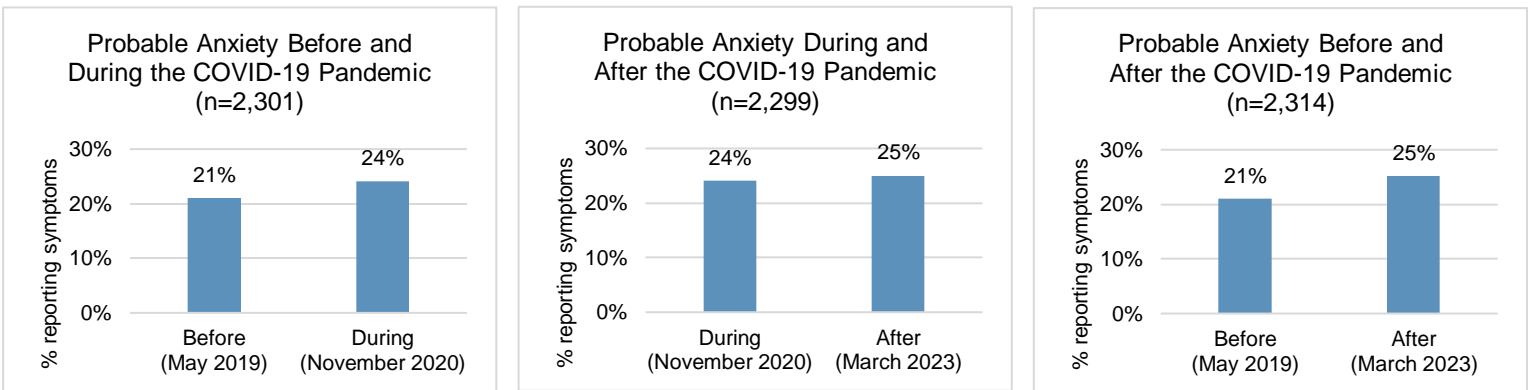


Veterans' Mental Health Before, During, and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

Takeaway: To examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, veterans were asked about their mental health symptoms before (May 2019), during (November 2020), and after (March 2023). These time points were approximately 33, 51, and 78 months after separation from the military, respectively. Veterans were screened for probable symptoms of anxiety (i.e., “feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge” and “not being able to stop or control worrying”) and depression (i.e., “little interest or pleasure in doing things” and “feeling down, depressed, or hopeless”) over the last two weeks at each time point. Veterans reported experiencing increases in anxiety and depression symptoms from before to during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, those who work with veterans should consider their mental health needs, especially post-pandemic.

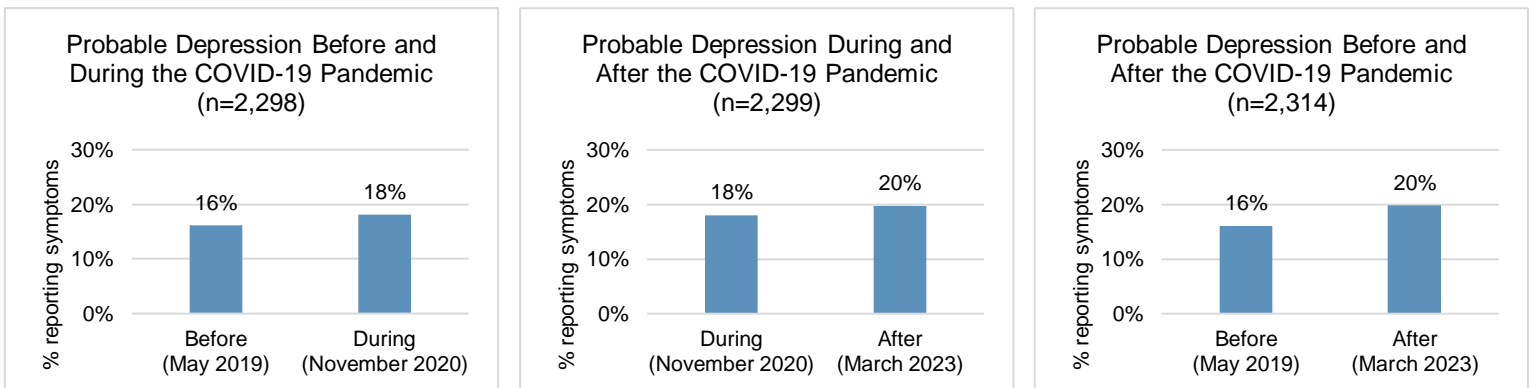
Positive Screens for Probable Anxiety Over Time



Note. The sample size is based on the veterans who completed the survey all three times and answered both anxiety items at each of the time points that were being compared.

