

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



**Focus:**  
National  
Guard

## Resilience as a Moderating Factor between Stress and Alcohol-Related Consequences in the Army National Guard

Morgan, J. K., Brown, J., & Bray, R. M. (2018). Resilience as a moderating factor between stress and alcohol-related consequences in the Army National Guard. *Addictive Behaviors*, 80, 22-27. doi:10.1016/j.addbeh.2018.01.002

**SUMMARY:** Alcohol-related consequences, such as hangovers and headaches after drinking, regrettable sexual situations, physical fights, conflict with family, drinking and driving, loss of memory, and being late for duty are all possible outcomes when people abuse alcohol. This study examined the likelihood of these consequences occurring in the context of low, medium, or high stress and low, medium, and high resilience (i.e., ability to "bounce back" from stress) in National Guard Soldiers. Results indicate resilience is most important when a Soldier is under stress.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Soldiers with the highest stress levels and low resilience experienced twice as many alcohol-related consequences as those with high resilience but the same level of stress.
- Soldiers with average resilience were also found to have an increase in alcohol-related consequences when under high stress, compared to Soldiers with high resilience.
- Resilience levels did not affect alcohol-related consequences when Soldiers were under low stress.
- Soldiers who were younger, male, and single demonstrated increased risk of alcohol-related consequences.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide education to Service members and their spouses regarding the importance of resilience when under conditions of high stress
- Offer workshops for Service members and their families to build resilience, particularly when stress increases
- Target alcohol reduction efforts toward Service members who are under increased stress, such as during reintegration

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend development and continuation of programs promoting resilience, stress reduction, and alcohol use reduction particularly for Soldiers who are younger, single, and male
- Encourage community-based programs that are easily accessible to manage stress for National Guard and Reserve Service members and their families
- Encourage the training of professionals who work with National Guard and Reserve families to monitor and address stress, resilience, and alcohol abuse

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## METHODS

- Participants were recruited through onsite, in-person invitations at various National Guard events from December 2014 to August 2016.
- Data were gathered via self-report from Service members.
- Alcohol-related consequences were measured with researcher-created measures, while stressors and resilience were measured with previously validated measures.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 320 National Guard Soldiers in Georgia and North Carolina, 30% female and 70% male. Races/ethnicities of the participants were White (64%), Black (23%), Latino (7%), and Other (6%).
- The average age of the participants was 32 years old (SD = 9 years) and most participants (88%) had completed at least some college.
- Sixty-three percent of participants were married or living as married, and 37% were single, divorced, or widowed.
- Nine percent of participants were rank E1-E3, 59% were E4-E6, 15% were E7-E9, and 16% were W1-W5/O1-O6. Fifty-eight percent had been previously combat deployed, 9% had been noncombat deployed, and 33% had never been deployed. Forty-two percent had been deployed more than once, and 29% had been deployed three or more times. Among the sample, average time since most recent deployment was five years.

## LIMITATIONS

- The participants were a self-selected convenience sample; therefore, the results may not be generalizable to all Reserve Component Soldiers.
- All the measures were self-report and therefore were subject to social desirability bias, particularly since the topic being studied was sensitive, which could limit the validity of the study.
- The study was completed at one time point, which limits the ability to determine causality.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Explore alcohol-related consequences, resilience, and stressors with a longitudinal design
- Consider accessing alternative sources of data, such as discipline records, family members/spouses, and different methodologies, such as clinical interviews
- Consider Service members' family status, such as having children, and mental health status, such as PTSD, in conjunction with alcohol-related consequences, resilience, and stressors

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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