



Supporting
Military Families
Through Research
and Outreach

PUTTING RESEARCH TO WORK FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

Patterns of Mutual and Nonmutual Spouse Abuse in the U.S. Army (1998–2002)

McCarroll, J. E., Ursano, R. J., Fan, Z., & Newby, J. H. (2004). Patterns of mutual and nonmutual spouse Abuse in the U.S. Army (1998–2002). *Violence and Victims*, 19(4), 453–468.



Researchers determined the patterns and severity of domestic violence incidents (N = 20,959) among Army enlisted personnel as reported to the Army Central Registry database from 1998 to 2002. Over the 5 year period of the study, 58% of the cases were nonmutual (one-sided) and 42% were mutual (bidirectional). Those at the highest risk of victimization were Active Duty females who were married to civilian males.

Key Findings:

- Over the 5-year period, 58% of victims were involved in nonmutual abuse incidents, whereas 42% were involved in mutual abuse incidents.
- Overall, 63% of victims were females. In nonmutual abuse, 73% of victims were females. Females were more severely abused than males regardless of whether the abuse was physical or emotional, mutual or nonmutual abuse.
- Active Duty females married to civilian males had the highest risk of victimization.
- Compared to physical abuse, emotional (verbal) abuse by a woman was more likely to lead to severe physical abuse by her spouse.

Implications for Programs:

- Programs could consider training practitioners to recognize and address mutual and nonmutual domestic abuse in military families.
- Programs could include modules in their family curricula about domestic violence, including risk factors, negative impacts on the family, and resources.

Implications for Policies:

- Policies could recommend regular screenings for domestic violence in military settings.
- Policies may recommend monitoring the prevalence of domestic violence prevalence over time, including assessing subgroups at higher risk for violent behavior.

Avenues for Future Research:

- Future research could explore rates of domestic violence among Service members in other branches of the military.
- Future research might explore the extent to which mutual abuse cases result from actual mutual violence versus self-defense on the part of the victim.
- Future research could investigate relationships between cultural factors and perpetration / victimization of interpersonal violence.

Prepared by the Military REACH Team.

For additional information, please visit <http://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu>

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Background Information

Methodology:

- The data were substantiated physical and emotional abuse domestic violence cases from the Army Central Registry (a centralized data bank) of victims and offenders for fiscal years 1998 to 2002.
- Researchers compared the frequencies, the rates per thousand, and the severity of mutual and nonmutual domestic violence incidents. Appropriate statistical analyses were used to test for group differences.
- This study focused on enlisted Army personnel and their spouses.





Participants:

- There were 20,959 victims in the 5 years of this study.
- Demographics: Gender: 63% women, 37% men; Mean age: 26.25 years (SD = 5.77)
- Race/Ethnicity: 45% Black, 40% White, 11% Hispanic, 3% Asian, 1% American Indian.

Limitations:

- This study focused on Active Duty Army personnel and their spouses. Hence, the findings may not generalize to Service members in other branches of the Military.
- The sample consists of abuse cases entered into the Army Central Registry. Hence, the prevalence rates of domestic violence in the Army may be conservative due to underreporting.
- The Army Central Registry is an administrative database, which is not designed for research purposes. Data gathered in clinical settings are subject to clinical judgment, which may bias the data.

Assessing Research that Works

Research Design and Sample				Quality Rating:	
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)	
The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Research Methods				Quality Rating:	
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)	
The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Limitations				Quality Rating:	
	Excellent Minor Limitations (★★★★)	Appropriate Few Limitations (★★★)	Limited Several Limitations (★★)	Questionable Many/Severe Limitations (★)	
The limitations of this study are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Implications				Quality Rating:	
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)	
The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications					
Overall Quality Rating					