

New survey shows PTSD is big problem, even for noncombatants

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A recent national survey of 1,484 U.S. military veterans shows that posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) remains a major health problem, even for service members who have never seen combat.

More than 85% of [veterans](#) reported exposure to a wide range of

traumas, the most common of which were sudden death of a family member or friend, seeing somebody get badly hurt or killed, and experiencing a natural disaster. The senior author of the study was Yale's Robert Pietrzak, director of the Translational Psychiatric Epidemiology Laboratory of the Clinical Neurosciences Division of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for PTSD and associate professor of psychiatry.

The study—designed to incorporate new diagnostic criteria for PTSD—showed that 8.1% of all the veterans surveyed screened positive for the disorder in their lifetimes and 4.7% currently had the disorder—which translates to more than 900,000 veterans nationwide who have the disorder, said Pietrzak.

Sexual abuse in childhood (28%) or as an adult (26%) were particularly likely to trigger PTSD among veterans, said the Yale researcher, and the disorder represents a substantial health risk, being linked to substantially elevated rates of co-occurring mood, anxiety, and substance use disorders. Further, nearly one in three veterans with PTSD reported having attempted suicide and more than half were currently contemplating suicide.

"These findings indicate that U.S. veterans at risk for PTSD should be assessed for a wide range of both military and non-military traumas, as well as co-occurring psychiatric disorders and suicide risk," Pietrzak said. The research was published online Sept. 13 in *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*.

More information: Blair E. Wisco et al. Probable Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in the US Veteran Population According to *DSM-5*, *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* (2016). [DOI: 10.4088/JCP.15m10188](https://doi.org/10.4088/JCP.15m10188)

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