

Military spouses face higher perinatal depression risk

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Women whose partners are away on military deployment are at greater risk of developing mental illness during the perinatal period, according to a review paper published in the *Journal of the Royal Army Medical*

Corps.

Researchers from Anglia Ruskin University's Veterans and Families Institute for Military Social Research (VFI) found that pregnant military spouses report more depressive symptoms at all stages of their pregnancy and all stages of their partner's deployment cycle.

The review found that deployment of the serving spouse is associated with [social isolation](#) and increased anxiety and stress for the pregnant partner at home, leading to a higher risk of perinatal depression.

This can be exacerbated by the stress of lone parenting for the duration of the deployment and coping with the subsequent change in day-to-day family life and parenting roles following the return of the serving partner.

Dr. Lauren Godier-McBard, lead author of the study, said: "Women who have a serving partner in the military not only have to deal with pregnancy and the additional demands this places on their [mental health](#), but they may also be very worried about the welfare of their partner—in addition they are lacking that essential support while their spouse is away.

"The evidence we found indicates that [social support](#) is an important protective factor for military spouses during the [perinatal period](#). This may be particularly important for reducing anxiety during the deployment of their serving partner. There may be benefits to specialised support for military spouses.

"While this review focused on US studies, the cultural and situational similarities between the two nations and their militaries mean there may be lessons the UK can take from this analysis. However, there remains a paucity of UK research on this subject."

More information: Lauren Rose Godier-McBard et al, Military spouses with deployed partners are at greater risk of poor perinatal mental health: a scoping review, *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps* (2019). [DOI: 10.1136/jramc-2018-001069](https://doi.org/10.1136/jramc-2018-001069)

Provided by Anglia Ruskin University

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