

Suicide in veterans – study finds mixed picture

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People who have served in the armed forces do not have a greater risk of suicide overall than people who have never served in the military, but there is an increased risk in certain groups, according to a study by the University of Glasgow.

Previous studies on [suicide risk](#) in veterans have shown a mixed picture but recent UK studies have generally shown them to be at no greater risk than the general public, whilst both Falklands and Gulf War veterans have been shown to have a lower risk of suicide.

This new study analysed the long-term risks of suicide in all veterans living in Scotland who served between 1960 and 2012, in comparison with non-veterans. Overall there was no difference between the veterans and the non-veterans, but the risk was increased in older veterans, women who joined the Services before 1992 and people who had left service early. Young veterans were not at increased risk. Although women usually have a lower risk of suicide than men, the study found that older [veteran](#) women had a similar risk to men. Veterans were less likely than non-veterans to have used firearms.

Lead researcher Dr Bergman said: "This is an important study which provides reassurance that military service in the last 50 years does not increase people's risk of suicide overall, but it draws our attention to those people whose increased risk may be overlooked, such as older veterans and [women veterans](#). It also confirms that early service leavers have a slightly increased risk but that may not manifest itself until

middle age."

The study, which used data from the Scottish Veterans Health Study to examine deaths classified as due to [suicide](#) or self-harm, is published in *Occupational Medicine*.

More information: B. P. Bergman et al. Suicide in Scottish military veterans: a 30-year retrospective cohort study, *Occupational Medicine* (2017). [DOI: 10.1093/occmed/kqx047](https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqx047)

Provided by University of Glasgow

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