100%	3,435	100%	179	100%	109	100%	361	100%	50,461	100%
FY 2011	Female	Denied	17	30%	50	24%	147	24%	60	22%	2	50%	2	10%	9	45%	425	24%
		Approved	39	70%	162	76%	459	76%	210	78%	2	50%	18	90%	11	55%	1,319	76%
		All	56	100%	212	100%	606	100%	270	100%	4	100%	20	100%	20	100%	1,744	100%
	Male	Denied	173	30%	359	14%	1,397	33%	669	21%	68	50%	18	18%	89	27%	12,215	25%
		Approved	403	70%	2,193	86%	2,776	67%	2,560	79%	67	50%	80	82%	238	73%	36,531	75%
		All	576	100%	2,552	100%	4,173	100%	3,229	100%	135	100%	98	100%	327	100%	48,746	100%
	All	Denied	190	30%	409	15%	1,544	32%	729	21%	70	50%	20	17%	98	28%	12,640	25%
		Approved	442	70%	2,355	85%	3,235	68%	2,770	79%	69	50%	98	83%	249	72%	37,850	75%
		All	632	100%	2,764	100%	4,779	100%	3,499	100%	139	100%	118	100%	347	100%	50,490	100%
FY 2012	Female	Denied	24	23%	53	21%	277	23%	99	19%	8	31%	4	17%	8	21%	644	20%
		Approved	80	77%	200	79%	948	77%	421	81%	18	69%	20	83%	30	79%	2,525	80%
		All	104	100%	253	100%	1,225	100%	520	100%	26	100%	24	100%	38	100%	3,169	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	190	21%	395	16%	2,038	27%	988	18%	87	38%	22	13%	113	26%	15,704	23%
	Approved	706	79%	2,007	84%	5,501	73%	4,423	82%	144	62%	151	87%	323	74%	53,656	77%
	All	896	100%	2,402	100%	7,539	100%	5,411	100%	231	100%	173	100%	436	100%	69,360	100%
All	Denied	214	21%	448	17%	2,315	26%	1,087	18%	95	37%	26	13%	121	26%	16,348	23%
	Approved	786	79%	2,207	83%	6,449	74%	4,844	82%	162	63%	171	87%	353	74%	56,181	77%
	All	1,000	100%	2,655	100%	8,764	100%	5,931	100%	257	100%	197	100%	474	100%	72,529	100%
FY 2013 Female	Denied	57	28%	73	20%	561	25%	202	21%	6	16%	6	12%	22	30%	1,271	24%
	Approved	150	72%	285	80%	1,704	75%	771	79%	31	84%	46	88%	51	70%	4,136	76%
	All	207	100%	358	100%	2,265	100%	973	100%	37	100%	52	100%	73	100%	5,407	100%
Male	Denied	348	23%	737	19%	4,106	31%	2,111	21%	122	36%	58	16%	264	29%	26,031	24%
	Approved	1,139	77%	3,068	81%	9,328	69%	7,802	79%	216	64%	302	84%	631	71%	82,284	76%
	All	1,487	100%	3,805	100%	13,434	100%	9,913	100%	338	100%	360	100%	895	100%	108,315	100%
All	Denied	405	24%	810	19%	4,667	30%	2,313	21%	128	34%	64	16%	286	30%	27,302	24%
	Approved	1,289	76%	3,353	81%	11,032	70%	8,573	79%	247	66%	348	84%	682	70%	86,420	76%
	All	1,694	100%	4,163	100%	15,699	100%	10,886	100%	375	100%	412	100%	968	100%	113,722	100%
FY 2014 Female	Denied	46	28%	84	22%	582	28%	231	23%	12	24%	17	35%	15	22%	1,302	25%
	Approved	121	72%	302	78%	1,534	72%	771	77%	37	76%	32	65%	53	78%	3,940	75%
	All	167	100%	386	100%	2,116	100%	1,002	100%	49	100%	49	100%	68	100%	5,242	100%
Male	Denied	403	27%	629	18%	4,159	31%	1,984	21%	139	38%	50	14%	252	32%	25,890	25%
	Approved	1,079	73%	2,788	82%	9,179	69%	7,635	79%	226	62%	296	86%	532	68%	78,089	75%
	All	1,482	100%	3,417	100%	13,338	100%	9,619	100%	365	100%	346	100%	784	100%	103,979	100%
All	Denied	449	27%	713	19%	4,741	31%	2,215	21%	151	36%	67	17%	267	31%	27,192	25%
	Approved	1,200	73%	3,090	81%	10,713	69%	8,406	79%	263	64%	328	83%	585	69%	82,029	75%
	All	1,649	100%	3,803	100%	15,454	100%	10,621	100%	414	100%	395	100%	852	100%	109,221	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2015	Female	Denied	43	20%	112	22%	848	28%	275	22%	18	22%	15	21%	35	28%	1,647	25%
		Approved	174	80%	387	78%	2,152	72%	1,004	78%	63	78%	57	79%	89	72%	4,853	75%
		All	217	100%	499	100%	3,000	100%	1,279	100%	81	100%	72	100%	124	100%	6,500	100%
	Male	Denied	418	25%	803	20%	5,371	32%	2,450	21%	178	36%	82	18%	342	32%	28,439	25%
		Approved	1,249	75%	3,143	80%	11,320	68%	9,264	79%	318	64%	381	82%	739	68%	86,633	75%
		All	1,667	100%	3,946	100%	16,691	100%	11,714	100%	496	100%	463	100%	1,081	100%	115,072	100%
	All	Denied	461	24%	915	21%	6,219	32%	2,725	21%	196	34%	97	18%	377	31%	30,086	25%
		Approved	1,423	76%	3,530	79%	13,472	68%	10,268	79%	381	66%	438	82%	828	69%	91,486	75%
		All	1,884	100%	4,445	100%	19,691	100%	12,993	100%	577	100%	535	100%	1,205	100%	121,572	100%
FY 2016	Female	Denied	46	23%	96	19%	816	28%	308	23%	16	46%	15	15%	39	23%	1,545	25%
		Approved	151	77%	399	81%	2,131	72%	1,006	77%	19	54%	83	85%	128	77%	4,646	75%
		All	197	100%	495	100%	2,947	100%	1,314	100%	35	100%	98	100%	167	100%	6,191	100%
	Male	Denied	330	23%	725	20%	4,925	31%	2,391	20%	161	45%	82	17%	317	28%	26,391	24%
		Approved	1,082	77%	2,985	80%	11,133	69%	9,380	80%	193	55%	393	83%	812	72%	82,286	76%
		All	1,412	100%	3,710	100%	16,058	100%	11,771	100%	354	100%	475	100%	1,129	100%	108,677	100%
	All	Denied	376	23%	821	20%	5,741	30%	2,699	21%	177	46%	97	17%	356	27%	27,936	24%
		Approved	1,233	77%	3,384	80%	13,264	70%	10,386	79%	212	54%	476	83%	940	73%	86,932	76%
		All	1,609	100%	4,205	100%	19,005	100%	13,085	100%	389	100%	573	100%	1,296	100%	114,868	100%
FY 2017	Female	Denied	53	24%	104	20%	890	25%	338	22%	21	60%	21	27%	46	19%	1,592	24%
		Approved	166	76%	428	80%	2,705	75%	1,200	78%	14	40%	56	73%	191	81%	5,022	76%
		All	219	100%	532	100%	3,595	100%	1,538	100%	35	100%	77	100%	237	100%	6,614	100%
	Male	Denied	332	22%	800	19%	5,642	30%	2,616	20%	185	49%	76	18%	332	27%	27,612	23%
		Approved	1,196	78%	3,426	81%	13,148	70%	10,349	80%	191	51%	340	82%	911	73%	90,598	77%
		All	1,528	100%	4,226	100%	18,790	100%	12,965	100%	376	100%	416	100%	1,243	100%	118,210	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
All	Denied	385	22%	904	19%	6,532	29%	2,954	20%	206	50%	97	20%	378	26%	29,204	23%	
	Approved	1,362	78%	3,854	81%	15,853	71%	11,549	80%	205	50%	396	80%	1,102	74%	95,620	77%	
	All	1,747	100%	4,758	100%	22,385	100%	14,503	100%	411	100%	493	100%	1,480	100%	124,824	100%	
FY 2018	Female	Denied	45	22%	105	16%	948	24%	342	19%	13	59%	16	21%	38	17%	1,551	22%
		Approved	161	78%	537	84%	2,959	76%	1,486	81%	9	41%	59	79%	190	83%	5,418	78%
		All	206	100%	642	100%	3,907	100%	1,828	100%	22	100%	75	100%	228	100%	6,969	100%
	Male	Denied	368	24%	725	17%	5,615	29%	2,634	20%	237	49%	65	15%	329	24%	27,025	23%
		Approved	1,168	76%	3,567	83%	13,914	71%	10,602	80%	246	51%	379	85%	1,062	76%	92,455	77%
		All	1,536	100%	4,292	100%	19,529	100%	13,236	100%	483	100%	444	100%	1,391	100%	119,480	100%
	All	Denied	413	24%	830	17%	6,563	28%	2,976	20%	250	50%	81	16%	367	23%	28,576	23%
		Approved	1,329	76%	4,104	83%	16,873	72%	12,088	80%	255	50%	438	84%	1,252	77%	97,873	77%
		All	1,742	100%	4,934	100%	23,436	100%	15,064	100%	505	100%	519	100%	1,619	100%	126,449	100%
FY 2019	Female	Denied	57	26%	129	20%	1,125	26%	416	19%	20	45%	24	29%	64	19%	1,834	22%
		Approved	159	74%	530	80%	3,212	74%	1,751	81%	24	55%	59	71%	267	81%	6,426	78%
		All	216	100%	659	100%	4,337	100%	2,167	100%	44	100%	83	100%	331	100%	8,260	100%
	Male	Denied	411	24%	797	16%	6,565	31%	2,790	19%	275	43%	63	14%	356	23%	30,300	23%
		Approved	1,284	76%	4,170	84%	14,837	69%	12,006	81%	363	57%	372	86%	1,207	77%	100,503	77%
		All	1,695	100%	4,967	100%	21,402	100%	14,796	100%	638	100%	435	100%	1,563	100%	130,803	100%
	All	Denied	468	24%	926	16%	7,690	30%	3,206	19%	295	43%	87	17%	420	22%	32,134	23%
		Approved	1,443	76%	4,700	84%	18,049	70%	13,757	81%	387	57%	431	83%	1,474	78%	106,929	77%
		All	1,911	100%	5,626	100%	25,739	100%	16,963	100%	682	100%	518	100%	1,894	100%	139,063	100%
FY 2020	Female	Denied	55	26%	90	14%	905	22%	358	17%	12	30%	13	15%	53	14%	1,432	20%
		Approved	159	74%	546	86%	3,148	78%	1,717	83%	28	70%	75	85%	331	86%	5,837	80%
		All	214	100%	636	100%	4,053	100%	2,075	100%	40	100%	88	100%	384	100%	7,269	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	256	20%	685	17%	4,470	26%	2,091	17%	1,204	37%	64	16%	285	18%	19,093	20%
	Approved	1,024	80%	3,452	83%	12,440	74%	10,357	83%	2,055	63%	341	84%	1,259	82%	74,768	80%
	All	1,280	100%	4,137	100%	16,910	100%	12,448	100%	3,259	100%	405	100%	1,544	100%	93,861	100%
All	Denied	311	21%	775	16%	5,375	26%	2,449	17%	1,216	37%	77	16%	338	18%	20,525	20%
	Approved	1,183	79%	3,998	84%	15,588	74%	12,074	83%	2,083	63%	416	84%	1,590	82%	80,605	80%
	All	1,494	100%	4,773	100%	20,963	100%	14,523	100%	3,299	100%	493	100%	1,928	100%	101,130	100%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that there were no veterans in the category. These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Tinnitus (diagnostic code 6260) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 27: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Hearing Loss by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	86%	14%	1,251	1,079	172
	Male	64%	36%	12,161	7,789	4,372
	All	66%	34%	13,412	8,868	4,544
Asian	Female	85%	15%	3,003	2,550	453
	Male	68%	32%	31,640	21,594	10,046
	All	70%	30%	34,643	24,144	10,499
Black/African American	Female	88%	12%	18,793	16,519	2,274
	Male	77%	23%	126,567	97,559	29,008
	All	78%	22%	145,360	114,078	31,282
Hispanic	Female	89%	11%	8,516	7,579	937
	Male	71%	29%	84,953	59,931	25,022
	All	72%	28%	93,469	67,510	25,959
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	88%	12%	299	263	36
	Male	52%	48%	7,347	3,812	3,535
	All	53%	47%	7,646	4,075	3,571
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	83%	17%	431	358	73
	Male	67%	33%	2,827	1,894	933
	All	69%	31%	3,258	2,252	1,006
Other	Female	90%	10%	1,065	960	105
	Male	63%	37%	9,099	5,712	3,387
	All	66%	34%	10,164	6,672	3,492
White	Female	84%	16%	43,247	36,363	6,884

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
Male	55%	45%	967,187	534,433	432,754
All	56%	44%	1,010,434	570,796	439,638

