

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
ABOUT THE FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM
FY 09 DOMESTIC ABUSE DATA

Q: How does the Department of Defense define “domestic violence?”

The Department of Defense distinguishes between the terms “domestic abuse” and “domestic violence.” Domestic abuse includes domestic violence:

Domestic abuse is (1) domestic violence or (2) a pattern of behavior resulting in emotional/psychological abuse, economic control, and/or interference with personal liberty that is directed toward a person of the opposite sex who is:

- A current or former spouse,
- A person with whom the abuser shares a child in common, or
- A current or former intimate partner with whom the abuser shares or has shared a common domicile.

Domestic violence is an offense under the United States Code, the Uniform Code of Military Justice, or State law involving the use, attempted use, or threatened use of force or violence against a person of the opposite sex, or a violation of a lawful order issued for the protection of a person of the opposite sex, who is:

- A current or former spouse,
- A person with whom the abuser shares a child in common, or
- A current or former intimate partner with whom the abuser shares or has shared a common domicile.

Q: How much domestic violence occurs that involves Service members?

A: DoD counts incidents of domestic violence that are reported to the Defense Incident-Based Reporting System (DIBRS), using offense codes for murder, manslaughter, maiming, various types of assault, sexual assault, and property damage or destruction and a choice of relationship codes between the alleged offender and the victim (spouse, common law spouse, former spouse, love interest). This domestic violence data must be obtained from DIBRS.

Q: How does the Department of Defense count domestic abuse incidents?

A: DoD does not know how many incidents go unreported, but counts each incident of suspected domestic abuse that is reported to the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) at each installation for clinical assessment and social services. With an incident-based system, we can calculate how many repeated incidents of domestic abuse are reported on the same victims. In many cases the incident was first reported to a civilian law enforcement agency or a civilian domestic violence program and was then reported to FAP; the incident may or may not be recorded in DIBRS. However, the FAP data excludes incidents that occur in Reserve component families (Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, and Air Force Reserve) because they are in the civilian community.

Q: What types of domestic abuse are included in this FAP domestic abuse data?

A: The data includes physical abuse, including acts of physical abuse in which no injury resulted but there was a reasonable potential for injury, and sexual abuse. It also includes emotional abuse and neglect of a spouse.

Q: Are all the alleged abuser active duty Service members in the FAP data?

A: No, only (62%) are. The alleged abuser may be an active duty Service member or the intimate partner or civilian spouse of an active duty Service member.

Q: Are all the victims civilian spouses in the FAP data?

A: No, only slightly more than half (52%) are. The victim may be an active duty Service member or the intimate partner or civilian spouse of an active duty Service member.

Q: How does the FAP data compare to data of domestic violence from studies of civilians?

A: Generally, the DoD FAP data should not be compared to data from studies of civilians because there are significant differences in the designs of the studies. Here are three examples:

- The FAP definition of domestic abuse usually differs from the definition of domestic violence used in the civilian studies.
- The DoD FAP data includes incidents of emotional abuse that occurred without any physical or sexual abuse, while most civilian studies include only physical or sexual abuse.
- The DoD demographics are usually much different from the demographics of the civilian studies. Family violence occurs more frequently in young couples, which are overrepresented in the military population.
- Comparisons should not be made unless the study designs and populations are standardized.

Q: The number of substantiated incidents of spouse abuse in the FAP data has increased 10.5 percent from FY08. Does this change mean that spouse abuse is increasing due to the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?

A. We do not know if this increase is related to adjustment reactions following return from military operations in Iraq or Afghanistan or to other factors, such as marital stress resulting from financial problems associated with the economy, continued public awareness activities encourage reporting, or to some combination of one or more of these. We are monitoring this rate closely. We will need several more years of data to see whether the general decline in

substantiated incidents of spouse abuse since FY00 (by 38.1 percent) will continue or is changing.

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