



NEWSLETTER

MILLENNIUM COHORT STUDY

JANUARY 2025 | ISSUE 02



Dear Participants,

We are excited to share the latest updates from the Millennium Cohort Study that were made possible by your invaluable contributions. Your dedication continues to drive research that shapes policies and programs supporting the health and well-being of service members, veterans, and their families.

In this issue, we highlight how findings from our study have contributed to policy changes within the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. This illustrates the far-reaching impact of your participation and underscores the importance of our endeavor.

We have also included summaries of our latest research publications, which offer insights into the study's ongoing efforts to answer critical questions regarding military service and health. These updates are a testament to the shared commitment between participants and researchers in advancing knowledge and improving lives.

Thank you for your continued support of the Millennium Cohort Study. Together, we are making a difference.

Very respectfully,
The Millennium Cohort Study Team

Please keep us updated!

- Have you recently moved or changed your email address or your name?
- Click here or visit our website and use the 'Update Contact Info' link at the top right of the page.



Millennium Cohort Study Impact on Policy

The primary objective of the Millennium Cohort Study is to provide evidence-based knowledge to inform and improve interventions, clinical practice guidelines, and policies for key stakeholders, including the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs leadership.

Thanks to your continued involvement in this project, we gathered critical data and insights that have driven significant policy changes, shaped healthcare practices, and paved the way for future advancements. Your willingness to share your experiences has directly influenced these achievements. We are excited to share some of the impactful policy changes and contributions made possible by your participation.

In addition to publishing our findings in academic journals, we also respond to specific research requests that inform policy decisions. Recently, our team provided insights into the impacts of sexual harassment and assault on service members to the Department of Defense's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO). We also conducted analyses on adverse mental health outcomes among Army veterinarians and veterinary technicians at the request of the Commanding Officer of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.

PACT Act:

The 'Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxins' (PACT) Act of 2022. The VA's decision to begin processing disability claims for conditions like asthma, rhinitis, and sinusitis, based on presumed particulate matter exposure during military service in Southwest Asia and other regions was influenced by Millennium Cohort Study research. [Read more.](#)

VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines for PTSD and Acute Stress Disorder:

Research findings from the Millennium Cohort Study have expanded our understanding of PTSD and other stress-related disorders, leading to the development and refinement of strategies to manage and treat these conditions. [Read more.](#)

VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines for Chronic Multisymptom Illness (CMI):

Millennium Cohort Study research has been instrumental in identifying factors contributing to CMI, a condition that significantly affects the quality of life for many service members and veterans. [Read more.](#)

Defense Health Board Report on Obesity and Overweight:

Millennium Cohort data informed recommendations to the Department of Defense regarding the challenges of excessive weight and obesity among service members, which has implications for national security and military healthcare. [Read more.](#)

Millennium Cohort Study Impact on Policy

VA/DoD Individual Longitudinal Exposure Record (ILER):

The Individual Longitudinal Exposure Record (ILER) is an individual, electronic record of exposures designed in collaboration between VA and the DoD for each service member and future veterans.

ILER will be available to clinicians and researchers and will contain information related to deployment, environment exposures during these deployments, and any medical concerns that should be addressed based on these exposures.

Millennium Cohort Study research, publications examining cancer mortality as well as blast exposure, was highlighted as a key example of DoD- and VA-funded efforts linking military service to health conditions. These findings informed Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommendations to expand access to ILER use, emphasizing the study's role in shaping policies on toxic exposure risks. [Read more.](#)

Report to Congress Armed Services Committee: Study on Effects of Sleep Deprivation on Readiness of Members of the Armed Forces:

Research from the Millennium Cohort Study informed recommendations made to the Armed Services Committee to promote a culture shift prioritizing adequate sleep among military personnel. [Read more.](#)



Defense Policy Board members hold a briefing at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., Dec. 15, 2021. (DoD photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer Zachary Wheeler)

Recent Millennium Cohort Study Published Papers

Risk Factors for Homelessness Among Post-9/11 Era Veterans

Despite lower levels of poverty and unemployment, and higher levels of educational attainment, veterans are overrepresented among the U.S. homeless population. This study examined the associations between individual characteristics and homelessness among post-9/11 era veterans. This study found several service-specific features, including PTSD, sexual trauma during service, and other than honorable discharges from military service, have been linked with a higher risk for homelessness. This paper was published online ahead of print in the July 25, 2024 issue of *Armed Forces & Society*. [Read more.](#)