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Hearing Loss (diagnostic code 6100) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 28: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Hearing Loss Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2010	Female	Denied	34	92%	135	80%	457	90%	183	90%	3	100%	7	78%	18	95%	1,353	85%
		Approved	3	8%	33	20%	53	10%	20	10%	-	0%	2	22%	1	5%	239	15%
		All	37	100%	168	100%	510	100%	203	100%	3	100%	9	100%	19	100%	1,592	100%
	Male	Denied	413	69%	1,814	66%	3,281	81%	2,012	70%	131	67%	77	77%	211	60%	27,582	56%
		Approved	186	31%	916	34%	792	19%	858	30%	64	33%	23	23%	140	40%	21,405	44%
		All	599	100%	2,730	100%	4,073	100%	2,870	100%	195	100%	100	100%	351	100%	48,987	100%
	All	Denied	447	70%	1,949	67%	3,738	82%	2,195	71%	134	68%	84	77%	229	62%	28,935	57%
		Approved	189	30%	949	33%	845	18%	878	29%	64	32%	25	23%	141	38%	21,644	43%
		All	636	100%	2,898	100%	4,583	100%	3,073	100%	198	100%	109	100%	370	100%	50,579	100%
FY 2011	Female	Denied	46	90%	124	86%	452	91%	191	92%	5	83%	9	75%	12	86%	1,226	84%
		Approved	5	10%	21	14%	47	9%	16	8%	1	17%	3	25%	2	14%	232	16%
		All	51	100%	145	100%	499	100%	207	100%	6	100%	12	100%	14	100%	1,458	100%
	Male	Denied	352	68%	1,458	66%	3,060	79%	1,848	68%	95	66%	54	67%	148	50%	24,636	53%
		Approved	166	32%	737	34%	813	21%	887	32%	49	34%	27	33%	150	50%	22,146	47%
		All	518	100%	2,195	100%	3,873	100%	2,735	100%	144	100%	81	100%	298	100%	46,782	100%
	All	Denied	398	70%	1,582	68%	3,512	80%	2,039	69%	100	67%	63	68%	160	51%	25,862	54%
		Approved	171	30%	758	32%	860	20%	903	31%	50	33%	30	32%	152	49%	22,378	46%
		All	569	100%	2,340	100%	4,372	100%	2,942	100%	150	100%	93	100%	312	100%	48,240	100%
FY 2012	Female	Denied	59	88%	139	84%	855	88%	340	90%	19	95%	11	65%	24	89%	2,093	85%
		Approved	8	12%	27	16%	118	12%	37	10%	1	5%	6	35%	3	11%	369	15%
		All	67	100%	166	100%	973	100%	377	100%	20	100%	17	100%	27	100%	2,462	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
FY 2013	Male	Denied	521	66%	1,382	68%	5,078	77%	3,125	69%	141	65%	103	69%	219	55%	35,143	55%
		Approved	264	34%	661	32%	1,490	23%	1,423	31%	76	35%	46	31%	181	45%	29,197	45%
		All	785	100%	2,043	100%	6,568	100%	4,548	100%	217	100%	149	100%	400	100%	64,340	100%
	All	Denied	580	68%	1,521	69%	5,933	79%	3,465	70%	160	68%	114	69%	243	57%	37,236	56%
		Approved	272	32%	688	31%	1,608	21%	1,460	30%	77	32%	52	31%	184	43%	29,566	44%
		All	852	100%	2,209	100%	7,541	100%	4,925	100%	237	100%	166	100%	427	100%	66,802	100%
	Female	Denied	132	88%	199	81%	1,467	86%	579	87%	30	91%	37	84%	56	89%	3,621	84%
		Approved	18	12%	47	19%	238	14%	84	13%	3	9%	7	16%	7	11%	689	16%
		All	150	100%	246	100%	1,705	100%	663	100%	33	100%	44	100%	63	100%	4,310	100%
Male		Denied	823	65%	2,115	69%	9,354	77%	5,571	69%	252	70%	210	72%	453	57%	56,348	56%
		Approved	440	35%	965	31%	2,767	23%	2,520	31%	110	30%	80	28%	348	43%	43,620	44%
		All	1,263	100%	3,080	100%	12,121	100%	8,091	100%	362	100%	290	100%	801	100%	99,968	100%
All	Denied	955	68%	2,314	70%	10,821	78%	6,150	70%	282	71%	247	74%	509	59%	59,969	58%	
	Approved	458	32%	1,012	30%	3,005	22%	2,604	30%	113	29%	87	26%	355	41%	44,309	42%	
	All	1,413	100%	3,326	100%	13,826	100%	8,754	100%	395	100%	334	100%	864	100%	104,278	100%	
FY 2014	Female	Denied	96	88%	223	84%	1,334	87%	592	89%	27	96%	32	89%	47	96%	3,220	83%
		Approved	13	12%	41	16%	196	13%	71	11%	1	4%	4	11%	2	4%	640	17%
		All	109	100%	264	100%	1,530	100%	663	100%	28	100%	36	100%	49	100%	3,860	100%
	Male	Denied	798	63%	1,805	68%	8,972	78%	5,290	69%	258	70%	148	61%	392	52%	52,612	56%
		Approved	465	37%	863	32%	2,585	22%	2,388	31%	113	30%	93	39%	355	48%	41,430	44%
		All	1,263	100%	2,668	100%	11,557	100%	7,678	100%	371	100%	241	100%	747	100%	94,042	100%
	All	Denied	894	65%	2,028	69%	10,306	79%	5,882	71%	285	71%	180	65%	439	55%	55,832	57%
		Approved	478	35%	904	31%	2,781	21%	2,459	29%	114	29%	97	35%	357	45%	42,070	43%
		All	1,372	100%	2,932	100%	13,087	100%	8,341	100%	399	100%	277	100%	796	100%	97,902	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2015	Female	Denied	118	87%	246	83%	1,766	87%	727	89%	56	95%	43	91%	68	92%	4,018	84%
		Approved	18	13%	51	17%	262	13%	89	11%	3	5%	4	9%	6	8%	745	16%
		All	136	100%	297	100%	2,028	100%	816	100%	59	100%	47	100%	74	100%	4,763	100%
	Male	Denied	909	65%	2,090	68%	11,157	78%	6,450	69%	319	72%	239	67%	567	57%	59,188	57%
		Approved	499	35%	962	32%	3,193	22%	2,868	31%	126	28%	119	33%	429	43%	45,197	43%
		All	1,408	100%	3,052	100%	14,350	100%	9,318	100%	445	100%	358	100%	996	100%	104,385	100%
	All	Denied	1,027	67%	2,336	70%	12,923	79%	7,177	71%	375	74%	282	70%	635	59%	63,206	58%
		Approved	517	33%	1,013	30%	3,455	21%	2,957	29%	129	26%	123	30%	435	41%	45,942	42%
		All	1,544	100%	3,349	100%	16,378	100%	10,134	100%	504	100%	405	100%	1,070	100%	109,148	100%
FY 2016	Female	Denied	94	74%	239	86%	1,655	88%	746	87%	27	100%	48	86%	75	83%	3,725	84%
		Approved	33	26%	40	14%	227	12%	111	13%	-	0%	8	14%	15	17%	734	16%
		All	127	100%	279	100%	1,882	100%	857	100%	27	100%	56	100%	90	100%	4,459	100%
	Male	Denied	773	65%	1,953	68%	10,126	77%	6,419	69%	247	65%	232	65%	566	59%	54,480	56%
		Approved	424	35%	899	32%	3,042	23%	2,839	31%	133	35%	124	35%	388	41%	42,656	44%
		All	1,197	100%	2,852	100%	13,168	100%	9,258	100%	380	100%	356	100%	954	100%	97,136	100%
	All	Denied	867	65%	2,192	70%	11,781	78%	7,165	71%	274	67%	280	68%	641	61%	58,205	57%
		Approved	457	35%	939	30%	3,269	22%	2,950	29%	133	33%	132	32%	403	39%	43,390	43%
		All	1,324	100%	3,131	100%	15,050	100%	10,115	100%	407	100%	412	100%	1,044	100%	101,595	100%
FY 2017	Female	Denied	135	89%	280	89%	2,003	88%	909	89%	27	93%	42	86%	137	90%	4,131	85%
		Approved	17	11%	36	11%	280	12%	116	11%	2	7%	7	14%	15	10%	725	15%
		All	152	100%	316	100%	2,283	100%	1,025	100%	29	100%	49	100%	152	100%	4,856	100%
	Male	Denied	814	63%	2,205	68%	11,800	77%	7,144	72%	251	60%	212	68%	710	68%	58,402	55%
		Approved	482	37%	1,027	32%	3,458	23%	2,818	28%	170	40%	101	32%	333	32%	47,422	45%
		All	1,296	100%	3,232	100%	15,258	100%	9,962	100%	421	100%	313	100%	1,043	100%	105,824	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
All	Denied	949	66%	2,485	70%	13,803	79%	8,053	73%	278	62%	254	70%	847	71%	62,533	56%	
	Approved	499	34%	1,063	30%	3,738	21%	2,934	27%	172	38%	108	30%	348	29%	48,147	44%	
	All	1,448	100%	3,548	100%	17,541	100%	10,987	100%	450	100%	362	100%	1,195	100%	110,680	100%	
FY 2018	Female	Denied	126	91%	332	88%	2,149	89%	1,007	89%	16	84%	37	80%	145	92%	4,154	84%
		Approved	12	9%	46	12%	279	11%	129	11%	3	16%	9	20%	13	8%	767	16%
		All	138	100%	378	100%	2,428	100%	1,136	100%	19	100%	46	100%	158	100%	4,921	100%
	Male	Denied	839	63%	2,169	67%	12,055	77%	7,303	71%	293	56%	207	66%	803	71%	57,969	54%
		Approved	499	37%	1,074	33%	3,672	23%	2,921	29%	229	44%	106	34%	332	29%	49,290	46%
		All	1,338	100%	3,243	100%	15,727	100%	10,224	100%	522	100%	313	100%	1,135	100%	107,259	100%
All	Denied	965	65%	2,501	69%	14,204	78%	8,310	73%	309	57%	244	68%	948	73%	62,123	55%	
	Approved	511	35%	1,120	31%	3,951	22%	3,050	27%	232	43%	115	32%	345	27%	50,057	45%	
	All	1,476	100%	3,621	100%	18,155	100%	11,360	100%	541	100%	359	100%	1,293	100%	112,180	100%	
FY 2019	Female	Denied	128	83%	335	85%	2,359	88%	1,199	89%	33	77%	40	77%	176	89%	4,833	83%
		Approved	27	17%	57	15%	316	12%	144	11%	10	23%	12	23%	21	11%	960	17%
		All	155	100%	392	100%	2,675	100%	1,343	100%	43	100%	52	100%	197	100%	5,793	100%
	Male	Denied	881	61%	2,524	69%	13,046	76%	8,164	72%	349	49%	216	65%	840	67%	63,361	54%
		Approved	569	39%	1,113	31%	4,130	24%	3,140	28%	364	51%	115	35%	413	33%	55,000	46%
		All	1,450	100%	3,637	100%	17,176	100%	11,304	100%	713	100%	331	100%	1,253	100%	118,361	100%
All	Denied	1,009	63%	2,859	71%	15,405	78%	9,363	74%	382	51%	256	67%	1,016	70%	68,194	55%	
	Approved	596	37%	1,170	29%	4,446	22%	3,284	26%	374	49%	127	33%	434	30%	55,960	45%	
	All	1,605	100%	4,029	100%	19,851	100%	12,647	100%	756	100%	383	100%	1,450	100%	124,154	100%	
FY 2020	Female	Denied	111	86%	298	85%	2,022	89%	1,106	90%	20	63%	52	83%	202	91%	3,989	84%
		Approved	18	14%	54	15%	258	11%	120	10%	12	38%	11	17%	20	9%	784	16%
		All	129	100%	352	100%	2,280	100%	1,226	100%	32	100%	63	100%	222	100%	4,773	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	666	64%	2,079	71%	9,630	76%	6,605	74%	1,476	41%	196	66%	803	72%	44,712	56%
	Approved	378	36%	829	29%	3,066	24%	2,360	26%	2,101	59%	99	34%	318	28%	35,391	44%
	All	1,044	100%	2,908	100%	12,696	100%	8,965	100%	3,577	100%	295	100%	1,121	100%	80,103	100%
All	Denied	777	66%	2,377	73%	11,652	78%	7,711	76%	1,496	41%	248	69%	1,005	75%	48,701	57%
	Approved	396	34%	883	27%	3,324	22%	2,480	24%	2,113	59%	110	31%	338	25%	36,175	43%
	All	1,173	100%	3,260	100%	14,976	100%	10,191	100%	3,609	100%	358	100%	1,343	100%	84,876	100%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that there were no veterans in the category. These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Hearing Loss (diagnostic code 6100) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 29: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Limitation of Flexion of the Knee by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	34%	66%	1,339	461	878
	Male	37%	63%	5,807	2,172	3,635
	All	37%	63%	7,146	2,633	4,513
Asian	Female	28%	72%	3,975	1,116	2,859
	Male	31%	69%	21,555	6,777	14,778
	All	31%	69%	25,530	7,893	17,637
Black/African American	Female	34%	66%	28,586	9,740	18,846
	Male	41%	59%	95,238	39,143	56,095
	All	39%	61%	123,824	48,883	74,941
Hispanic	Female	29%	71%	10,717	3,117	7,600
	Male	32%	68%	54,894	17,787	37,107
	All	32%	68%	65,611	20,904	44,707
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	48%	52%	211	102	109
	Male	58%	42%	863	499	364
	All	56%	44%	1,074	601	473
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	28%	72%	533	150	383
	Male	28%	72%	2,176	610	1,566
	All	28%	72%	2,709	760	1,949
Other	Female	28%	72%	1,401	391	1,010
	Male	38%	62%	4,303	1,646	2,657
	All	36%	64%	5,704	2,037	3,667
White	Female	31%	69%	42,497	13,264	29,233

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
Male	35%	65%	334,475	116,317	218,158
All	34%	66%	376,972	129,581	247,391

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Limitation of Flexion of the Knee (diagnostic code 5260) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 30: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Limitation of Flexion of the Knee Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2010	Female	Denied	22	47%	107	43%	339	52%	116	45%	-	0%	2	25%	12	63%	670	47%
		Approved	25	53%	143	57%	310	48%	142	55%	1	100%	6	75%	7	37%	764	53%
		All	47	100%	250	100%	649	100%	258	100%	1	100%	8	100%	19	100%	1,434	100%
	Male	Denied	122	58%	731	40%	1,561	60%	686	51%	21	81%	28	41%	65	68%	5,653	51%
		Approved	88	42%	1,103	60%	1,055	40%	667	49%	5	19%	40	59%	30	32%	5,516	49%
		All	210	100%	1,834	100%	2,616	100%	1,353	100%	26	100%	68	100%	95	100%	11,169	100%
	All	Denied	144	56%	838	40%	1,900	58%	802	50%	21	78%	30	39%	77	68%	6,323	50%
		Approved	113	44%	1,246	60%	1,365	42%	809	50%	6	22%	46	61%	37	32%	6,280	50%
		All	257	100%	2,084	100%	3,265	100%	1,611	100%	27	100%	76	100%	114	100%	12,603	100%
FY 2011	Female	Denied	27	54%	96	44%	421	56%	130	51%	1	33%	5	38%	12	60%	675	46%
		Approved	23	46%	121	56%	326	44%	124	49%	2	67%	8	62%	8	40%	808	54%
		All	50	100%	217	100%	747	100%	254	100%	3	100%	13	100%	20	100%	1,483	100%
	Male	Denied	121	53%	606	39%	1,491	56%	711	49%	19	59%	25	43%	52	58%	5,810	49%
		Approved	107	47%	936	61%	1,153	44%	727	51%	13	41%	33	57%	38	42%	5,937	51%
		All	228	100%	1,542	100%	2,644	100%	1,438	100%	32	100%	58	100%	90	100%	11,747	100%
	All	Denied	148	53%	702	40%	1,912	56%	841	50%	20	57%	30	42%	64	58%	6,485	49%
		Approved	130	47%	1,057	60%	1,479	44%	851	50%	15	43%	41	58%	46	42%	6,745	51%
		All	278	100%	1,759	100%	3,391	100%	1,692	100%	35	100%	71	100%	110	100%	13,230	100%
FY 2012	Female	Denied	37	46%	105	39%	580	44%	192	40%	6	55%	10	42%	21	46%	1,039	38%
		Approved	44	54%	166	61%	740	56%	294	60%	5	45%	14	58%	25	54%	1,662	62%
		All	81	100%	271	100%	1,320	100%	486	100%	11	100%	24	100%	46	100%	2,701	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	156	43%	516	39%	2,377	49%	1,085	42%	21	38%	29	32%	73	52%	8,898	42%
	Approved	210	57%	810	61%	2,478	51%	1,495	58%	35	63%	61	68%	67	48%	12,254	58%
	All	366	100%	1,326	100%	4,855	100%	2,580	100%	56	100%	90	100%	140	100%	21,152	100%
All	Denied	193	43%	621	39%	2,957	48%	1,277	42%	27	40%	39	34%	94	51%	9,937	42%
	Approved	254	57%	976	61%	3,218	52%	1,789	58%	40	60%	75	66%	92	49%	13,916	58%
	All	447	100%	1,597	100%	6,175	100%	3,066	100%	67	100%	114	100%	186	100%	23,853	100%
FY 2013 Female	Denied	59	40%	114	36%	1,047	42%	300	38%	17	52%	12	31%	25	35%	1,568	38%
	Approved	89	60%	205	64%	1,431	58%	483	62%	16	48%	27	69%	46	65%	2,521	62%
	All	148	100%	319	100%	2,478	100%	783	100%	33	100%	39	100%	71	100%	4,089	100%
Male	Denied	231	39%	702	40%	4,236	49%	1,915	42%	41	53%	68	37%	156	57%	14,188	42%
	Approved	369	62%	1,066	60%	4,409	51%	2,624	58%	36	47%	117	63%	119	43%	19,895	58%
	All	600	100%	1,768	100%	8,645	100%	4,539	100%	77	100%	185	100%	275	100%	34,083	100%
All	Denied	290	39%	816	39%	5,283	47%	2,215	42%	58	53%	80	36%	181	52%	15,756	41%
	Approved	458	61%	1,271	61%	5,840	53%	3,107	58%	52	47%	144	64%	165	48%	22,416	59%
	All	748	100%	2,087	100%	11,123	100%	5,322	100%	110	100%	224	100%	346	100%	38,172	100%
FY 2014 Female	Denied	55	42%	98	33%	964	41%	281	37%	14	42%	12	28%	25	40%	1,367	36%
	Approved	76	58%	197	67%	1,386	59%	484	63%	19	58%	31	72%	37	60%	2,470	64%
	All	131	100%	295	100%	2,350	100%	765	100%	33	100%	43	100%	62	100%	3,837	100%
Male	Denied	249	41%	579	35%	4,128	47%	1,745	39%	52	47%	54	31%	132	57%	12,216	39%
	Approved	354	59%	1,062	65%	4,673	53%	2,767	61%	59	53%	118	69%	98	43%	19,410	61%
	All	603	100%	1,641	100%	8,801	100%	4,512	100%	111	100%	172	100%	230	100%	31,626	100%
All	Denied	304	41%	677	35%	5,092	46%	2,026	38%	66	46%	66	31%	157	54%	13,583	38%
	Approved	430	59%	1,259	65%	6,059	54%	3,251	62%	78	54%	149	69%	135	46%	21,880	62%
	All	734	100%	1,936	100%	11,151	100%	5,277	100%	144	100%	215	100%	292	100%	35,463	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2015	Female	Denied	58	37%	112	35%	1,248	41%	317	33%	22	46%	17	33%	36	35%	1,483	35%
		Approved	100	63%	209	65%	1,763	59%	637	67%	26	54%	35	67%	66	65%	2,717	65%
		All	158	100%	321	100%	3,011	100%	954	100%	48	100%	52	100%	102	100%	4,200	100%
	Male	Denied	266	43%	730	38%	5,005	48%	2,057	39%	66	46%	79	33%	170	53%	13,667	39%
		Approved	354	57%	1,197	62%	5,429	52%	3,283	61%	78	54%	164	67%	149	47%	21,615	61%
		All	620	100%	1,927	100%	10,434	100%	5,340	100%	144	100%	243	100%	319	100%	35,282	100%
	All	Denied	324	42%	842	37%	6,253	47%	2,374	38%	88	46%	96	33%	206	49%	15,150	38%
		Approved	454	58%	1,406	63%	7,192	53%	3,920	62%	104	54%	199	67%	215	51%	24,332	62%
		All	778	100%	2,248	100%	13,445	100%	6,294	100%	192	100%	295	100%	421	100%	39,482	100%
FY 2016	Female	Denied	28	26%	89	29%	985	36%	308	34%	11	52%	15	29%	48	42%	1,262	34%
		Approved	79	74%	217	71%	1,739	64%	611	66%	10	48%	37	71%	67	58%	2,471	66%
		All	107	100%	306	100%	2,724	100%	919	100%	21	100%	52	100%	115	100%	3,733	100%
	Male	Denied	210	40%	548	33%	4,162	44%	1,884	36%	51	67%	79	32%	151	42%	11,606	37%
		Approved	318	60%	1,093	67%	5,339	56%	3,388	64%	25	33%	169	68%	210	58%	19,744	63%
		All	528	100%	1,641	100%	9,501	100%	5,272	100%	76	100%	248	100%	361	100%	31,350	100%
	All	Denied	238	37%	637	33%	5,147	42%	2,192	35%	62	64%	94	31%	199	42%	12,868	37%
		Approved	397	63%	1,310	67%	7,078	58%	3,999	65%	35	36%	206	69%	277	58%	22,215	63%
		All	635	100%	1,947	100%	12,225	100%	6,191	100%	97	100%	300	100%	476	100%	35,083	100%
FY 2017	Female	Denied	36	26%	100	27%	1,050	31%	332	29%	8	73%	14	20%	41	25%	1,266	30%
		Approved	103	74%	276	73%	2,323	69%	806	71%	3	27%	57	80%	121	75%	3,023	70%
		All	139	100%	376	100%	3,373	100%	1,138	100%	11	100%	71	100%	162	100%	4,289	100%
	Male	Denied	217	36%	541	27%	4,206	37%	1,961	30%	39	76%	47	20%	205	41%	11,650	32%
		Approved	383	64%	1,487	73%	7,072	63%	4,568	70%	12	24%	191	80%	291	59%	24,421	68%
		All	600	100%	2,028	100%	11,278	100%	6,529	100%	51	100%	238	100%	496	100%	36,071	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
All	Denied	253	34%	641	27%	5,256	36%	2,293	30%	47	76%	61	20%	246	37%	12,916	32%	
	Approved	486	66%	1,763	73%	9,395	64%	5,374	70%	15	24%	248	80%	412	63%	27,444	68%	
	All	739	100%	2,404	100%	14,651	100%	7,667	100%	62	100%	309	100%	658	100%	40,360	100%	
FY 2018	Female	Denied	45	29%	90	18%	1,032	26%	337	22%	8	57%	22	26%	44	22%	1,335	25%
		Approved	111	71%	422	82%	2,934	74%	1,205	78%	6	43%	62	74%	156	78%	4,034	75%
		All	156	100%	512	100%	3,966	100%	1,542	100%	14	100%	84	100%	200	100%	5,369	100%
	Male	Denied	221	32%	606	24%	4,255	33%	1,896	25%	48	65%	72	23%	218	32%	11,461	28%
		Approved	468	68%	1,945	76%	8,487	67%	5,679	75%	26	35%	239	77%	472	68%	30,008	72%
		All	689	100%	2,551	100%	12,742	100%	7,575	100%	74	100%	311	100%	690	100%	41,469	100%
All	Denied	266	31%	696	23%	5,287	32%	2,233	24%	56	64%	94	24%	262	29%	12,796	27%	
	Approved	579	69%	2,367	77%	11,421	68%	6,884	76%	32	36%	301	76%	628	71%	34,042	73%	
	All	845	100%	3,063	100%	16,708	100%	9,117	100%	88	100%	395	100%	890	100%	46,838	100%	
FY 2019	Female	Denied	50	31%	116	21%	1,212	29%	456	24%	10	50%	26	35%	65	24%	1,517	25%
		Approved	112	69%	433	79%	2,995	71%	1,408	76%	10	50%	49	65%	209	76%	4,497	75%
		All	162	100%	549	100%	4,207	100%	1,864	100%	20	100%	75	100%	274	100%	6,014	100%
	Male	Denied	238	31%	699	24%	4,530	35%	2,191	26%	44	60%	71	25%	237	31%	12,440	28%
		Approved	539	69%	2,176	76%	8,501	65%	6,175	74%	29	40%	209	75%	533	69%	31,717	72%
		All	777	100%	2,875	100%	13,031	100%	8,366	100%	73	100%	280	100%	770	100%	44,157	100%
All	Denied	288	31%	815	24%	5,742	33%	2,647	26%	54	58%	97	27%	302	29%	13,957	28%	
	Approved	651	69%	2,609	76%	11,496	67%	7,583	74%	39	42%	258	73%	742	71%	36,214	72%	
	All	939	100%	3,424	100%	17,238	100%	10,230	100%	93	100%	355	100%	1,044	100%	50,171	100%	
FY 2020	Female	Denied	44	28%	89	16%	862	23%	348	20%	5	31%	15	21%	62	19%	1,082	20%
		Approved	116	73%	470	84%	2,899	77%	1,406	80%	11	69%	57	79%	268	81%	4,266	80%
		All	160	100%	559	100%	3,761	100%	1,754	100%	16	100%	72	100%	330	100%	5,348	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	141	24%	519	21%	3,192	30%	1,656	22%	97	68%	58	20%	187	22%	8,728	24%
	Approved	445	76%	1,903	79%	7,499	70%	5,734	78%	46	32%	225	80%	650	78%	27,641	76%
	All	586	100%	2,422	100%	10,691	100%	7,390	100%	143	100%	283	100%	837	100%	36,369	100%
All	Denied	185	25%	608	20%	4,054	28%	2,004	22%	102	64%	73	21%	249	21%	9,810	24%
	Approved	561	75%	2,373	80%	10,398	72%	7,140	78%	57	36%	282	79%	918	79%	31,907	76%
	All	746	100%	2,981	100%	14,452	100%	9,144	100%	159	100%	355	100%	1,167	100%	41,717	100%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that there were no veterans in the category. These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Limitation of Flexion of the Knee (diagnostic code 5260) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 31: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Lumbosacral or Cervical Strain by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	42%	58%	1,779	748	1,031
	Male	47%	53%	6,877	3,256	3,621
	All	46%	54%	8,656	4,004	4,652
Asian	Female	35%	65%	5,415	1,920	3,495
	Male	40%	60%	25,569	10,297	15,272
	All	39%	61%	30,984	12,217	18,767
Black/African American	Female	45%	55%	34,327	15,410	18,917
	Male	56%	44%	109,725	61,986	47,739
	All	54%	46%	144,052	77,396	66,656
Hispanic	Female	36%	64%	13,780	4,955	8,825
	Male	43%	57%	64,238	27,848	36,390
	All	42%	58%	78,018	32,803	45,215
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	54%	46%	317	172	145
	Male	66%	34%	1,343	891	452
	All	64%	36%	1,660	1,063	597
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	36%	64%	714	255	459
	Male	41%	59%	2,473	1,012	1,461
	All	40%	60%	3,187	1,267	1,920
Other	Female	35%	65%	1,823	636	1,187
	Male	49%	51%	5,442	2,687	2,755
	All	46%	54%	7,265	3,323	3,942
White	Female	38%	62%	56,932	21,747	35,185

