

Special Considerations for Women Veterans

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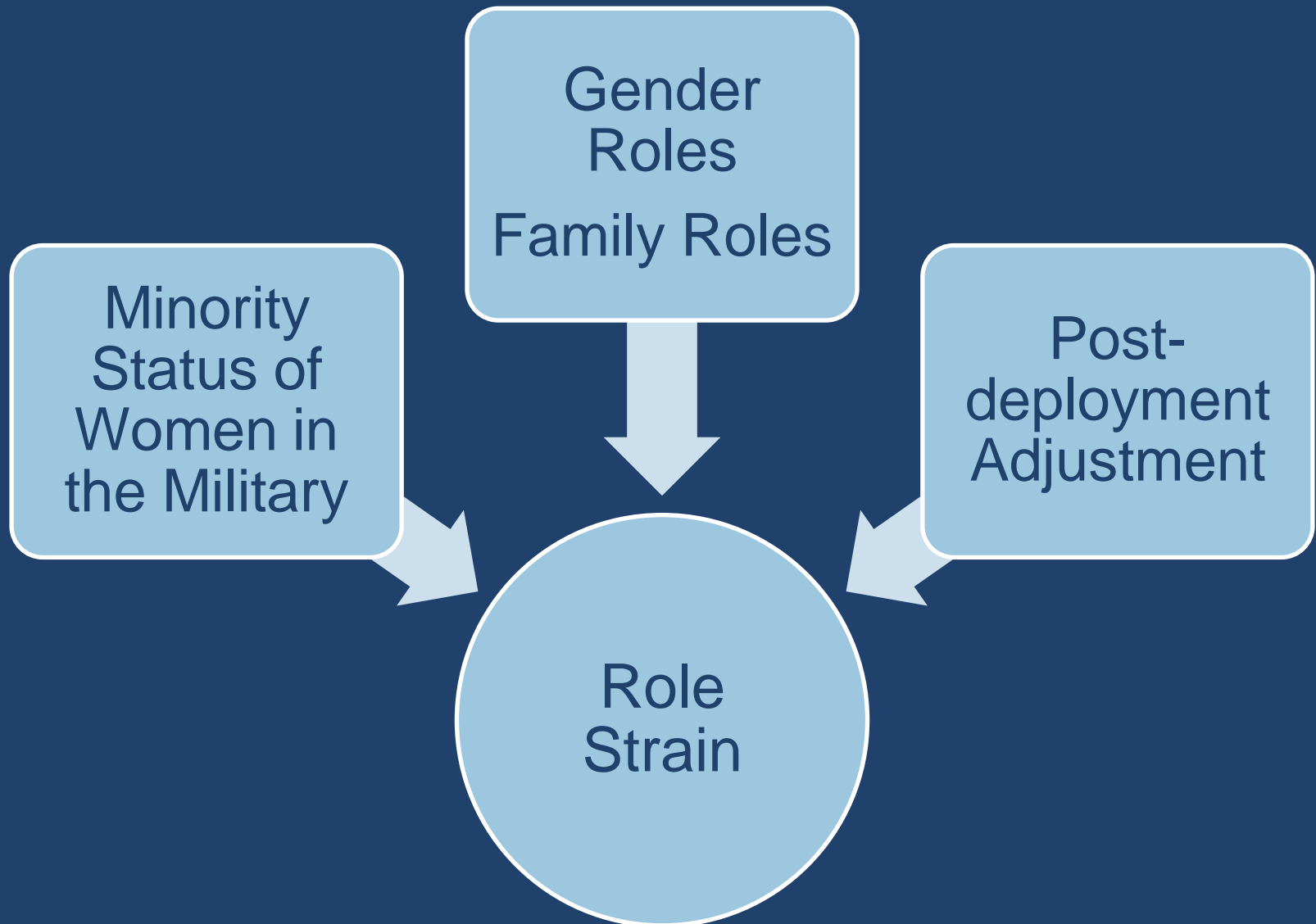
*Delivered at the 2nd Annual DoD/NIH/VA Trauma Spectrum Conference,
Washington, DC, December 10, 2009*

Women in the Armed Forces

- 20% of new recruits
- 14% of total DoD forces
- VHA expects 17% increase in women Veterans by 2033



Conceptual Model



“I think what defines a successful military career for me is balancing all three aspects of my life—being a Naval officer, a spouse, and a mother...I would not be as successful if I didn’t have my daughter and husband to support me.”

