

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



**Focus:**  
Multiple  
Branches

## Gender Differences in the Correlates of Hazardous Drinking Among Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans

Scott, J. C., Pietrzak, R. H., Mattocks, K., Southwick, S. M., Brandt, C., & Haskell, S. (2013). Gender differences in the correlates of hazardous drinking among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 127(3-Jan), 15-22. doi:10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2012.06.003

**SUMMARY:** Survey data from a community sample of OEF/OIF/OND Veterans were used to assess the prevalence of hazardous drinking among this population. Gender differences in the risk and protective factors for hazardous drinking were also examined. A variety of risk and protective factors influenced rates of hazardous drinking.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- In the sample 30% of male Veterans and 16% of female Veterans reported scores indicative of hazardous drinking.
- Among male Veterans, younger age, higher incidence of exposure to assaultive trauma, and higher levels of conflict in interpersonal relationships were predictive of hazardous drinking.
- Among female Veterans, younger age and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, especially emotional numbing, were predictive of hazardous drinking.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Educate practitioners about gender differences associated with hazardous drinking among Service members
- Tailor their services to align with the distinct risk and protective factors for male and female Service members engaging in hazardous drinking behaviors
- Offer support groups for Service members and families coping with substance use and abuse issues

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs designed to help military personnel with substance abuse issues
- Recommend routine screening for hazardous drinking among Service members at specified intervals across the deployment cycle
- Support research efforts that develop and evaluate the effectiveness of programs that help Service members who engage in hazardous drinking

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

- Data were collected during phase two of the Women Veterans Cohort Study (WVCS).
- Participants were enrolled for care at a Veteran Affairs hospital in Indiana or the New England region.
- Veterans completed a self-report survey that assessed hazardous drinking, PTSD, depression, combat exposure, traumatic events, military sexual trauma, social support, and interpersonal conflict.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Six hundred thirty-four Veterans participated in the study.
- The majority of participants were White (84%), female (54%), and the average age of participants was 37.8 years (SD = 10.3 years).
- Participants were 65% Army, 17% Air Force, 10% Navy, 8% Marines; 36% were Active Duty, 37% were National Guard, and 27% were Reserve.

## LIMITATIONS

- Given the low response rate (8%), participants may differ from non-participants in meaningful ways (e.g., those who responded may be functioning differently than those who did not respond).
- This study relied on self-report rather than diagnostic measures which may bias results as participants may not have been forthcoming in their drinking behaviors.
- Data were collected in two regions of the country; the ability to extrapolate these findings to Veterans in other parts of the United States is unknown.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Investigate how hazardous drinking may change across the course of the deployment cycle
- Examine potential causes and adverse outcomes of hazardous drinking among Service members over time
- Evaluate the effectiveness of substance use and abuse programs currently utilized in the military

## 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>