

Marriage and Divorce in the National Guard and Reserves: A Fact Sheet

Background

The United States Armed Services consists of five service branches: Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard. Across all five branches, military members belong either to the Active Component or the Reserve Component.³ Members of the Reserve Component of the U.S. Armed Forces (which is comprised of both the National Guard and the Reserves) make up a sizable population within the United States. In 2008, there were 1.1 million total Reserve Component members.¹ Similar to the United States population, 70% of Reserve Component (Reserves and National Guard) members are white, 15% are black, and 9% are Hispanic.⁴ In the years since September 11, 2001, the United States has seen one of the largest military movements since World War II, and members of the Reserve Component have been an important part of this troop mobilization. Unlike the civilian population, 82% of members of the reserve component are male.¹ On average, members of the Reserve Component are older than their Active Component counterparts (average age 32.3 vs. 28.3 years).⁴

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than civilians, but the scientific findings are much less clear cut. It is extremely difficult to compare marriage and divorce rates between military and civilian populations because members of the two groups differ in many ways that are important for understanding marriage and divorce.⁵ For example, service members tend to be male and younger than the general population. Because both gender and age are related to divorce rates, it can be misleading to compare military marriage and divorce rates to those of the entire civilian population; nonetheless, some studies do show higher marriage and divorce rates among the military in relation to similar civilians.^{6,7,8} In addition, an informal study conducted by the Army in 2005 showed that soldiers and their significant others rated the loss of their relationship as their number one concern regarding deployment – even more than death or injury.¹⁵ It is therefore important to understand and respond to the unique needs of military couples.

Definitions

National Guard -The National Guard, which comprises 468,000 members¹, consists of the Army

