

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Personal Technology Use by the U.S. Military Service Members and Veterans: An Update

Bush, N. E., & Wheeler, W. M. (2015). Personal technology use by the U.S. Military service members and veterans: An update. *Telemedicine and E-Health*, 21(4), 245-258. doi:10.1089/tmj.2014.0100

SUMMARY: Personal technology use is common. The researchers examined the technology habits of the military community through an online survey, and compared the results with a survey conducted two years ago. Findings revealed similar technology use habits in the military and civilian communities. The most salient change over the two surveys was the dramatic increase of mobile phone use at home.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The Service members and Veterans in the study had similar personal technology habits as civilians.
- Compared to the survey in 2012, the most dramatic change in the current survey was the great increase in mobile phone use at home.
- During deployment participants reported moderate non-work use of computers and tablet, but little mobile phone use due to military restrictions.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Collaborate with telehealth providers to offer health-related resources for Service members
- Teach Service members how to use the Internet to learn knowledge and strategies to improve their family well-being
- Educate military families, especially children, on the safe and proper use of personal technology

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage using personal technologies as an accessible and portable media for Service members to receive useful information
- Recommend professional development courses for community providers regarding the importance of personal technologies for Service members, and how to use the technologies to serve the Service members better
- Offer personal technology handbooks to promote safe and effective usage of the technologies

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



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METHODS

- The participants were recruited through a large military installation, social media, and the Army Knowledge Online website.
- The survey used in the present study was an update of a previous survey which was developed in 2012.
- The survey collected the following information: types of technologies used, purpose of technology use, smartphone app downloading, and uses of gaming devices.

PARTICIPANTS

- The sample included 239 participants, consisting of 151 Active Duty Service members, 29 Reserve and National Guard Service members, and 59 Veterans. The majority of the participants were in the Army (92%), followed by Air Force (3%), Navy (3%) and Marine (2%).
- The participants were White (63%), Black (13%), Hispanic (8%), Asian (3%), American Indian or Alaska Native (2%), and others (11%); most of the participants were male (87%).
- The average age of the participants was not reported in the article.

LIMITATIONS

- Sample size was relatively modest for the purpose of the study, which makes it difficult to generalize the findings.
- Data were aggregated broadly across gender, age, military branches and other characteristics, therefore the potential effect of these demographic factors may be overlooked.
- Caution must be taken regarding the accuracy of the results because some of the data were collected anonymously online.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine the potential effects of demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, marriage status) on Service members' and Veterans' personal technology use
- Recruit a larger number of civilian and military participants to allow comparison between the two groups in more details
- Include both objective and subjective measures of participants' personal technology use

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