

Transitioning from Military Service to Civilian Life: A Period of Elevated Risk?



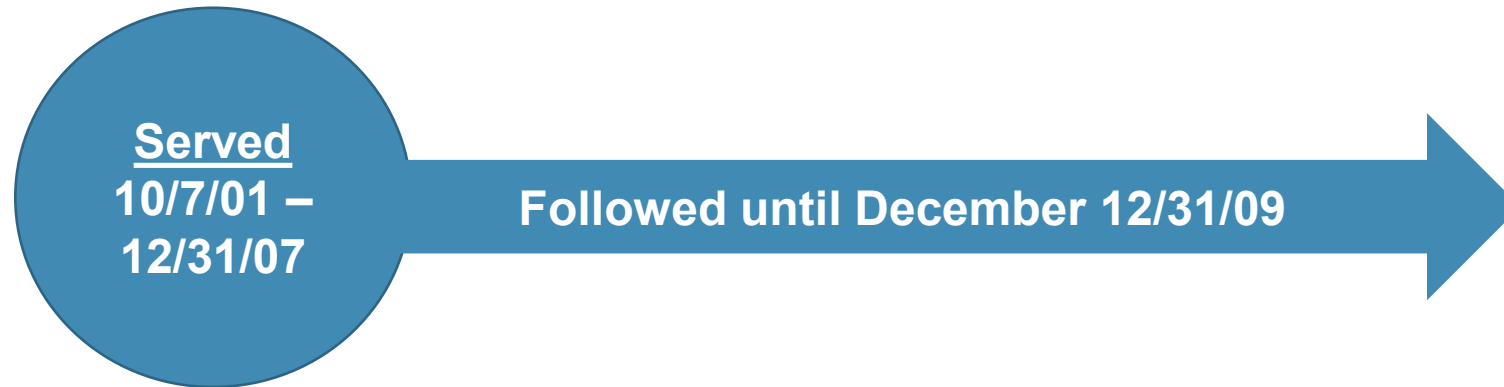
Epstein Family Veterans
Policy Research Institute

Our Mission

The RAND Epstein Family Veterans Policy Research Institute, housed at the RAND Corporation, is dedicated to conducting innovative, interdisciplinary, **evidence-based research to improve the lives of those who have served in the U.S. military**. Through a range of partnerships, the institute prioritizes creative, equitable, and inclusive analysis and evaluation to meet the needs of **diverse veteran populations** while engaging and empowering those who support them.

Are there periods of elevated suicide risk among veterans relative to separation?

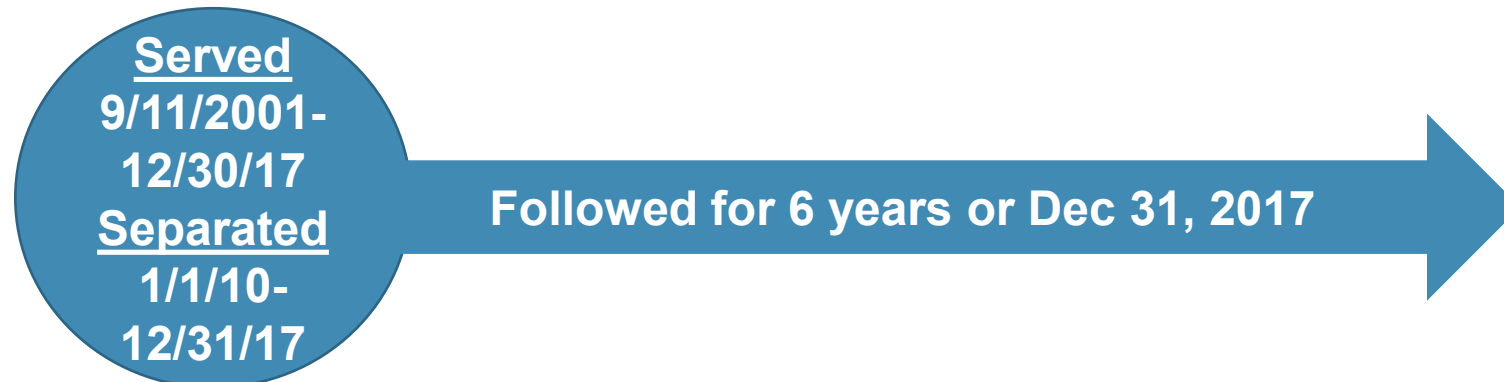
Reger et al., 2015



Key Results

- Elevated hazard upon separation from service
- Consistent across all service branches
- Monotonic decrease in suicide rate as years in service increased
- Not honorable discharges had increased risk of suicide

Ravindran et al., 2020



- Risk peaks at 6-12 months post-separation, and decreased modestly over time
- Elevated hazard among those separating with <2 years of service

From: **Association of Suicide Risk With Transition to Civilian Life Among US Military Service Members**

JAMA Netw Open. 2020;3(9):e2016261. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.16261

