

DOD SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

FACT SHEET: DMDC SURVEY

Background:

- The Department uses findings from the *Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members (WGRA)* as a source of information to evaluate sexual harassment and sexual assault prevention and response programs and to assess the gender-relations environment in the active duty force.
- The *WGRA* survey assesses the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment in the active duty force.
- The *WGRA* is conducted by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC).

Survey Methodology:

- DMDC subscribes to the survey methodology best practices promoted by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR). The techniques used by DMDC are those commonly used by other organizations that conduct surveys, such as the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Gallup.
- Ultimately, the accuracy of a survey is most dependent on whether the sample it uses is randomly drawn and representative of the population it is studying.
- DMDC designs probability random samples from the population in which inferences and conclusions are to be made. Once data collection ends, results are weighted to reflect the population of interest allowing the researcher to make statements generalizable to the population.
- Increasing the size of a probability sample will increase the precision associated with the estimates.
- Non-probability sampling methods, such as convenience and judgment samples, are not considered accepted methods since they do not provide any measures of precision associated with the estimates (margins of error) and findings cannot be generalized to the population (findings can only be generalized to those who took the survey).
- It is universally accepted by experts that survey results can accurately represent the views of a large population by surveying only a few thousand respondents.
 - In election polling and other public opinion research, the samples used are typically only 2,000 or less, and accurately represent estimates of the U.S. voting population as a whole.

2012 WGRA Survey Methodology:

- In 2012, the *WGRA* survey requested confidential feedback from more than 108,000 active duty members and more than 24,000 responses were provided. The overall weighted response rate was 24%.
- The Department's large sample allows it to "drill down" to certain smaller demographic sections (gender, rank, Service, deployment status, etc.) of the military population.
- The DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) uses the survey's estimated prevalence rates to approximate the scope of the sexual assault problem in military. This can be done because the survey's scientific survey methodology allows results from survey respondents to be generalized back to the active duty population -- standard practice in survey research.

2012 WGRA Survey Findings:

- For active duty women, past-year prevalence of unwanted sexual contact increased significantly, from 4.4 percent in 2010 to 6.1 percent in 2012.
- For active duty men, there was no statistically significant change in the past-year prevalence of unwanted sexual contact (0.9 percent in 2010 versus 1.2 percent in 2012).
- Using this methodology, it is estimated that 26,000 active duty members (out of 1.4 million) experienced some form of unwanted sexual contact in the year prior to being surveyed.

Why is the ‘Unwanted Sexual Contact’ used for the survey instead of the actual categories of crimes found in the Uniform Code of Military Justice?

- The term ‘unwanted sexual contact’ and its definition was created with the assistance of DoD attorneys to help laymen taking the survey better relate their experience of the several types of sexual assault addressed by military law and the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program.
- The vast majority of active duty members would not know the difference between the crimes of "Sexual Assault", "Aggravated Sexual Contact", or "Forcible Sodomy" described in Articles 120 and 125, UCMJ. As a result, the term ‘unwanted sexual contact’ was created so that respondents could read the definition provided and readily understand the kinds of behavior covered by the survey.
- There are three broad categories of ‘unwanted sexual contact’:
 - Penetration of any orifice,
 - Attempted Penetration and
 - Unwanted Sexual Touching (without penetration).
- While these unwanted behaviors are analogous to UCMJ offenses, they are not meant to be exact matches. Laymen cannot and do not consider the complex legal elements of a crime when being victimized by an offender. Consequently, forcing a layman to accurately categorize which offense they experienced would not be productive.
- The terms, questions, and definitions of ‘unwanted sexual contact’ have been consistent throughout all of the WGRA surveys since 2006.

Does the fluctuation in the Department’s estimated total of active duty members affect survey accuracy?

- Some say the Department’s estimated total of active duty members fluctuates too much from year to year for survey data to be accurate -- and cite the increased rates of unwanted sexual contact for active duty women in 2012.
- While the unwanted sexual contact rate for active duty women declined in 2010 and then increased in 2012, there is no statistical change among active duty men. Additionally, DMDC conducted a survey of Reserve component members in 2012 and found no statistical change in the unwanted sexual contact rate for men or women compared to 2008. The WGRA also includes a measure of sexual harassment (and all items that comprise sexual harassment), which did not see a statistical change in rates between 2010 and 2012.
- If there were a methodological issue with the survey resulting in an artificial inflation of estimates, we would expect to find this kind of fluctuation across the board - not just with active duty women. Again, this fluctuation in prevalence rate did not occur with men or with either gender in the Reserve Component survey.