



PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

## UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

APR 28 2020

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Section 1631 of the Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 (Public Law 111-383) requires the Secretary of Defense to submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and House of Representatives an annual report on sexual assaults involving members of the Armed Forces during the preceding year, including reports from each of the Military Departments.

The enclosed "Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military" presents statistics and analysis of reports of sexual assault during FY 2019 and discusses policy and program improvements to the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program of the Department. The numerical data and statistics contained in this report fulfill reporting requirements outlined in the NDAA's for FYs 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018, and 2019.

This year's Annual Report is informed by sexual assault reporting data, feedback from focus groups with Service members and first responders, and Annual Reports from the Military Services and National Guard Bureau on their prevention and response programs. This year's report illustrates the Department's efforts to address sexual assault by focusing on prevention, addressing problematic culture, preparing and equipping leaders at all levels, and promoting new and existing reporting options. Per Congressional requirement, the Department did not conduct a survey of the active force and, therefore, does not have an estimate of the number of sexual assaults that occurred in the past year within the active duty. Therefore, while the number of official sexual assault reports received by the Department increased by three percent this year, we cannot characterize this increase as a positive or negative trend.

Thank you for your continued support of our Service members. I am sending an identical letter to the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew P. Donovan", is positioned above the printed name.

Matthew P. Donovan

Enclosure:  
As stated



PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

**UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**  
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

APR 28 2020

The Honorable William M. "Mac" Thornberry  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Thornberry:

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## UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

APR 28 2020

The Honorable James M. Inhofe  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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PERSONNEL AND  
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**UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**  
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

APR 28 2020

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reed:

Section 1631 of the Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 (Public Law 111-383) requires the Secretary of Defense to submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and House of Representatives an annual report on sexual assaults involving members of the Armed Forces during the preceding year, including reports from each of the Military Departments.

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Matthew P. Donovan

Enclosure:  
As stated



# Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military

Fiscal Year 2019





*Department of Defense  
Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military  
Fiscal Year 2019*

The estimated cost of this report for the Department of Defense is approximately \$2,367,000 for the 2019 Fiscal Year. This includes \$1,863,000 in expenses and \$504,000 in labor.

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#### REPORTING REQUIREMENT

- Congress requires the Department to provide an annual report on sexual assaults involving members of the United States Armed Forces. This report satisfies that requirement.
- The Department uses the phrase “sexual assault” to refer to a range of crimes, including rape, sexual assault, forcible sodomy, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, and attempts to commit these offenses, as defined by the Uniform Code of Military Justice.
- **No sexual assault prevalence survey for the active force was required or conducted this year.**

#### THIS YEAR’S FINDINGS:

- Reports of sexual assault made to the DOD increased by 3 percent; however, this cannot be interpreted as an increase in sexual assault prevalence among the active duty force because a prevalence study was not conducted this year.
- Focus Groups with junior enlisted members and first responders indicated that the Department’s 2019 initiatives targeted the right personnel and activities to drive change.
- The CATCH A Serial Offender Program launched in August 2019, with Department-wide publicity and participation thereafter.

## Executive Summary

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The Department of Defense continues to address sexual assault comprehensively. The Department’s approach focuses on prevention by addressing problematic culture and preparing leaders at all levels to promote healthy unit climates. In addition, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program offers reporting options, including confidential venues, that respect victims’ individual situations and desired approach to recovery.

This year’s Annual Report provides an update on the Department’s efforts to combat sexual assault and harassment in the military force, and includes sexual assault reporting information, feedback from focus groups, and updates on efforts to prevent and respond to sexual assault in Fiscal Year 2019 (October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019).

## Current State and Enduring Actions

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The Department of Defense strives to advance a military culture free from sexual assault. The Department made progress reducing sexual assault and increasing help-seeking and reporting between 2006 and 2016. However, the Fiscal Year 2018 scientific survey of the active force found that the estimated past-year prevalence (number of Service members indicating an experience) of sexual assault increased for women, primarily those aged 17 to 24. Estimated prevalence for men remained unchanged.

In May 2019, the then-acting Secretary of Defense issued a “Call to Action” memorandum to focus Department actions on addressing sexual assault and related risk factors, such as sexual harassment, workplace incivility, and gender discrimination. The “Call to Action” memorandum directed the Department and Military Services to:

- Provide commanders with improved means to assess and address risk factors in military units
- Prepare new leaders and first-line supervisors to act upon misconduct that heightens risk
- Implement the Catch a Serial Offender Program (CATCH) to help address barriers to reporting sexual assault



**THIS YEAR'S FINDINGS  
(CONTINUED):**

- Assessment of the Department and Service headquarters' primary prevention capacities found similar strengths and challenges. Most strengths included leadership support and collaborative relationships to enhance ongoing prevention activities. Challenges included not having a fully empowered workforce and a common set of metrics to assess prevention effectiveness.

**WAY FORWARD FOR FISCAL  
YEAR 2020:**

- Many actions directed in 2019 will continue, including:
  - The Services will update their junior leader education and training efforts with learning objectives developed collaboratively with the Department.
  - New climate survey content will begin fielding.
  - CATCH Program procedures will be assessed and updated, as needed.
- New actions include:
  - Promoting the Department of Defense Safe Helpline and identifying other ways this service can support the needs of victims wanting to make reports of sexual assault.
  - Piloting prevention workforce training sessions.
  - Developing a cross-cutting prevention policy.

- Implement Sexual Assault Accountability and Investigation Task Force recommendations to improve accountability, comprehensive support to victims, and protection of rights for both the victim and the accused
- Execute the Sexual Assault Prevention Plan of Action to ensure initiatives to reduce and stop sexual assault have the best chance for success

## Fiscal Year 2019 Reporting Requirements

Congress requires the Department to provide an Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military by April 30 each year. This report covers sexual assault allegations made during Fiscal Year 2019. Enclosed with this report are supplementary reports from the Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau. This report also includes feedback from 61 focus groups conducted with 493 active duty members and first responders held at 8 installations throughout the continental United States. First responder participants included civilian and active duty personnel who are first responders to sexual assault, including Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Victim Advocates, healthcare personnel, law enforcement, Military Criminal Investigative Organizations, judge advocates, and chaplains. Focus group results provided in the report are not generalizable to the full population of the Military. Themes should be considered the opinions of focus group participants only and not those of all Service members. Per Congressional mandates, the Department did not conduct an active duty sexual assault prevalence survey this year. Lastly, findings from a scientific survey of the Reserve Component are included.

## Fiscal Year 2019 Focus Areas

The Fiscal Year 2019 report serves as the Department's assessment of the Military Services' response and prevention systems from October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019. This report focuses on strengths and challenges in the Military Services' sexual assault response and prevention systems in the following areas:

- Unit Climate
- Sexual Assault Reporting
- Victim Assistance
- Efforts to Reduce and Stop Sexual Assault

## Unit Climate

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The Department focuses on military climate and culture because over a decade of research, including Departmental surveys, concludes that respectful and healthy workplace climates reduce the risk of sexual assault.

This year's focus group feedback indicates that military culture is heading in the right direction, albeit slowly. Service member participants believed senior leaders actively drove change in their units. Previously admissible "locker room" behaviors face greater scrutiny today, in part due to younger Service members being more aware of what constitutes inappropriate behavior. Participants indicated that generational differences may impact progress in enhancing healthy workplace climates.

Male-dominated cultural norms are slowly changing, giving way to more inclusive attitudes. However, the appropriate role for women in the military, occupational differences in women's acceptance, and cynicism about exceptions to standards based on biological differences remain considerable points of contention. Female participants also indicated that some traditionally male occupations are not as supportive as others that tend to include a greater mix of the sexes. Women also indicated that these challenges vary by unit; moving to units with better climates allow them to do much better professionally.

