Women veterans' experiences with domestic violence and with sexual harassment while in the military.

(PMID:7742963)

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[Archives of Family Medicine](http://europepmc.org/search?page=1&query=ISSN:%221063-3987%22) [1995, 4(5):411-418]

**Type:** Journal Article

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| **Abstract** |

BACKGROUND: Both [domestic violence](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22domestic%20violence%22) and [sexual harassment](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22sexual%20harassment%22) may adversely affect women's health but often go unrecognized.

OBJECTIVE: To assess women veterans' experiences with [domestic violence](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22domestic%20violence%22) and with [sexual harassment](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22sexual%20harassment%22) while in the military as well as the relationship of such experiences to health and health care utilization.

METHODS: We surveyed all 191 women hospitalized from March 1992 to 1993 at the Minneapolis (Minn) Veterans Affairs Medical Center and 411 randomly selected female outpatients. Data were collected using an anonymous validated questionnaire.

RESULTS: Results were stratified by age and analyzed using both bivariable and multivariable techniques. Twenty-four percent of respondents under age 50 years reported [domestic violence](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22domestic%20violence%22) in the past year and 90% reported [sexual harassment](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22sexual%20harassment%22) while in the military. Among older respondents, 7% said they had experienced [domestic violence](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22domestic%20violence%22) in the past year and 37% reported a history of [sexual harassment](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22sexual%20harassment%22) while in the military. Of those who reported [domestic violence](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22domestic%20violence%22) in the past year, 50% of respondents under age 50 years and 28% of older respondents said that at least one assault was life-threatening. Rates of reports of completed and attempted sexual assaults while in the military were 20 times higher than previous reports by other government employees. Respondents with a history of either [domestic violence](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22domestic%20violence%22) (odds ratio, 2.83; 95% confidence interval [CI], 1.38 to 5.78) or [sexual harassment](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22sexual%20harassment%22) while in the military (odds ratio, 2.84; 95% CI, 1.22 to 6.53) were more than twice as likely to report a history of anxiety or [depression](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22depression%22), and a history of [domestic violence](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22domestic%20violence%22) was associated with more lifetime surgical procedures (odds ratio, 1.21; 95% CI, 1.10 to 1.33).

CONCLUSIONS: Histories of [domestic violence](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22domestic%20violence%22) within the past year and of [sexual harassment](http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/7742963/?whatizit_url=http://europepmc.org/search/?page=1&query=%22sexual%20harassment%22) while in the military are common among women veterans. Both may be associated with adverse effects on mental and physical health.