

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Air Force

## Intimate Partner Maltreatment Recidivism in U.S. Air Force families

Coley, S. L., McCarthy, R. J., Milner, J. S., Ormsby, L., & Travis, W. J. (2016). Intimate partner maltreatment recidivism in U.S. Air Force families. *Military Medicine*, 181(8), 926-930. doi:10.7205/MILMED-D-15-00333

**SUMMARY:** This study examined whether perpetrator characteristics (i.e., gender and age) and characteristics of intimate partner maltreatment incident (i.e., intensity of event) were related to intimate partner maltreatment recidivism. Results indicated that overall, the majority of perpetrators did not reoffend. Of the 17% that did reoffend, males were more likely to reoffend and subsequent incidents were more likely to be severe to moderate if the initial incident was severe to moderate.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- After one incident of intimate partner maltreatment, 83% participants identified as perpetrators did not reoffend.
- Male perpetrators were 1.45 times more likely to reoffend than their female counterparts.
- Participants identified as perpetrators were 21% more likely to reoffend if he or she had not used substances (i.e., illegal substances or alcohol).
- Reoffending participants with initial incidents categorized as moderate to severe, were approximately three times more likely to perpetrate subsequent moderate to severe incidents of intimate partner violence (IPV).

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Enhance education, activities, and curriculum related to coping behaviors and dealing with anger-related symptoms associated with intimate partner maltreatment
- Disseminate information regarding resources for support on possible symptoms of intimate partner violence for Service members and families
- Engage Service members and their intimate partners in workshops that aim to increase communication and conflict-resolution

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs for identification and prevention of domestic violence in military families
- Encourage collaboration among Department of Defense programs and community-based organizations to support a smooth transition for departing Service members and families
- Promote programs that include attention to assisting Service members and their partners in increasing effective communication and conflict resolution skills

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## METHODS

- This study used the U.S. Air Force Family Advocacy Program's (FAP) clinical database as a dataset to examining partner maltreatment incidents.
- Dataset included perpetrator and incident characteristics of IPV involving Air Force families.
- Data were analyzed to examine if perpetrator and incident characteristics (i.e., gender, age, and incident severity) were associated or related to perpetrators engaging in more repeated incidents of intimate partner violence.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants (n = 26,994) who were identified as IPV perpetrators were mostly male (62%), and were White (55.2%), Black (26.2%), Latino (11%), Asian-American (4%), and Other/Non-disclosed (4%).
- Average age of IPV perpetrators was 26.77 years (SD = 6.56) and most (58%) were Active Duty Airmen, of which 56% were enlisted Service members and 2% were officers.
- Participants who were identified as victims were mostly female (62%), had an average age of 26.4 years (SD = 6.41), were Active Duty Airmen (enlisted = 55%, officer = 2%), and were White (57%), Black (24%), Latino (10%), Asian-American (5%), or Other/Non-disclosed (4%).

## LIMITATIONS

- Recidivism may have been underrepresented in this sample because incidents examined were only those that met criteria by U.S. Air Force FAP and IPV is commonly underreported, which could influence results generalized to the larger population.
- Data were from participants while they are in the U.S. Air force, therefore there isn't any data on incidents that happen after participants leave the military, which could influence results.
- Criteria used by U.S. Air Force FAP in identifying intimate partner maltreatment was not explicitly discussed.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine characteristics of perpetrators to learn how to minimize recidivism of IPV
- Analyze other methods of measuring IPV and follow up with Service member when they leave or exit the military
- Explore the impact of anger management and other therapeutic interventions on intimate partner recidivism

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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