

Research Questions

- How does having served in the military affect overall religious participation or spirituality?
- Does this association differ by age?

Background

- Past research shows that those aged 25 years and younger who have been in combat as a member of enlisted military service tend to become more religious than they were before the combat (Cesur, Freidman, and Sabia 2018).
- Studies also suggest that those who have served in the military, and especially those who have experienced a traumatic event during their time serving, tend to have a weakened faith compared to what they had before becoming a member of the military (Fontana and Rosenheck 2004).

Hypothesis

- Those who have served in the military tend to be more spiritual than those who have never been in the military.
- Those with military experience will have fewer accounts of religious participation than those who have never served.
- These associations will be stronger for younger age groups and weaker for older age groups.

Data

- 2016 General Social Survey (N = 2867)
- Representative sample of U.S adults aged 18 and over

Dependent Measures

Spirituality

- Respondents were asked how spiritual they considered themselves to be.

Not	9.9%
Slightly	23.3%
Moderately	38.3%
Very	38.5%

Religious Participation

- Respondents were asked how often they prayed.

Never	15.2%
Less than once a week	9.2%
At least once a week	17.1%
At least once a day	58.5%

Independent Measure

Military Experience

- Respondents were asked if they had ever been on active duty for military training or service for two consecutive months or more.

Yes	9.9%
No	90.1%

Control Measure

Age

18-45	46.7%
46+	53.3%

Analysis

Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SPSS

Results

Figure 1. % Distribution for Spirituality by Military Experience and Age

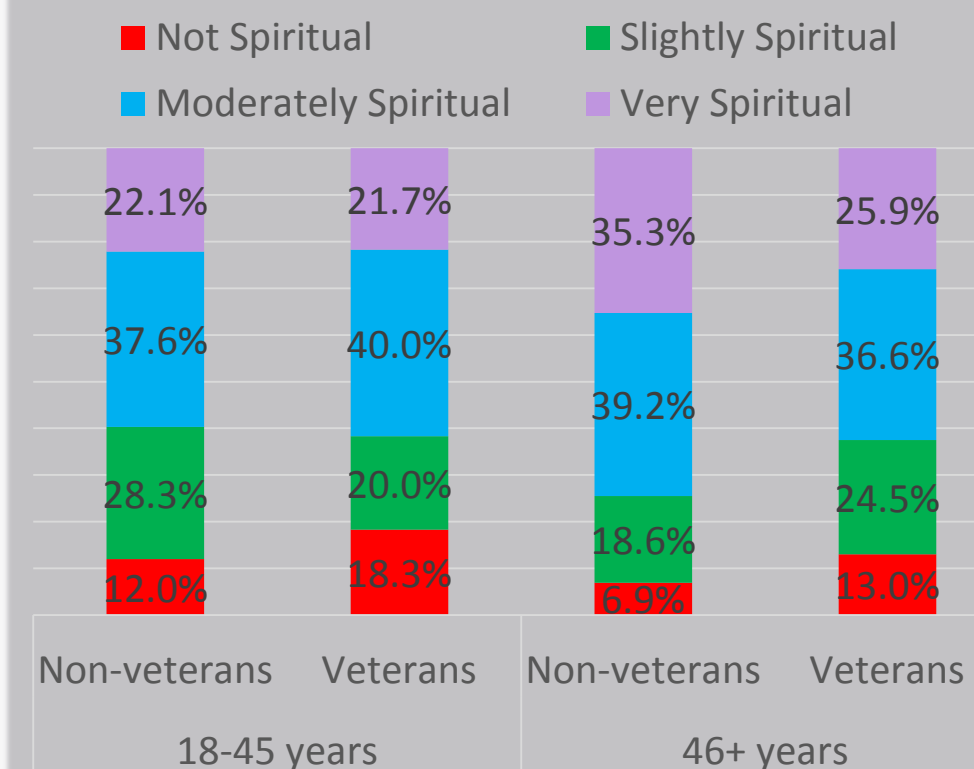
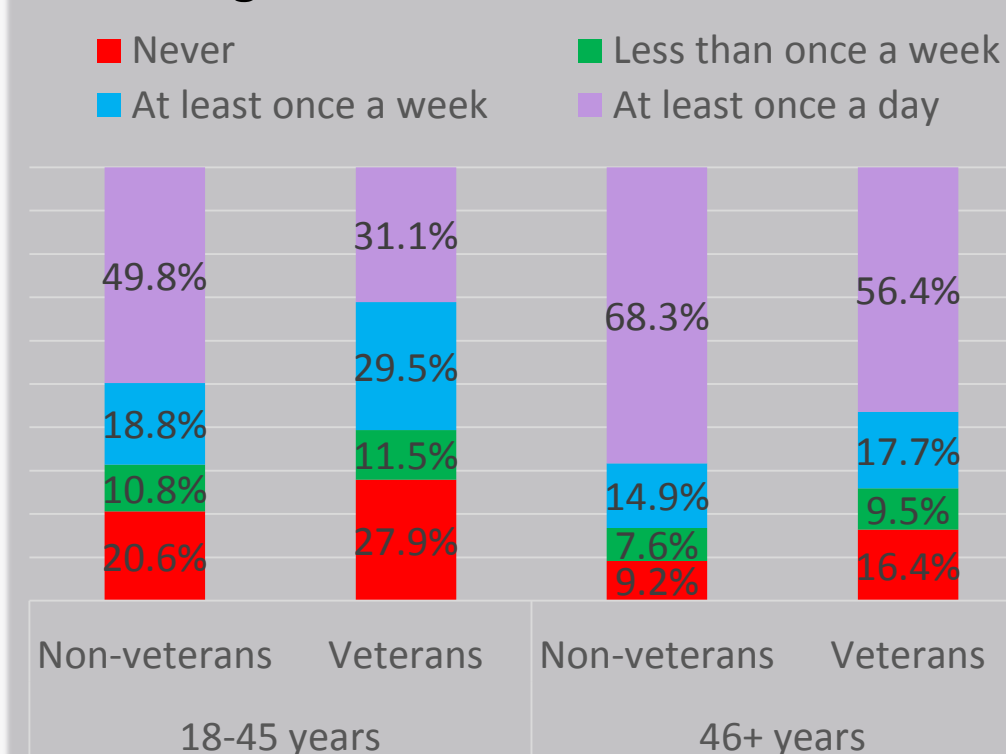


Figure 2. % Distribution for Religious Participation by Military Experience and Age



Summary of Findings

- Contrary to my hypothesis, those with some military experience are *less* likely to be spiritual than those with no military experience.
- Differences in having served or not are only significant among those 46 years of age and older.
- Regardless of age, those with some military experience are *less* likely to participate in religious activities than those who have never served.

Implications

- Although some research shows that religion helps service men and women recover from trauma, the current analysis suggests that having served in the military seems to weaken overall religiosity.

Resources

- Hassner, R. E. (2016). Hypotheses on Religion in the Military. *International Studies Review*, 18(2), 312-332. doi:10.1093/isr/viv009
- Fontana, A. and Rosenheck, R. (2004). Trauma, Change in Strength of Religious Faith, and Mental Health Service Use Among Veterans Treated for PTSD. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 192(9), 579-584.
- Cesur, R., Freidman, T., & Sabia, J. (2018). Death, Trauma and God: The Effect of Military Deployments on Religiosity. doi:10.3386/w24954