

# Veteran Status and Likelihood of Having Poor Mental Health

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## Research Questions

- Do military veterans have higher rates of poor mental health compared with those who have no military experience?
- Are there age differences in this potential association?

## Significance

- There are 2.2 million veterans who have given the ultimate sacrifice to serve our country (Reynolds & Shendunk, 2018).
- Because of mental health stigma, most people do not seek out mental health services, especially men who are told not to show their emotions (Vogel et al., 2014).

## Background

- Hankin et al, (1999) found that over 1/3 of the veteran respondents in the study met criteria for a mental illness diagnosis, and 85% had experienced a traumatic event during their service.
- There are high rates of mental health disorders among active duty military members and veterans, such as posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and alcohol use disorders (Seal et al., 2007).
- Pemberton et al. (2016) found that veterans had a higher prevalence of mental illness than nonveterans among adults aged 54 or younger, using the 2002-12 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

## Hypotheses

- Those who are of veteran status will have higher rates of mental health disorders than those who are of non-veteran status.
- This difference will be greater in the younger population.

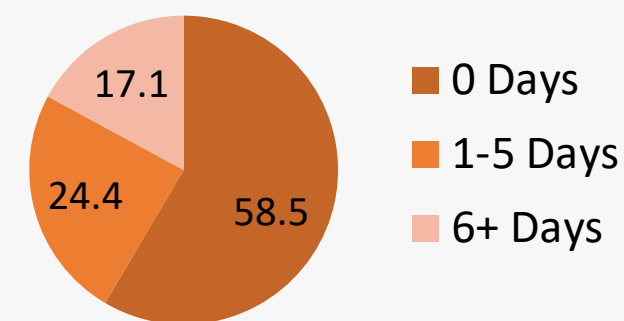
## Data and Sample

- General Social Survey (GSS)
- English or Spanish speaking American adults who are at least 18 years of age or older, in the continental United States
- 2014, 2016, & 2018 data (N= 7,753)

## Dependent Variable

- Mental health status
- “For how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good?”

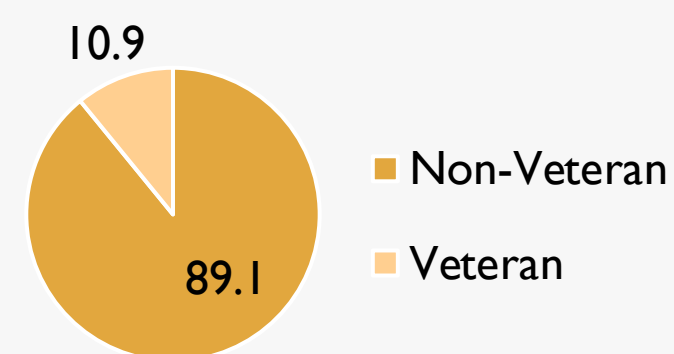
Figure 1. % Distribution for Mental Health Status



## Independent Variable

- Veteran Status
- “Have you ever been on active duty for military training or service for two consecutive months or more?”

Figure 2. % Distribution for Veteran Status



## Control Variable

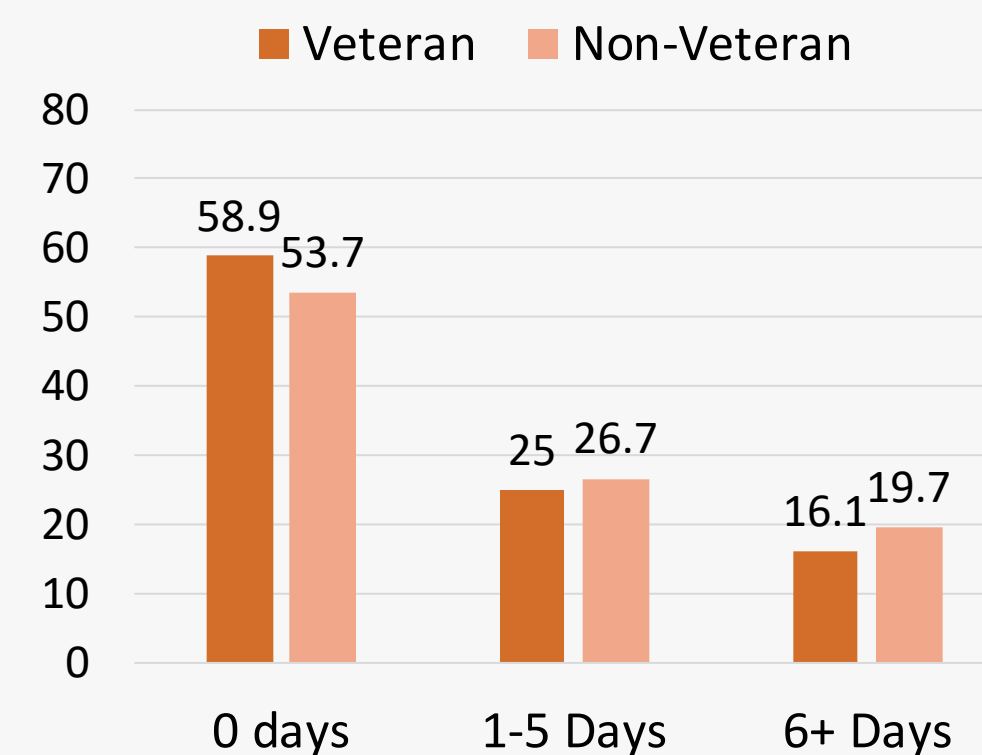
- Age
  - 18-45 years: 44.9%
  - 46-89 years: 55.1%