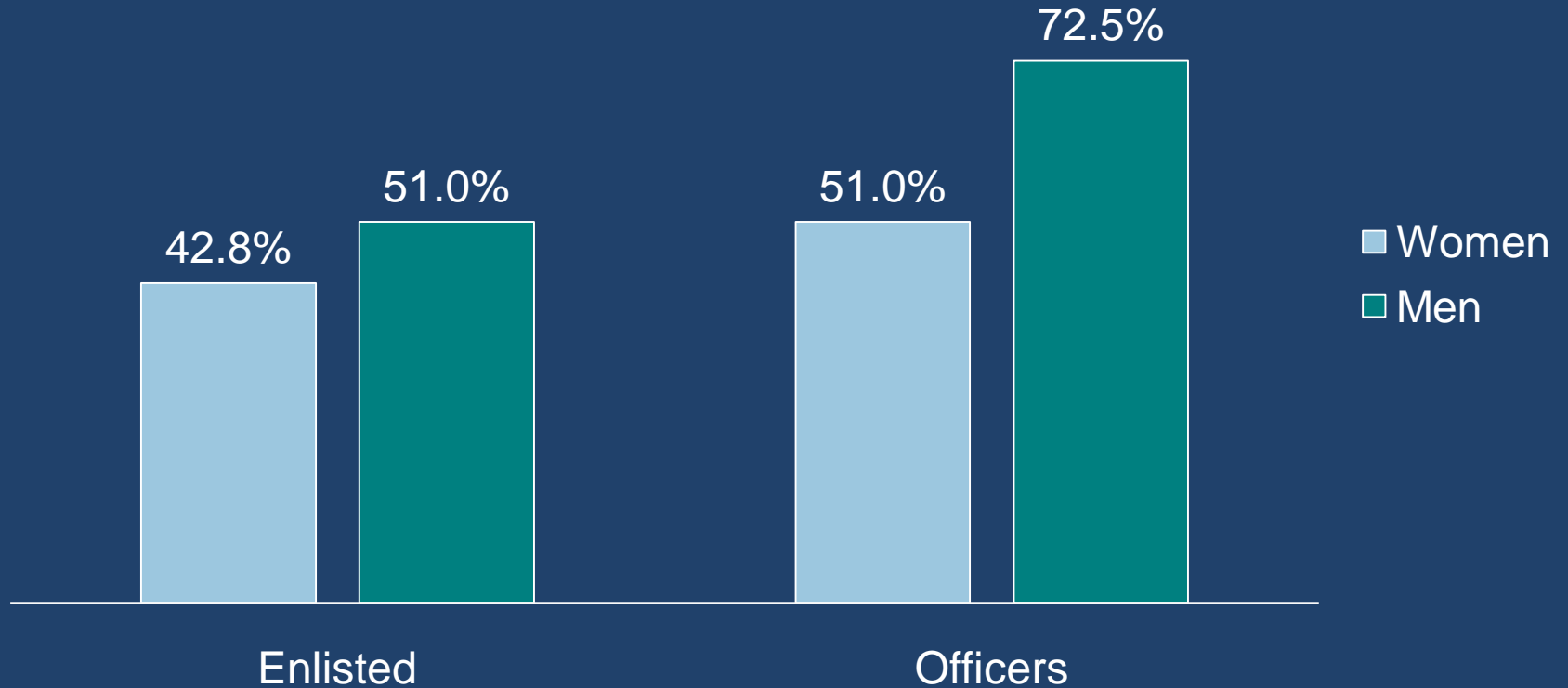
~ Female Sailor

I just find that for me at least, dealing with guys on this massive scale—the more like them you are, the easier it is to get ahead or get what you want. I hear guys saying they don't want to deal with women because they throw fits or you can't joke with them, so it's like walking on eggshells. It is their world, we are severely outnumbered, but in a way you just have to roll with them.”

