

The Impact of COVID-19 on Post-9/11 Veterans



Data was collected through the Veterans Engaging in Transition Studies (VETS) Survey, which was implemented by Penn State University researchers in collaboration with the Pew Charitable Trusts. The online survey was administered between November 2020 and January 2021 as an extension of The Veterans Metrics Initiative: Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being (TVMI) study. During the TVMI longitudinal study, six waves of data was collected from almost 10,000 post-9/11 veterans who separated from military service in 2016. Of the original sample, 3,516 veterans voluntarily chose to participate in the VETS Survey. New lines of survey questions were added to assess the early impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on veteran well-being.



average age of
~ 38 years with a range
of 23 to 68 years



70%
White Non-Hispanic



81% male



85% honorably discharged
29% junior enlisted
16% in reserve components

Veteran Stress

Takeaway: Female veterans and veterans of color were more negatively affected during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Family Life Demands

- Overall, veterans reported that the handling of childcare remained the same or was easy.
- There were no significant differences in handling childcare by gender.



Mental and Physical Health

- Overall, veterans reported being somewhat stressed related to their mental/emotional health.
- Male and female veterans of color reported significantly higher levels of mental/emotional stress than their White non-Hispanic male peers.
- Male and female veterans of color reported significantly higher levels of stress related to their physical health than their White non-Hispanic male peers.

Social Isolation and Restrictions



- Female veterans, especially those who self-identified as Hispanic and 'Other' race*, reported:
 - higher levels of stress from social isolation than males of all races/ethnicities;
 - higher levels of stress from missing major events (e.g., weddings, graduations) than males of all races/ethnicities; and
 - higher levels of stress from missing social activities (e.g., restaurants, sporting events) than males of all races/ethnicities.

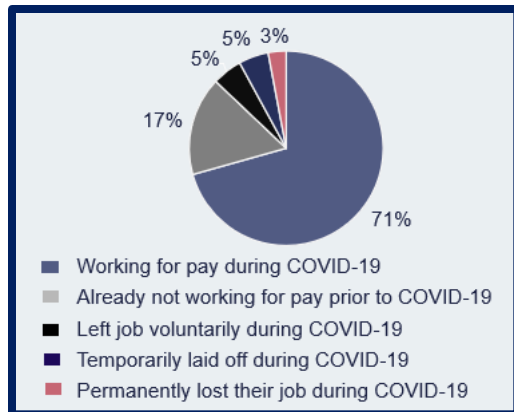
* 'Other' includes Asian Hawaiian Pacific Islander (non-Hispanic) (2.6%), more than one race (non-Hispanic) (5.4%), and other race (0.7%).

Veteran Employment



Job and Business Stability

Below is a chart of veterans' reported job change during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although 71% of the veterans continued working for pay, 81% worked for pay prior to COVID-19 restrictions.



Male veterans, veterans serving in a reserve component, veterans from higher military paygrades, and veterans who were honorably discharged were more likely to continue working.

'Other' non-Hispanic, Black non-Hispanic, and Hispanic veterans were 52%, 32%, and 31% less likely to continue working than White non-Hispanic veterans, respectively.

- Ten percent of the veterans indicated their employer permanently shut down.
- Of those laid off (n=140), 15% remained unemployed for more than 7 months.
- Of those who permanently lost their job (n=109), 55% remained unemployed for more than 7 months.

The following reasons were reported for voluntarily leaving a job (n= 158) during the pandemic:

- 23.5% feared contracting COVID-19;
- 14% had no childcare; and
- 13% were concerned that they would get someone else sick with COVID-19.

Nearly 8% of the veterans owned a small business in 2019-2020. Almost 8% of the business owners reported their business was no longer operational since COVID-19 restrictions were put in place.

Veteran Work Stressors

Fear of Illness



Female veterans and all veterans of color were more stressed about getting sick than White non-Hispanic males. Hispanic females, 'Other' non-Hispanic females, and Black non-Hispanic females and males reported the most stress related to fear of getting sick at work.

Interactions



'Other' non-Hispanic males and White non-Hispanic females were more stressed than White non-Hispanic males relative to restrictions on physical interactions with work colleagues.

Travel



'Other' non-Hispanic females were significantly more stressed about traveling for work (e.g., flying on a plane) than White non-Hispanic males, Hispanic males, and White non-Hispanic females.

Financial Stressors

Essentials



Black non-Hispanics (males and females), Hispanics (males and females), and White non-Hispanics females were significantly more stressed about paying for essential items (e.g., food, housing) than their White non-Hispanic male peers.

Extras



Although significant differences existed by gender and racial/ethnic groups for the ability to pay for extras (e.g., dinner at a restaurant), post-hoc comparisons did not confirm differences.