Participant feedback also indicated the potential of mid-level enlisted Service members (i.e., grades E4 to E6) to influence the behavior of younger Service members. Enlisted members in these grades are at a relatable age to younger members and are believed to exemplify desired standards of proficiency, knowledge, and effectiveness. Participants believed these individuals (i.e., grades E4 to E6) are uniquely positioned to lead young enlisted members, due to their frequent workplace interaction.

### Implications and Fiscal Year 2019 Actions

This year's focus group feedback suggests that the Department's actions to better prepare new enlisted leaders and officers are accurately targeted at the correct grades. This past year, the Department facilitated the Junior Leader Working Group, which consisted of members from the Military Services, National Guard, the Defense Suicide Prevention Office and the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. This group identified the relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to prepare junior leaders to encourage a positive workplace climate and understand their role in sexual assault and harassment prevention and response.

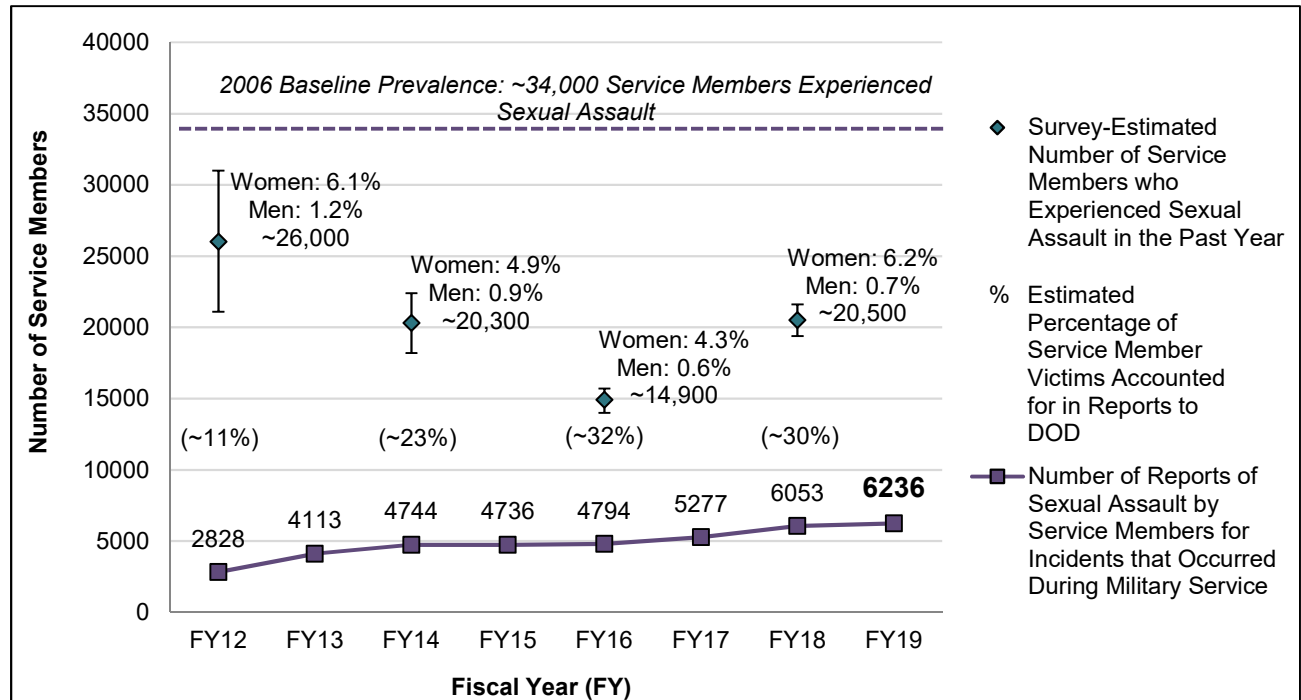
The Department also worked to revise its approach to climate assessments. This new approach will support prevention decision-making and enhance both officer and enlisted leaders' ability to identify and address conditions that increase risk for sexual assault, such as unhealthy workplace climates. The revised approach will also render a suite of actions to consider and tools to employ when addressing workplace challenges.

## Sexual Assault Reporting

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The Department encourages greater reporting to drive more help-seeking by Service members and hold alleged offenders appropriately accountable.

The number of sexual assault reports by Service members increased by 3 percent in Fiscal Year 2019, compared to Fiscal Year 2018. The Services received 6,236 reports in Fiscal Year 2019 from Service members indicating they experienced a sexual assault, up from 6,053 in Fiscal Year 2018 (see Exhibit 1). The Department cannot characterize this increase in terms of a reporting rate, as a prevalence survey was not conducted this year. Results from the next active duty survey will provide context to the increase in reports.



**Exhibit 1. Active Duty Estimated Biennial Prevalence Compared to Annual Reporting of Sexual Assault**

The Military Services received a total of 7,825 reports of sexual assault involving Service members as either victims or subjects, a 3 percent increase from the 7,623 reports received in Fiscal Year 2018. In addition to the 6,236 Service member reports described previously, the Department received 937 reports from United States civilians and foreign nationals who alleged a sexual assault by a Service member, and 652 reports from Service members who sought assistance for a sexual assault that occurred prior to military Service.

Focus group participants indicated that Service members view their unit commanders as the primary drivers behind encouraging reporting, ensuring training within the unit, and providing perspective on why sexual assault is a readiness issue. Participants concluded that when commanders do not emphasize the importance of the sexual assault program, the unit’s collective emphasis falters.

Focus group data revealed that first responders perceived an increase in male victim reporting. They also believed men’s sexual assault cases are taken more seriously now by all than in years past. First responders also described barriers that pose a challenge to reporting for Service members, despite recent increases in sexual assault reports. Some participants noted that they believe victims continue to have concerns regarding confidentiality breaches and indicated that third-party disclosures sometimes discourage victims from participating in the reporting process.

## Implications and Fiscal Year 2019 Actions

In August 2019, the Department launched CATCH, allowing Service members making Restricted Reports to confidentially provide information about the alleged offender and incident. If investigators discover a potential match to other reported incidents, members are notified and provided an opportunity to convert their report from Restricted to Unrestricted and participate in the military justice process. Since launch of the program in August 2019, and through the time of this report's publication in April 2020, there have been 239 victim reports in the CATCH program and 5 matches. This program serves to address Service member victims' desire for confidentiality while allowing the potential for justice system participation. To encourage ongoing participation in CATCH, the Department will review and update its procedures as needed.

The Department will also address some victims' confidentiality concerns in a report directed by the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act. The report will address the feasibility of a policy that enhances and preserves the Restricted Reporting option for adult sexual assault victims. Such a policy would allow a victim the ability to maintain confidential reporting, such as when a third party discloses an incident of sexual assault against the wishes of a victim.

## Victim Assistance

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The Department enacts policies to promote high-quality services and support to military victims of sexual assault that are intended to strengthen resiliency and instill confidence and trust in the reporting process.

Focus groups with first responders provided mixed perspectives on sexual assault prevention and response staff and offices. Understanding that victim experiences and needs differ, the Department provides a variety of reporting options, as well as civilian and military victim advocates to support them in recovery. Participants believed some Service members preferred civilian sexual assault advocate staff as a trustworthy and confidential source of information outside of the chain of command. Participants noted that the collateral duty role of some Victim Advocates may influence their availability to assist victims, obtain needed experience, and display appropriate professionalism in their support.

First responder participants also perceived an increase in anonymous calls for help, suggesting that Service members may be uncertain of the reporting and assistance process, but were active in reaching out to find out more. Some participants noted that assistance-seeking behaviors may still be deterred by survivors' concern for being punished for collateral offenses, by limits to needed confidentiality, and by a lack of a hotline that takes sexual assault reports.

