



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



## **JUST THE FACTS: UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE MILITARY**

*AS OF NOVEMBER 28, 2017*

**Fact: Both military women and men experience sexual assault.**

Sexual assault is a gender neutral crime in the Armed Services. The most recent Workplace and Gender Relations Survey for Active Duty estimates that about 8,600 women and 6,300 men indicated experiencing some kind of sexual assault in Fiscal Year 2016.

**Fact: There were nearly 6,200 reports of sexual assault in FY16.**

Under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, the term “sexual assault” refers to the full range sexual contact crimes between adults. These crimes can be penetrating, contact, or attempted offenses, ranging from rape to sexual touching. Of the nearly 4,600 Unrestricted Reports in FY16, 45% were penetrating crimes, 43% were contact crimes and 2% were attempts. 10% did not have offense data at the time of report<sup>1</sup>. The remaining 1,600 reports came from Service members and other eligible persons who chose to keep their report Restricted. This means that the individual made a confidential report that allowed them to seek assistance without participating in an investigation or military justice action.

**Fact: Most victims know their perpetrator.**

DoD research indicates that military members are more likely to be assaulted by another military member who is a peer or near peer in age and rank. According to the Workplace and Gender Relations Survey for Active Duty, 58% of women and 43% of men indicated that their offender was a friend or an acquaintance. Only 16% of women and 19% of men said the offender was a stranger.<sup>2</sup>

**Fact: Sexual assault has both physical and emotional effects.**

Almost half of sexual assaults are contact crimes. For the vast majority of Service members, these types of incidents do not leave visible injuries. If injuries are indeed present, they often heal quickly. A number of behavioral symptoms stemming from the incident may arise days or even weeks later. Both men and women can experience depression, intimacy issues, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, substance abuse, anger, shame, embarrassment, and guilt. Even penetrative crimes do not always leave physical signs on the body.

**Fact: Victims have many options for reporting a sexual assault and are not required to report the matter to their commander.**

A victim may make a confidential Restricted Report to a Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, SAPR Victim Advocate, or healthcare provider if they do not want to report to their commander

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Defense (2016). Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2016 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military. Department of Defense: Washington, D.C.

[http://sapr.mil/public/docs/reports/FY16\\_Annual/FY16\\_SAPRO\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](http://sapr.mil/public/docs/reports/FY16_Annual/FY16_SAPRO_Annual_Report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Department of Defense (2016). Office of People Analytics 2016 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members Overview Report. Department of Defense: Washington, D.C.

[http://sapr.mil/public/docs/reports/FY16\\_Annual/Annex\\_1\\_2016\\_WGRA\\_Report.pdf](http://sapr.mil/public/docs/reports/FY16_Annual/Annex_1_2016_WGRA_Report.pdf)

or law enforcement. A victim may also make an Unrestricted Report to receive care and participate in an investigation and/or military justice action. Service members' commanders are notified about Unrestricted Reports so that they may address member safety and keep them informed throughout the investigation and justice processes.

**Fact: The Department of Defense provides a wide range of services for those who have experienced sexual assault.**

The DoD Safe Helpline provides confidential, immediate support 24/7 worldwide (Number? Website?). Service members may also seek information from SAPR personnel, including SARCs, SAPR VAs, and special victims counsel/victims legal counsel (attorneys that represent victimized Service members throughout the reporting and justice process).

**Fact: Commanders take action to hold offenders appropriately accountable.**

In FY16, commanders had sufficient evidence to take disciplinary action on the majority of sexual assault allegations presented to them. When a sexual assault charge was supported by the evidence, 59% of cases went to court martial in FY16, while 40% went to non-judicial punishment, other adverse action, or discharge. Additionally, military courts found sufficient evidence for a conviction in 67% of cases where at least one sexual assault charge was made.<sup>3</sup> Most convicted offenders received four kinds of punishment: confinement, forfeitures of pay, reduction in rank, and a punitive discharge.

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Defense (2016). Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2016 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military. Department of Defense: Washington, D.C.  
[http://sapr.mil/public/docs/reports/FY16\\_Annual/FY16\\_SAPRO\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](http://sapr.mil/public/docs/reports/FY16_Annual/FY16_SAPRO_Annual_Report.pdf)