

Title: Mental Health Problems Among U.S. Veterans

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Purpose: In the military, mental health problems are considered stigmatized and seeking services can have negative career impacts. So this poses the question, do military veterans report or experience fewer poor mental health days?

Methods: Responses from 427,719 American adults (N = 6581 from West Virginia), from the 2011 and 2021 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data were used. A cross tabulation examined the relations between veteran status and reported poor mental health days in the past month.

Results: The results showed that 12.8% of the veterans reported experiencing 14+ poor mental health days, compared to 14.9% of U.S. civilians, χ^2 (DF=1, N=427719) = 32.54, $p < .001$. For West Virginia, 15.2% of veterans reported 14+ poor mental health days, compared to 19.9% from non-veterans, χ^2 (DF=1, N=6581) = 7.75, $p < .01$. Of note, WV veterans did not differ from U.S. veterans, χ^2 (DF=1, N=56065) = 00.03, $p = .95$.

Discussion: These data demonstrate a difference between veterans and non-veteran groups. Although WV veterans report poorer mental health relative to non-veterans in , they did not differ from other US veterans. Although causes for this difference are not evident in these data, or significance of fewer reported poor mental health days. Given that some data show mental health in veterans tends to decrease after retirement, more studies are needed.