## Implications and Fiscal Year 2019 Actions

In 2019, the Department and Military Services collaborated on the development of an assessment tool to improve baseline sexual assault advocacy skills. In addition, the Department revised its sexual assault advocate certification policy (published in February 2020) to streamline the hiring and certification of qualified personnel to better support Service members. The Department is also working on a report directed by the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act to address the feasibility of a collateral misconduct immunity policy. Finally, it will continue to promote the Department of Defense Safe Helpline and identify other ways this service can support the needs of victims wanting to make reports of sexual assault.

## Efforts to Reduce and Stop Sexual Assault

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The Department works to prevent sexual assault to reduce the crime's toll on human lives, improve mission readiness, enhance recruitment and retention, and strengthen international alliances.

The Department established a prevention framework, the Prevention Plan of Action, to advance efforts to reduce and stop sexual assault. The plan reflects agreement between the Department, Military Services, and National Guard Bureau on necessary steps to advance primary prevention. In recognition that each Military Service has its own unique organizational culture, structure, and needs, the plan outlines the process and organizational, system-level factors that facilitate prevention, which can be tailored to each organization.

In the first phase of executing the Prevention Plan of Action, the Department, Military Services, and National Guard Bureau conducted a self-assessment of their headquarters' prevention capabilities. The self-assessment highlighted strengths in leadership support and collaborative relationships, as well as gaps in an equipped and empowered prevention workforce and metrics that assess the quality implementation and effectiveness of prevention activities.

Focus group participants indicated that most current prevention activities primarily reflect leaderships' efforts to emphasize the importance of stopping sexual assault, as well as some kind of annual training. Participants thought that prevention training should be more relatable and tailored to Service members' needs and developmental stage. Participants believed Service members desired content on healthy relationships and consent, more responsible alcohol use, and fully understanding behaviors that constitute sexual harassment.

### Implications and Fiscal Year 2019 Actions

In addition to the Prevention Plan of Action Phase I Self Assessments, the Department continued demonstration projects at ten military sites that use a proven process to enhance each site's ability to successfully plan, implement, and evaluate prevention activities. It also continued its agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for it to provide sexual assault prevention technical assistance and professional development to the Department, Military Service, and National Guard prevention workforce.

The Department and Military Services also started building action plans to address personnel, infrastructure, and resourcing gaps identified in Phase I. The Department will develop prevention workforce curricula aligned with Service needs and pilot two training events before the end of December 2020. The Department of Defense Prevention Collaboration Forum, chartered in February 2020, will also provide leadership on cross-cutting approaches to preventing sexual violence, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and self-harm.

### Way Forward

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The Department continues to address sexual assault holistically with a focus on prevention, addressing problematic culture, improving the skills of leaders at all levels, and evaluating ways to make reporting of sexual assault easier for victims.

Sexual harassment and other misconduct remain a persistent challenge. However, this year's focus group data shows that mid-level enlisted Service members are well-positioned to

influence our youngest Service members and assist in advancing a culture of respect. To this end, the Department is continuing its culture-focused efforts as follows:

- The Junior Leader Working Group identified the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for new leaders and first-line supervisors to address climate issues that impact the occurrence of sexual assault and sexual harassment. The Services are now identifying how to incorporate or enhance these learning objectives in their education and training efforts.
- The Office of People Analytics is shepherding the ongoing climate survey update effort by fielding new survey content to better assess unit strengths and challenges and provide actionable information to leaders at all levels.

While barriers remain, the Department continually seeks new and revised approaches to encourage greater reporting. To this end:

- Procedures for the CATCH Program are under collaborative review by the Department and Services, with the intent to identify modifications with the potential to encourage greater participation.
- The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office has been collaborating with Service representatives to identify the feasibility of preserving the Restricted Reporting option under specific disclosure circumstances. A report to Congress on this topic is due in June 2020.

Despite Service member satisfaction with support services, focus group data shows additional steps could be taken to increase help-seeking, support, and connection to assistance. To this end:

- The Department will promote the Department of Defense Safe Helpline and continue to identify additional methods to support victims wanting to report and obtain recovery services.
- The Department issued revised expedited transfer processes in February 2020 to enhance victim safety measures, continuity of care, and include adult military dependents.
- The Department re-issued policy in February 2020 to streamline the hiring of qualified sexual assault advocate personnel.

Execution of the Prevention Plan of Action continues, which advances a systems-focused approach for the primary prevention of sexual assault. To this end:

- The Department is piloting prevention workforce training sessions as part of a collaborative curriculum development effort with the Military Services and National Guard Bureau.
- The Prevention Collaboration Forum received a charter on February 26, 2020 to lead the Department's cross-cutting efforts to prevent sexual assault and other behaviors that impact Service members and their families.
- The Office of Force Resiliency, in coordination with other Department and Military Service stakeholders, is developing a prevention policy to address risk factors known to influence the occurrence of sexual assault and other problematic behaviors.

Taken together, these efforts reflect the Department's continuing commitment to creating a culture of trust, respect, and inclusion, which is key to the Department being able to recruit

and retain a lethal force. The Department will continue its work to identify actions to further remove barriers to reporting, increase help-seeking behaviors, and codify prevention efforts into policy. Service members deserve to work and live in a culture of trust, respect, and inclusion. Effective prevention and response efforts also support the Department's need to remain contingency-ready, mission-focused, and closely connected to strategic allies and partnerships. As the nation faces one of its greatest public health challenges, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program's contributions to executing the National Defense Strategy could not be more important.

## Introduction

### Reporting Requirements

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The Department of Defense (DOD) annually assesses its programs that address sexual assault per Section 1631 of Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 (P.L. 111-383), as amended (10 U.S.C. 1561 note), Section 538 of the NDAA for FY18 (P.L. 115-91), and Section 481 of title 10, United States Code (U.S.C.).

### Report Contents

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The Department and Military Services invest significantly in activities to prevent and respond to sexual assault. The Department views these activities through the lens of two primary metrics:

- Estimated past-year prevalence of sexual assault of the active duty component. The desired state is to see a decreasing trend in estimated prevalence over time, meaning that fewer Service members experience sexual assault.
- Reporting of sexual assault to DOD authorities. The desired state is to see an increasing trend in the rate at which Service members make an Unrestricted or Restricted Report, meaning that a greater share of Service members who are sexually assaulted chose to officially report their experience.

Both measures rely on results from the *Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members (WGRA)*. This survey is administered in even-numbered Fiscal Years and was not conducted for this year's report.

Annual Reports for odd-numbered Fiscal Years, as is the case with this report, are informed by focus groups with active duty members, sexual assault reporting information, and other assessments of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) efforts by the Department, Military Services, and National Guard Bureau (NGB). Additional accomplishments, activities, and outreach conducted by the DOD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) can be found in Appendix A. Detailed statistical data and analysis on sexual assault allegations made during FY19 (October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2019) can be found in Appendices B, C, and D.

The DOD Safe Helpline supports SAPR programs by providing crisis intervention, support, and resources for members of the DOD community who have experienced sexual assault. A comprehensive report of FY19 data related to the Safe Helpline can be found in Appendix E. Military research finds that sexual assault and sexual harassment are interrelated problems. Appendix F contains data on formal and informal sexual harassment complaints

tracked by the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) in FY19. Data on sexual assault of a spouse or intimate partner and child sexual abuse is analyzed by the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) and can be found in Appendices G and H.

Military Department and NGB reports can be found in Enclosures 1, 2, 3, and 4. The Office of People Analytics (OPA) provided reports capturing results of active duty focus groups, and of the biennial survey of the Reserve Component. These reports are in Annexes 1 and 2.