All-Cause Mortality Among United States Military Personnel: Findings From the Millennium Cohort Study

Service members and veterans may face different risks to their health and longevity compared to civilians. These differences may be linked to unique aspects of military life, such as exposure to certain occupational hazards, demanding fitness requirements, access to universal healthcare, and the physical and mental demands of service. This study, using 20 years of data from the Millennium Cohort Study (2001–2021), explored the factors related to overall mortality among U.S. service members and veterans. The findings highlighted the impact of combat exposure, enlisted rank, and health behaviors on mortality rates. This paper was published online ahead of print in the August 28, 2024 issue of *Annals of Epidemiology*. [Read more.](#)

Risk of Traumatic Brain Injury in Deployment and Nondeployment Settings Among Members of the Millennium Cohort Study

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a significant concern among military personnel, with deployment settings potentially increasing the risk of such injuries. This study examined the relationship between time in the military and the risk of TBI, both overall and by deployed and non-deployed locations. The study found that approximately 23% of participants experienced at least one TBI during the study period. This paper was published online ahead of print in the June 27, 2024 issue of *Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation*. [Read more.](#)

Prospective Comparison of Risk Factors for Firearm Suicide and Non-Firearm Suicide in a Large Population-Based Cohort of Current and Former US Service Members: Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study

Suicide is a significant concern among current and former U.S. service members, with limited understanding of the distinct risk factors associated with firearm and non-firearm suicides. This study found that the risk factors for both types of suicide are similar, suggesting that prevention and intervention strategies may not need to be differentiated by specific demographic, military, or health factors. This paper was published in the June 14, 2024 issue of *The Lancet Regional Health – Americas*. [Read more.](#)

Millennium Cohort Study Published Papers

Sleep Health Among US Navy Afloat Versus Ashore Personnel in the Millennium Cohort Study

Research shows that getting less than seven hours of sleep, dealing with insomnia, or experiencing obstructive sleep apnea can lead to slower reaction times, difficulty thinking clearly, declines in physical health, and an increased risk of mental health problems. This study compared sleep and health outcomes between Naval personnel on sea duty and shore duty. Sailors on shore duty reported poorer physical health, while those on sea duty had shorter sleep durations but fewer physical health issues. Obesity was linked to more sleep-related health problems across both groups, highlighting differences in sleep and health based on duty location. This paper was published online ahead of print on May 24, 2024 in the *Journal of Sleep Research*. [Read more.](#)

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Veterans Health Administration Use, and Care-Seeking Among Recent-Era U.S. Veterans

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a common condition among veterans, but it's not clear how it affects their use of healthcare services. This study investigated the associations among probable posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Veterans Health Administration (VHA) health care use, and care-seeking for PTSD in U.S. military veterans. The findings showed that the main reason veterans with PTSD were not receiving care was due to underdiagnosis, rather than treatment-avoidant behaviors. The findings also showed that veterans with probable PTSD were more likely to use VHA services, and that those who used VHA services in the past year were more likely to seek care for their PTSD symptoms. This paper was published in the February 29, 2024 issue of the *Journal of Traumatic Stress*. [Read more.](#)

Lifetime Traumatic Brain Injury and Risk of Post-Concussive Symptoms in the Millennium Cohort Study

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a major concern for active-duty military members, affecting brain function, behavior, and overall health. These injuries can impact both immediate readiness and long-term health. This study explored how the total number of lifetime TBIs affect the risk of developing post-concussive symptoms (PCS) - issues like fatigue, restlessness, sleep problems, difficulty concentrating, and memory loss. The results showed a clear pattern: more TBIs lead to a greater number of these symptoms. These findings emphasize the growing impact of repeated TBIs on military personnel and the urgent need for long-term studies to better understand the connection between repeated TBIs and PCS. This paper was published in the February 27, 2024 issue of the *Journal of Neurotrauma*. [Read more.](#)

Racial, Ethnic, and Sex Disparities in Mental Health Among U.S. Service Members and Veterans: Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study

Differences in mental health outcomes among racial, ethnic, and sex groups are a concern in the general population. This study examined mental health outcomes among diverse groups within the military community to determine if these disparities also affect U.S. service members and veterans. The findings revealed that disparities in mental health persist, even after accounting for factors such as socioeconomic status, military experience, and access to healthcare. These results were published in the February 5, 2024 issue of the *American Journal of Epidemiology*. [Read more.](#)