

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



**Focus:**  
Multiple  
Branches

## Factors Associated with Civilian Employment, Work Satisfaction, and Performance Among National Guard Members

Nelson, C. B., Zivin, K., Walters, H., Ganoczy, D., MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M., & Valenstein, M. (2015). Factors associated with civilian employment, work satisfaction, and performance among National Guard members. *Psychiatric Services, 66*(12), 1318-1325. doi:10.1176/appi.ps.20140034

**SUMMARY:** Understanding risk factors related to Service members' employment-related outcomes is an important area of research, especially following the return of a deployment back into civilian life. Examination of alcohol use, psychiatric symptoms, and physical functioning suggested some negative links to National Guard employment status, work performance, and work satisfaction.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Guard Soldiers who had increased alcohol consumption were more likely to be unemployed at return of deployment with less satisfaction with civilian employment.
- Greater work performance and work satisfaction in Guard Soldiers were related to the availability of social resources (e.g., material aid, emotional support, and socially shared activities).
- Guard Soldiers with positive psychiatric symptoms (e.g., depression, anxiety, PTSD) reported lower work performance and work satisfaction ratings.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Develop classes for Service members to help them overcome the barriers to locating employment options following the return of a deployment
- Provide information regarding resources, such as mental health care, for Service members who are having a difficult time adjusting to civilian life and have experienced traumatic combat exposure
- Create workshops that allow Service members to engage with each other and build a sense of camaraderie in effort to reduce alcohol consumption and create a network of social support

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend professionals who work with military families to participate in trainings on improving long-term employment options
- Support programs for Service members and their families on healthy relationships and positive coping strategies to manage stress and challenges related to military deployment
- Encourage collaboration with the Veteran Affairs (VA) to ensure Service members are screened for psychiatric symptoms following the return of a combat-related deployment

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



## METHODS

- National Guard Soldiers who recently returned (within six months) from an OEF, OIF, or OND deployment were recruited during monthly drill and by mail.
- Participants completed measures of employment as well as health-related measures, including combat exposure, symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, and depression, physical functioning, and alcohol consumption.
- Statistical analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between health-related measures and employment-related outcome variables.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 1,151 National Guard members; 73% were employed, while 27% were unemployed.
- Among the sample, 84% were White followed by 6% Black, 4% Latino, 3% multiracial, and 3% other.
- Of those that were employed, 94% were male, 6% female with 42% between 18-30 years, 28% between 31- 40 years, and 30% older than 41 years.
- For those that were unemployed 90% were male, 10% were female with 63% between 18-30 years, 22% between 31-40 years, and 15% older than 41 years.

## LIMITATIONS

- The sample was all National Guard Soldiers, thus findings may not generalize to other branches.
- The study did not assess for exposure to different kinds of combat; these exposures could be differentially related to psychiatric symptoms, thus impacting employment and alcohol consumption.
- Data were cross-sectional, limiting the ability to differentiate casual effects of alcohol use and psychiatric symptoms in relation to combat exposure, deployment, or employment-related outcomes.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Collect interview data from Guard Soldiers on their lived experiences in returning from a deployment
- Investigate alcohol use, psychiatric symptoms, and employment before, during, and after a deployment to better assess relationships among these outcomes
- Examine the effects of alcohol use and psychiatric symptoms specifically among low-ranking Service members as it pertains to unemployment following the return from a deployment to civilian life

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:  
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>