## Report Focus Areas

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The FY19 report provides the Department's assessment of the Military Services' response and prevention systems from October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019. This year's report includes reporting and response data, efforts taken to advance SAPR systems, and feedback from focus groups with Service members and first responders.<sup>1</sup> It also contains reports from the Department, Military Services, and NGB on prevention and response programs, and findings from a scientific survey of the Reserve Component. This year's report focuses on strengths and challenges in the Military Services' sexual assault response and prevention systems in the following areas:

- Unit Climate
- Sexual Assault Reporting
- Victim Assistance
- Efforts to Reduce and Stop Sexual Assault

## Unit Climate

### Rationale: Respectful and Healthy Workplace Climates Reduce Risk of Sexual Assault

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Over a decade of Department research correlates the occurrence of sexual assault with military workplace climate. Most sexual assaults in the military occur between Service members that work and/or live in close proximity. When unit climates are tolerant of other forms of misconduct, risk of sexual assault increases. For this reason, the Department's approach to addressing sexual assault must always consider improving unit climate.

Last year's *2018 WGRA* found that most Service members work in relatively healthy workplace climates. However, for those indicating sexual harassment, gender discrimination, or hostility as part of their workplace, risk of sexual assault increased measurably. Estimated rates of sexual harassment and other forms of misconduct increased within the active duty in 2018 compared to 2016. In 2018, an estimated 24.2 percent of active duty women and an estimated 6.3 percent of active duty men indicated experiencing sexual harassment. This was a statistically significant increase for active duty women (estimated 21.4 percent in 2016) and men (estimated 5.7 percent in 2016). Active duty women who experienced sexual harassment were at three times greater risk for sexual assault than those who did not.

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<sup>1</sup> Focus group results provided in the report are not generalizable to the full population of the military. Themes should be considered the opinions of focus group participants only and not those of all Service members. First responder groups included civilian and active duty personnel who are first responders to sexual assault, including Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Victim Advocates, healthcare personnel, law enforcement, Military Criminal Investigative Organizations, judge advocates, and chaplains.



## This Year's Data

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### Reporting Information

#### *Service Members Filed More Formal Sexual Harassment Complaints*

In FY19, the Military Services received a total of 1,021 formal sexual harassment complaints, a 10 percent increase from complaints filed in FY18. Department policy promotes the chain of command as the primary and preferred channel for identifying and correcting sexually harassing behaviors. In conjunction with an appropriate command response, Department policy also encourages Service members to address behaviors perceived to be sexually harassing at the lowest interpersonal level. Service members may also elect to address what they believe to be offensive situations through an informal or formal complaint, or even an anonymous complaint. Given the variety of avenues available to address sexual harassment allegations, the total number of formal complaints does not reflect all the ways Service members may have chosen to address alleged behaviors they perceived to be sexually harassing.

### Focus Group Feedback

#### *Overall Military Culture Heading in Right Direction, Albeit Slowly*

This year's focus group participants indicated Service members believe senior leaders are actively driving change in the field. Previously tolerated "locker room" behaviors face greater scrutiny today, in part due to younger Service members' increased awareness of inappropriate behaviors. Active leadership engagement within units is necessary to communicate effectively and foster trust. Participants also reiterated the importance of correcting poor behavior before it becomes more egregious.

#### *Male-Dominated Culture Norms Slowly Giving Way*

Focus group participants indicated that generational differences may hinder progress toward healthier workplace climates. While the male-dominated workplace culture is slowly yielding to more inclusive attitudes, gender roles, occupational differences, and cynicism remain considerable points of contention. Men's and women's perceptions of gender roles within the military differ, which can have a negative impact on workplace and unit climate. Participants indicated that male peers may be less likely to recognize gender-based discrimination than female Service members. Men and women said that men may be more apt to police their language when female peers are present. Female Service members expressed that they are uncomfortable speaking up when they are the only women in the room, and when there is an absence of female leadership. Male focus group members perceived sex-based accommodations to physical fitness standards to be unpractical and unsafe, and that changes to these standards contributed to discrimination experienced by female Service members. Male participants also expressed that female Service members use gender for faster promotions and to avoid undesirable tasks or duties. Female participants perceived a demand to prove

#### **FY19 FOCUS GROUP METHODOLOGY**

This year, OPA conducted 61 focus groups at eight installations throughout the continental United States in the fall of 2019. A total of 493 active duty Service members and SAPR/SHARP responder staff participated in the 2019 focus groups. These groups targeted feedback from young Service members and, for the first time, included first responders. Using a focus group guide and protocol, moderators led the discussions, which covered topics about workplace culture, locations where Service members are at increased risk of sexual assault and/or sexual harassment, and insights on how Service leadership and SAPR/SHARP can better support sexual assault prevention efforts.

themselves repeatedly in the military setting. They also must advocate for fair treatment, despite feeling pressured to conform to “male culture.”

### *Sexual Harassment Remains a Gray Area*

This year’s focus group feedback indicates that Service members continue to struggle to fully define what constitutes sexual harassment. Participants stated that sexual harassment is perception-based, and that male and female Service members define sexual harassment differently. When sexual harassment occurs, participants perceived that these offensive behaviors are not always confronted or addressed. Service members suggest that this reaction may be attributed to not wanting to jeopardize the career of a higher ranking or better performing Service member. Participants expressed an understanding that tolerance of sexual harassment and other inappropriate behavior within units diminishes peers’ trust in each other and may increase risk for sexual assault.

### *Mid-Level Enlisted Service Members Are Well Positioned to Positively Influence our Youngest Service Members*

Focus group participants indicated the potential of mid-level enlisted Service members (i.e., grades E4 to E6) to influence the behavior of younger Service members. E4s to E6s are at a relatable age to younger members and considered to exemplify desired standards of job proficiency, knowledge, and effectiveness. Participants indicate that these individuals have significant influence due to their frequent, daily contact with Service members junior to them who likely watch behaviors both reinforced and ignored. However, according to focus group participants, not all enlisted members possess the same influence. Older members (i.e., grades E7 to E9) have less influence over general behavior and speech occurring behind closed doors, while mid-level enlisted members have significant influence due to frequent workplace interactions with junior Service members.

In fact, some participants called out the special ability that members in the grade of E4 have to achieve results. These participants noted the formal, and sometimes informal, role that E4s play in setting the example and getting things done. Participants noted that E4s can have both a helpful and unhelpful impact on unit climate by choosing which behaviors they decide to address or tolerate.

## **Implications and FY19 Actions**

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### **Continuing Action to Prepare New Leaders to Address Unit Climate Challenges**

This year’s focus group feedback confirms that mid-level enlisted Service members are well-positioned to positively influence behaviors of the youngest Service members. Junior leaders are on the frontline of the fight to eradicate these problems in our units and must serve as role models in this effort. Therefore, junior leaders must be appropriately prepared and held accountable for promoting civility and cohesion in their units by setting an example through their behavior. This includes an appropriate, professional response to a victim and an alleged offender when a sexual assault is reported.

In May 2019, the Secretary of Defense “Call to Action” directed the Secretaries of the Military Departments, Chiefs of the Military Services, and Chief of the NGB to ensure our newest officers and enlisted leaders are prepared to fulfill their supervisory roles to prevent and properly respond to sexual assault and sexual harassment. To fulfill this direction, DOD

SAPRO facilitated the Junior Leader Working Group consisting of membership from the Military Services, NGB, and the Defense Suicide Prevention Office. This group met to identify the appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to effectively prepare junior officers and enlisted leaders to influence a positive workplace climate, while understanding his or her critical role in the prevention of and response to sexual assault and sexual harassment.

## **Revising Climate Assessments to Provide Feedback and Solutions for Cross-cutting Risk Factors**

To support prevention decision-making and enhance leaders' ability to identify and address workplace climate conditions that increase risk for sexual assault, the Department continued efforts to revise climate assessment content and tools. The revised approach will provide leaders with a solution for consolidated analysis of a variety of climate factors and a suite of actions to consider when addressing workplace challenges. This approach, and the solutions identified, will not only be relevant to commanders, but also executable by officers and enlisted leaders within the chain of command.

