

# Vietnam war veterans at no higher risk for suicide: Study

December 29 2023, by Ernie Mundell

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The Vietnam war was a traumatic event in American history, most

especially for those who served.

However, there's a glimmer of good news from recent research: Suicide rates for Vietnam veterans over the past four decades were no higher than that of the [general population](#).

Still, between 1979 and 2019—the period covered by the new study—almost 100,000 Vietnam War vets did lose their lives to suicide, the researchers noted. Those tragedies "merit the ongoing attention of health policymakers and [mental health professionals](#)," they said.

Suicide has long been a concern among U.S. veterans generally. According to background information in the study, Veterans Administration data for 2022 shows that "although veterans composed only 7.6% of the U.S. population, they accounted for almost 14% of US suicides."

In 2021, VA data showed that suicide accounted for about 32 deaths out of every 100,000 veterans—double the rate of suicide seen among civilians.

Did the trauma faced by soldiers in the Vietnam conflict lead to even higher rates of suicide?

To find out, Tim Bullman and colleagues at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, D.C., analyzed health data for over 9.5 million Vietnam veterans.

Almost all were men, and close to 2.5 million served directly (were deployed) in Vietnam during the conflict.

Tracking rates of suicide between 1979 and 2019, Pullman's team found a total of 22,736 suicides among veterans who had been deployed to

Vietnam.

However, compared to the general population "Vietnam War deployment was not associated with an increased risk of suicide," the study concluded. That was true whether or not a [veteran](#) had seen action in the theater of war.

Still, a total of 94,497 Vietnam-era veterans (whether deployed to Vietnam or not) did lose their lives to [suicide](#) in those 40 years, the VA team noted.

"This loss of life deserves not only to be noted on behalf of these veterans and their survivors, but also merits the ongoing attention of health policymakers and mental health professionals, especially given that [suicide rates](#) have increased over 41 years among all Vietnam War-era veterans, veterans of other eras of military service, and the wider U.S. population," the VA investigators wrote.

The study was published Dec. 28 in the journal [JAMA Network Open](#).

If you or a loved one is in mental health crisis, immediate help is at hand at the [988](#) Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

**More information:** Find out more about spotting the signs of suicide risk at the [U.S. National Institute for Mental Health](#).

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