

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Army

## Predictive Validity and Correlates of Self-Assessed Resilience Among U.S. Army Soldiers

Campbell-Sills, L., Kessler, R. C., Ursano, R. J., Sun, X., Taylor, C. T., Heeringa, S. G., ... Stein, M. B. (2017). Predictive validity and correlates of self-assessed resilience among U.S. Army soldiers. *Depression and Anxiety*, 1-10. doi:10.1002/da.22694

**SUMMARY:** Resilience is important for Service members' mental health; however, little is known about the associations between self-assessed resilience and Service members' well-being. This study had 35,807 new Soldiers complete a survey regarding their resilience, mental disorders, childhood maltreatment, and personal growth. In addition, 8,558 experienced Soldiers also completed the same survey at four different time points both before and after deployment. Results indicated that self-assessing resilience is a valid way to predict Soldiers' well-being, especially in stressful situations like deployment.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Both new and experienced Soldiers reported a high level of resilience, and male Soldiers reported a higher resilience level than female Soldiers.
- Childhood maltreatment was negatively associated with both new and experienced Soldiers' resilience level.
- Experienced Soldiers who had high resilience before deployment were less likely to suffer from emotional disorders (e.g., depression, posttraumatic stress disorder) and more likely to experience personal growth after deployment.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Develop workshops for Service members on how to increase their resilience level
- Offer support groups for female Service members to help to increase their resilience levels
- Provide outreach services that increase awareness of available supports to military families during deployment

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage awareness campaigns on military bases regarding the importance of resilience for Service members
- Recommend continued monitoring of Service members' well-being by letting them complete self-assessed resilience surveys
- Recommend professional development for professionals working with Service members on common factors that may decrease Service members' resilience level and how to help them cope with these factors

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## METHODS

- The new Soldiers were recruited shortly before the Basic Combat Training and 77% of them consented to participate in the study.
- The experienced Soldiers were recruited from three Brigade Combat Teams and 86% of them consented to the study. They were surveyed one to two months before deployment (baseline), within one month of their return (T1), three months later (T2), and nine months later (T3); 60% of the baseline sample completed the whole study.
- Measures in this study included resilience, mental disorders and suicidal ideation, personal growth, childhood maltreatment, recent stress, and demographic information.
- Data were analyzed to examine the associations between Soldiers' resilience score and their mental health outcomes.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 35,807 new Soldiers and 8,558 experienced Soldiers.
- The age and gender of the Soldiers were not reported.
- The race/ethnicity of the Soldiers were not reported.

## LIMITATIONS

- The study was based on self-report data, which made it vulnerable to memory bias and social-desirability bias.
- The resilience scale was designed specifically for the study, so the reliability and validity of the scale were not tested.
- All participants were in the Army; therefore, caution must be taken to generalize the results to other military branches.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Use objective data (e.g., hospital records, clinical diagnosis) to increase the reliability of a similar study
- Recruit participants from all military branches so that the findings can be better generalized
- Explore methods (e.g., workshops, support groups) that may increase Service members' resilience level

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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