## **Sexual Assault Reporting**

### **Rationale: Greater Reporting Encourages Help-Seeking and Provides the Opportunity to Hold Alleged Offenders Appropriately Accountable**

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Sexual assault remains underreported within both the civilian and military sectors of United States (U.S.) society, meaning that the crime occurs more often than is reported to authorities. As part of the inception of the SAPR Program, the Department enacted policy to promote greater reporting of sexual assault in 2005. Since then, the rate of sexual assault reporting by Service members has quadrupled, from 7 percent in 2006 to 30 percent in 2018. However, scientific surveys and other data show that further gains in reporting are subject to the victim's desire to "move on," maintain privacy, and avoid feelings of shame. The Department will continue to encourage greater reporting to ensure that victims receive the appropriate resources, such as medical and mental health care, that increase their likelihood of recovery. Furthermore, the Department will continue to seek opportunities to encourage reporting and hold alleged offenders appropriately accountable.

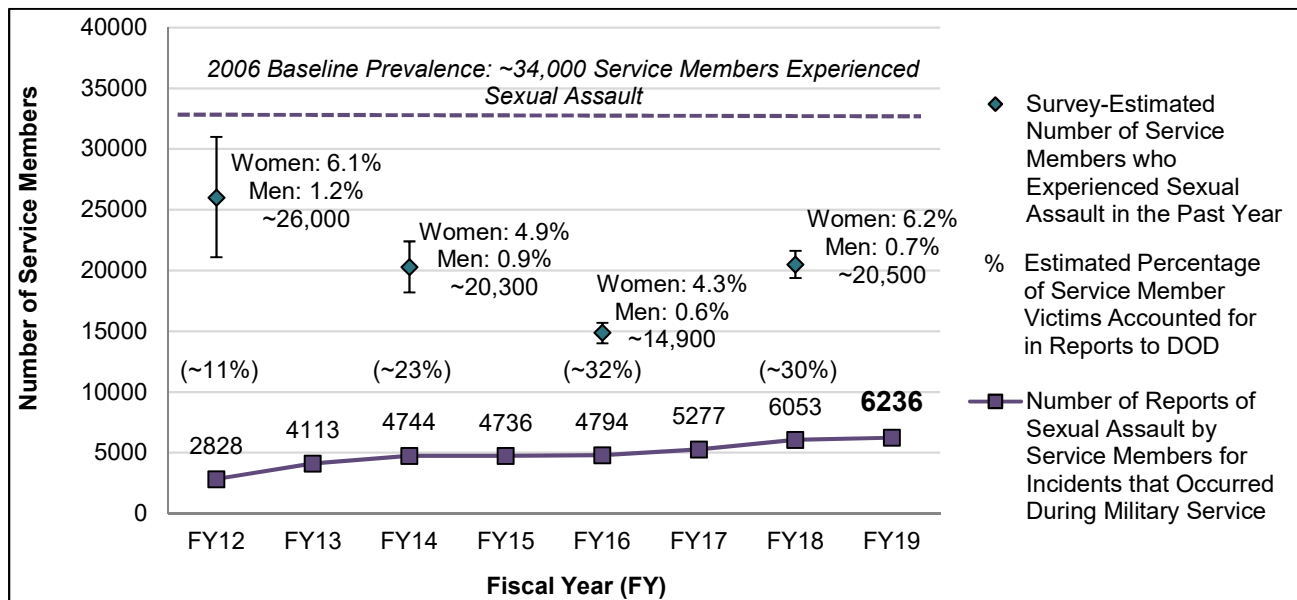
### **This Year's Data**

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#### **Reporting Information**

##### *The Number of Sexual Assault Reports Increased*

As shown in Exhibit 2, the number of sexual assault reports from Service members increased by 3 percent, from 6,053 in FY18 to 6,236 in FY19. Since the Department did not conduct a prevalence survey this year, results from the next *WGRA* will provide context to this increase in reporting.



**Exhibit 2. Active Duty Estimated Biennial Prevalence Compared to Annual Reporting of Sexual Assault**

Overall in FY19, the Military Services received a total of 7,825 reports of sexual assault involving Service members as either victims or subjects, which represents a 3 percent increase from reports received in FY18. In addition to the 6,236 Service members who reported an incident of sexual assault, the Department also received 652 reports from Service members for incidents that occurred prior to their entering military Service, and 937 reports from U.S. civilians and foreign nationals who alleged being sexually assaulted by a Service member.<sup>2</sup>

Of the 7,825 total reports, the Military Services received 5,699 Unrestricted Reports involving Service members as victims or subjects in FY19, a two percent decrease compared to the 5,805 received in FY18.<sup>3</sup> The Military Services initially received 2,750 Restricted Reports involving Service members as either victims or subjects. Of the 2,750 initial Restricted Reports, about a quarter (624 reports) later converted to Unrestricted Reports. These converted Restricted Reports are now counted with the Unrestricted Reports. There were 2,126 reports remaining Restricted at the end of FY19, which is a difference of about 17 percent compared to the 1,818 that remained Restricted at the end of FY18.

<sup>2</sup> Prior to FY14, an Unrestricted Report of sexual assault may have included one or more victims and one or more subjects. DOD relied upon the MCIOs to provide the number of Unrestricted Reports each year, and the subsequent number of victims and subjects associated with those reports. In FY14, DOD moved to the Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database (DSAID) as the primary source of reporting statistics with each Unrestricted Report corresponding to a single victim.

<sup>3</sup> DOD extracts and analyzes data from DSAID six weeks after the end of each FY to allow sufficient time for data validation. DSAID is a “live” database, meaning that its records change daily to reflect case status. During this six-week period, 43 additional Restricted Reports converted to Unrestricted. After a report converts from Restricted to Unrestricted, all data associated with the report is then counted in the Unrestricted Report category. These 43 reports were made during the FY, converted to Unrestricted in the 6-week period after the end of the FY, and are included with the 624 reports that converted from Restricted to Unrestricted that DOD counts with FY19 numbers. This has been the Department’s practice since moving to DSAID in FY14.

## Focus Group Feedback

### *Persistent Barriers Pose a Challenge to Reporting Sexual Assault*

Despite increases in the number of sexual assault reports made by Service members, persistent barriers pose a challenge to continued reporting. In focus groups, some first responder participants perceived that victims have concerns regarding confidentiality breaches and indicated that third-party disclosures discourage victims from participating in the reporting process. Some first responders also thought victims may be deterred by the potential for gossip about their case, as well as a perceived lack of victim confidentiality resulting from leaders engaging leadership teams to address allegations of sexual harassment and assault.

In active duty focus groups, participants indicated that an unhealthy command climate may also lead to feelings of discomfort and concern related to reporting. Focus group participants further indicated that some members continue to fear retaliation for reporting an experience of sexual assault, and also worry that their report will be made public. Some participants also felt that concern about punishment for collateral offenses may also be limiting reporting.

## Implications and FY19 Actions

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### **CATCH a Serial Offender Program Addresses Victim's Desire for Confidentiality, While Allowing Potential for Justice System Participation**

The May 2019 "Call to Action" directed the Department to launch the CATCH Program to improve the identification of repeat sexual assault offenders. The program allows Service members making Restricted Reports to confidentially provide information about the alleged offender and incident to law enforcement personnel. Should this information match another's allegation, victims are offered the opportunity to convert their report to Unrestricted and participate in the military justice process.

