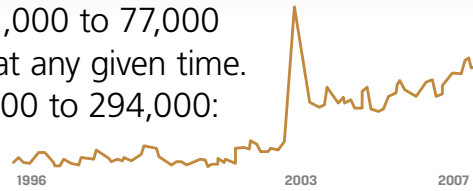


# After Nearly a Decade of War, Servicemembers and Families Report Stress, Resilience

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have put America's all-volunteer force to its most severe test since its inception in 1973. Between 1996 and 2002, 31,000 to 77,000 U.S. servicemembers were deployed abroad on active duty at any given time. Between 2003 and 2007, however, that range reached 74,000 to 294,000:



This overall increase has been sustained through successful military recruiting and incentive strategies. But how are the troops and their families faring?

A growing body of RAND research is helping to illustrate the consequences so that support programs and other policies can better serve the populations in need.

For more information about RAND research on this issue, including insight into the ways the military is sustaining readiness, see [www.rand.org/feature/military-well-being](http://www.rand.org/feature/military-well-being)

NOTE: Deployment graphic and ranges are based on *How Is Deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan Affecting U.S. Service Members and Their Families?* RAND/OP-316, 2011, p. 3, [www.rand.org/t/OP316](http://www.rand.org/t/OP316).



More than two million **U.S. servicemembers** have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. Many of these troops experience trauma while deployed and return home with mental health conditions. A variety of barriers may be preventing many of those in need from seeking care.



Nearly **20 percent** of servicemembers deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan reported symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or major depression, as of fall 2007. More than **400,000** could be affected as of today.

U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) suicide rates have historically been lower than those of a comparable subgroup of the U.S. population. In 2006, an increase in the DoD rate began to **narrow the gap**.



## Traumatic Experiences Are Common During Deployments

- My friend was seriously wounded or killed **50%**
- I saw dead or seriously injured noncombatants **45%**
- I witnessed serious injury or death **45%**
- I smelled decomposing bodies **37%**
- I was physically moved or knocked over by an explosion **23%**
- I was injured but not hospitalized **23%**
- I received a blow to the head in an accident or injury **18%**
- I was injured and hospitalized **11%**

## Troops Report Barriers to Seeking Care

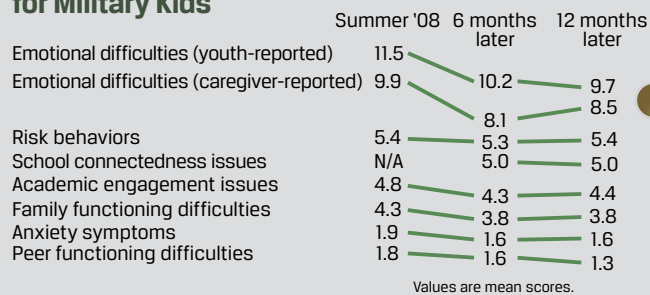
The medications could have too many side effects  
**It could harm my career** I could be denied a security clearance  
**My family and friends would be more helpful than a mental health professional**  
**My coworkers would have less confidence in me**  
**I don't think my treatment would be kept confidential**  
**My commander or supervisor might respect me less**  
**My friends and family would respect me less**  
**I could lose contact with or custody of my children**  
**My commander or supervisor asked us not to get treatment**

NOTES clockwise from upper right: (1) Based on RAND research into probable rates of PTSD and major depression among servicemembers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) or Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and into suicide rates; see *Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences, and Services to Assist Recovery*, RAND/MG-720, 2008, p. 98, [www.rand.org/t/MG720](http://www.rand.org/t/MG720), and *The War Within: Preventing Suicide in the U.S. Military*, RAND/MG-953, 2011, pp. xv, 15, [www.rand.org/t/MG953](http://www.rand.org/t/MG953). (2) Based on a survey of servicemembers deployed to OEF or OIF; see *Invisible Wounds of War*, p. 104. (3) Based on RAND research into rates of trauma exposure among servicemembers deployed to OEF or OIF; see *Invisible Wounds of War*, p. 97.