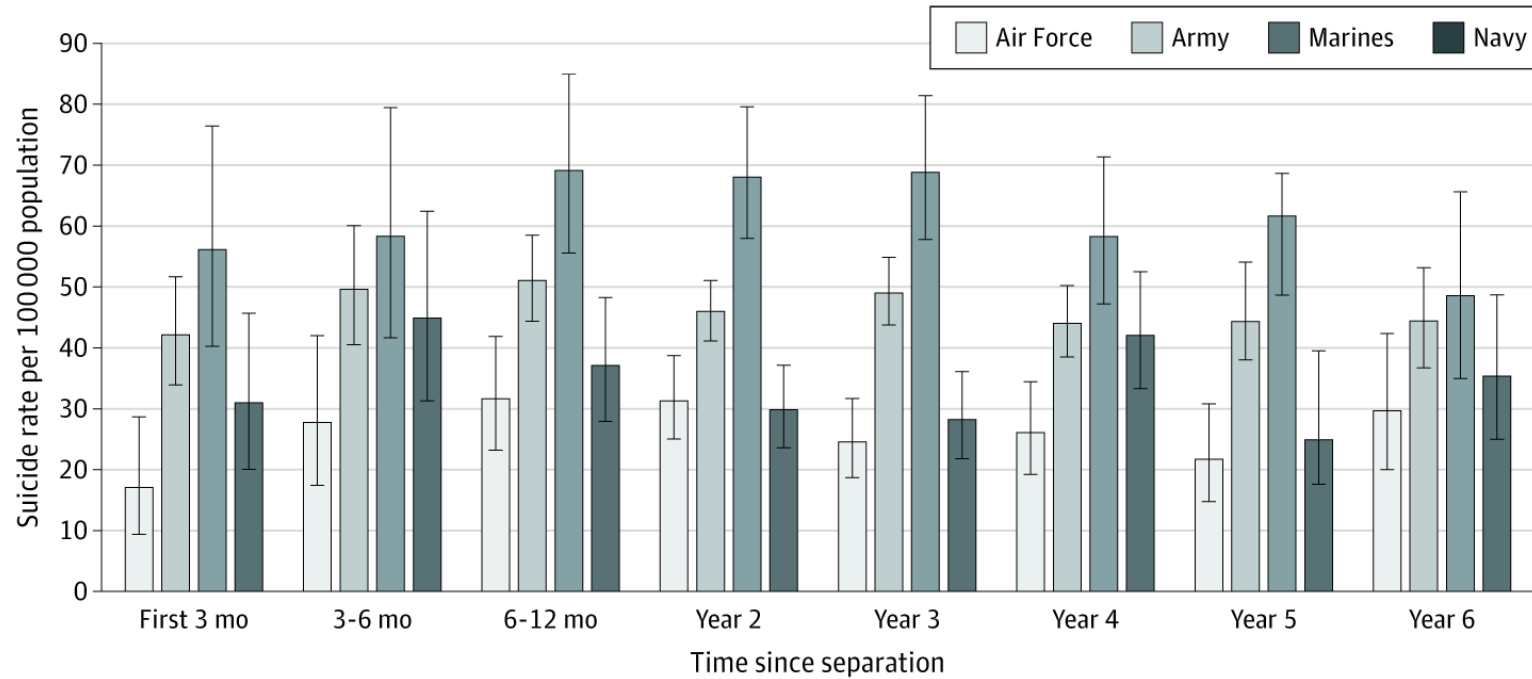


Figure Legend:

Suicide Rates Conditioned on Time Since Separation by Service Branch With 95% CIs

