



## Circumstances Preceding Suicide in U.S. Soldiers

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Researchers have identified common circumstances surrounding suicide deaths among U.S. Army soldiers. This information sheds light on prevention opportunities in military populations.

Researchers used the Department of Defense Suicide Event Report (DoDSER) system and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) to gather data on active duty Army soldiers who died by suicide. Required for all confirmed military suicides, a DoDSER includes a range of information on decedents, including military background, mental health history, and a narrative on the sequence of events that occurred before the suicide. NVDRS data are collected in select states and also include narrative information on circumstances preceding a suicide death.

Researchers identified 135 active duty Army soldiers who died by suicide in participating NVDRS states with at least one narrative available in NVDRS or DoDSER. Using narrative coding, the researchers categorized the preceding circumstances surrounding the suicide deaths and identified the most frequent categories. These categories included problems related to intimate partner relationships (63.0%), mental health/substance abuse (51.9%), employment or military service (46.7%), finances (17.8%), and criminal or legal activity (16.3%).

These findings suggest prevention strategies are needed to ensure U.S. soldiers are equipped with necessary coping skills and are aware of resources to support their psychosocial functioning.

Skopp, N. A., Holland, K. M., Logan, J. E., Alexander, C. L., & Faye Floyd, C. (2019). Circumstances preceding suicide in U.S. soldiers: A qualitative analysis of narrative data. *Psychological Services, 16*(2), 302–311.

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