

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Air Force

## Hazardous Alcohol Use and Intimate Partner Violence in Military: Understanding Protective Factors

Foran, H. M., Heyman, R. E., Smith Slep, A. M., & Snarr, J. D. (2012). Hazardous alcohol use and intimate partner violence in military: Understanding protective factors. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 26*(3), 471-483. doi:10.1037/a0027688

**SUMMARY:** There is a well-established relationship between hazardous alcohol use and male perpetration of interpersonal violence (IPV), but little is known about related protective factors. This study examined the effects of a range of demographic and potential protective factors on the relationship between hazardous alcohol use and IPV in Service members. Results suggest relational and developmental protective factors may be particularly important in buffering against alcohol-related IPV perpetration.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Greater relationship satisfaction, parent-child relationship strength, family income, length of marriage, length of military service, and community safety appeared to reduce the risk of male Service members perpetrating alcohol-related IPV.
- The risk of perpetrating alcohol-related IPV was higher for fathers than non-fathers, especially with greater alcohol use, shorter marriage length, and low relationship satisfaction.
- Being a father reduced alcohol-related IPV risk even when relationship satisfaction was low.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Target alcohol abuse and IPV prevention programs toward younger male Service members and those who are early in their relationships or military careers
- Educate military families about skills to improve marital satisfaction and parent-child relationships in order to reduce the risk of alcohol-related IPV perpetration
- Educate military couples about risk factors for IPV and intervention programs for families with a history of IPV

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to provide programs that promote positive family relationships among military families
- Recommend professional development for providers working with military families regarding the risk and protective factors for alcohol-related IPV
- Promote community safety initiatives on and around military bases to buffer against the risk of perpetration of alcohol-related IPV

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## METHODS

- Active Duty U.S. Air Force members were recruited from 82 bases worldwide with a 45% response rate, and only Service members in romantic relationships were included.
- Participants self-reported on multiple demographic factors and a range of individual, maturity, family, workplace, and community variables potentially related to alcohol use and IPV.
- The effect of each factor on the relationship between hazardous alcohol use and risk for perpetrating IPV was examined for male and female Service members.

## PARTICIPANTS

- The number of female participants and the associated demographic data were reported incorrectly, and no results were reported for females since no analyses were significant.
- Male participants were Active Duty U.S. Air Force members who were married (85%) or in a romantic relationship (15%) and identified as primarily White (75%), Black (12%), or Latino (7%).
- Male participants included enlisted (18%), officers (24%), and non-commissioned officers (58%).

## LIMITATIONS

- Descriptive data about female Service members was incorrectly reported.
- Response rates were low (45%), and Service members with a history of hazardous alcohol use or IPV perpetration may have been less likely to respond than those without.
- Due to the cross-sectional study design, directions of effects cannot be inferred.
- Self-reported IPV perpetration is known to be under-reported, likely in an attempt by participants to appear more socially acceptable, possibly biasing the results of the study.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine the hypothesis that hazardous alcohol use may not put women at increased risk for perpetrating IPV due to less societal stigma surrounding IPV perpetrated by women
- Conduct a similar longitudinal study collecting reports of IPV from both relationship partners
- Investigate the effects of emotion regulation skills on the risk for alcohol-related IPV perpetration

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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