## Analysis

- Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SPSS

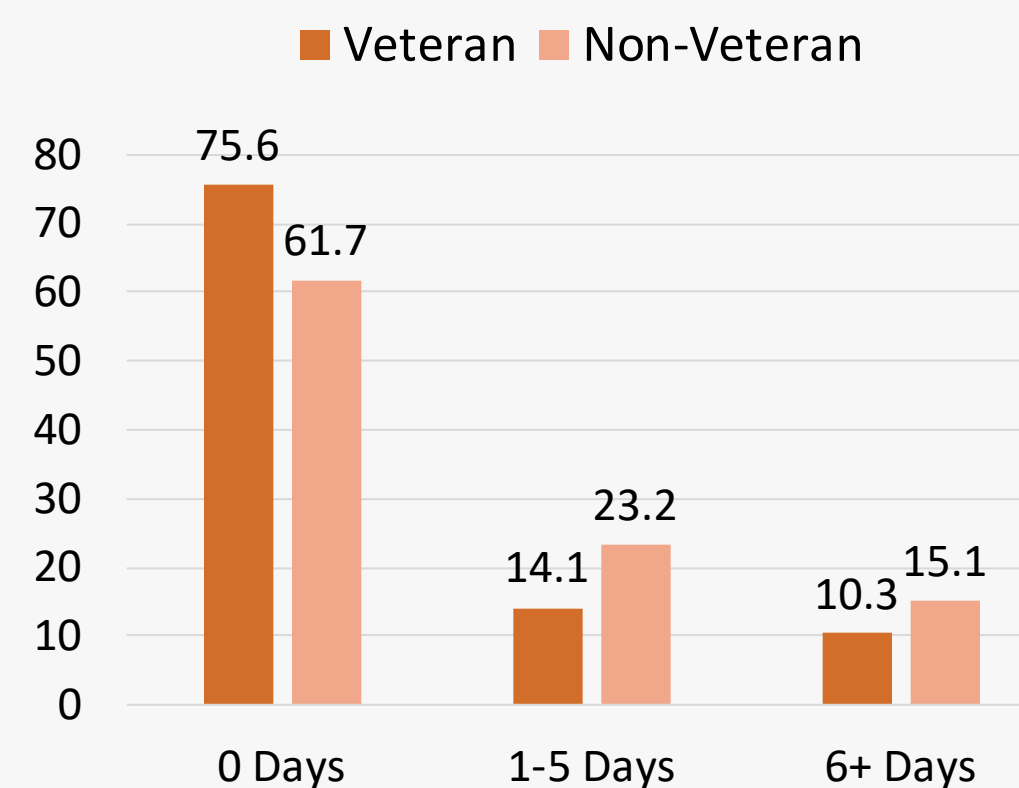
## Results

Figure 3. % Distribution for Days Having Poor Mental Health by Veteran Status: 18-45 Years Old



Note: Chi-square test suggests differences by veteran status was not significant.

Figure 4. % Distribution for Days Having Poor Mental Health by Veteran Status: 46-89 Years Old



Note: Chi-square test suggests differences by veteran status was significant at  $p < .001$ .

## Summary of Findings

- Veterans were less likely to report 6+ days of poor mental health than those who were of non-veteran status.
- Controlling for age, the difference in mental health by veteran status was significant only among the older group (aged 46 or older).

## Discussion

- It is possible that many veterans may not see that they have mental health issues (Veterans Affairs, 2018).
- The current do not include active military member, which could include a big percentage of individuals with poor mental health.

## References

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