Overall, increases in positive screens for probable anxiety among veterans were observed between May 2019 and March 2023, and the largest increase, 4%, occurred from before to after the COVID-19 pandemic.

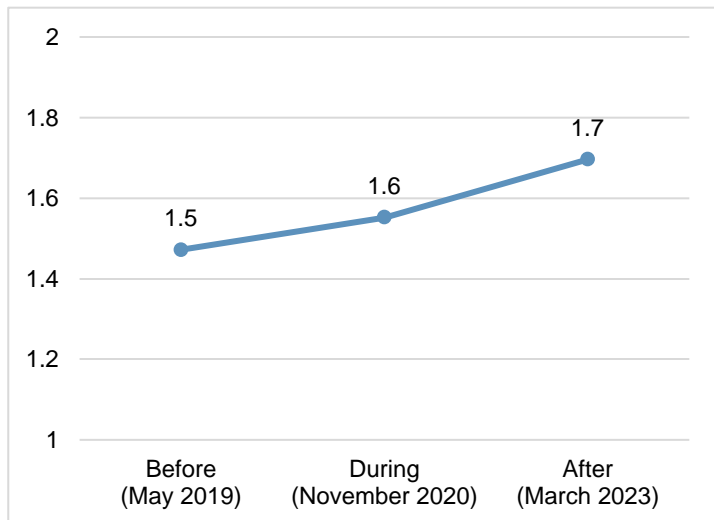
Positive Screens for Probable Depression Over Time



Note. The sample size is based on the veterans who completed the survey all three times and answered both depression items at each of the time points that were being compared.

Overall, increases in positive screens for probable depression among veterans were observed between May 2019 and March 2023, and the largest increase, 4%, occurred from before to after the COVID-19 pandemic.

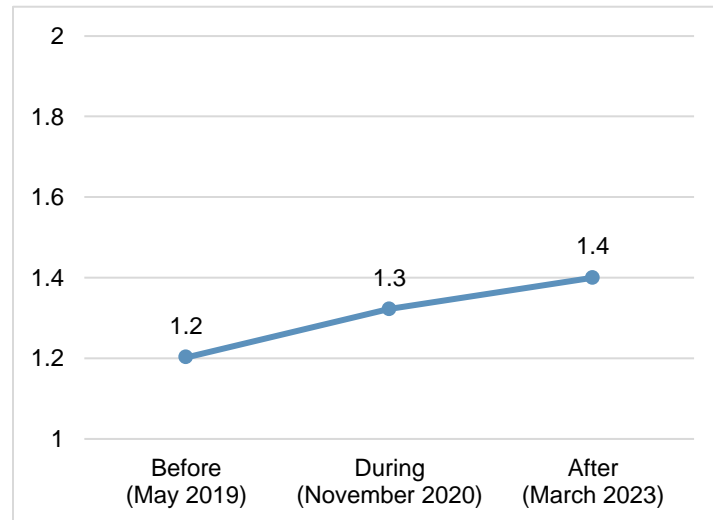
Mean Anxiety Scores Over Time (n=2,299)



Note. Anxiety Scores range from 0 to 6. The sample size is based on the veterans who completed the survey at all three time points and answered both anxiety items at all waves.

Mean scores for probable anxiety gradually increased, albeit small, over time from before the COVID-19 pandemic through the time after the pandemic ended.

Mean Depression Scores Over Time (n=2,297)



Note. Depression Scores range from 0 to 6. The sample size is based on the veterans who completed the survey at all three time points and answered both depression items at all waves.

Mean scores for probable depression gradually increased a small amount over time from before the COVID-19 pandemic through the time after the pandemic ended.

More Information for Veteran-Serving Providers: The Veteran Transition Screener (VTS) is a freely-available, online tool for service providers (e.g., mental health counselors, social workers, case managers, career counselors) to help support veterans' and their families' well-being. The VTS can identify veterans' risks and can help guide service providers through the use of empirical data to inform their decisions regarding the most effective program components that can be used to support veteran clients and their families. Details about the VTS can be found here: <https://veteranetwork.psu.edu/projects/veteran-transition-screener/>.

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. 3,514 veterans from TVMI voluntarily chose to participate in VETS.

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