



Supporting  
Military Families  
Through Research  
and Outreach

# PUTTING RESEARCH TO WORK FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

## Deployment Stress and Well-being among Military Spouses: The Role of Social Support

Skomorovsky, A. (2014). Deployment stress and well-being among military spouses: The role of social support. *Military Psychology*, 26, 44-54.



*A survey of 639 spouses of currently or recently deployed Canadian Armed Forces members examined the moderating role of social support in the link between deployment stress and military spouses' psychological well-being. Although social support from significant others was a significant predictor of better psychological health and lower levels of depression among military spouses, it did not buffer the effect of deployment stress on well-being.*

### Key Findings:

- Social support from family, civilian friends, and partners were significant predictors of better psychological health and lower levels of depression among military spouses.
- Social support from military friends was not found to be an important predictor of well-being when the other sources of support were accounted for.
- Social support from a partner played a unique role in predicting well-being in families where the Canadian Armed Forces member had just returned from deployment, but not during the deployment stage.
- Social support did not buffer the effect of deployment stress on spouses' psychological well-being.

### Implications for Programs:

- Programs could target strengthening support for spouses by providing opportunities for a range of support networks during deployment (e.g., online forums, peer support groups, social events).
- Programs could include modules on the important role of social support (especially support from one's partner) in family education programs.

### Implications for Policies:

- Policies could recommend the establishment of both formal and informal support networks for families during deployment.
- Policies related to family support surrounding deployment could extend the span of available services, such that families can access a range of support services before, during, and after deployment.

### Avenues for Future Research:

- Longitudinal research could potentially explore causal explanations of these findings.
- Additional research could evaluate the effectiveness of a variety of informal support networks for military spouses and families.

Prepared by the Military REACH Team.

For additional information, please visit [reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu](http://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu)

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## Background Information

### Methodology:

- A paper based survey was mailed to 10,592 spouses of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members, stratified by gender and environment; 21% responded.
- Participants were asked questions about demographic information, psychological health, depressive symptoms, social support, and deployment stress.
- Simple and hierarchical linear regressions were conducted to examine the role of deployment stress and social support in psychological well-being.





### Participants:

- 639 spouses of Canadian Armed Forces whose spouses were currently (40%) or recently deployed (60%).
- 91% female, 91% English as a first language.
- 20% were Canadian Armed Forces members themselves.
- Average marriage length = 12 years, 61% had children living at home
- 17% of the spouses were diagnosed with depression, 11% anxiety disorder, 2% PTSD, 2% adjustment disorder.

### Limitations:

- Because the response rate was relatively low, generalizability may be limited; those that elected to return the survey may be different from the general population of spouses.
- Gender comparisons were not possible because of the small number of males.
- The data was cross-sectional and causal explanations are not possible.

## 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications					
Overall Quality Rating					