

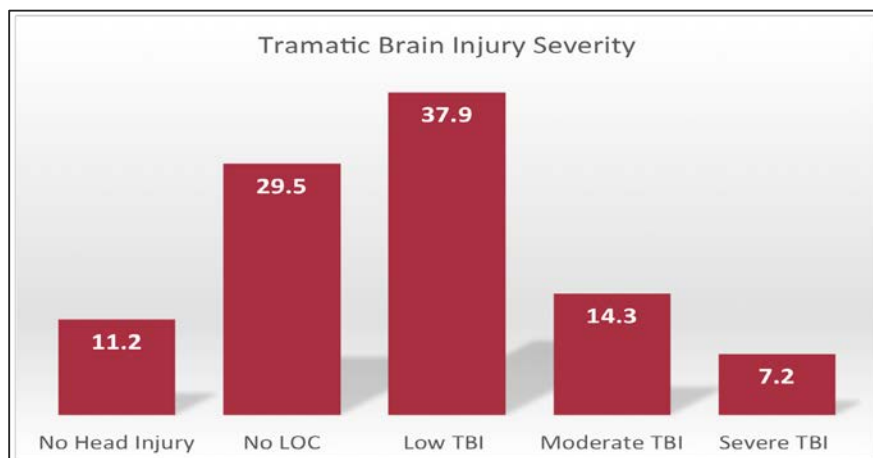
The decade long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have heightened our awareness of the stressors related to military service and the challenges associated with transition from military to civilian life. A growing awareness of justice involved veterans is revealing how little is known about this population, to what extent they have experienced a traumatic brain injury (TBI), and how this may relate to their criminal history, institutional behavior, participation in programs, and use of institutional resources. This research brief highlights the results of a study on veterans in Washington State prisons and how a history of TBI may affect veterans' prison experience and use of prison resources.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is an acute injury to the head or upper extremities that typically involves the following characteristics: loss or alteration of consciousness, memory loss, and/or hypotension. TBI severity in this study is categorized as:

- Mild—loss of consciousness < 30 minutes or altered mental state of up to 24 hours
- Moderate—loss of consciousness > 30 minutes but < 24 hours
- Severe—loss of consciousness for > 24 hours or altered mental state up to one week

TBI may complicate inmates' efforts to successfully adapt to prison life and positively engage programming during their incarceration.

Incarcerated Veterans and TBI Washington State University completed an assessment of the prevalence of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) among incarcerated veterans living in Washington State prisons. The results show that 41% of incarcerated veterans self-reported never experiencing a TBI, 38% reported a low severity TBI, and 21% reported a moderate to severe TBI. Veterans reporting a TBI averaged nearly 3 head injuries in their lifetimes (2.9) and the mean age in which the first head injury occurred was 15 years old.



KEY FINDINGS

Veterans with a moderate to severe TBI when compared to those with no head injury or an improbable TBI were:

Program Participation

- 41% *less likely* to participate in education or job skills programs

Medical Service Use

- 17% *more likely* to use medical services
- 31% *more likely* to be on medication
- 40% *more likely* to use psychological medications

Prison Infractions

- 56% *more likely* to commit a violent infraction

Maximum Custody Use

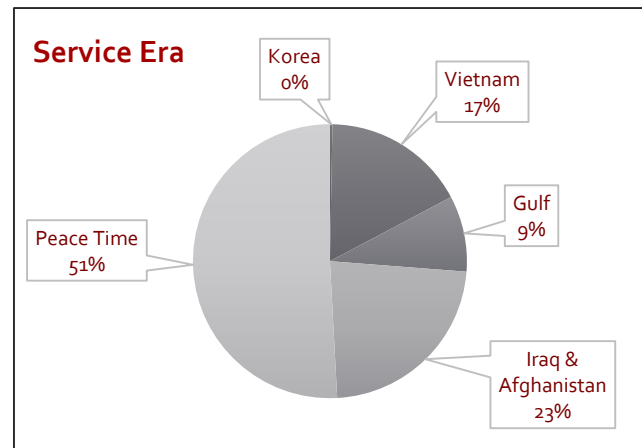
- 43% *more likely* to be placed in maximum custody
- 21% *more likely* to spend longer periods of time in maximum custody

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Research Design To assess both TBI and veteran's prison experiences, two sources of data were collected for this study. First, WADOC staff administered the *Ohio State University Traumatic Brain Injury Identification Method* (2012) assessment tool to determine veteran's self-reported lifetime history of ever having experienced a TBI. Second, official record data from the WADOC Offender Management Information (OMNI) system was used to determine inmate's institutional experiences. Only veterans residing in the major secure prisons, excluding minimum security camps, were contacted by WADOC staff and asked if they would participate in the study (N=1,015). Of these veterans, 956 had complete data for both the TBI assessment and record data (94%). Comparisons were made between veterans reporting a moderate to severe TBI to those reporting a low level severity, no LOC, or no head injury.

Incarcerated Veteran Characteristics The largest group of veterans served in the Army (32%), followed by the Navy (16%), Marine Corp (9%) and the Air Force (7%). The majority of incarcerated veterans (51%) in our sample completed their military service during peace time. The largest group of war era veterans served in the military during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars (2001-2014) followed by Vietnam (1961-1975), the first Gulf War (1990-1991), and the Korean Conflict (1950-1955; n=3 <1% of sample). The majority of incarcerated veterans (54%) were released from military service via an honorable, general, or medical discharge.



Research Findings The findings of this study show that incarcerated veterans who report a moderate to severe TBI differ from non-TBI veterans related to participation in programs, use of medical services, disciplinary infractions, and maximum custody.

Program participation. The majority (64%) of veterans participated in at least one offender change program during their most recent incarceration. No significant differences were found between the TBI group and the non-TBI group for participation in rehabilitation programs or life skills programs. TBI veterans, however, were significantly less likely to participate in educational or job skills programs compared to the non-TBI group.

Medical service use. The TBI group was significantly more likely than the non-TBI group to visit medical services, to use prescription medication, and to be prescribed psychological medications.

Disciplinary infractions and maximum custody. No significant differences were found between the TBI and non-TBI groups for non-violent infractions. The TBI group, however, was significantly more likely than the non-TBI group to commit a violent infraction, to serve time in a maximum custody (solitary confinement) cell, and to spend a longer period of time when in maximum custody.

Research Summary These findings suggest that incarcerated veterans that reported experiencing a moderate to severe TBI at some point during their lives experience the prison environment differently than those who have a low probability of ever having experienced a TBI or head injury. Although this study is limited to incarcerated veterans, prison administrators may want to more broadly consider ways to support inmates with a TBI and manage prison resources to effect positive outcomes.