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
Male	46%	54%	399,538	182,307	217,231
All	45%	55%	456,470	204,054	252,416

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Lumbosacral or Cervical Strain (diagnostic code 5237) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 32: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Lumbosacral or Cervical Strain Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2010	Female	Denied	27	44%	158	47%	645	64%	204	48%	4	57%	8	53%	21	66%	1,091	53%
		Approved	34	56%	175	53%	370	36%	221	52%	3	43%	7	47%	11	34%	986	47%
		All	61	100%	333	100%	1,015	100%	425	100%	7	100%	15	100%	32	100%	2,077	100%
	Male	Denied	186	63%	832	44%	2,517	73%	1,001	59%	35	81%	26	49%	89	68%	9,183	62%
		Approved	107	37%	1,080	56%	940	27%	682	41%	8	19%	27	51%	41	32%	5,689	38%
		All	293	100%	1,912	100%	3,457	100%	1,683	100%	43	100%	53	100%	130	100%	14,872	100%
	All	Denied	213	60%	990	44%	3,162	71%	1,205	57%	39	78%	34	50%	110	68%	10,274	61%
		Approved	141	40%	1,255	56%	1,310	29%	903	43%	11	22%	34	50%	52	32%	6,675	39%
		All	354	100%	2,245	100%	4,472	100%	2,108	100%	50	100%	68	100%	162	100%	16,949	100%
FY 2011	Female	Denied	31	48%	125	47%	496	58%	153	50%	6	55%	12	57%	18	82%	868	49%
		Approved	34	52%	142	53%	365	42%	153	50%	5	45%	9	43%	4	18%	908	51%
		All	65	100%	267	100%	861	100%	306	100%	11	100%	21	100%	22	100%	1,776	100%
	Male	Denied	136	63%	723	44%	2,132	70%	944	57%	18	51%	31	42%	63	64%	7,644	57%
		Approved	81	37%	902	56%	904	30%	701	43%	17	49%	42	58%	36	36%	5,851	43%
		All	217	100%	1,625	100%	3,036	100%	1,645	100%	35	100%	73	100%	99	100%	13,495	100%
	All	Denied	167	59%	848	45%	2,628	67%	1,097	56%	24	52%	43	46%	81	67%	8,512	56%
		Approved	115	41%	1,044	55%	1,269	33%	854	44%	22	48%	51	54%	40	33%	6,759	44%
		All	282	100%	1,892	100%	3,897	100%	1,951	100%	46	100%	94	100%	121	100%	15,271	100%
FY 2012	Female	Denied	43	43%	122	40%	797	49%	239	40%	8	40%	7	28%	17	34%	1,328	40%
		Approved	56	57%	184	60%	821	51%	361	60%	12	60%	18	72%	33	66%	2,032	60%
		All	99	100%	306	100%	1,618	100%	600	100%	20	100%	25	100%	50	100%	3,360	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	203	51%	638	45%	3,078	60%	1,353	47%	46	56%	38	41%	106	62%	11,135	49%
	Approved	198	49%	770	55%	2,013	40%	1,502	53%	36	44%	55	59%	64	38%	11,705	51%
	All	401	100%	1,408	100%	5,091	100%	2,855	100%	82	100%	93	100%	170	100%	22,840	100%
All	Denied	246	49%	760	44%	3,875	58%	1,592	46%	54	53%	45	38%	123	56%	12,463	48%
	Approved	254	51%	954	56%	2,834	42%	1,863	54%	48	47%	73	62%	97	44%	13,737	52%
	All	500	100%	1,714	100%	6,709	100%	3,455	100%	102	100%	118	100%	220	100%	26,200	100%
FY 2013 Female	Denied	94	44%	169	40%	1,483	49%	423	40%	20	53%	30	37%	47	43%	2,335	41%
	Approved	119	56%	253	60%	1,561	51%	637	60%	18	47%	51	63%	62	57%	3,397	59%
	All	213	100%	422	100%	3,044	100%	1,060	100%	38	100%	81	100%	109	100%	5,732	100%
Male	Denied	375	49%	994	44%	6,121	61%	2,635	48%	62	47%	87	40%	213	61%	19,637	48%
	Approved	386	51%	1,253	56%	3,906	39%	2,842	52%	69	53%	129	60%	136	39%	21,585	52%
	All	761	100%	2,247	100%	10,027	100%	5,477	100%	131	100%	216	100%	349	100%	41,222	100%
All	Denied	469	48%	1,163	44%	7,604	58%	3,058	47%	82	49%	117	39%	260	57%	21,972	47%
	Approved	505	52%	1,506	56%	5,467	42%	3,479	53%	87	51%	180	61%	198	43%	24,982	53%
	All	974	100%	2,669	100%	13,071	100%	6,537	100%	169	100%	297	100%	458	100%	46,954	100%
FY 2014 Female	Denied	72	42%	178	40%	1,517	50%	429	39%	12	31%	18	38%	31	35%	2,038	37%
	Approved	101	58%	271	60%	1,517	50%	681	61%	27	69%	30	63%	57	65%	3,470	63%
	All	173	100%	449	100%	3,034	100%	1,110	100%	39	100%	48	100%	88	100%	5,508	100%
Male	Denied	351	47%	868	42%	6,261	60%	2,486	45%	84	49%	78	40%	197	65%	18,207	45%
	Approved	401	53%	1,208	58%	4,162	40%	3,019	55%	86	51%	117	60%	104	35%	21,875	55%
	All	752	100%	2,076	100%	10,423	100%	5,505	100%	170	100%	195	100%	301	100%	40,082	100%
All	Denied	423	46%	1,046	41%	7,778	58%	2,915	44%	96	46%	96	40%	228	59%	20,245	44%
	Approved	502	54%	1,479	59%	5,679	42%	3,700	56%	113	54%	147	60%	161	41%	25,345	56%
	All	925	100%	2,525	100%	13,457	100%	6,615	100%	209	100%	243	100%	389	100%	45,590	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2015	Female	Denied	82	38%	222	40%	1,918	50%	554	38%	22	37%	29	36%	67	46%	2,629	39%
		Approved	133	62%	334	60%	1,947	50%	906	62%	37	63%	51	64%	79	54%	4,037	61%
		All	215	100%	556	100%	3,865	100%	1,460	100%	59	100%	80	100%	146	100%	6,666	100%
	Male	Denied	416	51%	1,140	45%	8,028	61%	3,263	47%	131	57%	160	44%	319	64%	21,992	47%
		Approved	398	49%	1,412	55%	5,103	39%	3,666	53%	100	43%	207	56%	177	36%	25,230	53%
		All	814	100%	2,552	100%	13,131	100%	6,929	100%	231	100%	367	100%	496	100%	47,222	100%
	All	Denied	498	48%	1,362	44%	9,946	59%	3,817	46%	153	53%	189	42%	386	60%	24,621	46%
		Approved	531	52%	1,746	56%	7,050	41%	4,572	54%	137	47%	258	58%	256	40%	29,267	54%
		All	1,029	100%	3,108	100%	16,996	100%	8,389	100%	290	100%	447	100%	642	100%	53,888	100%
FY 2016	Female	Denied	81	45%	187	36%	1,700	48%	502	37%	25	69%	30	33%	62	36%	2,315	39%
		Approved	99	55%	330	64%	1,869	52%	846	63%	11	31%	61	67%	112	64%	3,591	61%
		All	180	100%	517	100%	3,569	100%	1,348	100%	36	100%	91	100%	174	100%	5,906	100%
	Male	Denied	331	47%	933	41%	7,020	58%	3,109	45%	83	75%	122	39%	302	53%	19,457	46%
		Approved	380	53%	1,354	59%	5,016	42%	3,774	55%	28	25%	189	61%	273	47%	22,970	54%
		All	711	100%	2,287	100%	12,036	100%	6,883	100%	111	100%	311	100%	575	100%	42,427	100%
	All	Denied	412	46%	1,120	40%	8,720	56%	3,611	44%	108	73%	152	38%	364	49%	21,772	45%
		Approved	479	54%	1,684	60%	6,885	44%	4,620	56%	39	27%	250	62%	385	51%	26,561	55%
		All	891	100%	2,804	100%	15,605	100%	8,231	100%	147	100%	402	100%	749	100%	48,333	100%
FY 2017	Female	Denied	91	44%	189	33%	1,740	42%	598	37%	16	80%	31	33%	85	35%	2,368	38%
		Approved	115	56%	386	67%	2,440	58%	999	63%	4	20%	63	67%	156	65%	3,880	62%
		All	206	100%	575	100%	4,180	100%	1,597	100%	20	100%	94	100%	241	100%	6,248	100%
	Male	Denied	322	43%	1,040	39%	7,104	53%	3,260	41%	74	82%	114	40%	353	52%	20,277	44%
		Approved	427	57%	1,639	61%	6,179	47%	4,638	59%	16	18%	169	60%	327	48%	25,561	56%
		All	749	100%	2,679	100%	13,283	100%	7,898	100%	90	100%	283	100%	680	100%	45,838	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
All	Denied	413	43%	1,229	38%	8,844	51%	3,858	41%	90	82%	145	38%	438	48%	22,645	43%	
	Approved	542	57%	2,025	62%	8,619	49%	5,637	59%	20	18%	232	62%	483	52%	29,441	57%	
	All	955	100%	3,254	100%	17,463	100%	9,495	100%	110	100%	377	100%	921	100%	52,086	100%	
FY 2018	Female	Denied	73	40%	205	30%	1,775	41%	590	33%	19	86%	35	36%	82	32%	2,353	37%
		Approved	111	60%	470	70%	2,602	59%	1,176	67%	3	14%	61	64%	171	68%	4,083	63%
		All	184	100%	675	100%	4,377	100%	1,766	100%	22	100%	96	100%	253	100%	6,436	100%
	Male	Denied	367	47%	1,031	36%	7,244	52%	3,383	41%	82	77%	118	38%	360	46%	19,971	44%
		Approved	418	53%	1,797	64%	6,605	48%	4,867	59%	25	23%	192	62%	430	54%	25,731	56%
		All	785	100%	2,828	100%	13,849	100%	8,250	100%	107	100%	310	100%	790	100%	45,702	100%
All	Denied	440	45%	1,236	35%	9,019	49%	3,973	40%	101	78%	153	38%	442	42%	22,324	43%	
	Approved	529	55%	2,267	65%	9,207	51%	6,043	60%	28	22%	253	62%	601	58%	29,814	57%	
	All	969	100%	3,503	100%	18,226	100%	10,016	100%	129	100%	406	100%	1,043	100%	52,138	100%	
FY 2019	Female	Denied	94	45%	193	29%	1,928	41%	719	33%	17	59%	31	38%	116	34%	2,571	36%
		Approved	116	55%	462	71%	2,719	59%	1,448	67%	12	41%	51	62%	224	66%	4,554	64%
		All	210	100%	655	100%	4,647	100%	2,167	100%	29	100%	82	100%	340	100%	7,125	100%
	Male	Denied	344	43%	1,220	38%	7,419	52%	3,735	40%	77	76%	129	43%	397	43%	20,811	43%
		Approved	450	57%	2,032	62%	6,799	48%	5,504	60%	24	24%	169	57%	522	57%	27,066	57%
		All	794	100%	3,252	100%	14,218	100%	9,239	100%	101	100%	298	100%	919	100%	47,877	100%
All	Denied	438	44%	1,413	36%	9,347	50%	4,454	39%	94	72%	160	42%	513	41%	23,382	43%	
	Approved	566	56%	2,494	64%	9,518	50%	6,952	61%	36	28%	220	58%	746	59%	31,620	57%	
	All	1,004	100%	3,907	100%	18,865	100%	11,406	100%	130	100%	380	100%	1,259	100%	55,002	100%	
FY 2020	Female	Denied	60	35%	172	26%	1,411	34%	544	28%	23	64%	24	30%	90	24%	1,851	30%
		Approved	113	65%	488	74%	2,706	66%	1,397	72%	13	36%	57	70%	278	76%	4,247	70%
		All	173	100%	660	100%	4,117	100%	1,941	100%	36	100%	81	100%	368	100%	6,098	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	225	38%	878	32%	5,062	45%	2,679	34%	199	82%	109	40%	288	31%	13,993	37%
	Approved	375	63%	1,825	68%	6,112	55%	5,195	66%	43	18%	165	60%	645	69%	23,968	63%
	All	600	100%	2,703	100%	11,174	100%	7,874	100%	242	100%	274	100%	933	100%	37,961	100%
All	Denied	285	37%	1,050	31%	6,473	42%	3,223	33%	222	80%	133	37%	378	29%	15,844	36%
	Approved	488	63%	2,313	69%	8,818	58%	6,592	67%	56	20%	222	63%	923	71%	28,215	64%
	All	773	100%	3,363	100%	15,291	100%	9,815	100%	278	100%	355	100%	1,301	100%	44,059	100%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Lumbosacral or Cervical Strain (diagnostic code 5237) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 33: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Limited Motion of the Ankle by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	43%	57%	951	405	546
	Male	40%	60%	4,178	1,668	2,510
	All	40%	60%	5,129	2,073	3,056
Asian	Female	37%	63%	3,432	1,269	2,163
	Male	37%	63%	17,887	6,643	11,244
	All	37%	63%	21,319	7,912	13,407
Black/African American	Female	44%	56%	19,866	8,711	11,155
	Male	45%	55%	70,368	31,460	38,908
	All	45%	55%	90,234	40,171	50,063
Hispanic	Female	39%	61%	8,295	3,200	5,095
	Male	38%	62%	42,648	16,190	26,458
	All	38%	62%	50,943	19,390	31,553
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	50%	50%	147	74	73
	Male	53%	47%	602	320	282
	All	53%	47%	749	394	355
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	36%	64%	456	164	292
	Male	33%	67%	1,920	641	1,279
	All	34%	66%	2,376	805	1,571
Other	Female	38%	62%	934	352	582
	Male	43%	57%	2,965	1,287	1,678
	All	42%	58%	3,899	1,639	2,260
White	Female	39%	61%	32,090	12,591	19,499

