Sexual or Gender Minority Status and Suicide Attempts among Veterans Seeking Treatment for Military Sexual Trauma

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Veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma and who identify as sexual or gender minorities are at increased risk for suicidal behaviors.

Using a semi-structured intake interview, researchers collected clinical and demographic information from 277 veterans seeking treatment for military sexual trauma at a midwestern Veterans Health Administration hospital. Twenty-eight veterans who identified as sexual or gender minorities were compared with heterosexual and non-transgender veterans on suicide risk and other psychiatric outcomes. The researchers found that 53.6% of veterans who identified as sexual or gender minorities reported a history of suicide attempts, compared with 28.1% of their heterosexual and non-transgender peers.

Veterans seeking treatment for military sexual trauma have high rates of suicide attempt histories, and veterans who identify as sexual or gender minorities are at particular risk for suicidal behaviors. The researchers suggested that veterans service organizations should address these health disparities through prevention efforts, culturally competent clinical practices, and trauma-informed care.