In FY19, the Secretaries of the Military Departments, Chiefs of the Military Services, and Chief of the NGB incorporated CATCH into their respective SAPR programs. All response personnel, including Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs), Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Victim Advocates (SAPR VAs), Special Victims' Counsel (SVC), Victims' Legal Counsel (VLC), and military justice personnel, received training on program procedures.

The CATCH program was launched on August 5, 2019. As of the end of April 2020, over 239 Service members made reports into the CATCH system, resulting in 5 matches.

### **Ongoing Actions to Address Retaliation Associated with Reporting Sexual Assault**

In FY19, SAPRO worked with the Military Services to compile retaliation data associated with tasks identified in the Defense Retaliation Prevention and Response Strategy (DRPRS) Implementation Plan. SAPRO also initiated efforts to draft a retaliation prevention and response policy aimed at implementing the remaining initiatives established in the DRPRS Implementation Plan. The retaliation policy will standardize the training definition employed by the Services to address the full spectrum of retaliatory behavior, and institutionalize support initiatives to protect and assist reporters with a variety of resources.

## Implemented Recommendations from the Sexual Assault Accountability and Investigations Task Force

The May 2019 “Call to Action” memorandum required implementation of recommendations from the Sexual Assault Accountability and Investigations Task Force (SAAITF) Report. In FY19, the Military Services developed an implementation plan for these recommendations, including the identification of necessary changes to program structure and resourcing for initiatives recommended by the SAAITF. Furthermore, the Task Force recommended development of a policy that would more fully protect the victim’s ability to file a Restricted Report, as well as provide victims a confidentiality option should their allegation be inadvertently disclosed or reported by a third-party. The FY20 NDAA eventually required a report on the feasibility and advisability of such a policy.

## Victim Assistance

### Rationale: DOD Enacts Policies to Promote High-quality Services and Support to Military Victims of Sexual Assault

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The Department’s sexual assault response policies are intended to strengthen resiliency and instill confidence and trust in the reporting process. The military response system aims to advocate for all Service members and their adult dependents by encouraging sexual assault reporting, promoting recovery, facilitating treatment, and improving military readiness.

In FY18, the WGRA survey found that Service member survivors of sexual assault used, and highly rated, services from SVCs/MLCs, SARCs, SAPR VAs, and healthcare providers. Overall, about three-quarters of men and women who experienced sexual assault and interacted with SAPR response personnel during the military justice process were satisfied with the support they received.

### This Year’s Data

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#### Focus Group Feedback

##### *First Responders Perceived an Increase in Anonymous Calls and Reports from Male Victims*

In focus groups with first responders, some participants perceived an increase in anonymous calls for help, suggesting that Service members may be uncertain of the reporting and assistance experience, but are willing to reach out. First responders also indicated an increase in sexual assault reports from men, and said that men’s cases involved more violence and hazing compared to allegations from women. Participants indicated male Service members tend to delay reporting their experience and choose the Restricted Reporting option. First responders thought that men may be grappling with how others might view their masculinity, sexuality, and identity as victims.

##### *Despite Satisfaction with Services, Help-Seeking Behaviors May be Deterred by Barriers to Engaging with SAPR Staff*

First responder participants indicated in focus groups that some Service members preferred civilian sexual assault advocate staff. Those who did held them in high regard and viewed them as trustworthy and confidential sources of information. First responders also

thought that Service members may view part-time or “collateral duty” SAPR VAs as “wearing too many hats,” lacking the time needed to provide services to Service members. Some first responders also indicated that assistance-seeking behaviors may be deterred by survivor concern about punishment for collateral offenses, as well as a need for confidentiality and lack of a hotline that takes reports.

Some first responder participants identified several barriers to providing effective victim assistance. They noted that staffing can sometimes be inadequate for installation needs. Participants noted that their offices are required to complete a wide range of functions; however, they sometimes lack the resources to fully execute their responsibilities and must sometimes rely on other programs for assistance. Participants identified funding as one obstacle and wished each Service received more consistent funding and guidelines.

## Implications and FY19 Actions

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### Developed Assessment Tool for Training New Sexual Assault Victim Advocates

The Department and Military Services collaborated on the development of an assessment tool to improve baseline sexual assault advocacy skills. This tool will enable structured observation and feedback to SARCs and SAPR VAs by providing a checklist of critical behaviors to be met during role-play scenarios. This tool is intended to be used by course facilitators and instructors during initial SAPR training. Additionally, this tool may be used by SARCs to support their ongoing professional development and provide feedback to SARCs or SAPR VAs whom they supervise.

### Continued Implementation of the Department’s Plan to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Assault of Military Men

The Department worked in FY19 to enhance research-informed, gender-specific techniques to increase awareness of how sexual assault impacts men and ensure response services meet the needs of male survivors. The Department developed a social marketing framework, completed in September 2019, which will inform the Men's SAPR Plan Working Group’s development of metrics for expanded communications tailored toward male experiences. Concurrently, SAPRO continued development of a related communications toolkit. This effort intends to assist the Military Services in designing communications plans that support the Department’s goal of encouraging more men to report their experience of sexual assault.

### Revised Policies to Encourage Greater Help-Seeking and Improve Support

The Department worked to revise and improve several victim assistance policies in FY19 that were subsequently issued in FY20:

- **Updated Victim Reporting Preference Form and Storage Procedures** (Issued by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (OUSD(P&R)) on October 15, 2019). This policy memorandum directs the use of DD Form 2910-1 “Replacement of Lost DD Form 2910, Victim Reporting Preference Statement” to replace a previously filed DD Form 2910 that has been lost or misplaced. DD Form 2910-2, “Retaliation Reporting Statement for Unrestricted Sexual Assault Cases” allows retaliation reporters to document an official retaliation report to a Sexual Assault Response Coordinator. Additionally, this memo directed the use of an electronic File Locker in the Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database

(DSAID) to implement an NDAA requirement to retain DD Forms 2910 for 50 years. While Unrestricted Report documentation has been stored in DSAID for several years, Restricted Report documentation required further protection and encryption employed by the electronic “File Locker.” DD Forms 2910-1 and 2910-2 will also be stored in the electronic File Locker. In addition, the memorandum directs a new training definition for retaliation to ensure standardization across the Department and Military Services. Finally, it mandates use of a new DSAID Retaliation Module to track sexual assault-related retaliation cases in DSAID from the date of initiation to completion of command action or disposition for the retaliation case.

- **Revised Case Management Group (CMG) Guidance** (Issued by OUSD(P&R) on November 13, 2019). The memorandum addressed the requirement for improved guidance to SARCs concerning discussions with victim-related matters at CMG meetings. It improves oversight of victim safety, and provides new timeframes for movement of Service members after an Expedited Transfer and for tracking of retaliation allegations. The policy further improves system coordination and accountability, and clarifies participation by a General or Flag Officer in the CMG.
- **Revised Expedited Transfer Procedures** (Issued by OUSD(P&R) on February 10, 2020). The Department issued revised expedited transfer processes to enhance victim safety measures and continuity of care. When an expedited transfer request is approved, the installation’s SARC is required to have “out-brief” and “intake” meetings with the Service member victim to explain the full range of support options available at the new installation, facilitate appointments with response personnel, and help answer any questions. The policy also expanded to allow the transfer of a Service member whose adult military dependent makes an allegation of sexual assault that is not domestic abuse related. Situations within the purview of domestic abuse are handled by FAP.
- **Revised DOD Instruction 6495.03, The Defense Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program** (Issued by OUSD(P&R) on February 28, 2020). The Department revised its sexual assault advocate certification policy that requires Tier III background checks and allows for intermediate hiring and certification of qualified personnel.

