



# FACTS ON UNITED STATES MILITARY SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Statistics from the 2016 – 2020 DoD SAPRO Reports and their appendices/annexes, unless otherwise noted.  
<https://www.sapr.mil/reports>  
Updated May 2021

## Sexual Violence Remains Pervasive

- In FY18, **20,500** service members were sexually assaulted or raped including 13,000 women and 7,500 men. The rate of sexual assault and rape **jumped by almost 40%** from FY16 to FY18, and for women the rate increased by over 50% to the **highest level since 2006**.
- Of **women** who reported a penetrative sexual assault, **59%** were assaulted by someone with a **higher rank than them**, and **24%** were assaulted by someone in their **chain of command**.

## Vast Majority of Cases Go Un-Reported

- **76.1%** of victims did **not** report the crime in FY18.

## Retaliation Is the Norm

- **66%** of servicemembers who reported retaliation after filing a sexual assault complaint were **women**.
- **73%** of retaliation reports alleged that retaliators were in the reporter's chain of command.
- A **third** of victims are discharged after reporting, typically **within 7 months** of making a report.<sup>i</sup>
- Victims received **harsher discharges**, with 24% separated under less than fully honorable conditions, compared to 15% of all service members.<sup>ii</sup>

## Low Trust and Satisfaction in System

- In FY18, over **1 in 4** victims who did not report feared retaliation from their command or coworkers.
- Nearly **1 in 3** victims who did not report feared the process would be unfair or nothing would be done.
- **Less than half of female survivors felt well supported by their chain of command**.

## Conviction and Prosecution Rates

- Despite a **23%** increase in unrestricted sexual assault reports since 2015, **convictions** have plummeted by almost **80%** in the same timeframe.
- In FY20, of the **5,640 unrestricted reports** of sexual assault, 225 (**4.0%**) cases were tried by court

martial, and 50 (**0.8%**) offenders were **convicted of a nonconsensual sex offense**.

## High Demand for VA Care

- **Over 1,325,000** outpatient visits took place at the VA for Military Sexual Trauma (MST)-related care in FY17, a **1.3% increase** from FY15.<sup>iii</sup>
- Approximately **38% of female** and **4% of male** military personnel and veterans have experienced MST.<sup>iv</sup>
- **40%** of women homeless veterans have faced MST.<sup>v</sup> Veterans with an MST history are **over twice as likely** to experience homelessness.

## Sexual Harassment is Alarming High

- **6.3%** active duty men and **24.2%** active duty women were **sexually harassed** in FY18.
- **1 in 5 women** who experienced **sexual harassment** were also **sexually assaulted**.
- DoD concluded that **“sexual harassment is a leading factor affecting the unit climate on sexual assault.”**
- **The majority** of victims were harassed by someone in their chain of command.
- 1,021 formal sexual harassment complaints were made in FY19, a 10% increase from FY18.

## Good Order and Discipline at Risk

- Service members who are sexually harassed are at **significantly greater risk** of sexual assault.
- **More than 1 in 4** survivors of either sexual assault or sexual harassment/discrimination took steps to leave the military as a result.

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*Definitions: Sexual assault in the survey corresponds to crimes defined by Uniform Code of Justice (UCMJ) Article 120 (rape & sexual assault) and Article 80 (attempts). Sexual harassment is defined in federal law and military regulations and includes a pervasive and severe sexually hostile work environment that interferes with the ability to do one's job and/or sexual quid pro quo. Gender discrimination, also defined in law and regulations, refers to gender-based mistreatment that results in harm to one's career.*

<sup>i</sup> Department of Defense (DoD) Inspector General, *Evaluation of the Separation of Service Members Who Made a Report of Sexual Assault* (2016). <https://media.defense.gov/2016/May/09/2001714241/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2016-088.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> DoD IG report; Veterans Legal Clinic, Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School, *Underserved: How the VA Wrongfully Excludes Veterans with Bad Paper* (2016). <https://www.vetsprobono.org/library/item.655363>. Underserved\_How\_the\_VA\_Wrongfully\_Excludes\_Veterans\_with\_Bad\_Paper.

<sup>iii</sup> Department of Veterans Affairs, *VA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Guidebook* (2018).

<sup>iv</sup> L Wilson, “The Prevalence of Military Sexual Trauma: A Meta-Analysis,” *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* (2016).

<sup>v</sup> J Pavao, JA Turchik, JK Hyun, et al., “Military Sexual Trauma Among Homeless Veterans,” *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 28 Suppl 2 (2013).