



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
**SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION
AND RESPONSE OFFICE**



FISCAL YEAR 2017 ANNUAL REPORT ON SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE MILITARY

APRIL 2018

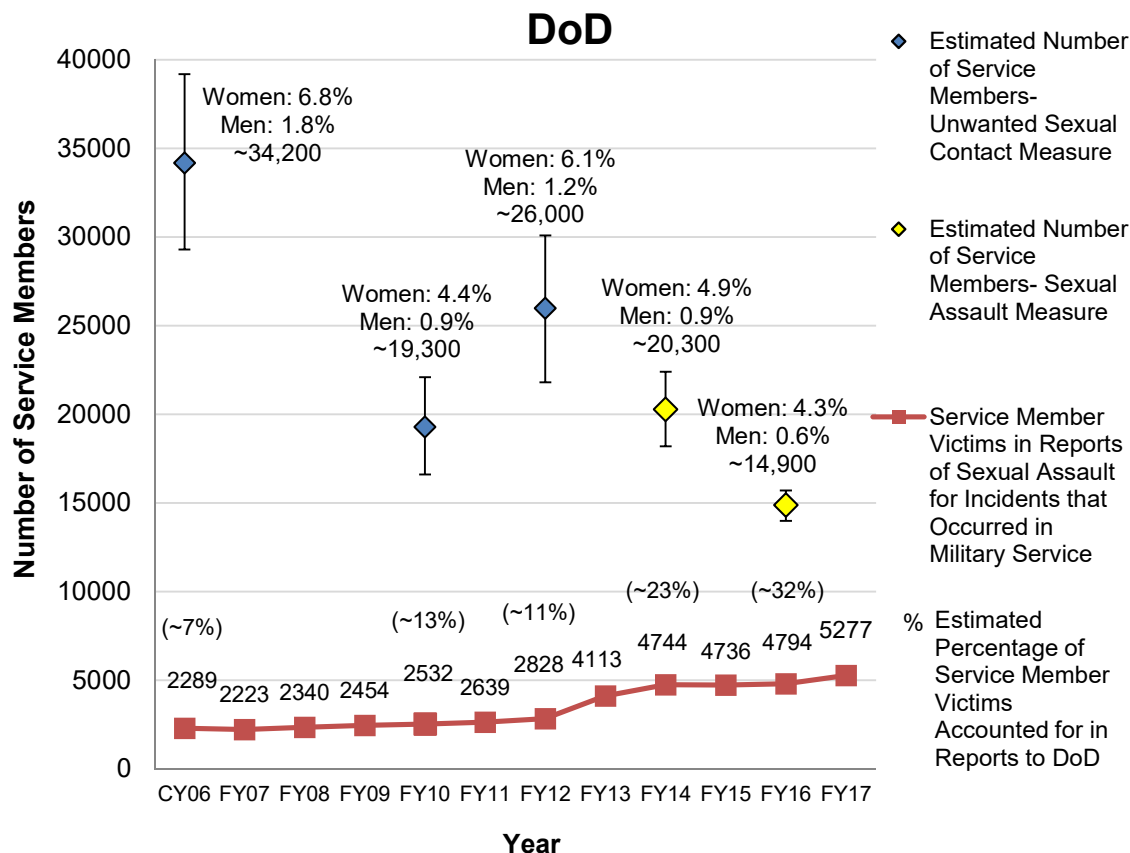
Background

- Section 1631 of the Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2011 (Public Law 111-383) requires the Secretary of Defense to submit to Congress an annual report on sexual assaults involving Service members of the Armed Forces during the preceding year.
- The Department of Defense (DoD) *Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military* fulfills the NDAA requirement and discusses significant actions taken by the Department to prevent and respond to sexual assault and information provided by the following focus groups and surveys:
 - *2017 Military Service Gender Relations Focus Groups*;
 - *2017 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Reserve Component Members*; and
 - *2016 - 2017 Military Investigation and Justice Experience Survey*.

Top Line Results

- **Sexual assault reports increased by 9.7 percent**
 - The Military Services received 6,769 reports of sexual assault involving Service members as either victims or subjects in FY17, representing a 9.7 percent increase over the 6,172 reports made in FY16.
 - Of the 5,864 Service member victims, 10 percent made a report for incidents that occurred prior to them entering military service.
 - With sexual assault being a significantly underreported crime, a higher proportion of reporting is an indicator that victims continue to gain confidence in the sexual assault prevention and response and military justice systems, especially when increased reporting is paired with decreased sexual assault prevalence (occurrence).
 - Since FY12, sexual assault reporting has increased by over 88 percent within the Department, while prevalence has decreased by nearly 45 percent for the same period.
 - Taken together, increased reporting and decreased prevalence are strong evidence that the Department is making consistent progress toward the elimination of this crime from the military. The graph below reflects prevalence vs. reporting since 2006.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office



- **Restricted Reports converted at a higher rate**
 - Of the 2,196 Restricted Reports received in FY17, 537 (or 24 percent) later converted to Unrestricted Reports, leaving 1,659 reports remaining Restricted at the end of the year. The FY17 conversion rate is three percent higher than last year.
 - A higher proportion of victims converting their reports from Restricted to Unrestricted may also be an indicator that victims are continuing to gain confidence in the sexual assault response process and military justice system.
- **About two-thirds of cases completed in 2017 received command action**
 - This year, the Department had sufficient evidence to take disciplinary action in 62 percent of the cases of accused Service members within its legal authority.
 - Disciplinary action was not possible for the remaining 38 percent of cases due to evidentiary or other factors, such as insufficient evidence of an offense to prosecute, a victim declining to participate in the justice proceedings, or other reasons.

Focus Group and Survey Findings

- **Active Duty Focus Group feedback reflects progress and opportunities for improvement**
 - All levels of leadership play an integral role in preventing sexual assault and sexual harassment by modeling and encouraging positive behaviors. Participants with greater time in service also perceived that their leaders have made sexual assault a greater priority in recent years;
 - The military provides a supportive environment for reporting sexual assault or sexual harassment, but further efforts are required to address negative perceptions about training and other aspects of the program; and
 - Confusion remains about which behaviors constitute sexual harassment. However, participants stated that behaviors previously minimized, such as crude comments and inappropriate jokes, are now taken seriously.
- **Service members endorsed high levels of satisfaction with support services**
 - Responses from the *2016-2017 Military Investigation and Justice Experience Survey* documented high levels of satisfaction with the services provided by Special Victims' Counsel / Victims' Legal Counsel, Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, and Victim Advocates.
 - Seventy-three percent of respondents recommended that other Service members report their sexual assault.
 - About 40 percent of respondents indicated experiencing negative behaviors consistent with some form of retaliation associated with reporting sexual assault.

Way Forward

The Department will emphasize the following initiatives in FY18 to further its sexual assault prevention and response efforts in support of the needs of Service members:

- Focus prevention efforts through the development of the *Prevention Plan of Action*;
- Expand response initiatives by implementing the *Plan to Prevent and Respond to the Sexual Assault of Military Men*;
- Execute the tasks outlined in the *DoD Retaliation Prevention and Response Strategy Implementation Plan*; and
- Update the estimate of past-year experience of sexual assault and sexual harassment using the *2018 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Component Members*.