

## **Author's response to reviews**

**Title:** The Association of State per Capita Income and Military Service Deaths in the Vietnam and Iraq Wars

### **Authors:**

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### **Author's response to reviews:**

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Colin Mathers

Editor, Population Health Metrics

Dear Dr. Mathers:

Thank you for your thoughtful and comprehensive review of The burden of war for the states: the association of per capita income and death in Vietnam and Iraq (MS 9547090832192001).

Your concerns about adjusting for the number of combatants from each state as well as causal inferences about war casualties lowering state per capita income are duly noted. First, all data used in this study are from public sources available on the Internet. While it would be preferable to know the state of origin of combatants in Vietnam and Iraq, such information if it exists is not readily available. Most likely this information does not exist for the Vietnam War which began over 40 years ago. It is possible that it exists for the more current conflict in Iraq, but obtaining it requires resources that we do not have. The best that can be done is to use state population as a proxy for the number of combatants from each state. Of course there is potential bias in that poorer states are more likely to have their residents join the military. This is noted in the revised manuscript.

It was not my intent to infer that combat deaths resulted in lower state per capita income. As you indicate, this is highly unlikely. Material that implies this has been removed from the paper. In addition the title of the paper has been changed to The association of state per capita income and military service deaths in the Vietnam and Iraq wars.

I thank the reviewers for their insightful comments and have done my best to

address them, but most likely the responses will not be adequate, given the limitations of the data sources. The fact that combat casualties are unequally distributed across individuals and states may seem obvious, but needs to be formally documented. To follow is a point by point consideration of the reviewers' comments.

Again thank you for your consideration of the paper and for making Population Health Metrics such a valuable resource.

Sincerely,

Charles Maynard

Research Professor

Response to Reviewer 1

1. The very low number of deaths in women in the Vietnam War seems reasonable given that the war was fought in part by young men who either volunteered or were drafted. During the Vietnam era, women were not drafted and few if any women served in combat areas. A possible exception to this was that nurses provided medical care in MASH units located in forward combat areas. We don't know the ranks of the 8 women who died in Vietnam. Moreover, we have no way of verifying the accuracy of this information, which is provided by the United States National Archives. The situation in Iraq is quite different from Vietnam in that women serve in combat zones. The Iraq conflict has been described as a "frontless war" and women and men are both subject to the same random bombings that are responsible for many of this war's casualties.

2. We agree that knowing combatant's state of residence would be better, but unfortunately that information either does not exist or is very difficult to obtain. The best we can do is use the state population as a proxy for the number of combatants. This has been stated on page 5 of the revised paper. For Iraq, the ratio of combatant deaths to state population ages 18 thru 49 was calculated; the association between the ratio and state per capita income was -0.55, quit similar to the -0.52 reported in the paper.

3. All material indicating a causal association between war deaths and per capita income has been removed from the paper. The title has also been changed.

4. 1999 data were used because this was the latest year for which data were available (please see page 3 of the revised paper).

5. More details about the sources of mortality data are provided on page 3.

6. Hostile deaths refer to those personnel who were killed in action, died of wounds, missing in action, or died in captivity. (please see page 3 of the revised paper).

7. Labels are included for both figures.

Thank you for your thoughtful questions.