

Military-to-Civilian Transition for Post-9/11 Veterans

Military-to-Civilian Transition (MCT) begins when a service member decides to leave the military and starts planning their exit. For most veterans, transitioning to civilian life takes three years after leaving the service. However, a significant minority continues to struggle with transition for longer.

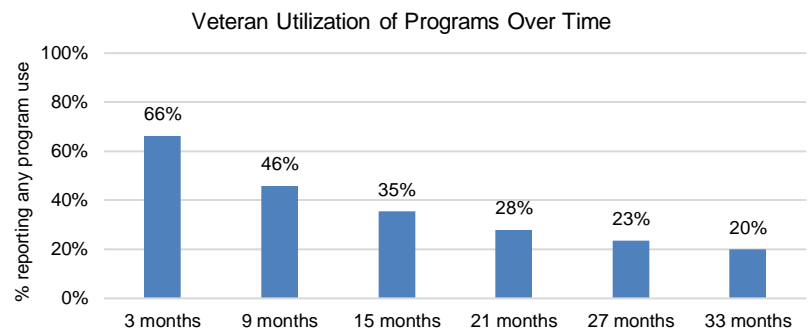
A 6.5-year longitudinal study of transitioning veterans revealed the following:

- 65% (n = 1,879) of veterans felt fully transitioned after three years, while at 6.5 years, 19% of veterans still did not feel fully transitioned.
- 66% of veterans utilized transition programs within the first three months; this percent dropped to 20% at 3-years.
- One-fifth of transitioning veterans require support after 3 years.

Program Utilization

Two-thirds of veterans engaged with transition programs across various life domains – employment, education, financial, health, and social – within the first three months after leaving the military.

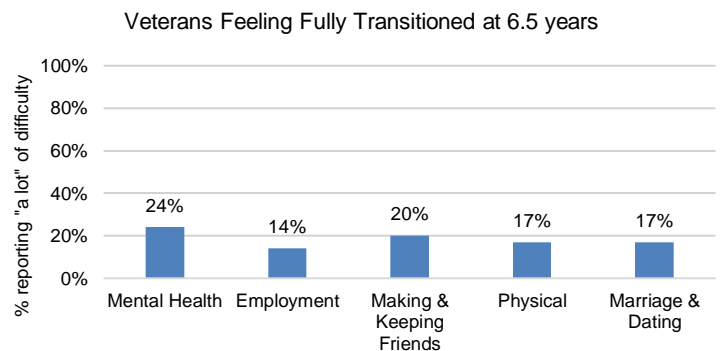
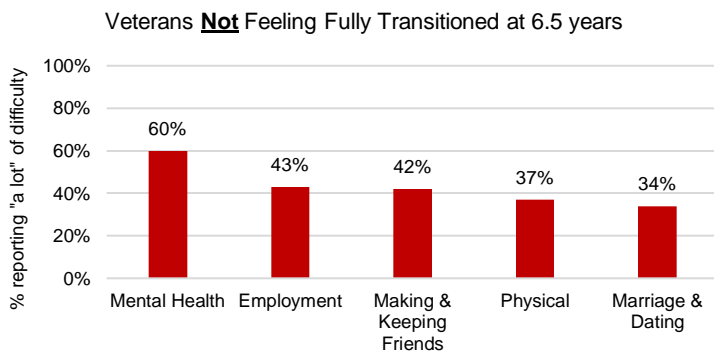
Program use steadily declined over time, with 20% of veterans still accessing programs and services approximately 33 months, or 3 years, after separation, showing a gradual reduction in the need for formal support.



Note. Includes programs in all life domains (i.e., employment, education, financial, health, and social).

Veterans At-Risk During MCT

Veterans who reported not being fully transitioned ($n = 562$) more than 6 years post-separation noted their top three concerns **were mental health, employment, and making and keeping friends**. The degree of difficulty between veterans who had not fully transitioned and veterans who had fully transitioned was almost **two or more times** greater in most life areas. For example, 60% of not-fully transitioned veterans reported mental health as a concern compared to 24% of fully transitioned veterans.



Note. Survey Question asked 6.5 years after transition: How much difficulty did you experience while adjusting to civilian life? Sample sizes for the *Not Fully Transitioned* ranged from 427-547, and the *Fully Transitioned* group ranged from 1,708-2,152. Only the top five concerns are shown in the above charts.

Policy Implications

To better support veteran well-being and promote health and resilience, take the following actions:

- **Implement standardized risk screening.**
 - Utilize tools like the [Veteran Transition Screener](#) (VTS) to identify MCT risk factors as part of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).
- **Provide integrated care coordination across and between transition support systems.**
 - Foster seamless coordination between the Department of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and other stakeholders such as nongovernmental organizations engaged in transition support.
 - Establish or tap into accessible care pathways at the community level to ensure comprehensive support for transitioning veterans in identified areas of need for support, such as mental health and relationships.
- **Develop an effective federal employment support system readily available for veterans as they transition.**
 - Require the use of evidence-informed employment components internally and among nongovernmental employment partners.

Study Summary

[The Veterans Metrics Initiative: Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being](#) (TVMI) collected six waves (i.e., 3, 9, 15, 21, 27, and 33 months) of well-being and program utilization data from almost 10,000 post-9/11 veterans who had separated from military service in 2016. Additional waves (i.e., 51 and 78 months) of data were collected independently by the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State through the Veterans Engaging in Transition Studies (VETS), which is part of the VETERANetwork (<https://veteranetwork.psu.edu/>). 3,514 veterans from TVMI voluntarily chose to participate in VETS.

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