

# Number of Scottish veterans who develop dementia is no greater than in wider community

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The number of Scottish veterans who develop dementia in later life is no greater than in the wider community, according to new research.

The study, led by the University of Glasgow, funded by Forces in Mind Trust and published in *Psychological Medicine*, compared veterans with people who had never served, and found that there were no more cases of [dementia](#) than in the non-veterans.

The research confirmed the finding of other studies: that having been diagnosed with PTSD or depression is associated with increased risk of dementia in the long term. Researchers found this was the same for both veterans and non-veterans. For depression, the increased risk of dementia was higher in veterans, but for PTSD the risk of dementia was higher in non-veterans.

Researchers suggest that, while these current findings are positive news for veterans' overall risk of dementia, it will be important to continue to carry out research in this area as the post-National Service veterans continue to age.

Lead researcher Dr. Beverly Bergman, Honorary Clinical Associate Professor and leader of the Scottish Veterans Health Research Group at the University of Glasgow—who was recently awarded an OBE for her work on veterans—said: "This is an important preliminary study as previously we had no information on whether [military service](#) is a risk factor for dementia. At the moment we can say that it is not, but we will need to continue to monitor the situation as the post-National Service veterans become older.

"We already knew that depression and PTSD were associated with an increased risk of dementia in later life. In older people, these conditions might be an early warning of dementia and in veterans, they should not just be put down to earlier in-service trauma, as prompt assessment and correct treatment can minimize deterioration."

Thomas McBarnet, Director of Programs at Forces in Mind Trust, said:

"At Forces in Mind Trust, our mission is to enable ex-Service personnel and their families to make a successful and sustainable transition to civilian life. We believe that no [veteran](#) should be disadvantaged because of their service and an understanding of the health risks which they may face is critical to also ensuring they receive the care to which they are entitled.

"Whilst it is good news that veterans do not face an increased risk of dementia, we must continue to research and seek to better understand how to support future generations of veterans."

The retrospective cohort study, using data from the Trends in Scottish Veterans' Health Study, looked at 78,000 veterans and 253,000 non-veterans in Scotland born between 1945 and 1995, matched for age, sex and area of residence. The study used survival analysis to examine the [risk of dementia](#) in veterans compared with non-veterans, and explored associations with common mental health disorders.

"Dementia in Scottish military veterans: early evidence from a [retrospective cohort study](#)" is published in *Psychological Medicine*. The study was funded by the Forces in Mind Trust.

**More information:** B. P. Bergman et al, Dementia in Scottish military veterans: early evidence from a retrospective cohort study, *Psychological Medicine* (2021). [DOI: 10.1017/S0033291721002440](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291721002440)

Provided by University of Glasgow

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