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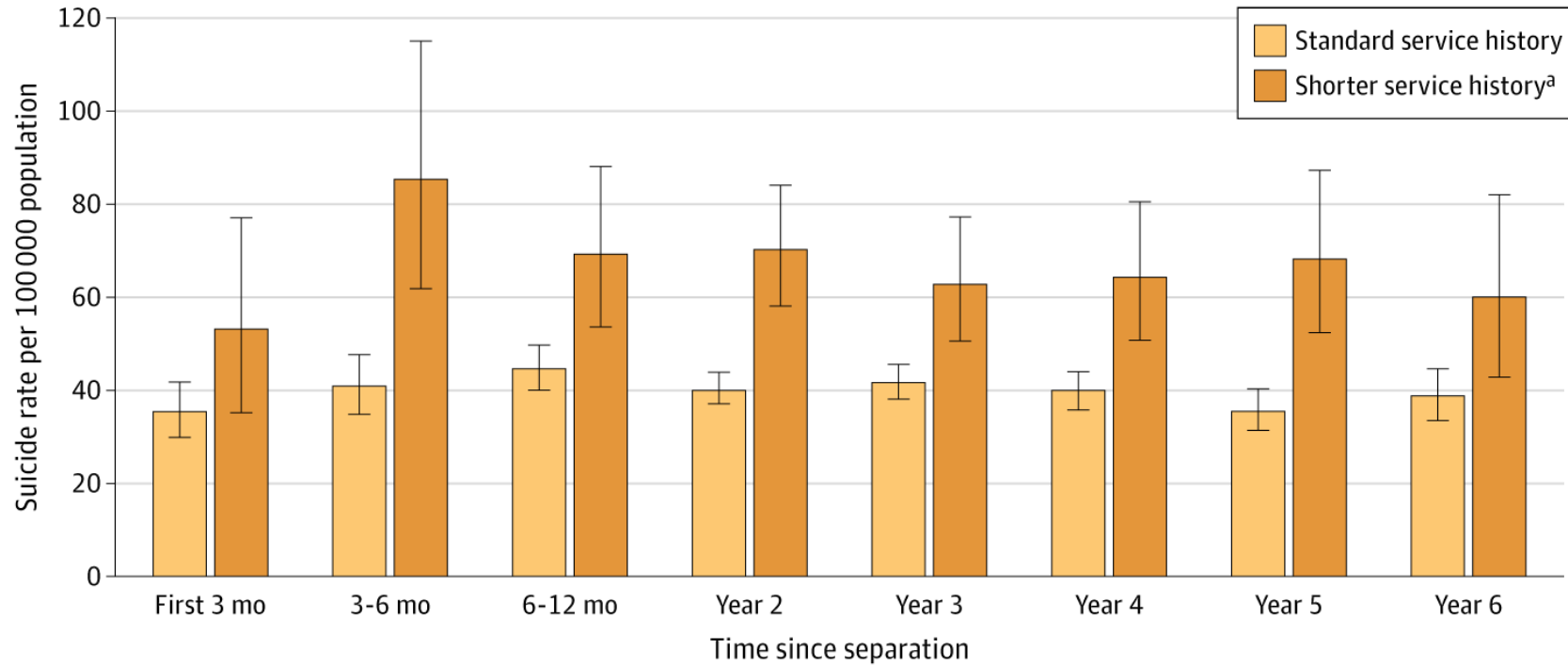


Figure Legend:

Suicide Rates Conditioned on Time Since Separation by Length of Service With 95% CIs^a Shorter service history defined as less than 2 years of service in the active component with no other military service or deployment history.



TVMI

The Veterans Metrics Initiative



Identifying the Needs of Transitioning Veterans



- 9,566 servicemembers 0-90 days of separation in Fall 2016
- Six surveys over 3 years
- Continued follow-up being conducted by Penn State researchers at the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness

Funders

Prudential; Wounded Warrior Project; Veterans Health Administration Office of Research and Development; Walmart Foundation; May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust; Robert R. McCormick Foundation; Schultz Family Foundation; Lockheed Martin Corporation; Health Net Federal Services; Bob Woodruff Foundation; Northrop Grumman; Marge and Phil Odeen; The Heinz Endowments; National Endowment for the Humanities; and Henry Jackson Foundation

Key Findings from TVMI



Employment

Initial satisfaction followed by perceived underemployment



Financial

Veterans with a problematic financial status at discharge were more likely to experience difficulty adjusting during their transition, and this difficulty remained high through two years post-military separation



Education

Veterans with problematic financial risk and those with PTSD were less likely to complete their education if pursuing a bachelor's degree



Physical Health

Chronic pain and sleep problems were the most commonly endorsed conditions, and health functioning and satisfaction declined over the three years of the study



Mental Health

Approximately 10% reported thoughts of suicide at each assessment. Veterans with ongoing mental health problems were more likely to have difficulty adjusting during their transition to civilian life



Social Connections

Veterans' social well-being declined over the three years of the study.

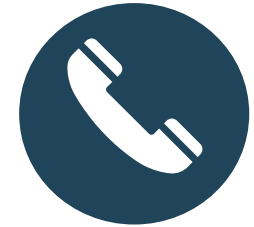
LAURA WERBER, JESSICA PHILLIPS, LAUREN SKRABALA

What Are Organizations Doing to Strengthen Veterans' Social Connections?

An Examination of Program Operations and Evaluation Efforts



87 web-based surveys



15 follow-up phone-based interviews

Organizations build camaraderie in one of three ways:

1. Providing a context for social connections;
2. Brokering connections on behalf of veterans;
3. Restoring veterans' capacity to connect with others.

Organizations struggle to measure social connectedness, particularly for evaluations

Other evaluation challenges include those associated with collecting data and insufficient resources

What are the factors that influence transition experiences?

4

Roundtable discussions with SMEs

- Service and pre-service factors
- “Transition” factors
- Post-transition factors
- Prioritized recommendations

Themes summarized and published

“Conditions for Postservice Success Are Set Well Before the Uniform Comes Off”

Proceedings from a Roundtable on How Military Service Affects Veterans' Posttransition Outcomes

RAJEEV RAMCHAND, KAYLA M. WILLIAMS, CARRIE M. FARMER

Sponsored by the Heinz Endowments



Scheduled release date: May 30, 2023



Key Themes

Pre-enlistment factors

- Motivations for serving in the military
- Adverse childhood events

Military experiences

- Military occupational specialty (MOS)
- Variability in support services across installations caused by leadership climate and state-level policies

Military cultural norms

- Discourages seeking help until a crisis,
- Concealing disability
- Poor military leadership or infrastructure

Organizational responsibilities

- The role of DoD, community services, and VSOs and MSOs



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