

# POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS, SOCIAL SUPPORT, AND ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION. PROS AND CONS

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## BACKGROUND

- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and problematic alcohol use commonly co-occur among military service members.
- This study tested whether motivations or reasons for drinking alcohol help explain why we see posttraumatic stress symptoms (PTSS) related to alcohol use and problems, and whether feeling supported by friends or family are helpful for reducing potentially harmful patterns of drinking.

## RESEARCH CONDUCTED

- Current reservists and separated service members were asked to complete a survey regarding their work, health, family, and well-being characteristics, including their past month PTSS, alcohol drinking motives, how much and how often they drank, and how much support they felt they had from their friends and family.

## RESULTS

- 17% of the sample met criteria for probable PTSD, and 27% reported problematic drinking – based on an Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT) score of 8 or more
- Service members with higher PTSS reported drinking more often, in higher quantities, and were more likely to binge drink due to higher motivations to drink to cope with stress and enhance their positive mood.
- Higher PTSS was only related to reports of more alcohol problems due to higher drinking to cope motivations.
- Higher support from friends made the relationships between PTSS, drinking to cope motives, and quantity of drinking and alcohol problems weaker.
- However, higher support from family made relationships between PTSS, drinking to cope motives, and quantity of drinking and alcohol problems stronger.
- Service members with high enhancement motives who felt they had high support from their friends reported higher levels of drinking on average. Those who did not drink to boost their positive feelings but still had high support from their friends reported lower levels of drinking.

## IMPORTANCE

- Hazardous drinking rates in military populations is considered a public health problem.
- Identifying drinking motives, particularly drinking to cope motives, may improve screening for hazardous alcohol use and problems.
- Friends and family are important for health and happiness. Building positive relationships can aid in recovery from stress, and improve transition and reintegration experiences.



Summary based on the following paper:

McCabe, C. T., Mohr, C.D., Hammer, L. B., & Carlson, K. F. (2018). PTSD symptomology and motivated alcohol use among military service members: Testing a conditional indirect effect model of social support. *Substance Use & Misuse*