

**SUMMARY:** Relationships between parental deployment and rates of child maltreatment were explored by analyzing data of Active duty U.S. Air Force parents. No significant differences were found between rates of mild to moderate child maltreatment by military parents before vs after deployment. However, rates of severe child maltreatment were significantly higher after deployment than beforehand.

**KEY FINDINGS**
- Rates of Service member-perpetrated mild to moderate child maltreatment were not significantly different before and after deployment; further, rates did not vary by number of parental deployments.
- Rates of severe child maltreatment (e.g., causing child injury) were higher after deployment compared to beforehand.
- Previously deployed fathers perpetrated higher rates of child maltreatment than deployed mothers.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS**
Programs could:
- Offer programs designed to educate returning Service members and their families about child maltreatment risk factors
- Collaborate with community organizations to educate practitioners about the importance of screening for child maltreatment
- Host a variety of support programs for reintegrating Service members and their families to assist them with the potentially stressful transitions

**IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES**
Policies could:
- Support programs that assist Service members with coping with parenting stress
- Dedicate additional resources to families with a history of family violence upon homecoming from deployment
- Encourage installations participate in family violence awareness campaigns
METHODS

- Deployment data was gathered from an Air Force database provided by the Clinical Informatics Branch. Child maltreatment rates were obtained from Family Advocacy Program databases.
- Inclusion criteria included personnel who had substantiated incidents of child maltreatment (e.g., neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse).
- Statistical analyses were conducted to predict each parent’s rate of child maltreatment and rates of child maltreatment before vs after deployment.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were taken from a broader sample of Active duty Air Force personnel who had deployed for 31 days or more.
- Parents (n = 99,967) had at least one child under age 18.
- Most participants (89%) were fathers, and the majority were White (62%), Black (12%), or Latino (8%).
- Average age at the first time of their deployment was 31.21 years (SD = 7.22).

LIMITATIONS

- This study used a large database that had no information about the factors related to the Service member who deployed (e.g., parenting arrangements) and the deployment (e.g., combat exposure).
- Participants were predominately male and solely from an Air Force population, which limits generalizability to the broader military population.
- There are no data on the rates of child maltreatment involving the civilian spouses or other caregivers.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Gather additional information on parenting practices that impact child maltreatment.
- Conduct qualitative research on military parents’ perspectives on child maltreatment.
- Collect information from other informants such as spouses or partners to provide a broader picture of family violence.