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
Male	39%	61%	243,532	94,785	148,747
All	39%	61%	275,622	107,376	168,246

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Limited Motion of the Ankle (diagnostic code 5271) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 34: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Limited Motion of the Ankle Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2010	Female	Denied	19	59%	122	52%	327	64%	105	53%	2	67%	6	46%	8	50%	569	53%
		Approved	13	41%	114	48%	181	36%	92	47%	1	33%	7	54%	8	50%	501	47%
		All	32	100%	236	100%	508	100%	197	100%	3	100%	13	100%	16	100%	1,070	100%
	Male	Denied	78	56%	695	45%	1,275	59%	573	52%	10	59%	17	47%	53	63%	4,478	54%
		Approved	62	44%	841	55%	881	41%	522	48%	7	41%	19	53%	31	37%	3,885	46%
		All	140	100%	1,536	100%	2,156	100%	1,095	100%	17	100%	36	100%	84	100%	8,363	100%
	All	Denied	97	56%	817	46%	1,602	60%	678	52%	12	60%	23	47%	61	61%	5,047	54%
		Approved	75	44%	955	54%	1,062	40%	614	48%	8	40%	26	53%	39	39%	4,386	46%
		All	172	100%	1,772	100%	2,664	100%	1,292	100%	20	100%	49	100%	100	100%	9,433	100%
FY 2011	Female	Denied	19	66%	95	51%	278	60%	110	60%	3	60%	10	71%	11	65%	514	52%
		Approved	10	34%	93	49%	188	40%	74	40%	2	40%	4	29%	6	35%	470	48%
		All	29	100%	188	100%	466	100%	184	100%	5	100%	14	100%	17	100%	984	100%
	Male	Denied	78	55%	531	43%	1,197	58%	614	55%	8	40%	21	40%	56	62%	4,408	53%
		Approved	65	45%	701	57%	859	42%	500	45%	12	60%	32	60%	34	38%	3,937	47%
		All	143	100%	1,232	100%	2,056	100%	1,114	100%	20	100%	53	100%	90	100%	8,345	100%
	All	Denied	97	56%	626	44%	1,475	58%	724	56%	11	44%	31	46%	67	63%	4,922	53%
		Approved	75	44%	794	56%	1,047	42%	574	44%	14	56%	36	54%	40	37%	4,407	47%
		All	172	100%	1,420	100%	2,522	100%	1,298	100%	25	100%	67	100%	107	100%	9,329	100%
FY 2012	Female	Denied	26	49%	76	37%	431	47%	167	43%	4	33%	10	45%	12	44%	826	41%
		Approved	27	51%	128	63%	477	53%	217	57%	8	67%	12	55%	15	56%	1,206	59%
		All	53	100%	204	100%	908	100%	384	100%	12	100%	22	100%	27	100%	2,032	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
FY 2013	Male	Denied	113	41%	393	39%	1,771	47%	843	41%	11	29%	26	31%	43	48%	6,253	41%
		Approved	160	59%	610	61%	2,026	53%	1,202	59%	27	71%	57	69%	46	52%	9,012	59%
		All	273	100%	1,003	100%	3,797	100%	2,045	100%	38	100%	83	100%	89	100%	15,265	100%
	All	Denied	139	43%	469	39%	2,202	47%	1,010	42%	15	30%	36	34%	55	47%	7,079	41%
		Approved	187	57%	738	61%	2,503	53%	1,419	58%	35	70%	69	66%	61	53%	10,218	59%
		All	326	100%	1,207	100%	4,705	100%	2,429	100%	50	100%	105	100%	116	100%	17,297	100%
	Female	Denied	52	45%	98	36%	837	46%	251	38%	9	41%	17	47%	19	53%	1,362	41%
		Approved	64	55%	175	64%	964	54%	402	62%	13	59%	19	53%	17	47%	1,987	59%
		All	116	100%	273	100%	1,801	100%	653	100%	22	100%	36	100%	36	100%	3,349	100%
Male	Denied	188	39%	601	39%	3,174	47%	1,499	40%	26	38%	65	33%	96	51%	10,335	40%	
	Approved	292	61%	947	61%	3,571	53%	2,235	60%	42	62%	133	67%	94	49%	15,367	60%	
	All	480	100%	1,548	100%	6,745	100%	3,734	100%	68	100%	198	100%	190	100%	25,702	100%	
All	Denied	240	40%	699	38%	4,011	47%	1,750	40%	35	39%	82	35%	115	51%	11,697	40%	
	Approved	356	60%	1,122	62%	4,535	53%	2,637	60%	55	61%	152	65%	111	49%	17,354	60%	
	All	596	100%	1,821	100%	8,546	100%	4,387	100%	90	100%	234	100%	226	100%	29,051	100%	
FY 2014	Female	Denied	41	44%	98	37%	889	50%	261	40%	15	63%	9	27%	22	46%	1,239	40%
		Approved	52	56%	169	63%	884	50%	396	60%	9	38%	24	73%	26	54%	1,866	60%
		All	93	100%	267	100%	1,773	100%	657	100%	24	100%	33	100%	48	100%	3,105	100%
	Male	Denied	176	42%	576	38%	3,082	47%	1,479	39%	43	49%	43	28%	76	48%	9,649	39%
		Approved	243	58%	932	62%	3,444	53%	2,281	61%	44	51%	111	72%	83	52%	15,023	61%
		All	419	100%	1,508	100%	6,526	100%	3,760	100%	87	100%	154	100%	159	100%	24,672	100%
	All	Denied	217	42%	674	38%	3,971	48%	1,740	39%	58	52%	52	28%	98	47%	10,888	39%
		Approved	295	58%	1,101	62%	4,328	52%	2,677	61%	53	48%	135	72%	109	53%	16,889	61%
		All	512	100%	1,775	100%	8,299	100%	4,417	100%	111	100%	187	100%	207	100%	27,777	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2015	Female	Denied	50	43%	139	43%	1,086	49%	320	39%	17	47%	16	28%	26	35%	1,490	41%
		Approved	66	57%	185	57%	1,131	51%	505	61%	19	53%	41	72%	48	65%	2,136	59%
		All	116	100%	324	100%	2,217	100%	825	100%	36	100%	57	100%	74	100%	3,626	100%
	Male	Denied	198	42%	691	40%	3,961	49%	1,826	40%	70	53%	87	36%	120	55%	11,523	41%
		Approved	271	58%	1,021	60%	4,068	51%	2,696	60%	63	47%	154	64%	100	45%	16,639	59%
		All	469	100%	1,712	100%	8,029	100%	4,522	100%	133	100%	241	100%	220	100%	28,162	100%
	All	Denied	248	42%	830	41%	5,047	49%	2,146	40%	87	51%	103	35%	146	50%	13,013	41%
		Approved	337	58%	1,206	59%	5,199	51%	3,201	60%	82	49%	195	65%	148	50%	18,775	59%
		All	585	100%	2,036	100%	10,246	100%	5,347	100%	169	100%	298	100%	294	100%	31,788	100%
FY 2016	Female	Denied	33	38%	127	38%	925	45%	338	41%	3	30%	24	39%	39	39%	1,316	41%
		Approved	54	62%	208	62%	1,120	55%	490	59%	7	70%	37	61%	60	61%	1,931	59%
		All	87	100%	335	100%	2,045	100%	828	100%	10	100%	61	100%	99	100%	3,247	100%
	Male	Denied	178	42%	618	38%	3,463	46%	1,788	39%	36	61%	95	38%	155	48%	10,284	40%
		Approved	248	58%	994	62%	4,039	54%	2,767	61%	23	39%	152	62%	171	52%	15,543	60%
		All	426	100%	1,612	100%	7,502	100%	4,555	100%	59	100%	247	100%	326	100%	25,827	100%
	All	Denied	211	41%	745	38%	4,388	46%	2,126	39%	39	57%	119	39%	194	46%	11,600	40%
		Approved	302	59%	1,202	62%	5,159	54%	3,257	61%	30	43%	189	61%	231	54%	17,474	60%
		All	513	100%	1,947	100%	9,547	100%	5,383	100%	69	100%	308	100%	425	100%	29,074	100%
FY 2017	Female	Denied	31	29%	131	37%	1,074	43%	377	38%	6	67%	23	40%	57	46%	1,399	40%
		Approved	75	71%	225	63%	1,449	57%	603	62%	3	33%	35	60%	68	54%	2,098	60%
		All	106	100%	356	100%	2,523	100%	980	100%	9	100%	58	100%	125	100%	3,497	100%
	Male	Denied	205	44%	649	36%	3,679	43%	2,008	38%	19	73%	82	34%	155	42%	10,519	38%
		Approved	266	56%	1,173	64%	4,960	57%	3,336	62%	7	27%	159	66%	210	58%	17,261	62%
		All	471	100%	1,822	100%	8,639	100%	5,344	100%	26	100%	241	100%	365	100%	27,780	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
All	Denied	236	41%	780	36%	4,753	43%	2,385	38%	25	71%	105	35%	212	43%	11,918	38%	
	Approved	341	59%	1,398	64%	6,409	57%	3,939	62%	10	29%	194	65%	278	57%	19,359	62%	
	All	577	100%	2,178	100%	11,162	100%	6,324	100%	35	100%	299	100%	490	100%	31,277	100%	
FY 2018	Female	Denied	51	45%	135	33%	1,011	38%	406	36%	4	40%	17	29%	36	30%	1,347	37%
		Approved	62	55%	275	67%	1,616	62%	724	64%	6	60%	41	71%	84	70%	2,294	63%
		All	113	100%	410	100%	2,627	100%	1,130	100%	10	100%	58	100%	120	100%	3,641	100%
	Male	Denied	161	34%	637	32%	3,601	40%	1,932	35%	31	66%	65	29%	176	41%	10,001	36%
		Approved	310	66%	1,364	68%	5,295	60%	3,605	65%	16	34%	160	71%	257	59%	17,648	64%
		All	471	100%	2,001	100%	8,896	100%	5,537	100%	47	100%	225	100%	433	100%	27,649	100%
All	Denied	212	36%	772	32%	4,612	40%	2,338	35%	35	61%	82	29%	212	38%	11,348	36%	
	Approved	372	64%	1,639	68%	6,911	60%	4,329	65%	22	39%	201	71%	341	62%	19,942	64%	
	All	584	100%	2,411	100%	11,523	100%	6,667	100%	57	100%	283	100%	553	100%	31,290	100%	
FY 2019	Female	Denied	49	44%	128	31%	1,031	40%	463	36%	7	78%	15	35%	68	41%	1,389	35%
		Approved	62	56%	286	69%	1,558	60%	807	64%	2	22%	28	65%	98	59%	2,585	65%
		All	111	100%	414	100%	2,589	100%	1,270	100%	9	100%	43	100%	166	100%	3,974	100%
	Male	Denied	168	34%	694	33%	3,635	41%	2,072	35%	19	56%	74	33%	200	41%	10,005	35%
		Approved	322	66%	1,408	67%	5,171	59%	3,802	65%	15	44%	148	67%	288	59%	18,391	65%
		All	490	100%	2,102	100%	8,806	100%	5,874	100%	34	100%	222	100%	488	100%	28,396	100%
All	Denied	217	36%	822	33%	4,666	41%	2,535	35%	26	60%	89	34%	268	41%	11,394	35%	
	Approved	384	64%	1,694	67%	6,729	59%	4,609	65%	17	40%	176	66%	386	59%	20,976	65%	
	All	601	100%	2,516	100%	11,395	100%	7,144	100%	43	100%	265	100%	654	100%	32,370	100%	
FY 2020	Female	Denied	34	36%	120	28%	822	34%	402	34%	4	57%	17	28%	54	26%	1,140	32%
		Approved	61	64%	305	72%	1,587	66%	785	66%	3	43%	44	72%	152	74%	2,425	68%
		All	95	100%	425	100%	2,409	100%	1,187	100%	7	100%	61	100%	206	100%	3,565	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	125	32%	558	31%	2,622	36%	1,556	31%	47	64%	66	30%	157	30%	7,330	31%
	Approved	271	68%	1,253	69%	4,594	64%	3,512	69%	26	36%	154	70%	364	70%	16,041	69%
	All	396	100%	1,811	100%	7,216	100%	5,068	100%	73	100%	220	100%	521	100%	23,371	100%
All	Denied	159	32%	678	30%	3,444	36%	1,958	31%	51	64%	83	30%	211	29%	8,470	31%
	Approved	332	68%	1,558	70%	6,181	64%	4,297	69%	29	36%	198	70%	516	71%	18,466	69%
	All	491	100%	2,236	100%	9,625	100%	6,255	100%	80	100%	281	100%	727	100%	26,936	100%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Limited Motion of the Ankle (diagnostic code 5271) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 35: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Limitation of Motion of the Arm by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	42%	58%	728	303	425
	Male	41%	59%	4,160	1,712	2,448
	All	41%	59%	4,888	2,015	2,873
Asian	Female	38%	62%	2,547	972	1,575
	Male	37%	63%	15,875	5,837	10,038
	All	37%	63%	18,422	6,809	11,613
Black/African American	Female	42%	58%	15,235	6,349	8,886
	Male	47%	53%	62,535	29,189	33,346
	All	46%	54%	77,770	35,538	42,232
Hispanic	Female	35%	65%	6,179	2,193	3,986
	Male	37%	63%	39,957	14,687	25,270
	All	37%	63%	46,136	16,880	29,256
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	62%	38%	91	56	35
	Male	66%	34%	551	363	188
	All	65%	35%	642	419	223
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	39%	61%	335	130	205
	Male	35%	65%	1,754	618	1,136
	All	36%	64%	2,089	748	1,341
Other	Female	36%	64%	798	288	510
	Male	42%	58%	3,369	1,405	1,964
	All	41%	59%	4,167	1,693	2,474
White	Female	40%	60%	26,325	10,421	15,904

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
Male	40%	60%	244,287	96,943	147,344
All	40%	60%	270,612	107,364	163,248

