

Changes in the subjective health of Reserve Component Veterans as a function of mobilization status during the first Persian Gulf War

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Abstract

Data from nearly 1,000 Reserve Component Persian Gulf War veterans were analyzed to assess changes in subjective health as reported retrospectively for four time periods: prior to the war, during the war, between June 1991 and June 1995, and during the past year (1996-1997). Changes were assessed by analysis of variance with repeated measures over time as a function of gender, mobilization status, military rank, branch of service (army/marines versus air force/navy), and ethnic minority status. Both being mobilized within the United States and being deployed to the Persian Gulf region were associated with declines in reported subjective health; declines over the four time periods were not moderated by gender, minority status, ground force status, or rank, but women and minorities did appear to experience more rapid declines in health from pre-war to during the war. Minorities (excluding women), lower ranking veterans, and ground force veterans tended to report poorer subjective health, independently of level of mobilization or time of their retrospective reports. Implications for the search for causal factors responsible for the health problems of many Persian Gulf War veterans are discussed. This article is dedicated to one such veteran, Chaplain (CPT) (P)(Retired) John Peters.

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