

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

Homecoming of Soldiers who are Citizens: Re-Employment and Financial Status of Returning Army National Guard Soldiers From Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF)

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SUMMARY: Survey data were used to examine the relationships between employment, financial difficulties, social support, and general adjustment among Army National Guard Soldiers after returning from deployment. Although few Guard Soldiers reported financial strain, negative experiences during and after deployment were most linked to financial difficulties. Among Guard Soldiers who reported financial strain after deployment, not having resumed their pre-deployment job was most associated with financial difficulties.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Few Guard Soldiers experienced financial difficulties during (7%) or (12%) after deployment.
- Of the Guard Soldiers who reported financial difficulties during and after deployment (6%), not having resumed pre-deployment employment was strongly linked to financial difficulties.
- Guard Soldiers who had the most financial difficulties after deployment also reported more negative experiences during and after deployment (e.g., loss of significant others, being angry and frustrated).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide workshops to Service members and their families to help them learn about available employment and financial services
- Disseminate information regarding how deployment can influence military families' financial stability and employment opportunities
- Educate military couples regarding how financial issues can negatively affect the psychological well-being of families and discuss positive ways to cope with financial stressors

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support financial literacy programs for Service members and their families
- Encourage collaboration between DoD programs and community-based employers to support and maintain job positions for Service members while they are deployed
- Recommend education for service providers regarding how to recognize financial distress among Service members and their families

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METHODS

- Data were taken from a screening inventory, which Soldiers voluntarily complete within 60-90 days after returning from deployment.
- Participants completed questions related to problem behaviors (e.g., suicidal thoughts), deployment stressors (e.g., financial issues), perceived social support, and deployment information (e.g., location of deployment).
- Soldiers were grouped into four different categories based on their survey responses regarding employment and post-deployment financial hardships.

PARTICIPANTS

- The sample (n = 4,567) was comprised of Army National Guard Soldiers primarily deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom (83.5%) or Operation Enduring Freedom (15.7%).
- Most Soldiers had one deployment (65%) in the last year; the majority of deployments (90%) were 7-12 months long.
- No other demographic information (i.e., gender or race) was provided.

LIMITATIONS

- No background or personal characteristics were used when analyzing data, and it's possible that the results may have been different if those characteristics were included in the analyses.
- The sample only included Guard Soldiers and may not be generalizable to Active Duty Soldiers.
- Guard Soldiers self-selected to participate in the study and there may be a selection bias where participants with the least amount of distress volunteered for the study.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Explore how background characteristics and personal factors (e.g., race, gender) contribute to financial stress for Guard Soldiers after deployment
- Examine the influence social support has on rates of post-deployment employment among Guard Soldiers
- Conduct studies on the impact of unemployment on children's outcomes in Guard Soldiers' families

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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