



## **Spouse Abuse and Alcohol Problems among White, African American, and Hispanic U.S. Army soldiers**

Bell, N. S., Harford, T. C., Fuchs, C. H. McCarroll, J. E., & Schwartz, C. E. (2006). Spouse abuse and alcohol problems among White, African American, and Hispanic U.S. Army soldiers. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 30, 1721-1733. doi:10.1111/j.1530-0277.2006.00214.x

**SUMMARY:** Differences in the association between alcohol use and spousal abuse was examined in married, enlisted, Active-Duty Soldiers from three different racial groups: Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. The findings indicate that the pathway between alcohol use and spousal abuse may vary depending on race.

### **KEY FINDINGS**

- The following factors were associated with a risk of spousal abuse: alcohol abuse, low educational attainment, low rank, low job satisfaction, low social support, and depressed mood.
- Alcohol was involved in 29% of abuse incidents, with Whites being most likely to report drinking during perpetration of abuse (34.1%), followed by Hispanics (31.9%), and Blacks (24.4%).
- White Soldiers were more likely to consume more drinks per week than Blacks or Hispanics.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS**

Programs could:

- Provide informational classes about the relationship between alcohol abuse and domestic violence for Service members and their spouses
- Offer supportive services that are modified to be culturally sensitive to help Service members reduce their alcohol use
- Develop trainings for professionals who work with military families about warning signs that suggest a Service member has difficulties with alcohol abuse

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES**

Policies could:

- Encourage Service members to participate in substance abuse prevention programming as part of their reintegration process
- Support programs that provide outreach and supportive services to military families who have a Service member diagnosed with alcohol abuse
- Urge awareness campaigns about the impact of alcohol abuse and domestic violence on family relationships

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



## METHODS

- This study used existing sources of data collected between 1991 and 1998 that were located in the Total Army Injury and Health Outcomes Database (TAIHOD).
- Inclusion criteria in the study included Soldiers with a substantiated case of abuse, but no cases in the system prior to 1991.
- Statistical analyses were used to examine associations between alcohol use and risk of spousal abuse, and to see whether patterns varied by racial/ethnic group.

## PARTICIPANTS

- All participants were married and male Active-Duty Army Soldiers. A total of 24,328 Soldiers (6,507 with a documented incident of abuse and 17,821 controls) were included.
- Participants with a documented incident of abuse were all first time offenders.
- No data were provided about the participants' age. In the sample, 54% were White, 34% were Black, and 12% were Hispanic.

## LIMITATIONS

- There may be measurement bias as the determination of alcohol-related abuse was made by the researchers based on their interpretations of interviews of the incident.
- Questions that measured alcohol consumption assessed lifetime experience of alcohol abuse which may not have reflected Soldiers' current alcohol use when the data were collected.
- Interaction analyses were poorly examined, which limits interpretations of the data.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Further research could collect data on spouses' alcohol use during domestic violent incidents and explore any relationships to perpetrators' alcohol use.
- Future research could examine the impact of illicit substances on incidences of intimate partner violence in military couples.
- Additional studies could explore the role of acculturation or racial identity in influencing alcohol use in different racial groups.

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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