

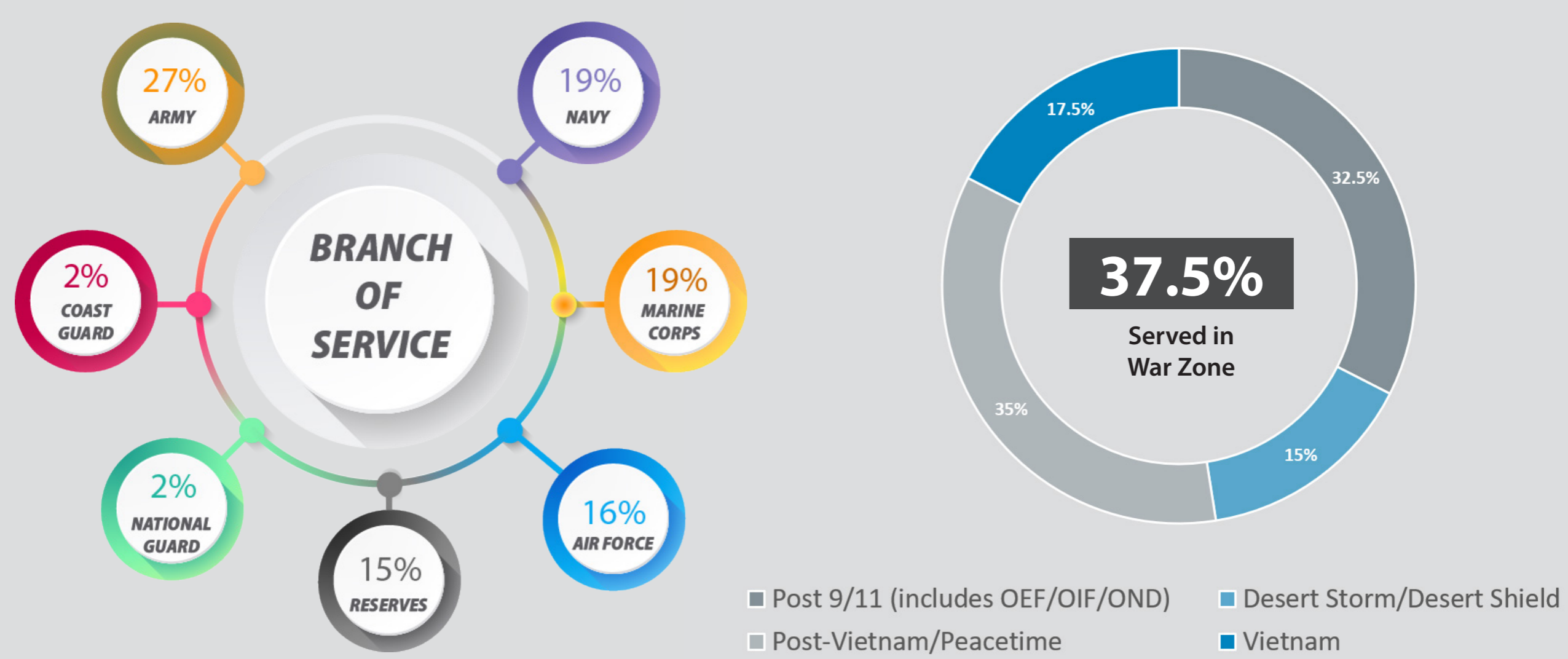
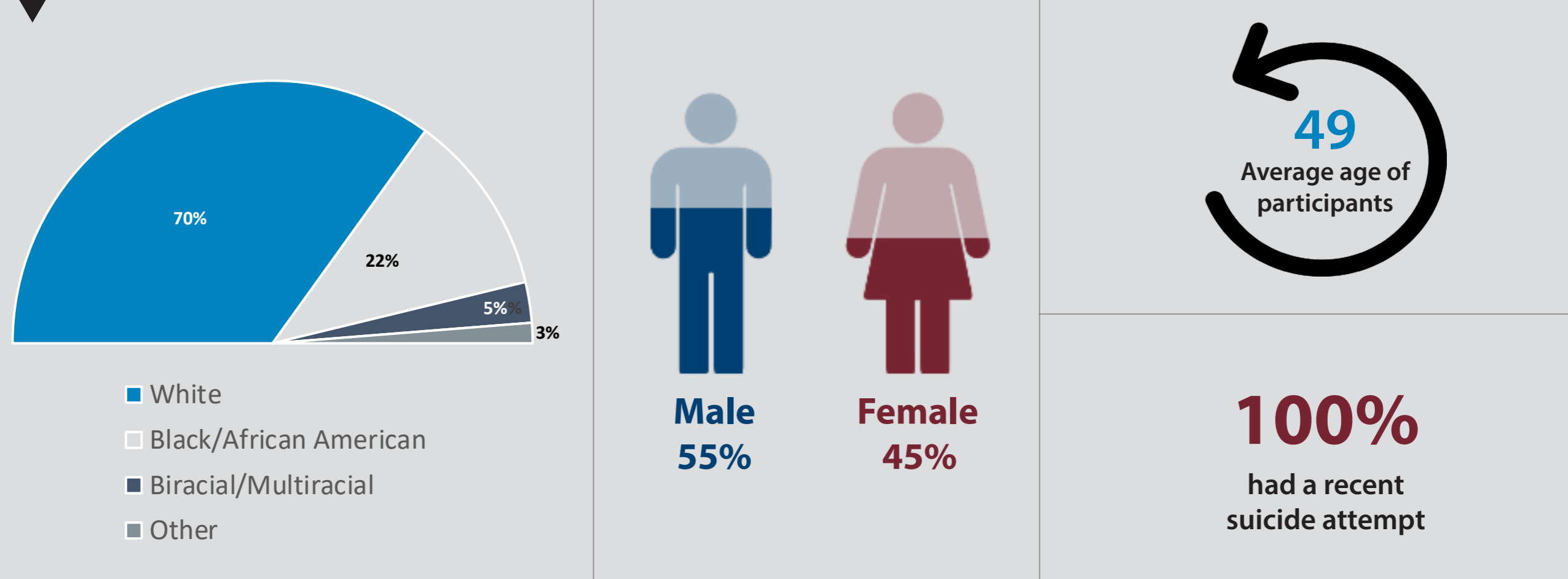
## Bottom Line

