

BACKGROUND

- In 2020, many National Guard (NG) service members were activated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- NG service members experienced a wide range of COVID-19 related stressors during their activations that influenced their mental health post-activation.
- Understanding this relationship can promote resilience and help the NG prepare for future humanitarian crises.



<https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2900042/national-guard-helps-medical-facilities-with-covid-19-peak/>

METHODS

Procedures

- Online surveys were distributed by email to specific state NG service members
- Total 1,393 state Army and Air Force NG activated service members participated
- Study participation was voluntary and anonymous

Participants

Gender: 83.8% male; 16.2% female

Marital Status: 60.1% unmarried; 39.9% married

Age: mode = 30-39 (32%)

Branch: 88.4% Army NG; 11.6% Air N

Race: 67% white; 33% non-white

Timeline: Aug.-Dec. 2020; 2-3 months post-activation

Rank: 80% enlisted; 20% officer

Measures

COVID-19-related stressors:

- Feelings of isolation
- Working with COVID-19 positive individuals
- Not having access to exercise facility/equipment
- Lack of training for assignment

and returning home

- Responses ranged from 0 (“not at all”) to 4 (“extremely”)
- Scores were dichotomized to reflect low (0-2) to high (3+) levels of stress

PTSD: PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5; 4 items)

Responses ranged from 0 (“not at all”) to 4 (“extremely”) with possible total score range of 0-16; scores of 6+ indicated probable PTSD

Anxiety/Depression: Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4), which includes two items from the Generalized Anxiety Disorder 2-item (GAD-2) measure of anxiety and two items from the PHQ-2 measure of depression

- Responses ranged from 0 (“not at all”) to 3 (“nearly every day”)
- Possible total score range of 0-12
- Scores of 6+ indicated clinically significant level of depression and anxiety



<https://ngmpublic.azurewebsites.us/minnesot-national-guard-marks-one-year-since-first-covid-19-support-mission/>

RESULTS

Nine percent of NG service members had PTSD in the past month and 7% had anxiety/depression in the past two weeks.

Univariable logistic regression analyses found that:

Female gender

Being in the Army NG*

High levels of stress from:

- Feelings of isolation
- Working with COVID-19 positive individuals and returning home
- Not having access to exercise facility/equipment
- Lack of training for assignment

were associated with increased risk of PTSD

and anxiety/depression.

*Only related to PTSD

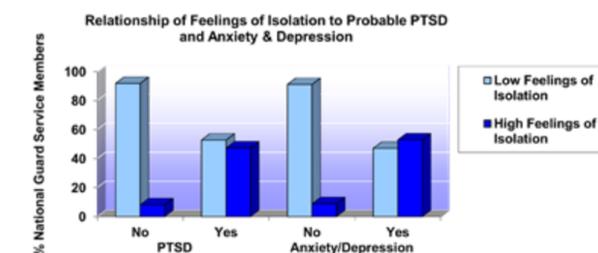
In two final multivariable models that included all factors and demographic/service-related variables, only those with high levels of feelings of isolation were more likely to report PTSD and anxiety/depression.

Multivariable logistic regression analyses, including each stressor separately (adjusting for demographics and service-related characteristics) found that:

High levels of stress from:

- Feelings of isolation
- Working with COVID-19 positive individuals and returning home
- Not having access to exercise facility/equipment
- Lack of training for assignment

were associated with PTSD and anxiety/depression.



CONCLUSIONS



<https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/maryland-national-guard-protecting-coronavirus-tests-seizure-feds-992535/>

- Significant predictors of PTSD, when considered individually, included female gender, Army NG, and all COVID-19 stressors
- Significant predictors of anxiety/depression included female gender and all COVID-19 stressors
- When all factors were considered together, only feelings of isolation remained significantly associated with PTSD and anxiety/depression
- Attention to disaster-related stressors prior to and during activation by NG leadership may promote resilience, improve future responses to disasters, and help alleviate adverse psychological outcomes