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Limitation of Motion of the Arm (diagnostic code 5201) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 36: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Limitation of Motion of the Arm Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2010	Female	Denied	7	64%	57	54%	193	70%	68	63%	-	-	2	50%	9	75%	397	66%
		Approved	4	36%	49	46%	82	30%	40	37%	-	-	2	50%	3	25%	209	34%
		All	11	100%	106	100%	275	100%	108	100%	-	-	4	100%	12	100%	606	100%
	Male	Denied	78	71%	527	53%	1,012	70%	448	67%	12	86%	26	68%	42	69%	3,954	66%
		Approved	32	29%	464	47%	428	30%	221	33%	2	14%	12	32%	19	31%	2,080	34%
		All	110	100%	991	100%	1,440	100%	669	100%	14	100%	38	100%	61	100%	6,034	100%
	All	Denied	85	70%	584	53%	1,205	70%	516	66%	12	86%	28	67%	51	70%	4,351	66%
		Approved	36	30%	513	47%	510	30%	261	34%	2	14%	14	33%	22	30%	2,289	34%
		All	121	100%	1,097	100%	1,715	100%	777	100%	14	100%	42	100%	73	100%	6,640	100%
FY 2011	Female	Denied	9	75%	49	57%	207	68%	54	59%	-	0%	4	80%	3	43%	341	61%
		Approved	3	25%	37	43%	97	32%	37	41%	2	100%	1	20%	4	57%	216	39%
		All	12	100%	86	100%	304	100%	91	100%	2	100%	5	100%	7	100%	557	100%
	Male	Denied	56	58%	421	53%	921	68%	472	66%	7	50%	14	45%	40	71%	3,629	61%
		Approved	41	42%	372	47%	442	32%	238	34%	7	50%	17	55%	16	29%	2,332	39%
		All	97	100%	793	100%	1,363	100%	710	100%	14	100%	31	100%	56	100%	5,961	100%
	All	Denied	65	60%	470	53%	1,128	68%	526	66%	7	44%	18	50%	43	68%	3,970	61%
		Approved	44	40%	409	47%	539	32%	275	34%	9	56%	18	50%	20	32%	2,548	39%
		All	109	100%	879	100%	1,667	100%	801	100%	16	100%	36	100%	63	100%	6,518	100%
FY 2012	Female	Denied	16	46%	45	47%	296	57%	101	54%	4	57%	3	30%	8	47%	613	52%
		Approved	19	54%	50	53%	222	43%	87	46%	3	43%	7	70%	9	53%	576	48%
		All	35	100%	95	100%	518	100%	188	100%	7	100%	10	100%	17	100%	1,189	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
FY 2013	Male	Denied	97	51%	322	51%	1,485	60%	692	53%	22	59%	33	57%	44	59%	5,907	53%
		Approved	94	49%	310	49%	998	40%	604	47%	15	41%	25	43%	31	41%	5,234	47%
		All	191	100%	632	100%	2,483	100%	1,296	100%	37	100%	58	100%	75	100%	11,141	100%
	All	Denied	113	50%	367	50%	1,781	59%	793	53%	26	59%	36	53%	52	57%	6,520	53%
		Approved	113	50%	360	50%	1,220	41%	691	47%	18	41%	32	47%	40	43%	5,810	47%
		All	226	100%	727	100%	3,001	100%	1,484	100%	44	100%	68	100%	92	100%	12,330	100%
	Female	Denied	37	59%	100	66%	638	62%	197	61%	4	50%	6	30%	19	70%	1,118	57%
		Approved	26	41%	52	34%	399	38%	126	39%	4	50%	14	70%	8	30%	860	43%
		All	63	100%	152	100%	1,037	100%	323	100%	8	100%	20	100%	27	100%	1,978	100%
Male		Denied	181	59%	568	55%	2,936	64%	1,370	58%	28	65%	52	48%	105	74%	10,615	56%
		Approved	128	41%	460	45%	1,625	36%	1,002	42%	15	35%	56	52%	36	26%	8,182	44%
		All	309	100%	1,028	100%	4,561	100%	2,372	100%	43	100%	108	100%	141	100%	18,797	100%
All	Denied	218	59%	668	57%	3,574	64%	1,567	58%	32	63%	58	45%	124	74%	11,733	56%	
	Approved	154	41%	512	43%	2,024	36%	1,128	42%	19	37%	70	55%	44	26%	9,042	44%	
	All	372	100%	1,180	100%	5,598	100%	2,695	100%	51	100%	128	100%	168	100%	20,775	100%	
FY 2014	Female	Denied	28	65%	90	61%	625	63%	212	59%	11	79%	16	80%	7	44%	1,052	58%
		Approved	15	35%	57	39%	361	37%	145	41%	3	21%	4	20%	9	56%	760	42%
		All	43	100%	147	100%	986	100%	357	100%	14	100%	20	100%	16	100%	1,812	100%
	Male	Denied	189	61%	530	58%	2,925	67%	1,388	61%	39	64%	54	51%	101	75%	10,265	60%
		Approved	121	39%	378	42%	1,428	33%	889	39%	22	36%	52	49%	34	25%	6,840	40%
		All	310	100%	908	100%	4,353	100%	2,277	100%	61	100%	106	100%	135	100%	17,105	100%
	All	Denied	217	61%	620	59%	3,550	66%	1,600	61%	50	67%	70	56%	108	72%	11,317	60%
		Approved	136	39%	435	41%	1,789	34%	1,034	39%	25	33%	56	44%	43	28%	7,600	40%
		All	353	100%	1,055	100%	5,339	100%	2,634	100%	75	100%	126	100%	151	100%	18,917	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2015	Female	Denied	45	66%	108	64%	827	65%	227	59%	12	63%	16	62%	31	76%	1,310	62%
		Approved	23	34%	61	36%	441	35%	159	41%	7	37%	10	38%	10	24%	802	38%
		All	68	100%	169	100%	1,268	100%	386	100%	19	100%	26	100%	41	100%	2,112	100%
	Male	Denied	229	66%	687	62%	3,873	72%	1,795	64%	59	73%	99	65%	149	75%	12,631	64%
		Approved	118	34%	429	38%	1,539	28%	1,017	36%	22	27%	53	35%	50	25%	7,203	36%
		All	347	100%	1,116	100%	5,412	100%	2,812	100%	81	100%	152	100%	199	100%	19,834	100%
	All	Denied	274	66%	795	62%	4,700	70%	2,022	63%	71	71%	115	65%	180	75%	13,941	64%
		Approved	141	34%	490	38%	1,980	30%	1,176	37%	29	29%	63	35%	60	25%	8,005	36%
		All	415	100%	1,285	100%	6,680	100%	3,198	100%	100	100%	178	100%	240	100%	21,946	100%
FY 2016	Female	Denied	28	39%	101	47%	716	50%	221	45%	8	80%	20	50%	39	52%	1,199	51%
		Approved	43	61%	114	53%	705	50%	274	55%	2	20%	20	50%	36	48%	1,166	49%
		All	71	100%	215	100%	1,421	100%	495	100%	10	100%	40	100%	75	100%	2,365	100%
	Male	Denied	196	46%	553	43%	3,403	56%	1,660	46%	34	74%	80	40%	153	55%	10,874	48%
		Approved	226	54%	727	57%	2,710	44%	1,951	54%	12	26%	121	60%	123	45%	11,872	52%
		All	422	100%	1,280	100%	6,113	100%	3,611	100%	46	100%	201	100%	276	100%	22,746	100%
	All	Denied	224	45%	654	44%	4,119	55%	1,881	46%	42	75%	100	41%	192	55%	12,073	48%
		Approved	269	55%	841	56%	3,415	45%	2,225	54%	14	25%	141	59%	159	45%	13,038	52%
		All	493	100%	1,495	100%	7,534	100%	4,106	100%	56	100%	241	100%	351	100%	25,111	100%
FY 2017	Female	Denied	41	33%	112	32%	725	32%	240	27%	1	33%	12	26%	42	34%	1,162	31%
		Approved	83	67%	241	68%	1,552	68%	637	73%	2	67%	35	74%	81	66%	2,588	69%
		All	124	100%	353	100%	2,277	100%	877	100%	3	100%	47	100%	123	100%	3,750	100%
	Male	Denied	183	30%	519	25%	3,559	37%	1,723	27%	29	63%	59	24%	200	41%	10,657	29%
		Approved	425	70%	1,584	75%	6,049	63%	4,561	73%	17	37%	188	76%	291	59%	26,086	71%
		All	608	100%	2,103	100%	9,608	100%	6,284	100%	46	100%	247	100%	491	100%	36,743	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
All	Denied	224	31%	631	26%	4,284	36%	1,963	27%	30	61%	71	24%	242	39%	11,819	29%	
	Approved	508	69%	1,825	74%	7,601	64%	5,198	73%	19	39%	223	76%	372	61%	28,674	71%	
	All	732	100%	2,456	100%	11,885	100%	7,161	100%	49	100%	294	100%	614	100%	40,493	100%	
FY 2018	Female	Denied	31	33%	106	25%	725	30%	282	27%	2	40%	15	26%	37	32%	1,135	28%
		Approved	62	67%	321	75%	1,702	70%	754	73%	3	60%	43	74%	78	68%	2,866	72%
		All	93	100%	427	100%	2,427	100%	1,036	100%	5	100%	58	100%	115	100%	4,001	100%
	Male	Denied	181	30%	544	23%	3,256	34%	1,765	27%	37	61%	68	22%	177	31%	10,246	28%
		Approved	423	70%	1,788	77%	6,441	66%	4,874	73%	24	39%	236	78%	389	69%	26,936	72%
		All	604	100%	2,332	100%	9,697	100%	6,639	100%	61	100%	304	100%	566	100%	37,182	100%
	All	Denied	212	30%	650	24%	3,981	33%	2,047	27%	39	59%	83	23%	214	31%	11,381	28%
		Approved	485	70%	2,109	76%	8,143	67%	5,628	73%	27	41%	279	77%	467	69%	29,802	72%
		All	697	100%	2,759	100%	12,124	100%	7,675	100%	66	100%	362	100%	681	100%	41,183	100%
FY 2019	Female	Denied	30	27%	119	30%	778	32%	314	27%	5	71%	20	43%	47	29%	1,180	27%
		Approved	81	73%	280	70%	1,671	68%	858	73%	2	29%	27	57%	116	71%	3,125	73%
		All	111	100%	399	100%	2,449	100%	1,172	100%	7	100%	47	100%	163	100%	4,305	100%
	Male	Denied	187	29%	660	26%	3,403	35%	1,936	28%	32	62%	71	27%	226	35%	10,734	28%
		Approved	447	71%	1,892	74%	6,283	65%	5,102	72%	20	38%	195	73%	426	65%	27,053	72%
		All	634	100%	2,552	100%	9,686	100%	7,038	100%	52	100%	266	100%	652	100%	37,787	100%
	All	Denied	217	29%	779	26%	4,181	34%	2,250	27%	37	63%	91	29%	273	33%	11,914	28%
		Approved	528	71%	2,172	74%	7,954	66%	5,960	73%	22	37%	222	71%	542	67%	30,178	72%
		All	745	100%	2,951	100%	12,135	100%	8,210	100%	59	100%	313	100%	815	100%	42,092	100%
FY 2020	Female	Denied	31	32%	85	21%	619	27%	277	24%	9	56%	16	28%	46	23%	914	25%
		Approved	66	68%	313	79%	1,654	73%	869	76%	7	44%	42	72%	156	77%	2,736	75%
		All	97	100%	398	100%	2,273	100%	1,146	100%	16	100%	58	100%	202	100%	3,650	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	135	26%	506	24%	2,416	31%	1,438	23%	64	67%	62	26%	168	23%	7,431	24%
	Approved	393	74%	1,634	76%	5,403	69%	4,811	77%	32	33%	181	74%	549	77%	23,526	76%
	All	528	100%	2,140	100%	7,819	100%	6,249	100%	96	100%	243	100%	717	100%	30,957	100%
All	Denied	166	27%	591	23%	3,035	30%	1,715	23%	73	65%	78	26%	214	23%	8,345	24%
	Approved	459	73%	1,947	77%	7,057	70%	5,680	77%	39	35%	223	74%	705	77%	26,262	76%
	All	625	100%	2,538	100%	10,092	100%	7,395	100%	112	100%	301	100%	919	100%	34,607	100%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that there were no veterans in the category. These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Limitation of Motion of the Arm (diagnostic code 5201) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 37: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Scars General by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	11%	89%	834	93	741
	Male	10%	90%	3,178	330	2,848
	All	11%	89%	4,012	423	3,589
Asian	Female	11%	89%	2,175	233	1,942
	Male	10%	90%	9,519	979	8,540
	All	10%	90%	11,694	1,212	10,482
Black/African American	Female	12%	88%	16,532	1,954	14,578
	Male	12%	88%	40,960	5,103	35,857
	All	12%	88%	57,492	7,057	50,435
Hispanic	Female	11%	89%	5,553	622	4,931
	Male	10%	90%	24,432	2,423	22,009
	All	10%	90%	29,985	3,045	26,940
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	15%	85%	130	19	111
	Male	18%	82%	452	82	370
	All	17%	83%	582	101	481
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	9%	91%	316	28	288
	Male	8%	92%	1,075	82	993
	All	8%	92%	1,391	110	1,281
Other	Female	13%	87%	624	80	544
	Male	15%	85%	1,674	246	1,428
	All	14%	86%	2,298	326	1,972
White	Female	10%	90%	28,171	2,721	25,450

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
Male	9%	91%	197,870	17,941	179,929
All	9%	91%	226,041	20,662	205,379

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Scars General (diagnostic code 7805) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 38: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Scars General Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2010	Female	Denied	3	18%	16	18%	76	20%	7	6%	1	25%	-	0%	2	18%	141	20%
		Approved	14	82%	75	82%	297	80%	101	94%	3	75%	5	100%	9	82%	559	80%
		All	17	100%	91	100%	373	100%	108	100%	4	100%	5	100%	11	100%	700	100%
	Male	Denied	16	17%	91	13%	199	21%	107	20%	5	45%	3	18%	10	28%	974	20%
		Approved	80	83%	593	87%	763	79%	441	80%	6	55%	14	82%	26	72%	3,886	80%
		All	96	100%	684	100%	962	100%	548	100%	11	100%	17	100%	36	100%	4,860	100%
	All	Denied	19	17%	107	14%	275	21%	114	17%	6	40%	3	14%	12	26%	1,115	20%
		Approved	94	83%	668	86%	1,060	79%	542	83%	9	60%	19	86%	35	74%	4,445	80%
		All	113	100%	775	100%	1,335	100%	656	100%	15	100%	22	100%	47	100%	5,560	100%
FY 2011	Female	Denied	3	11%	13	17%	69	18%	19	16%	-	0%	1	11%	5	56%	118	17%
		Approved	24	89%	64	83%	317	82%	97	84%	1	100%	8	89%	4	44%	597	83%
		All	27	100%	77	100%	386	100%	116	100%	1	100%	9	100%	9	100%	715	100%
	Male	Denied	12	17%	78	13%	156	17%	93	17%	5	28%	3	23%	3	13%	710	15%
		Approved	58	83%	536	87%	774	83%	460	83%	13	72%	10	77%	21	88%	4,114	85%
		All	70	100%	614	100%	930	100%	553	100%	18	100%	13	100%	24	100%	4,824	100%
	All	Denied	15	15%	91	13%	225	17%	112	17%	5	26%	4	18%	8	24%	828	15%
		Approved	82	85%	600	87%	1,091	83%	557	83%	14	74%	18	82%	25	76%	4,711	85%
		All	97	100%	691	100%	1,316	100%	669	100%	19	100%	22	100%	33	100%	5,539	100%
FY 2012	Female	Denied	5	9%	15	10%	142	12%	36	11%	-	0%	3	15%	1	4%	221	11%
		Approved	53	91%	134	90%	1,002	88%	285	89%	15	100%	17	85%	25	96%	1,870	89%
		All	58	100%	149	100%	1,144	100%	321	100%	15	100%	20	100%	26	100%	2,091	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
FY 2013	Male	Denied	23	10%	69	11%	309	12%	142	10%	3	9%	3	5%	7	8%	1,259	9%
		Approved	197	90%	554	89%	2,377	88%	1,334	90%	31	91%	52	95%	78	92%	12,100	91%
		All	220	100%	623	100%	2,686	100%	1,476	100%	34	100%	55	100%	85	100%	13,359	100%
	All	Denied	28	10%	84	11%	451	12%	178	10%	3	6%	6	8%	8	7%	1,480	10%
		Approved	250	90%	688	89%	3,379	88%	1,619	90%	46	94%	69	92%	103	93%	13,970	90%
		All	278	100%	772	100%	3,830	100%	1,797	100%	49	100%	75	100%	111	100%	15,450	100%
	Female	Denied	18	14%	26	9%	235	11%	81	12%	2	10%	8	19%	8	14%	354	9%
		Approved	115	86%	252	91%	1,994	89%	577	88%	18	90%	34	81%	49	86%	3,719	91%
		All	133	100%	278	100%	2,229	100%	658	100%	20	100%	42	100%	57	100%	4,073	100%
Male	Denied	39	8%	111	9%	643	12%	310	10%	10	16%	10	6%	32	16%	2,411	9%	
	Approved	438	92%	1,084	91%	4,911	88%	2,818	90%	54	84%	146	94%	165	84%	25,556	91%	
	All	477	100%	1,195	100%	5,554	100%	3,128	100%	64	100%	156	100%	197	100%	27,967	100%	
All	Denied	57	9%	137	9%	878	11%	391	10%	12	14%	18	9%	40	16%	2,765	9%	
	Approved	553	91%	1,336	91%	6,905	89%	3,395	90%	72	86%	180	91%	214	84%	29,275	91%	
	All	610	100%	1,473	100%	7,783	100%	3,786	100%	84	100%	198	100%	254	100%	32,040	100%	
FY 2014	Female	Denied	12	12%	25	10%	211	10%	66	10%	3	13%	2	5%	8	17%	307	8%
		Approved	86	88%	238	90%	1,827	90%	607	90%	20	87%	40	95%	39	83%	3,400	92%
		All	98	100%	263	100%	2,038	100%	673	100%	23	100%	42	100%	47	100%	3,707	100%
	Male	Denied	39	9%	95	9%	553	11%	269	9%	11	13%	6	4%	18	13%	2,066	8%
		Approved	393	91%	1,022	91%	4,609	89%	2,737	91%	77	88%	131	96%	117	87%	24,628	92%
		All	432	100%	1,117	100%	5,162	100%	3,006	100%	88	100%	137	100%	135	100%	26,694	100%
	All	Denied	51	10%	120	9%	764	11%	335	9%	14	13%	8	4%	26	14%	2,373	8%
		Approved	479	90%	1,260	91%	6,436	89%	3,344	91%	97	87%	171	96%	156	86%	28,028	92%
		All	530	100%	1,380	100%	7,200	100%	3,679	100%	111	100%	179	100%	182	100%	30,401	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2015	Female	Denied	11	10%	29	9%	265	11%	77	10%	5	14%	2	4%	9	13%	366	9%
		Approved	97	90%	282	91%	2,089	89%	718	90%	32	86%	46	96%	63	88%	3,804	91%
		All	108	100%	311	100%	2,354	100%	795	100%	37	100%	48	100%	72	100%	4,170	100%
	Male	Denied	47	11%	112	9%	722	13%	316	9%	12	12%	21	11%	28	14%	2,263	8%
		Approved	392	89%	1,130	91%	4,989	87%	3,110	91%	85	88%	166	89%	168	86%	26,103	92%
		All	439	100%	1,242	100%	5,711	100%	3,426	100%	97	100%	187	100%	196	100%	28,366	100%
	All	Denied	58	11%	141	9%	987	12%	393	9%	17	13%	23	10%	37	14%	2,629	8%
		Approved	489	89%	1,412	91%	7,078	88%	3,828	91%	117	87%	212	90%	231	86%	29,907	92%
		All	547	100%	1,553	100%	8,065	100%	4,221	100%	134	100%	235	100%	268	100%	32,536	100%
FY 2016	Female	Denied	9	8%	27	10%	225	10%	77	10%	4	33%	3	6%	6	6%	294	8%
		Approved	108	92%	252	90%	1,923	90%	663	90%	8	67%	44	94%	100	94%	3,311	92%
		All	117	100%	279	100%	2,148	100%	740	100%	12	100%	47	100%	106	100%	3,605	100%
	Male	Denied	36	9%	92	8%	610	11%	297	9%	8	21%	11	6%	28	11%	2,028	8%
		Approved	364	91%	1,016	92%	4,877	89%	3,071	91%	30	79%	163	94%	227	89%	23,874	92%
		All	400	100%	1,108	100%	5,487	100%	3,368	100%	38	100%	174	100%	255	100%	25,902	100%
	All	Denied	45	9%	119	9%	835	11%	374	9%	12	24%	14	6%	34	9%	2,322	8%
		Approved	472	91%	1,268	91%	6,800	89%	3,734	91%	38	76%	207	94%	327	91%	27,185	92%
		All	517	100%	1,387	100%	7,635	100%	4,108	100%	50	100%	221	100%	361	100%	29,507	100%
FY 2017	Female	Denied	13	10%	18	6%	229	9%	79	9%	1	13%	4	9%	11	10%	302	7%
		Approved	118	90%	288	94%	2,418	91%	807	91%	7	88%	43	91%	100	90%	3,742	93%
		All	131	100%	306	100%	2,647	100%	886	100%	8	100%	47	100%	111	100%	4,044	100%
	Male	Denied	45	10%	97	7%	658	10%	285	7%	10	28%	12	7%	26	9%	2,142	7%
		Approved	423	90%	1,198	93%	5,836	90%	3,655	93%	26	72%	151	93%	268	91%	28,099	93%
		All	468	100%	1,295	100%	6,494	100%	3,940	100%	36	100%	163	100%	294	100%	30,241	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
All	Denied	58	10%	115	7%	887	10%	364	8%	11	25%	16	8%	37	9%	2,444	7%	
	Approved	541	90%	1,486	93%	8,254	90%	4,462	92%	33	75%	194	92%	368	91%	31,841	93%	
	All	599	100%	1,601	100%	9,141	100%	4,826	100%	44	100%	210	100%	405	100%	34,285	100%	
FY 2018	Female	Denied	11	11%	31	10%	253	10%	81	9%	1	14%	1	2%	12	9%	294	8%
		Approved	93	89%	285	90%	2,233	90%	856	91%	6	86%	46	98%	124	91%	3,585	92%
		All	104	100%	316	100%	2,486	100%	937	100%	7	100%	47	100%	136	100%	3,879	100%
	Male	Denied	36	8%	114	9%	666	11%	286	7%	6	15%	7	5%	38	12%	2,061	7%
		Approved	402	92%	1,148	91%	5,574	89%	3,659	93%	35	85%	133	95%	282	88%	25,744	93%
		All	438	100%	1,262	100%	6,240	100%	3,945	100%	41	100%	140	100%	320	100%	27,805	100%
	All	Denied	47	9%	145	9%	919	11%	367	8%	7	15%	8	4%	50	11%	2,355	7%
		Approved	495	91%	1,433	91%	7,807	89%	4,515	92%	41	85%	179	96%	406	89%	29,329	93%
		All	542	100%	1,578	100%	8,726	100%	4,882	100%	48	100%	187	100%	456	100%	31,684	100%
FY 2019	Female	Denied	5	14%	18	22%	164	27%	68	25%	1	50%	3	38%	12	30%	207	21%
		Approved	31	86%	64	78%	439	73%	201	75%	1	50%	5	63%	28	70%	788	79%
		All	36	100%	82	100%	603	100%	269	100%	2	100%	8	100%	40	100%	995	100%
	Male	Denied	21	19%	77	25%	406	28%	208	24%	5	31%	5	17%	38	35%	1,378	21%
		Approved	91	81%	237	75%	1,045	72%	651	76%	11	69%	24	83%	70	65%	5,293	79%
		All	112	100%	314	100%	1,451	100%	859	100%	16	100%	29	100%	108	100%	6,671	100%
	All	Denied	26	18%	95	24%	570	28%	276	24%	6	33%	8	22%	50	34%	1,585	21%
		Approved	122	82%	301	76%	1,484	72%	852	76%	12	67%	29	78%	98	66%	6,081	79%
		All	148	100%	396	100%	2,054	100%	1,128	100%	18	100%	37	100%	148	100%	7,666	100%
FY 2020	Female	Denied	3	60%	15	65%	85	69%	31	62%	1	100%	1	100%	6	67%	117	61%
		Approved	2	40%	8	35%	39	31%	19	38%	-	0%	-	0%	3	33%	75	39%
		All	5	100%	23	100%	124	100%	50	100%	1	100%	1	100%	9	100%	192	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	16	62%	43	66%	181	64%	110	60%	7	78%	1	25%	18	75%	649	55%
	Approved	10	38%	22	34%	102	36%	73	40%	2	22%	3	75%	6	25%	532	45%
	All	26	100%	65	100%	283	100%	183	100%	9	100%	4	100%	24	100%	1,181	100%
All	Denied	19	61%	58	66%	266	65%	141	61%	8	80%	2	40%	24	73%	766	56%
	Approved	12	39%	30	34%	141	35%	92	39%	2	20%	3	60%	9	27%	607	44%
	All	31	100%	88	100%	407	100%	233	100%	10	100%	5	100%	33	100%	1,373	100%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that there were no veterans in the category. These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Scars General (diagnostic code 7805) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 39: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Paralysis of Sciatic Nerve by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	45%	55%	494	224	270
	Male	42%	58%	2,259	956	1,303
	All	43%	57%	2,753	1,180	1,573
Asian	Female	44%	56%	1,565	685	880
	Male	41%	59%	6,992	2,862	4,130
	All	41%	59%	8,557	3,547	5,010
Black/African American	Female	50%	50%	10,506	5,250	5,256
	Male	50%	50%	32,672	16,394	16,278
	All	50%	50%	43,178	21,644	21,534
Hispanic	Female	45%	55%	4,137	1,862	2,275
	Male	41%	59%	18,815	7,744	11,071
	All	42%	58%	22,952	9,606	13,346
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	54%	46%	63	34	29
	Male	54%	46%	471	252	219
	All	54%	46%	534	286	248
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	47%	53%	217	103	114
	Male	38%	62%	690	263	427
	All	40%	60%	907	366	541
Other	Female	46%	54%	507	233	274
	Male	44%	56%	1,580	693	887
	All	44%	56%	2,087	926	1,161
White	Female	44%	56%	18,101	7,889	10,212