~Female Coast Guardsman

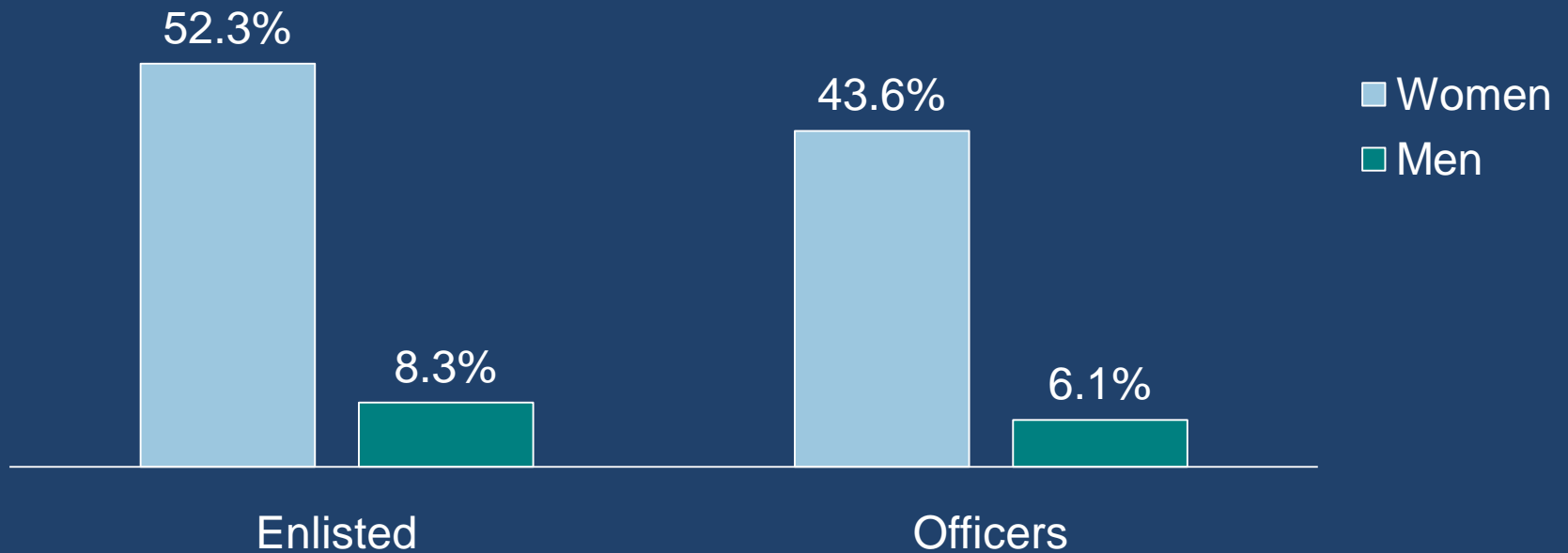
Marital Status

Active Duty, FY2005



Dual-Military Marriages

Active Duty, FY2005



“As a dual military couple, it seemed to us that one parent had to focus more on the kids, and that was me. So my role for the early part of my career was the parent, and he was focused on his career.”