### Provided Support to Service Members through Safe Helpline

The DOD Safe Helpline supports SAPR programs by providing crisis intervention, support, and resources for members of the community who have experienced sexual assault. The service is confidential, anonymous, secure, and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Its availability ensures that all victims have a place to safely disclose sexual assault allegations, express concerns, and obtain information. As such, this resource provides victims a key source of support, particularly for those who might not otherwise reach out for help through face-to-face military channels. The Department leverages Safe Helpline as an accessible point-of-entry for the military community that facilitates sexual assault reporting to SARCs and SAPR VAs.

In FY19, 36,966 users (28,909 online users and 8,057 phone users) contacted Safe Helpline for assistance. Of the 2,316 sessions in which an event was discussed, and a user-victim relationship was disclosed, 87 percent of users identified themselves as having experienced a sexual assault. Some users called on behalf of victims to learn how they could provide support and help prevent re-victimization. While women are the most frequent users of Safe Helpline, greater than one-third of phone users were men in FY19.



An additional Departmental resource called the Safe HelpRoom is an anonymous, moderated online chat service that allows individuals who experienced sexual assault in the military to safely and securely connect. In FY19, the Safe HelpRoom had 4,931 visitors, an increase from 2,510 visitors in FY18. Supplemental data on Safe Helpline can be found in Appendix G.

In order to address focus group feedback that DOD's sexual assault hotline should take reports, the Department will continue to promote the Safe Helpline and identify additional methods to support victims wanting to report and obtain recovery services.

## Efforts to Reduce and Stop Sexual Assault

### Rationale: Sexual Assault Prevention Contributes to the Execution of the National Defense Strategy

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The Department has sought to improve how it can prevent sexual assault in order to reduce the crime's toll on human lives, enhance mission readiness, conserve scarce resources, contribute to recruitment and retention, and strengthen international alliances and partnerships.

Last year in FY18, the Department's *WGRA* survey found that the estimated sexual assault prevalence increased for young, enlisted women, but remained statistically unchanged for men. The vast majority of sexual assaults involving Service members occurred between people aged 17 to 24 who work, train, and/or live in close proximity. Survey data shows that women indicated that offenders were most often military men whom they considered to be a friend or acquaintance, who acted alone. Women indicated that the alleged offender's grade was most often the same as the victim's or one grade higher, with most alleged incidents involving junior enlisted women in the grades of E3 or E4.

The data for male victims was similar, but men were about three times more likely than women to characterize their sexual assault as hazing or bullying. In addition, it is believed from the survey data that male experiences occur more often during duty hours and in the workplace compared to female experiences, and their alleged offenders were also peers or near peers in terms of grade; about 52 percent of alleged offenders were male, 30 percent were female, about 13 were men and women acting together, and 5 percent were unknown.

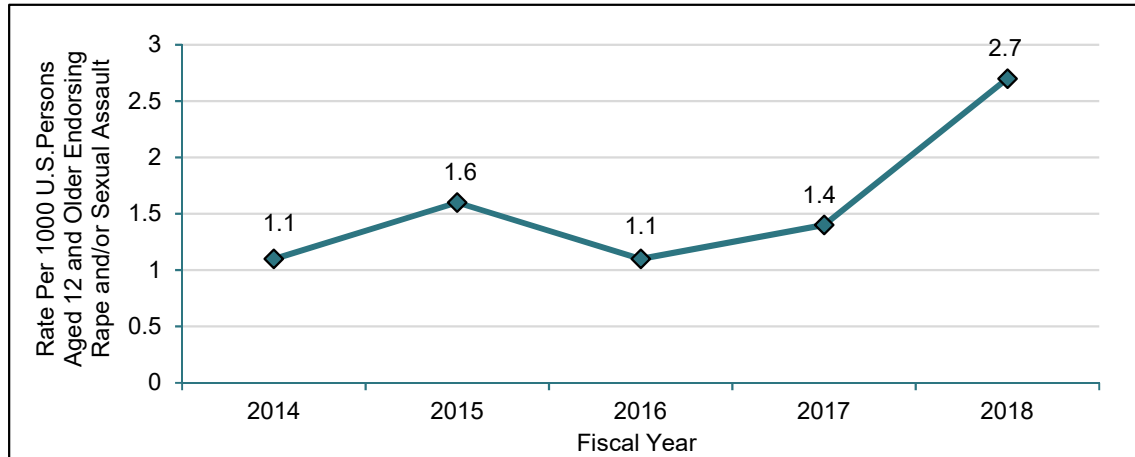
### This Year's Data

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#### The Department of Justice's 2018 National Crime Victimization Survey

Recent research suggests that in 2018 the U.S. as a whole experienced an upward trend in sexual violence victimization. As a result, findings from last year's *2018 WGRA* may reflect this general increase in sexual violence in the country. However, the Department must continue to hold itself to a higher standard of behavior.

The Department of Justice’s 2018 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) found that rates of rape or sexual assault more than doubled for US persons from 2014 to 2018.<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that the Department of Justice uses the term rape to refer to penetrative behaviors, while the term sexual assault refers to sexual contact behaviors. In addition, the rates published are combined for men and women. The NCVS rates are shown in Exhibit 3.



**Exhibit 3. Rape or Sexual Assault Victimization Rate Per 1000 U.S. Persons Aged 12 and Over**

### 2019 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of the Reserve Component

Despite the apparent national increase sexual violence, results from the *2019 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Reserve Component Members* reflect that the estimated sexual assault prevalence rates for Reserve Component men and women have remained statistically the same since 2017. Survey results estimate that 3.1 percent of Reserve Component women may have experienced sexual assault in 2019, which is statistically unchanged from estimated rates measured in 2017. Estimated past-year rates of sexual assault for Reserve Component men also remain statistically unchanged at 0.3 percent.

### Prevention Plan of Action Phase I Assessment: Strengths in Prevention Efforts Exist Across Each Military Service

The Department established a prevention framework, the Prevention Plan of Action (PPoA), to advance efforts to reduce and stop sexual assault. The plan reflects agreement between the Department, Military Services, and NGB on necessary steps to advance primary prevention. In recognition that each Military Service has its own unique organizational culture, structure, and need, the plan outlines the process and organizational, system-level factors that facilitate prevention, which can be tailored to each organization.

While supporting victims and holding alleged offenders appropriately accountable are enduring efforts for the Department, sexual assault prevention must receive equal, if not greater, emphasis if further reductions in victimization are to occur. In FY19, the Department employed the PPoA framework to assess the alignment of the Military Services’ prevention capabilities

<sup>4</sup> Rachel E. Morgan, and Barbara A. Oudeker, *Criminal Victimization, 2018* (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2019). Significant differences in methodology of the NCVS prevents the Department from making comparisons. For example, the NCVS uses the term “rape” to refer to penetrative sex crimes and “sexual assault” to refer to contact sex crimes. In addition, the data available for review could not be analyzed by sex and age of respondent. Nevertheless, the NCVS trends in rates generalizable to the U.S. as a whole and provides important context for understanding the national prevalence of sexual victimization.

with prevention best practices. The self-assessment highlighted strengths in leadership and collaborative relationships. The self-assessments also identified gaps in the Department's ability to field a fully equipped and empowered prevention workforce, as well as generally accepted metrics to assess the quality of implementation and effectiveness of prevention activities. Trained prevention personnel at all echelons of command and data that informs where, when, and how prevention activities should be tailored and delivered are required for the Department to achieve and sustain future measurable reductions in sexual assault.

### *Army Prevention Assessment*

The Department's baseline assessment of prevention activities in the Army found several strengths. Army leadership is committed to executing an effective prevention strategy and is aware of the importance of evidence to inform and drive its execution. Program staff strive to include program monitoring data, military literature, and internal and external research when possible. Army SHARP leaders regularly leverage the workforce for "response," and this organization is now integrated with other prevention activities to include suicide prevention and substance abuse prevention. There is a prevention workforce at the headquarters level with numerous experts across a variety of prevention functions, and operational and tactical staff are trained in primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention at the SHARP Academy.