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
Male	43%	57%	150,202	64,093	86,109
All	43%	57%	168,303	71,982	96,321

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Paralysis of the Sciatic Nerve (diagnostic code 8520) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 40: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Paralysis of Sciatic Nerve Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2010	Female	Denied	3	43%	36	64%	108	74%	29	71%	1	100%	2	100%	3	75%	221	63%
		Approved	4	57%	20	36%	38	26%	12	29%	-	0%	-	0%	1	25%	129	37%
		All	7	100%	56	100%	146	100%	41	100%	1	100%	2	100%	4	100%	350	100%
	Male	Denied	22	45%	202	58%	403	65%	199	62%	8	57%	4	67%	17	55%	2,106	59%
		Approved	27	55%	149	42%	217	35%	122	38%	6	43%	2	33%	14	45%	1,491	41%
		All	49	100%	351	100%	620	100%	321	100%	14	100%	6	100%	31	100%	3,597	100%
	All	Denied	25	45%	238	58%	511	67%	228	63%	9	60%	6	75%	20	57%	2,327	59%
		Approved	31	55%	169	42%	255	33%	134	37%	6	40%	2	25%	15	43%	1,620	41%
		All	56	100%	407	100%	766	100%	362	100%	15	100%	8	100%	35	100%	3,947	100%
FY 2011	Female	Denied	4	44%	31	66%	115	73%	38	69%	1	100%	3	60%	2	50%	233	61%
		Approved	5	56%	16	34%	43	27%	17	31%	-	0%	2	40%	2	50%	152	39%
		All	9	100%	47	100%	158	100%	55	100%	1	100%	5	100%	4	100%	385	100%
	Male	Denied	22	49%	164	52%	449	69%	214	59%	6	100%	7	78%	17	85%	2,029	53%
		Approved	23	51%	153	48%	201	31%	150	41%	-	0%	2	22%	3	15%	1,769	47%
		All	45	100%	317	100%	650	100%	364	100%	6	100%	9	100%	20	100%	3,798	100%
	All	Denied	26	48%	195	54%	564	70%	252	60%	7	100%	10	71%	19	79%	2,262	54%
		Approved	28	52%	169	46%	244	30%	167	40%	-	0%	4	29%	5	21%	1,921	46%
		All	54	100%	364	100%	808	100%	419	100%	7	100%	14	100%	24	100%	4,183	100%
FY 2012	Female	Denied	6	46%	23	49%	228	70%	71	67%	-	-	7	88%	7	78%	388	57%
		Approved	7	54%	24	51%	98	30%	35	33%	-	-	1	13%	2	22%	297	43%
		All	13	100%	47	100%	326	100%	106	100%	-	-	8	100%	9	100%	685	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
FY 2013	Male	Denied	61	64%	133	56%	792	66%	317	56%	7	78%	11	61%	27	63%	3,440	53%
		Approved	35	36%	105	44%	410	34%	249	44%	2	22%	7	39%	16	37%	3,066	47%
		All	96	100%	238	100%	1,202	100%	566	100%	9	100%	18	100%	43	100%	6,506	100%
	All	Denied	67	61%	156	55%	1,020	67%	388	58%	7	78%	18	69%	34	65%	3,828	53%
		Approved	42	39%	129	45%	508	33%	284	42%	2	22%	8	31%	18	35%	3,363	47%
		All	109	100%	285	100%	1,528	100%	672	100%	9	100%	26	100%	52	100%	7,191	100%
	Female	Denied	23	55%	46	45%	434	63%	137	63%	4	100%	9	60%	9	56%	734	55%
		Approved	19	45%	56	55%	253	37%	82	37%	-	0%	6	40%	7	44%	596	45%
		All	42	100%	102	100%	687	100%	219	100%	4	100%	15	100%	16	100%	1,330	100%
Male	Denied	100	51%	209	45%	1,509	62%	704	55%	19	66%	19	48%	57	52%	6,505	52%	
	Approved	97	49%	254	55%	928	38%	574	45%	10	34%	21	53%	53	48%	6,123	48%	
	All	197	100%	463	100%	2,437	100%	1,278	100%	29	100%	40	100%	110	100%	12,628	100%	
All	Denied	123	51%	255	45%	1,943	62%	841	56%	23	70%	28	51%	66	52%	7,239	52%	
	Approved	116	49%	310	55%	1,181	38%	656	44%	10	30%	27	49%	60	48%	6,719	48%	
	All	239	100%	565	100%	3,124	100%	1,497	100%	33	100%	55	100%	126	100%	13,958	100%	
FY 2014	Female	Denied	23	53%	52	51%	416	57%	141	53%	3	50%	7	64%	13	68%	687	46%
		Approved	20	47%	50	49%	313	43%	127	47%	3	50%	4	36%	6	32%	797	54%
		All	43	100%	102	100%	729	100%	268	100%	6	100%	11	100%	19	100%	1,484	100%
	Male	Denied	89	48%	207	45%	1,499	58%	598	46%	24	55%	21	41%	49	46%	6,121	47%
		Approved	95	52%	255	55%	1,090	42%	716	54%	20	45%	30	59%	57	54%	6,957	53%
		All	184	100%	462	100%	2,589	100%	1,314	100%	44	100%	51	100%	106	100%	13,078	100%
	All	Denied	112	49%	259	46%	1,915	58%	739	47%	27	54%	28	45%	62	50%	6,808	47%
		Approved	115	51%	305	54%	1,403	42%	843	53%	23	46%	34	55%	63	50%	7,754	53%
		All	227	100%	564	100%	3,318	100%	1,582	100%	50	100%	62	100%	125	100%	14,562	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2015	Female	Denied	45	56%	74	47%	579	53%	156	42%	9	45%	10	50%	23	55%	927	47%
		Approved	35	44%	84	53%	518	47%	214	58%	11	55%	10	50%	19	45%	1,051	53%
		All	80	100%	158	100%	1,097	100%	370	100%	20	100%	20	100%	42	100%	1,978	100%
	Male	Denied	97	40%	252	41%	1,939	54%	806	44%	20	38%	35	45%	74	49%	7,721	45%
		Approved	144	60%	368	59%	1,640	46%	1,013	56%	32	62%	42	55%	77	51%	9,346	55%
		All	241	100%	620	100%	3,579	100%	1,819	100%	52	100%	77	100%	151	100%	17,067	100%
	All	Denied	142	44%	326	42%	2,518	54%	962	44%	29	40%	45	46%	97	50%	8,648	45%
		Approved	179	56%	452	58%	2,158	46%	1,227	56%	43	60%	52	54%	96	50%	10,397	55%
		All	321	100%	778	100%	4,676	100%	2,189	100%	72	100%	97	100%	193	100%	19,045	100%
FY 2016	Female	Denied	25	48%	62	42%	533	49%	171	45%	6	75%	9	29%	26	52%	820	42%
		Approved	27	52%	86	58%	562	51%	212	55%	2	25%	22	71%	24	48%	1,110	58%
		All	52	100%	148	100%	1,095	100%	383	100%	8	100%	31	100%	50	100%	1,930	100%
	Male	Denied	96	41%	257	39%	1,853	51%	832	41%	25	74%	28	30%	80	49%	6,932	42%
		Approved	139	59%	394	61%	1,799	49%	1,173	59%	9	26%	65	70%	83	51%	9,504	58%
		All	235	100%	651	100%	3,652	100%	2,005	100%	34	100%	93	100%	163	100%	16,436	100%
	All	Denied	121	42%	319	40%	2,386	50%	1,003	42%	31	74%	37	30%	106	50%	7,752	42%
		Approved	166	58%	480	60%	2,361	50%	1,385	58%	11	26%	87	70%	107	50%	10,614	58%
		All	287	100%	799	100%	4,747	100%	2,388	100%	42	100%	124	100%	213	100%	18,366	100%
FY 2017	Female	Denied	31	52%	77	43%	719	51%	255	45%	-	0%	14	56%	32	55%	969	44%
		Approved	29	48%	102	57%	697	49%	310	55%	5	100%	11	44%	26	45%	1,249	56%
		All	60	100%	179	100%	1,416	100%	565	100%	5	100%	25	100%	58	100%	2,218	100%
	Male	Denied	116	41%	374	43%	2,120	49%	965	40%	23	72%	35	41%	77	45%	8,039	43%
		Approved	165	59%	488	57%	2,230	51%	1,441	60%	9	28%	50	59%	93	55%	10,703	57%
		All	281	100%	862	100%	4,350	100%	2,406	100%	32	100%	85	100%	170	100%	18,742	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
All	Denied	147	43%	451	43%	2,839	49%	1,220	41%	23	62%	49	45%	109	48%	9,008	43%	
	Approved	194	57%	590	57%	2,927	51%	1,751	59%	14	38%	61	55%	119	52%	11,952	57%	
	All	341	100%	1,041	100%	5,766	100%	2,971	100%	37	100%	110	100%	228	100%	20,960	100%	
FY 2018	Female																	
	Denied	27	39%	97	43%	741	45%	283	44%	2	67%	15	37%	31	45%	950	39%	
	Approved	43	61%	126	57%	898	55%	363	56%	1	33%	26	63%	38	55%	1,456	61%	
	All	70	100%	223	100%	1,639	100%	646	100%	3	100%	41	100%	69	100%	2,406	100%	
	Male																	
	Denied	121	38%	346	35%	2,201	46%	1,143	41%	23	59%	31	28%	68	33%	7,919	40%	
Approved	197	62%	630	65%	2,630	54%	1,644	59%	16	41%	81	72%	136	67%	12,126	60%		
All	318	100%	976	100%	4,831	100%	2,787	100%	39	100%	112	100%	204	100%	20,045	100%		
All	Denied	148	38%	443	37%	2,942	45%	1,426	42%	25	60%	46	30%	99	36%	8,869	40%	
	Approved	240	62%	756	63%	3,528	55%	2,007	58%	17	40%	107	70%	174	64%	13,582	60%	
	All	388	100%	1,199	100%	6,470	100%	3,433	100%	42	100%	153	100%	273	100%	22,451	100%	
FY 2019	Female																	
	Denied	20	33%	96	39%	786	47%	325	43%	5	50%	10	48%	47	42%	1,144	40%	
	Approved	41	67%	153	61%	875	53%	439	57%	5	50%	11	52%	65	58%	1,685	60%	
	All	61	100%	249	100%	1,661	100%	764	100%	10	100%	21	100%	112	100%	2,829	100%	
	Male																	
	Denied	140	42%	419	38%	2,121	45%	1,098	36%	20	45%	43	42%	114	43%	7,886	38%	
Approved	197	58%	685	62%	2,624	55%	1,992	64%	24	55%	59	58%	151	57%	13,126	62%		
All	337	100%	1,104	100%	4,745	100%	3,090	100%	44	100%	102	100%	265	100%	21,012	100%		
All	Denied	160	40%	515	38%	2,907	45%	1,423	37%	25	46%	53	43%	161	43%	9,030	38%	
	Approved	238	60%	838	62%	3,499	55%	2,431	63%	29	54%	70	57%	216	57%	14,811	62%	
	All	398	100%	1,353	100%	6,406	100%	3,854	100%	54	100%	123	100%	377	100%	23,841	100%	
FY 2020	Female																	
	Denied	17	30%	91	36%	591	38%	256	36%	3	60%	17	45%	40	32%	816	33%	
	Approved	40	70%	163	64%	961	62%	464	64%	2	40%	21	55%	84	68%	1,690	67%	
All	57	100%	254	100%	1,552	100%	720	100%	5	100%	38	100%	124	100%	2,506	100%		