Veterans indicated that public health campaigns can be effective interventions during periods of crisis. Our findings highlight opportunities to inform campaign development targeting Veterans at high risk for suicide.

## Research Questions

1. How do Veterans at high risk for suicide understand and interpret suicide prevention messages?
2. What types of messages influence the likelihood for help seeking during periods of crisis?

## Sample (N=40)



## Linking Research to Practice

- 1**

Main point of messages was discernible; however, actionable steps (crisis line use) were not clearly communicated, potentially preventing messages from increasing help seeking behaviors.

**Keep Messages Simple.** Consider the capacity for those in distress to take action. Provide clear direction for (or depictions of) targeted behavior change to help overcome potential processing issues during crisis.
- 2**

Participants did not regularly perceive themselves as targets for messages despite content developed towards populations at high risk for suicide.

**One size does not fit all.** Apply more nuanced approaches that include messaging tailored to specific characteristics vs. ambiguous audience.

Consider the potential need for **novel, emotionally intense stimuli** to better connect Veterans in distress to message content.

**Cultural competence is a must.** Veterans didn't recognize firearm access as a risk factor for suicide.
- 3**

Powerful solemn features paralleled how emotional crisis felt for participants, which increased their likelihood to attend to and positively respond to messages.

**Frame messages** as somber and provocative to initially draw audience attention, but transition content to a more positive emotional appeal to motivate help seeking (i.e. benefits of treatment).

**Test, Test, Test.** Obtain stakeholder feedback throughout the design process to ensure messages functionally match the communication needs of Veterans at risk for suicide.

## What Veterans Said



## Study Limitations

Study findings are subject to limitations commonly associated with qualitative research (i.e. limited generalizability, sample/response biases); future research has been proposed to test the effects of messaging on targeted behavior change.

“Thirty seconds can make a big difference, but it's got to capture you. And when you're in that state of mind it's not easy to capture that brain because that brain is about 99% focused on the problem.”