~Female Airman

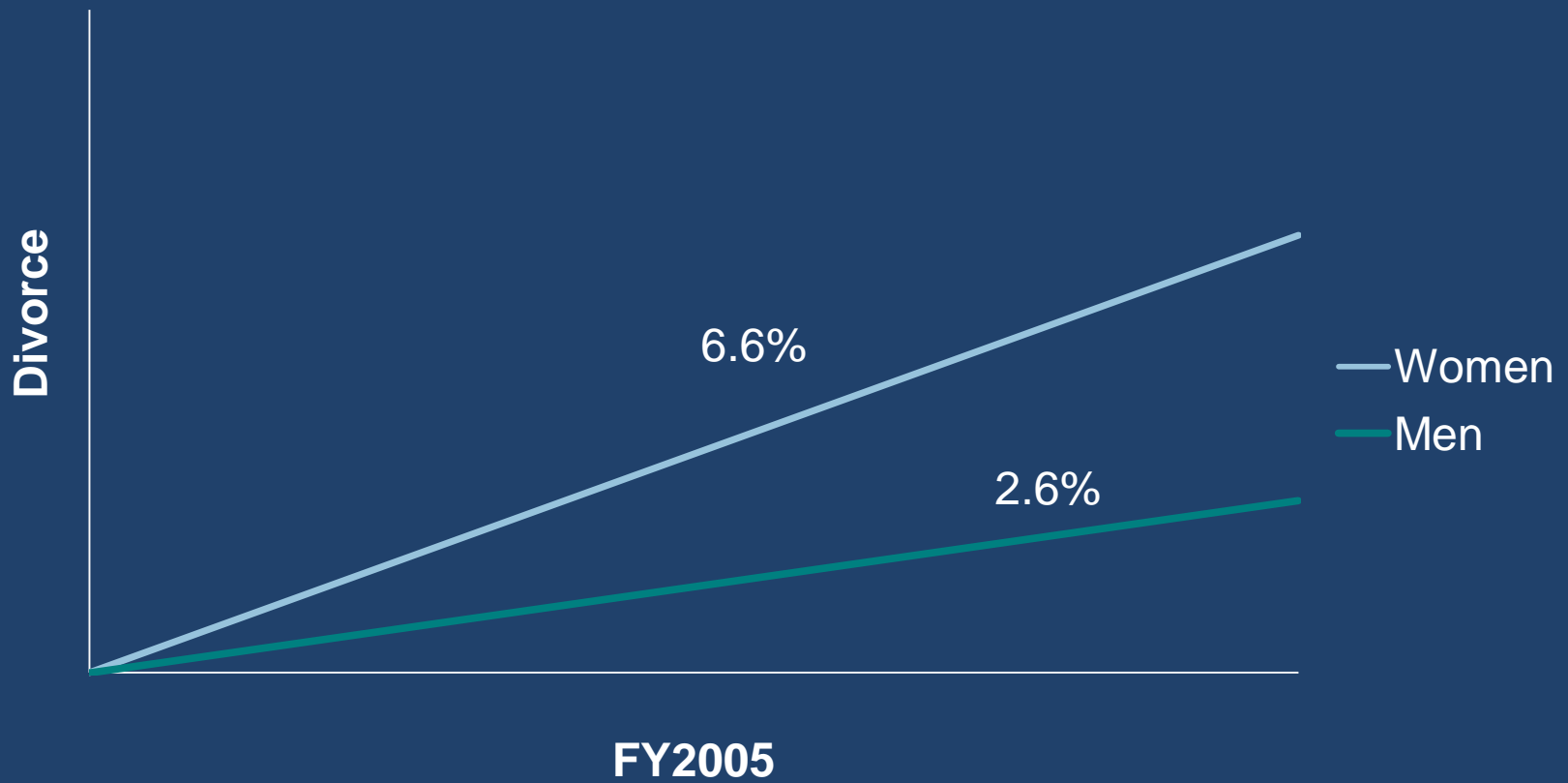
“I don’t think there’s any balance being dual military. Being deployed every year and a half; I don’t think that’s any way to raise a child.”

~Female Soldier (Currently Deployed)