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	92	33%	299	32%	1,508	38%	868	30%	77	46%	29	30%	113	36%	5,395	31%
	Approved	184	67%	649	68%	2,509	62%	1,997	70%	91	54%	68	70%	204	64%	11,898	69%
	All	276	100%	948	100%	4,017	100%	2,865	100%	168	100%	97	100%	317	100%	17,293	100%
All	Denied	109	33%	390	32%	2,099	38%	1,124	31%	80	46%	46	34%	153	35%	6,211	31%
	Approved	224	67%	812	68%	3,470	62%	2,461	69%	93	54%	89	66%	288	65%	13,588	69%
	All	333	100%	1,202	100%	5,569	100%	3,585	100%	173	100%	135	100%	441	100%	19,799	100%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that there were no veterans in the category. These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Paralysis of Sciatic Nerve (diagnostic code 8520) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran's active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. "Multiple race/unknown race" is VA's combined category for veterans who reported in the data as "multiple race" and veterans whose race is "unknown." Also, "other" is VA's category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 41: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Migraine by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	29%	71%	1,344	391	953
	Male	30%	70%	3,511	1,046	2,465
	All	30%	70%	4,855	1,437	3,418
Asian	Female	24%	76%	3,891	928	2,963
	Male	28%	72%	13,436	3,700	9,736
	All	27%	73%	17,327	4,628	12,699
Black/African American	Female	32%	68%	27,748	8,863	18,885
	Male	43%	57%	59,666	25,783	33,883
	All	40%	60%	87,414	34,646	52,768
Hispanic	Female	25%	75%	10,384	2,609	7,775
	Male	30%	70%	32,126	9,666	22,460
	All	29%	71%	42,510	12,275	30,235
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	36%	64%	203	74	129
	Male	57%	43%	479	271	208
	All	51%	49%	682	345	337
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	26%	74%	555	142	413
	Male	26%	74%	1,442	382	1,060
	All	26%	74%	1,997	524	1,473
Other	Female	25%	75%	1,463	363	1,100
	Male	37%	63%	2,450	901	1,549
	All	32%	68%	3,913	1,264	2,649
White	Female	25%	75%	43,313	10,884	32,429

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
Male	31%	69%	186,236	58,477	127,759
All	30%	70%	229,549	69,361	160,188

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Migraine (diagnostic code 8100) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 42: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Migraine Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2010	Female	Denied	19	37%	70	30%	338	43%	111	40%	1	25%	5	38%	12	43%	540	34%
		Approved	33	63%	161	70%	444	57%	168	60%	3	75%	8	62%	16	57%	1,052	66%
		All	52	100%	231	100%	782	100%	279	100%	4	100%	13	100%	28	100%	1,592	100%
	Male	Denied	48	46%	357	33%	941	62%	317	46%	11	73%	14	47%	27	54%	2,742	49%
		Approved	56	54%	719	67%	567	38%	376	54%	4	27%	16	53%	23	46%	2,865	51%
		All	104	100%	1,076	100%	1,508	100%	693	100%	15	100%	30	100%	50	100%	5,607	100%
	All	Denied	67	43%	427	33%	1,279	56%	428	44%	12	63%	19	44%	39	50%	3,282	46%
		Approved	89	57%	880	67%	1,011	44%	544	56%	7	37%	24	56%	39	50%	3,917	54%
		All	156	100%	1,307	100%	2,290	100%	972	100%	19	100%	43	100%	78	100%	7,199	100%
FY 2011	Female	Denied	21	46%	72	33%	290	42%	85	39%	2	40%	4	31%	7	37%	458	32%
		Approved	25	54%	143	67%	405	58%	135	61%	3	60%	9	69%	12	63%	978	68%
		All	46	100%	215	100%	695	100%	220	100%	5	100%	13	100%	19	100%	1,436	100%
	Male	Denied	41	41%	275	33%	911	61%	332	46%	3	27%	9	32%	24	51%	2,537	45%
		Approved	59	59%	571	67%	585	39%	396	54%	8	73%	19	68%	23	49%	3,117	55%
		All	100	100%	846	100%	1,496	100%	728	100%	11	100%	28	100%	47	100%	5,654	100%
	All	Denied	62	42%	347	33%	1,201	55%	417	44%	5	31%	13	32%	31	47%	2,995	42%
		Approved	84	58%	714	67%	990	45%	531	56%	11	69%	28	68%	35	53%	4,095	58%
		All	146	100%	1,061	100%	2,191	100%	948	100%	16	100%	41	100%	66	100%	7,090	100%
FY 2012	Female	Denied	19	26%	59	30%	425	33%	118	26%	5	31%	2	12%	11	27%	637	25%
		Approved	54	74%	139	70%	873	67%	333	74%	11	69%	15	88%	30	73%	1,953	75%
		All	73	100%	198	100%	1,298	100%	451	100%	16	100%	17	100%	41	100%	2,590	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	71	33%	207	32%	1,283	48%	463	35%	7	33%	13	27%	20	33%	3,506	33%
	Approved	141	67%	440	68%	1,400	52%	868	65%	14	67%	36	73%	40	67%	6,966	67%
	All	212	100%	647	100%	2,683	100%	1,331	100%	21	100%	49	100%	60	100%	10,472	100%
All	Denied	90	32%	266	31%	1,708	43%	581	33%	12	32%	15	23%	31	31%	4,143	32%
	Approved	195	68%	579	69%	2,273	57%	1,201	67%	25	68%	51	77%	70	69%	8,919	68%
	All	285	100%	845	100%	3,981	100%	1,782	100%	37	100%	66	100%	101	100%	13,062	100%
FY 2013 Female	Denied	46	28%	78	26%	802	34%	234	31%	9	25%	8	21%	33	38%	1,104	27%
	Approved	116	72%	225	74%	1,546	66%	517	69%	27	75%	30	79%	54	62%	3,057	73%
	All	162	100%	303	100%	2,348	100%	751	100%	36	100%	38	100%	87	100%	4,161	100%
Male	Denied	129	33%	334	32%	2,436	47%	885	35%	22	39%	35	28%	75	47%	6,355	33%
	Approved	264	67%	724	68%	2,717	53%	1,624	65%	35	61%	90	72%	84	53%	12,722	67%
	All	393	100%	1,058	100%	5,153	100%	2,509	100%	57	100%	125	100%	159	100%	19,077	100%
All	Denied	175	32%	412	30%	3,238	43%	1,119	34%	31	33%	43	26%	108	44%	7,459	32%
	Approved	380	68%	949	70%	4,263	57%	2,141	66%	62	67%	120	74%	138	56%	15,779	68%
	All	555	100%	1,361	100%	7,501	100%	3,260	100%	93	100%	163	100%	246	100%	23,238	100%
FY 2014 Female	Denied	38	30%	73	25%	770	34%	218	28%	7	25%	11	26%	23	40%	976	24%
	Approved	87	70%	216	75%	1,506	66%	547	72%	21	75%	31	74%	35	60%	3,021	76%
	All	125	100%	289	100%	2,276	100%	765	100%	28	100%	42	100%	58	100%	3,997	100%
Male	Denied	89	28%	272	27%	2,442	48%	831	32%	29	42%	27	22%	64	58%	5,739	31%
	Approved	233	72%	718	73%	2,699	52%	1,795	68%	40	58%	98	78%	46	42%	12,524	69%
	All	322	100%	990	100%	5,141	100%	2,626	100%	69	100%	125	100%	110	100%	18,263	100%
All	Denied	127	28%	345	27%	3,212	43%	1,049	31%	36	37%	38	23%	87	52%	6,715	30%
	Approved	320	72%	934	73%	4,205	57%	2,342	69%	61	63%	129	77%	81	48%	15,545	70%
	All	447	100%	1,279	100%	7,417	100%	3,391	100%	97	100%	167	100%	168	100%	22,260	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2015	Female	Denied	53	33%	90	26%	1,097	37%	278	28%	12	28%	21	31%	34	33%	1,223	26%
		Approved	107	67%	261	74%	1,869	63%	717	72%	31	72%	47	69%	68	67%	3,447	74%
		All	160	100%	351	100%	2,966	100%	995	100%	43	100%	68	100%	102	100%	4,670	100%
	Male	Denied	140	34%	386	30%	3,317	50%	1,057	33%	49	52%	59	34%	86	48%	6,989	33%
		Approved	266	66%	881	70%	3,308	50%	2,160	67%	46	48%	114	66%	95	52%	14,047	67%
		All	406	100%	1,267	100%	6,625	100%	3,217	100%	95	100%	173	100%	181	100%	21,036	100%
	All	Denied	193	34%	476	29%	4,414	46%	1,335	32%	61	44%	80	33%	120	42%	8,212	32%
		Approved	373	66%	1,142	71%	5,177	54%	2,877	68%	77	56%	161	67%	163	58%	17,494	68%
		All	566	100%	1,618	100%	9,591	100%	4,212	100%	138	100%	241	100%	283	100%	25,706	100%
FY 2016	Female	Denied	30	25%	95	25%	910	33%	269	26%	7	47%	19	30%	33	23%	1,157	26%
		Approved	90	75%	280	75%	1,887	67%	748	74%	8	53%	45	70%	108	77%	3,316	74%
		All	120	100%	375	100%	2,797	100%	1,017	100%	15	100%	64	100%	141	100%	4,473	100%
	Male	Denied	101	30%	338	29%	2,895	45%	1,047	31%	28	62%	57	29%	106	45%	6,389	32%
		Approved	240	70%	846	71%	3,562	55%	2,353	69%	17	38%	138	71%	132	55%	13,527	68%
		All	341	100%	1,184	100%	6,457	100%	3,400	100%	45	100%	195	100%	238	100%	19,916	100%
	All	Denied	131	28%	433	28%	3,805	41%	1,316	30%	35	58%	76	29%	139	37%	7,546	31%
		Approved	330	72%	1,126	72%	5,449	59%	3,101	70%	25	42%	183	71%	240	63%	16,843	69%
		All	461	100%	1,559	100%	9,254	100%	4,417	100%	60	100%	259	100%	379	100%	24,389	100%
FY 2017	Female	Denied	44	29%	81	20%	1,046	30%	298	25%	4	57%	19	23%	43	21%	1,231	25%
		Approved	108	71%	327	80%	2,450	70%	899	75%	3	43%	64	77%	161	79%	3,640	75%
		All	152	100%	408	100%	3,496	100%	1,197	100%	7	100%	83	100%	204	100%	4,871	100%
	Male	Denied	121	31%	367	27%	3,036	40%	1,185	29%	18	78%	40	25%	105	36%	6,480	30%
		Approved	266	69%	1,005	73%	4,510	60%	2,879	71%	5	22%	123	75%	187	64%	15,082	70%
		All	387	100%	1,372	100%	7,546	100%	4,064	100%	23	100%	163	100%	292	100%	21,562	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
All	Denied	165	31%	448	25%	4,082	37%	1,483	28%	22	73%	59	24%	148	30%	7,711	29%	
	Approved	374	69%	1,332	75%	6,960	63%	3,778	72%	8	27%	187	76%	348	70%	18,722	71%	
	All	539	100%	1,780	100%	11,042	100%	5,261	100%	30	100%	246	100%	496	100%	26,433	100%	
FY 2018	Female	Denied	48	31%	112	22%	1,077	30%	332	24%	5	42%	18	25%	49	25%	1,177	24%
		Approved	105	69%	394	78%	2,518	70%	1,057	76%	7	58%	54	75%	147	75%	3,672	76%
		All	153	100%	506	100%	3,595	100%	1,389	100%	12	100%	72	100%	196	100%	4,849	100%
	Male	Denied	116	28%	365	23%	3,074	39%	1,186	28%	29	71%	42	21%	135	36%	6,425	30%
		Approved	294	72%	1,241	77%	4,890	61%	3,070	72%	12	29%	157	79%	245	64%	15,249	70%
		All	410	100%	1,606	100%	7,964	100%	4,256	100%	41	100%	199	100%	380	100%	21,674	100%
All	Denied	164	29%	477	23%	4,151	36%	1,518	27%	34	64%	60	22%	184	32%	7,602	29%	
	Approved	399	71%	1,635	77%	7,408	64%	4,127	73%	19	36%	211	78%	392	68%	18,921	71%	
	All	563	100%	2,112	100%	11,559	100%	5,645	100%	53	100%	271	100%	576	100%	26,523	100%	
FY 2019	Female	Denied	38	25%	105	21%	1,247	32%	378	22%	15	71%	19	28%	70	25%	1,381	25%
		Approved	115	75%	405	79%	2,667	68%	1,320	78%	6	29%	49	72%	211	75%	4,236	75%
		All	153	100%	510	100%	3,914	100%	1,698	100%	21	100%	68	100%	281	100%	5,617	100%
	Male	Denied	100	23%	443	24%	3,169	39%	1,366	28%	27	73%	52	28%	144	34%	6,616	29%
		Approved	338	77%	1,376	76%	4,936	61%	3,471	72%	10	27%	134	72%	281	66%	16,421	71%
		All	438	100%	1,819	100%	8,105	100%	4,837	100%	37	100%	186	100%	425	100%	23,037	100%
All	Denied	138	23%	548	24%	4,416	37%	1,744	27%	42	72%	71	28%	214	30%	7,997	28%	
	Approved	453	77%	1,781	76%	7,603	63%	4,791	73%	16	28%	183	72%	492	70%	20,657	72%	
	All	591	100%	2,329	100%	12,019	100%	6,535	100%	58	100%	254	100%	706	100%	28,654	100%	
FY 2020	Female	Denied	35	24%	93	18%	861	24%	288	18%	7	44%	16	21%	48	16%	1,000	20%
		Approved	113	76%	412	82%	2,720	76%	1,334	82%	9	56%	61	79%	258	84%	4,057	80%
		All	148	100%	505	100%	3,581	100%	1,622	100%	16	100%	77	100%	306	100%	5,057	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	90	23%	356	23%	2,279	33%	997	22%	48	74%	34	20%	115	23%	4,699	24%
	Approved	308	77%	1,215	77%	4,709	67%	3,468	78%	17	26%	135	80%	393	77%	15,239	76%
	All	398	100%	1,571	100%	6,988	100%	4,465	100%	65	100%	169	100%	508	100%	19,938	100%
All	Denied	125	23%	449	22%	3,140	30%	1,285	21%	55	68%	50	20%	163	20%	5,699	23%
	Approved	421	77%	1,627	78%	7,429	70%	4,802	79%	26	32%	196	80%	651	80%	19,296	77%
	All	546	100%	2,076	100%	10,569	100%	6,087	100%	81	100%	246	100%	814	100%	24,995	100%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Migraine (diagnostic code 8100) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 43: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

		Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
American Indian/Alaska Native	Female	41%	59%	781	323	458
	Male	46%	54%	3,812	1,740	2,072
	All	45%	55%	4,593	2,063	2,530
Asian	Female	40%	60%	1,734	695	1,039
	Male	40%	60%	11,119	4,461	6,658
	All	40%	60%	12,853	5,156	7,697
Black/African American	Female	50%	50%	13,979	7,009	6,970
	Male	57%	43%	61,069	34,607	26,462
	All	55%	45%	75,048	41,616	33,432
Hispanic	Female	38%	62%	4,959	1,871	3,088
	Male	41%	59%	28,922	11,813	17,109
	All	40%	60%	33,881	13,684	20,197
Multiple Race/Unknown Race	Female	55%	45%	144	79	65
	Male	58%	42%	930	543	387
	All	58%	42%	1,074	622	452
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Female	33%	68%	240	78	162
	Male	36%	64%	1,077	392	685
	All	36%	64%	1,317	470	847
Other	Female	39%	61%	645	249	396
	Male	53%	47%	2,273	1,198	1,075
	All	50%	50%	2,918	1,447	1,471
White	Female	42%	58%	23,642	9,991	13,651

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

	Veterans denied %	Veterans approved %	Total number of veterans	Number veterans denied	Number veterans approved
Male	44%	56%	216,350	95,440	120,910
All	44%	56%	239,992	105,431	134,561

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (diagnostic code 9411) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

Table 44: VA Approval and Denial Rates for Veterans' Initial Disability Compensation for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Each Fiscal Year (FY) by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Fiscal Years 2010–2020