The Army has also developed an Initiative Evaluation Process Guide to help plan and evaluate evidence-informed activities at various levels of implementation. The SHARP Academy, working with the Center for Army Lessons Learned, established formal means for the submission of prevention lessons learned and best practices via the Joint Lessons Learned Information System. Finally, an Organizational Inspection Program checklist exists that can be used to potentially monitor implementation at regional and local levels.

### *Navy Prevention Assessment*

Navy leadership has significant strengths, including support for prevention staff and evidence-based prevention decisions and programs grounded in proven research and evaluation. It has a clear plan for aligning best practices and next steps as outlined in the PPOA. As the number of prevention staff grows, Navy headquarters (HQ) will need to ensure appropriate resources and opportunities for training are in place. Their Behavior Research and Development and Evaluation and Feedback sections are critical enablers to identify and evaluate innovative and relevant research supporting Navy Culture of Excellence (COE) strategies in the prevention of sexual assault and other destructive behaviors. Navy HQ's COE includes promising primary prevention initiatives to inform policy updates under the Simplify and Align umbrella of work.

The Navy's most significant strength is its comprehensive approach to primary prevention, as evidenced by its active prevention capacity and capability-building through Fleet-wide training being developed and implemented with Command Resilience Teams. Its recognition of inclusion and diversity as a critical component for COE is reflected in its strong leadership support and recruitment goals. Navy HQ will continue its progressive activities in primary prevention by translating best practices to lower echelon commands.

### *Marine Corps Assessment*

Strengths exist in the Marine Corps leadership, quality implementation, and overall prevention workforce staffing. Prevention personnel are working as a comprehensive workforce

to identify additional resources and initiatives and implement collaborative training. The Primary Prevention Program Manager is developing an integrated strategy and framework at the HQ level. The intent of this effort is to disseminate primary prevention practices and education across the enterprise, addressing behavioral health topics including sexual assault. The Research and Program Evaluation team of Behavioral Programs created a SAPR Standardized Evaluation Measurement Program that will use online surveys accessible at workstations and on personal mobile devices to evaluate the effectiveness of SAPR training across the Marine Corps. This project is highly supported by Service leadership. Weekly synchronization meetings are held between suicide prevention and SAPR leadership, and monthly syncs and roundtables allow diverse stakeholders to look at shared risk and protective factors and discuss collaborative prevention efforts.

### *Air Force Assessment*

The Air Force is committed to this endeavor, has made significant progress towards sexual assault prevention, and continues to press forward on prevention efforts. Identified strengths include leadership, collaborative relationships, and a comprehensive prevention approach. The Air Force is also working to address challenges including developing a prevention workforce, resources, quality implementation, and continuous evaluation.

### *NGB Assessment*

NGB's baseline assessment of their prevention activities documented a number of strengths and highlighted that it is in an early phase of prevention capability. Relative strengths were noted in leadership and collaborative relationships. NGB leadership is motivated and committed to developing and executing an effective prevention strategy based on the Guard population, which will consider differences across its 54 states and territories. Leadership is also working collaboratively with SAPRO and other technical assistance providers to secure professional development of its staff to ensure they have access to the most up-to-date information, resources, research, and news in prevention, nationwide.

### **Focus Group Feedback**

#### *Most Prevention Activities Currently Rely upon Leadership Emphasis and Annual Training*

Active duty participants indicated in focus groups that most current prevention activities primarily reflect leadership's efforts to emphasize the importance of stopping sexual assault. Participants noted that sexual assault prevention training content can sometimes be vague or incomplete. Participants indicated leaving with questions unanswered and a misunderstanding of appropriate behavioral boundaries. Male participants noted that they sometimes feel targeted as the "bad guy" during SAPR trainings and briefings. Participants perceived leaders as not always knowing how to address or prevent gender-based discrimination. Participants thought leaders are sometimes "checking the box" when conducting trainings, and that a mission-first mentality can sidetrack response to victims.

Participants thought that prevention training should be more relatable and tailored to Service members' needs and developmental stage. Participants believed Service members desired content on healthy relationships and consent, more responsible alcohol use, and understanding sexual harassment "gray areas." Trainings should include practice for skill building, in addition to a more fulsome discussion amongst trainers and peers. Participants also thought trainers should be experts and work harder to relate with Service members junior to

them. Participants perceived role playing, videos, expert trainers, and skits as more effective or memorable.

## Implications and FY19 Actions

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### **Began Executing the Department's Prevention Plan of Action**

The Department published and implemented the PPOA in FY19 to reduce the occurrence of sexual assault as well as other co-occurring destructive behaviors. This strategy outlines the prevention process and enabling organizational factors that will serve as the enduring framework for sexual assault prevention and related oversight in all future Departmental endeavors. The Department will also continue working with 10 military demonstration sites piloting a promising prevention planning and evaluation process. The findings from these pilots will inform the execution of the PPOA.

### **Empowered Prevention Workforce**

The Department continued efforts to equip and expand the abilities of its prevention workforce to implement and evaluate research-based sexual assault prevention approaches. Efforts included senior leader workshops, the development of a curriculum to train prevention personnel on key competencies, webinars to teach foundational concepts and skills, and partnerships with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide technical assistance at all command echelons. The Department is preparing prevention workforce curricula with the goal of piloting two training events in FY20.

## Way Forward

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The Department continues to address sexual assault holistically with a focus on prevention, addressing problematic culture, preparing leaders at all levels, and promoting new and existing reporting options. This year's report finds that on-going policy development, programs, and activities are appropriately targeted to address key areas impacting sexual assault prevention and response.

Achieving healthy command climates continues to be a high priority. This year's data show that mid-level enlisted Service members are well-positioned to influence behaviors of our youngest Service members. The Junior Leader Working Group will continue efforts to ensure these first-line supervisors have the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to perform their duties relative to sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention. The Military Services are working to ensure the current education and training landscape reflect these learning objectives. In addition, the Department is taking steps to update the climate assessment process and will begin fielding new survey content in FY20.

To encourage greater sexual assault reporting, the Military Services will continue to publicize the CATCH Program. The Department will also analyze results from the implementation of the program, and update related policies as necessary. The Department will also work to develop additional guidance for tracking and reporting sexual assault retaliation. In addition, the Department will support the FY20 NDAA and assess the feasibility of keeping certain sexual assault disclosure avenues confidential.

Despite Service member satisfaction with support services, data show that additional steps could be taken to drive greater help-seeking, support, and connection. The Department has revised victim assistance protocols and procedures in FY20, including an update to the expedited transfer process, improved CMG procedures, and updated policy on certification of sexual assault advocate personnel. The Department will continue to promote the DOD Safe Helpline and identify other ways this service can support the needs of victims wanting to make reports of sexual assault.

The Department will continue executing the PPOA by equipping leaders and its prevention workforce with the tools they need to prevent the crime. The Department is focusing on addressing gaps identified in the self-assessment, which include developing and piloting a curriculum to train prevention personnel, continuing to provide technical assistance, launching a new climate assessment tool, and institutionalizing capabilities to sustain and measure prevention activities through the development of a new prevention policy. The Prevention Collaboration Forum will also lead the Department's cross-cutting efforts to prevent sexual assault and other behaviors that impact execution of the National Defense Strategy.

We will not be deterred from our mission to eliminate sexual assault from the military. Taken together, these efforts reflect the Department's continuing commitment to create a culture of trust, respect, and inclusion, which is key to it being able to recruit and retain a lethal force. Effective prevention and response efforts support the Department's need to remain contingency-ready, mission-focused, and closely connected to strategic allies and partnerships. As the nation faces one of its greatest challenges, SAPRO's contributions to executing the National Defense Strategy could not be more important.