Along certain measures of functioning and well-being, **children from military families** are no different from other children. However, they do report experiencing more anxiety symptoms, emotional difficulties, and problems with family functioning.

## Many Problems Persist for at Least a Year for Military Kids



## Military Kids Compared with Their Peers

- Peer functioning difficulties: comparable
- Academic engagement problems: comparable
- Risk behaviors: comparable
- Emotional or behavioral difficulties: elevated
- Anxiety symptoms: elevated
- Family functioning difficulties: elevated

## Emotional Difficulties, Anxiety Symptoms

**34%** In a sample, percentage of **military kids** experiencing moderate or high levels of emotional difficulties, according to caregivers

**30%** In a sample, percentage of **military kids** reporting elevated anxiety symptoms

**19%** Estimated percentage of **youth in the general population** with these emotional difficulties

**15%** Estimated percentage of **youth in the general population** with these anxiety symptoms

## Deployment Effects in Three Key Areas

according to a survey of active-duty U.S. Air Force spouses

	worsened	improved	no change
Child-related problems	<b>52%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>41%</b>
Employment-related problems	<b>44%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>48%</b>
Financial problems	<b>29%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>36%</b>



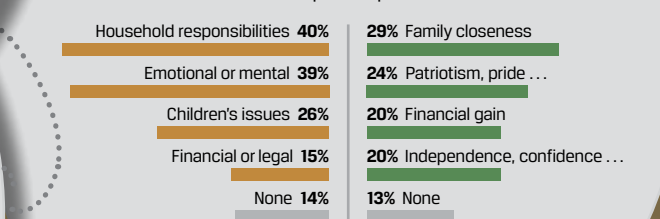
The lives of **spouses and caregivers from military families** change dramatically during deployment. There are both challenges and benefits, but, for many, child- and employment-related problems appear to worsen.

## Views from the Homefront: Greatest Challenges

- I took on more responsibilities at home **82%**
- I helped my child deal with life without the deployed parent **80%**
- People in my community didn't get what life was like for me **52%**
- I spent more time with my child on homework **52%**
- I talked to teachers about my child's school performance **50%**
- I felt like I had no one to talk to about my stress, sadness **49%**
- I lost contact with other military families **29%**
- I no longer spent time with other military families **18%**

## Deployment Challenges and Deployment Benefits

according to interviews with spouses of deployed reserve component personnel



NOTES clockwise from upper right: (1) Based on a RAND survey of families that applied to the Operation Purple camp program; see *Views from the Homefront: The Experiences of Youth and Spouses from Military Families*, RAND/TR-913, 2011, p. xv, [www.rand.org/t/TR913](http://www.rand.org/t/TR913). (2) Based on multiple studies (green percentages) and a RAND survey of families that applied to the Operation Purple camp program (red percentages); see *Views from the Homefront*, pp. 24, 28. (3) Based on a RAND survey of families that applied to the Operation Purple camp program; see *Views from the Homefront*, p. 25.

NOTES clockwise from lower right: (1) Based on RAND interviews with Reserve and National Guard families that experienced at least one overseas deployment; see *Deployment Experiences of Guard and Reserve Families: Implications for Support and Retention*, RAND/MG-645, 2008, pp. 71, 109, [www.rand.org/t/MG645](http://www.rand.org/t/MG645). (2) Based on a RAND survey of families that applied to the Operation Purple camp program; see *Views from the Homefront: The Experiences of Youth and Spouses from Military Families*, RAND/TR-913, 2011, p. 46, [www.rand.org/t/TR913](http://www.rand.org/t/TR913). (3) Based on a RAND survey of active-duty U.S. Air Force spouses; see *Year of the Air Force Family: 2009 Survey of Active-Duty Spouses*, RAND/TR-879, 2011, pp. 18, 21, 25, [www.rand.org/t/TR879](http://www.rand.org/t/TR879).