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2010	Female	Denied	12	71%	53	56%	215	75%	53	60%	3	75%	4	67%	3	100%	506	69%
		Approved	5	29%	42	44%	70	25%	36	40%	1	25%	2	33%	-	0%	232	31%
		All	17	100%	95	100%	285	100%	89	100%	4	100%	6	100%	3	100%	738	100%
	Male	Denied	93	62%	374	39%	1,513	77%	514	59%	32	73%	9	41%	45	63%	5,778	62%
		Approved	56	38%	574	61%	444	23%	362	41%	12	27%	13	59%	27	38%	3,491	38%
		All	149	100%	948	100%	1,957	100%	876	100%	44	100%	22	100%	72	100%	9,269	100%
	All	Denied	105	63%	427	41%	1,728	77%	567	59%	35	73%	13	46%	48	64%	6,284	63%
		Approved	61	37%	616	59%	514	23%	398	41%	13	27%	15	54%	27	36%	3,723	37%
		All	166	100%	1,043	100%	2,242	100%	965	100%	48	100%	28	100%	75	100%	10,007	100%
FY 2011	Female	Denied	14	67%	33	43%	182	69%	42	50%	1	100%	4	57%	2	22%	370	58%
		Approved	7	33%	43	57%	82	31%	42	50%	-	0%	3	43%	7	78%	268	42%
		All	21	100%	76	100%	264	100%	84	100%	1	100%	7	100%	9	100%	638	100%
	Male	Denied	86	51%	310	40%	1,255	67%	393	47%	21	64%	12	34%	41	56%	4,670	49%
		Approved	83	49%	469	60%	609	33%	445	53%	12	36%	23	66%	32	44%	4,935	51%
		All	169	100%	779	100%	1,864	100%	838	100%	33	100%	35	100%	73	100%	9,605	100%
	All	Denied	100	53%	343	40%	1,437	68%	435	47%	22	65%	16	38%	43	52%	5,040	49%
		Approved	90	47%	512	60%	691	32%	487	53%	12	35%	26	62%	39	48%	5,203	51%
		All	190	100%	855	100%	2,128	100%	922	100%	34	100%	42	100%	82	100%	10,243	100%
FY 2012	Female	Denied	15	44%	38	46%	257	62%	75	49%	4	80%	5	63%	8	57%	506	50%
		Approved	19	56%	45	54%	156	38%	78	51%	1	20%	3	38%	6	43%	498	50%
		All	34	100%	83	100%	413	100%	153	100%	5	100%	8	100%	14	100%	1,004	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	111	49%	292	44%	1,890	61%	600	44%	22	63%	13	36%	55	50%	6,374	46%
	Approved	115	51%	367	56%	1,210	39%	755	56%	13	37%	23	64%	55	50%	7,561	54%
	All	226	100%	659	100%	3,100	100%	1,355	100%	35	100%	36	100%	110	100%	13,935	100%
All	Denied	126	48%	330	44%	2,147	61%	675	45%	26	65%	18	41%	63	51%	6,880	46%
	Approved	134	52%	412	56%	1,366	39%	833	55%	14	35%	26	59%	61	49%	8,059	54%
	All	260	100%	742	100%	3,513	100%	1,508	100%	40	100%	44	100%	124	100%	14,939	100%
FY 2013 Female	Denied	38	52%	59	55%	623	63%	169	52%	7	54%	1	10%	15	54%	1,144	58%
	Approved	35	48%	49	45%	367	37%	158	48%	6	46%	9	90%	13	46%	841	42%
	All	73	100%	108	100%	990	100%	327	100%	13	100%	10	100%	28	100%	1,985	100%
Male	Denied	240	57%	506	48%	3,896	66%	1,345	49%	44	65%	46	46%	102	54%	12,583	51%
	Approved	183	43%	550	52%	2,023	34%	1,380	51%	24	35%	54	54%	86	46%	12,265	49%
	All	423	100%	1,056	100%	5,919	100%	2,725	100%	68	100%	100	100%	188	100%	24,848	100%
All	Denied	278	56%	565	49%	4,519	65%	1,514	50%	51	63%	47	43%	117	54%	13,727	51%
	Approved	218	44%	599	51%	2,390	35%	1,538	50%	30	37%	63	57%	99	46%	13,106	49%
	All	496	100%	1,164	100%	6,909	100%	3,052	100%	81	100%	110	100%	216	100%	26,833	100%
FY 2014 Female	Denied	31	54%	73	57%	608	62%	146	49%	11	65%	7	32%	17	71%	993	54%
	Approved	26	46%	54	43%	372	38%	149	51%	6	35%	15	68%	7	29%	848	46%
	All	57	100%	127	100%	980	100%	295	100%	17	100%	22	100%	24	100%	1,841	100%
Male	Denied	177	49%	395	49%	3,528	64%	1,212	50%	44	57%	35	42%	102	65%	10,383	49%
	Approved	186	51%	417	51%	1,994	36%	1,236	50%	33	43%	49	58%	56	35%	10,671	51%
	All	363	100%	812	100%	5,522	100%	2,448	100%	77	100%	84	100%	158	100%	21,054	100%
All	Denied	208	50%	468	50%	4,136	64%	1,358	50%	55	59%	42	40%	119	65%	11,376	50%
	Approved	212	50%	471	50%	2,366	36%	1,385	50%	39	41%	64	60%	63	35%	11,519	50%
	All	420	100%	939	100%	6,502	100%	2,743	100%	94	100%	106	100%	182	100%	22,895	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

			American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
			Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
FY 2015	Female	Denied	40	51%	83	48%	865	60%	205	46%	13	54%	9	43%	27	68%	1,171	47%
		Approved	39	49%	89	52%	587	40%	238	54%	11	46%	12	57%	13	33%	1,312	53%
		All	79	100%	172	100%	1,452	100%	443	100%	24	100%	21	100%	40	100%	2,483	100%
	Male	Denied	212	52%	493	49%	4,495	63%	1,499	47%	69	61%	69	49%	154	62%	11,819	48%
		Approved	198	48%	522	51%	2,611	37%	1,665	53%	45	39%	71	51%	96	38%	12,645	52%
		All	410	100%	1,015	100%	7,106	100%	3,164	100%	114	100%	140	100%	250	100%	24,464	100%
	All	Denied	252	52%	576	49%	5,360	63%	1,704	47%	82	59%	78	48%	181	62%	12,990	48%
		Approved	237	48%	611	51%	3,198	37%	1,903	53%	56	41%	83	52%	109	38%	13,957	52%
		All	489	100%	1,187	100%	8,558	100%	3,607	100%	138	100%	161	100%	290	100%	26,947	100%
FY 2016	Female	Denied	38	46%	70	47%	749	52%	216	44%	10	59%	12	38%	31	44%	1,085	45%
		Approved	45	54%	79	53%	693	48%	271	56%	7	41%	20	63%	39	56%	1,348	55%
		All	83	100%	149	100%	1,442	100%	487	100%	17	100%	32	100%	70	100%	2,433	100%
	Male	Denied	157	44%	427	45%	3,675	58%	1,292	43%	63	65%	63	47%	128	54%	9,893	46%
		Approved	203	56%	528	55%	2,682	42%	1,747	57%	34	35%	70	53%	111	46%	11,820	54%
		All	360	100%	955	100%	6,357	100%	3,039	100%	97	100%	133	100%	239	100%	21,713	100%
	All	Denied	195	44%	497	45%	4,424	57%	1,508	43%	73	64%	75	45%	159	51%	10,978	45%
		Approved	248	56%	607	55%	3,375	43%	2,018	57%	41	36%	90	55%	150	49%	13,168	55%
		All	443	100%	1,104	100%	7,799	100%	3,526	100%	114	100%	165	100%	309	100%	24,146	100%
FY 2017	Female	Denied	37	36%	48	29%	756	44%	208	36%	4	40%	7	21%	28	32%	1,050	40%
		Approved	65	64%	118	71%	964	56%	369	64%	6	60%	26	79%	59	68%	1,600	60%
		All	102	100%	166	100%	1,720	100%	577	100%	10	100%	33	100%	87	100%	2,650	100%
	Male	Denied	175	44%	402	38%	3,721	51%	1,275	37%	59	69%	37	30%	131	54%	9,105	40%
		Approved	227	56%	664	62%	3,532	49%	2,150	63%	27	31%	85	70%	113	46%	13,451	60%
		All	402	100%	1,066	100%	7,253	100%	3,425	100%	86	100%	122	100%	244	100%	22,556	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White		
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	
All	Denied	212	42%	450	37%	4,477	50%	1,483	37%	63	66%	44	28%	159	48%	10,155	40%	
	Approved	292	58%	782	63%	4,496	50%	2,519	63%	33	34%	111	72%	172	52%	15,051	60%	
	All	504	100%	1,232	100%	8,973	100%	4,002	100%	96	100%	155	100%	331	100%	25,206	100%	
FY 2018	Female	Denied	33	33%	70	33%	921	48%	246	35%	8	57%	8	32%	34	41%	1,104	38%
		Approved	67	67%	140	67%	998	52%	460	65%	6	43%	17	68%	48	59%	1,792	62%
		All	100	100%	210	100%	1,919	100%	706	100%	14	100%	25	100%	82	100%	2,896	100%
	Male	Denied	195	45%	430	36%	3,865	52%	1,366	39%	48	55%	38	33%	146	54%	9,165	40%
		Approved	241	55%	777	64%	3,567	48%	2,151	61%	40	45%	76	67%	122	46%	13,947	60%
		All	436	100%	1,207	100%	7,432	100%	3,517	100%	88	100%	114	100%	268	100%	23,112	100%
All	Denied	228	43%	500	35%	4,786	51%	1,612	38%	56	55%	46	33%	180	51%	10,269	39%	
	Approved	308	57%	917	65%	4,565	49%	2,611	62%	46	45%	93	67%	170	49%	15,739	61%	
	All	536	100%	1,417	100%	9,351	100%	4,223	100%	102	100%	139	100%	350	100%	26,008	100%	
FY 2019	Female	Denied	43	35%	97	34%	1,022	43%	277	31%	10	59%	12	29%	41	34%	1,185	32%
		Approved	81	65%	186	66%	1,338	57%	629	69%	7	41%	30	71%	81	66%	2,471	68%
		All	124	100%	283	100%	2,360	100%	906	100%	17	100%	42	100%	122	100%	3,656	100%
	Male	Denied	180	37%	441	32%	4,046	50%	1,365	34%	60	61%	42	27%	163	48%	9,611	37%
		Approved	311	63%	953	68%	4,091	50%	2,688	66%	39	39%	113	73%	175	52%	16,071	63%
		All	491	100%	1,394	100%	8,137	100%	4,053	100%	99	100%	155	100%	338	100%	25,682	100%
All	Denied	223	36%	538	32%	5,068	48%	1,642	33%	70	60%	54	27%	204	44%	10,796	37%	
	Approved	392	64%	1,139	68%	5,429	52%	3,317	67%	46	40%	143	73%	256	56%	18,542	63%	
	All	615	100%	1,677	100%	10,497	100%	4,959	100%	116	100%	197	100%	460	100%	29,338	100%	
FY 2020	Female	Denied	22	24%	71	27%	811	38%	234	26%	8	36%	9	26%	43	26%	877	26%
		Approved	69	76%	194	73%	1,343	62%	658	74%	14	64%	25	74%	123	74%	2,441	74%
		All	91	100%	265	100%	2,154	100%	892	100%	22	100%	34	100%	166	100%	3,318	100%

Appendix II: Analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' Data on Disability Claims, Fully Developed Claims, and Disability Ratings

		American Indian/ Alaska Native		Asian		Black/ African American		Hispanic		Multiple Race/ Unknown Race		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		Other		White	
		Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %	Number veterans	Veterans %
Male	Denied	114	30%	391	32%	2,723	42%	952	27%	81	43%	28	21%	131	39%	6,059	30%
	Approved	269	70%	837	68%	3,699	58%	2,530	73%	108	57%	108	79%	202	61%	14,053	70%
	All	383	100%	1,228	100%	6,422	100%	3,482	100%	189	100%	136	100%	333	100%	20,112	100%
All	Denied	136	29%	462	31%	3,534	41%	1,186	27%	89	42%	37	22%	174	35%	6,936	30%
	Approved	338	71%	1,031	69%	5,042	59%	3,188	73%	122	58%	133	78%	325	65%	16,494	70%
	All	474	100%	1,493	100%	8,576	100%	4,374	100%	211	100%	170	100%	499	100%	23,430	100%

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-23-106097

Note: A cell with a dash indicates that there were no veterans in the category. These data show the VA approval and denial rates for service connection for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (diagnostic code 9411) that were included as part of initial claims. An initial claim is when veterans apply for VA disability compensation for the first time. VA determines service connection based on whether an illness or injury was caused by—or got worse because of—the veteran’s active military service. GAO categorized all veterans who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic under that designation regardless of race. “Multiple race/unknown race” is VA’s combined category for veterans who reported in the data as “multiple race” and veterans whose race is “unknown.” Also, “other” is VA’s category for veterans who do not fall into one of the other race and ethnicity groups.

Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Veterans Affairs



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

July 10, 2023

Ms. Elizabeth Curda
Director
Education, Workforce
and Income Security Issues
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Curda:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has reviewed the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report: ***VA DISABILITY BENEFITS: Actions Needed to Further Examine Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Compensation*** (GAO-23-106097).

VA recently announced the establishment of an Agency Equity Team, known as the I*DEA (inclusion, diversity, equity and access) Council, that is responsible for helping VA improve outcomes for historically-underserved Veterans; identifying and eliminating any disparities in VA health care and benefits; and creating and implementing a VA Equity Action Plan. The Council will also work to eliminate disparities and barriers to recruit, hire, develop, promote and retain employees, including those from historically-underserved communities. The Council will report directly to VA's Deputy Secretary.

Further, I am pleased to inform you that the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) is creating a new Equity Assurance Office to address benefit disparity issues. This office will work in coordination with the I*DEA Council and promote equitable delivery of earned benefits to Veterans, including disability benefits, housing benefits, GI Bill benefits and much more. This office will be led by an Executive Director from the Senior Executive Service, and that executive will report directly to the Office of the Under Secretary for Benefits. The office will examine every aspect of VBA — including organizational structure, training and quality control, data, outreach, policies, customer experience, outcomes and more — to identify any disparities that may exist, understand their root causes and seek to eliminate them.

The enclosure contains technical comments and the action plan to address the draft report recommendations. VA appreciates the opportunity to comment on your draft report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tanya J. Bradsher".

Tanya J. Bradsher
Chief of Staff

Enclosure

**Appendix III: Comments from the Department
of Veterans Affairs**

Enclosure

The Department of Veterans Affairs Comments to
Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report
***VA DISABILITY BENEFITS: Actions Needed to Further Examine
Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Compensation***
(GAO-23-106097)

General Comments:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recognizes the importance of improving how it collects race and ethnicity data to understand the experiences of Veterans who may apply for disability compensation. VA is committed to improving outcomes for historically-underserved Veterans by identifying and eliminating any disparities in VA health care and benefits; listening to and learning from historically-underserved Veteran communities; and creating and implementing a VA Equity Action Plan. For this reason, it recently established an Agency Equity Team, as well as a new Equity Assurance Office within the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) to ensure that VA delivers on its promise to provide world-class care and benefits to all Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors – regardless of their age, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability or sexual identity.

VA agrees with the need to conduct a comprehensive assessment of disability compensation to identify the root causes that could contribute to any racial and ethnic disparities. Understanding the data and identifying the root causes for any disparities poses a substantial challenge given the complexity of the data and underlying issues. For example, data recently released by VA showed that, consistent with GAO's finding here, Black Veterans had lower grant ratings for disability claims than White Veterans by between 5% to 10% depending on the type of claim filed. However, Black Veterans also apply for disability benefits at materially higher rates than their white counterparts, and on average, Black Veterans receive slightly higher disability ratings from VA than White Veterans (65.7% vs. 62.2% for post-traumatic stress disorder; 80% vs. 78% for all mental health conditions; and 68% vs. 58% for all conditions). The data also show that the average yearly benefits payment is slightly higher for Black Veterans than their white counterparts (\$37,591 vs \$34,763 for post-traumatic stress disorder; \$36,563 vs. \$33,321 for all mental health conditions; and \$27,446 vs. \$21,867 for all conditions).

Despite the complexities, VA will work to identify the root causes of any racial and ethnic disparities and develop a plan to guide and coordinate VA's actions to address and eliminate any disparities in the delivery of earned benefits to Veterans, including disability benefits, housing benefits, GI Bill benefits and other benefits.

Enclosure

The Department of Veterans Affairs Comments to
Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report
***VA DISABILITY BENEFITS: Actions Needed to Further Examine
Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Compensation***
(GAO-23-106097)

Recommendation 1: The Secretary of VA should develop a documented plan that details specific actions, time frames, and procedures to address the limitations it has identified with its race and ethnicity data for veterans from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups.

VA Response: Concur. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Data Governance Council's Demographic Data Working Group (DDWG) is developing recommendations for VA-wide demographic data collection standards to ensure consistency and alignment with Federal requirements, industry standards and best practices. The DDWG's first set of recommendations, which outline collection standards on race and ethnicity, were approved by the Data Governance Council in March 2023. Next steps for race and ethnicity standardization include coordination by the Office of Enterprise Integration with the Office of Information and Technology and across VA Administrations and Staff Offices for development of a recommended implementation plan across VA systems.

Recommendation 2: The Secretary of VA should conduct a comprehensive assessment of disability compensation to identify the root causes that could contribute to any racial and ethnic disparities. Such an assessment could be completed internally or contracted out by VA. Also, it could include factors we identified in this report and any other factors VA considers relevant.

VA Response: Concur. The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has begun releasing a set of draft VBA equity dashboards that are in prototype for future use. The initial dashboard, covering disability compensation benefits, provides statistics such as application rate, grant rate and average award amounts by disability and demographic.

VBA recognizes that a comprehensive assessment requires rigorous research and will contract for a fiscal year (FY) 2024 study to identify potential barriers, by disability, in the disability compensation claims process. The study will build upon findings from the VBA equity dashboard project and FY 2023 root cause analysis into the differences for mental health disability compensation benefits.

VA is standing up a VA Equity Team called the I*DEA Council, and VBA is establishing an Equity Assurance Office as a part of its mission to provide world-class care and benefits to all Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors. These efforts are also a part of executing President Biden's Executive Orders (EO) on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, EOs 13985 and 14091, which charged the Federal Government with advancing equity for all and addressing systemic racism in policies and programs. The VBA Equity Assurance

**Appendix III: Comments from the Department
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(GAO-23-106097)

Office will work across the Administration to ensure that recommendations for improvement in disability compensation are addressed.

Recommendation 3: The Secretary of VA should, after completing a comprehensive assessment of disability compensation, develop a plan to guide and coordinate VA 's actions to address the identified root causes of any racial and ethnic disparities.

VA Response: Concur. VBA will develop a plan to guide and coordinate VA's actions to address root causes for the identified racial and ethnic disparities after the comprehensive assessment of disability compensation, as described under Recommendation 2, is completed.

Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Elizabeth H. Curda, (202) 512-7215 or curdae@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Nyree M. Ryder Tee (Assistant Director), Ashanta Williams (Analyst-in-Charge), and David Reed made key contributions to this report. Also contributing to this report were Tracy Abdo, Melinda Cordero, Andrew Emmons, David Forgosh, Alex Galuten, Gina Hoover, Gabriel Jimenez, Anjalique Lawrence, Diona Martyn, Zina Merritt, Brittni Milam, Anna Maria Ortiz, Raquel Quall-Hampton, Joi Reece, Meg Sommerfeld, Curtia Taylor, Ann Tynan, Lisa Van Arsdale, Adam Wendel, and Christopher Zbrozek.

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