Intimate Partner Violence

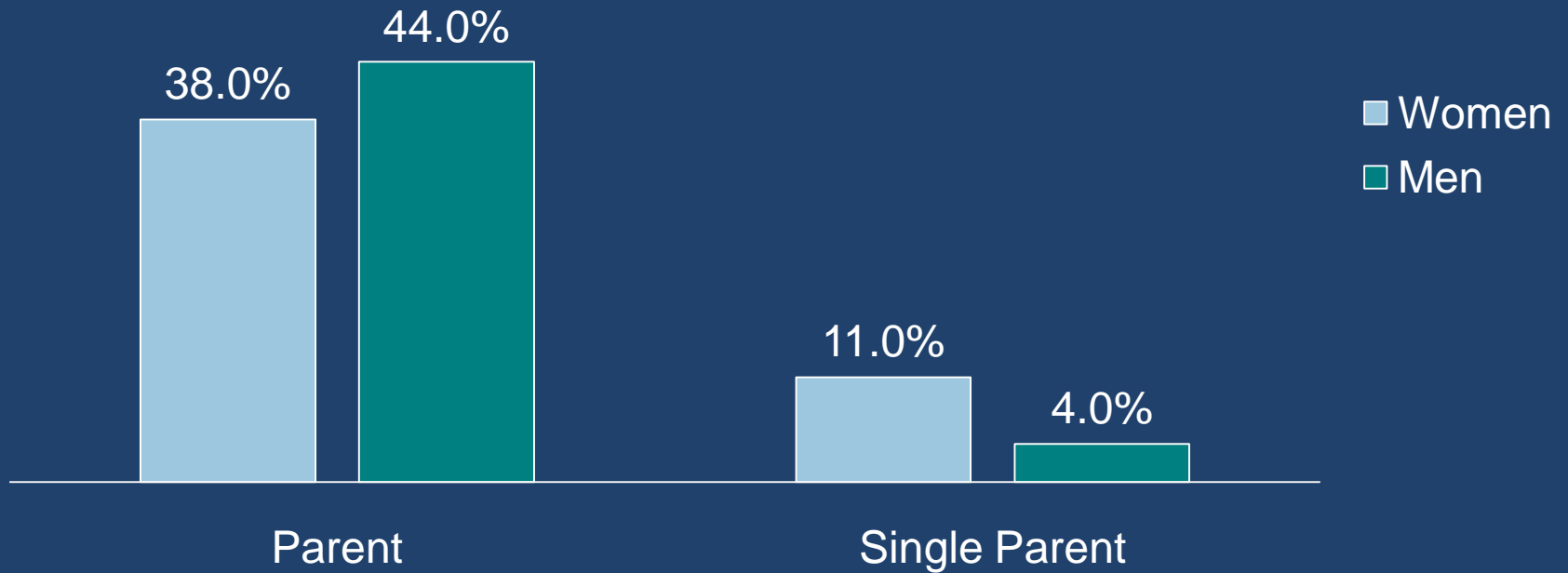
- 30-44% of active duty women report adult lifetime history of IPV
- 21.6% during service
- Enlisted women at higher risk
- 39% of women Veterans report a lifetime history of IPV

Annual Rate of Marital Dissolution



Parenting Status

Active Duty, FY2005



“As a single mother of three it is difficult for me to find the time to care for myself, and the way personnel are handled in the military arena has caused me to seek care in the civilian sector for fear of being ostracized or jeopardizing my military career.”

~Female Service Member

Childcare

- Women report greater childcare problems than men
- Military mothers more likely than fathers to miss work due to childcare
 - 37% vs. 7%

“Childcare is an aspect that I can’t hit on hard enough; it’s come a long way, but the availability is not there. I think a lot of people do get out because of the lack of support.”

~Senior Leader

“Another thing that is difficult is the daycare facility. The hours do not [meet my needs]. And the cost [is too high]. Soldiers have to do 24-hour duty, and we don’t have a facility doing 24 hours...and we have to pay extra money.”

~Female Service Member

Marriage and Deployment

- *Female gender* = consistent predictor of marital dissolution
- Children reduce risk for dissolution
 - *Less so for women than men*
- Deployment reduces risk (Army, Navy Marines)
 - *Less so for women than men*
- Deployment increases risk (Air Force)
 - *More so for women than men*

Post-deployment Adjustment

- Mothers = more problems with depression, family functioning than women without children
- Family functioning = greater role in women's individual adjustment than men's
- Gender-specific deployment stressors: sexual harassment, assault
 - “*Trauma hypothesis*” is not limited to combat exposure

Deployment & Role Strain

“I speak often to [my children] about how important it is to do what I do. They seem proud of it but still do not want me to deploy. They don’t seem to mind that Dad goes.”

“I expected my husband to step in and take on more of the managing of our children than he was used to doing, but he didn’t. I found myself dealing with issues...a couple of months after the time that they should have been addressed.”

“My son was very angry with the military and blamed the military for both our separation and the divorce. He was angry with me for not wanting to leave the military.”

Future Directions

- Role conflict: Match expectations to demands on women and their families
 - Expectations of both families *and* women themselves
- Support: Facilitate spousal support and peer support
 - Spousal support strongly linked to women's marital satisfaction
 - Peer support among women service members
 - Social support to male spouses