

2014 DoD Workplace and Gender Relations Survey (WGRS)

Purpose: This point paper is intended to provide information about the RAND Corporation approach for conducting the 2014 WGRS.

Background:

- The WGRS is the Department of Defense's (DoD) primary means for estimating the past-year prevalence (occurrence) of sexual assault and harassment among military Service members.
- Civilian and military research alike has established that sexual assault is an under-reported crime, meaning that the number of reports to law enforcement fall far short of the number of incidents estimated to exist using representative surveys of the population.
 - Since 2006, the DoD has used a scientifically conducted, representative survey of the Active and Reserve Components to estimate the extent of the problem of sexual assault in the US military.
- Given the significant interest in the results of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 survey, the Secretary of Defense directed that the FY14 survey be externalized to a non-DoD agency for an independent look at the problem.
- On December 20, 2013, the President of the United States directed the Secretary of Defense to provide him with a report on the Department's progress with regard to sexual assault prevention and response by December 1, 2014. Included in this report is to be an estimate of past-year sexual assault prevalence in the military.
- DoD contracted with RAND Corporation, a federally funded research and development center (FFRDC) to independently design, administer, and analyze the 2014 WGRS.
 - Prior to awarding the current contract, the Department considered a number of options to externalize the FY14 survey. Given the tight timeline to meet the requirements of the report to the President, the only valid, timely option was to use a pre-existing FFRDC contract.
- In addition to reporting prevalence of sexual assault and associated risk factors (e.g., sexual harassment, alcohol use, etc.), RAND will also conduct a critical review of the DoD's survey methodology, implement improvements for the 2014 WGRS to increase response rates and reduce non-response bias, and recommend additional improvements for future WGRS administrations by the Department.
 - DoD SAPRO provided RAND with a number of sources that voiced concern with the Department's FY12 survey approach and/or results, to include statements made to the Response Systems Panel, press accounts, and comments by stakeholders both internal and external to the Department. RAND was asked to evaluate and address these concerns in their methodological approach as appropriate.

Discussion:

- RAND's methodological approach will include:
 - A large survey sample. RAND will invite 100% of female Service members and 25% of all male Service members to take the survey. This approach will produce a sample of about 500,000 Service members – or one-third the active force.

- An advisory panel. RAND will develop the survey in consultation with a panel of nationally-recognized experts in survey methodology, assessment of sexual assault and harassment, military law, and related topics. The panel will review and modify as indicated the sexual assault and harassment items to produce prevalence estimates that are more reflective of the offense definitions in Articles 120, 125, and 80 the Uniform Code of Military Justice.
- Three survey conditions (randomly assigned): (1) short-form survey that is focused on prevalence responses; (2) modified long-form survey that will address factors influencing sexual assault prevalence and the SAPR program; (3) DMDC's survey instrument used in 2012. The vast majority of respondents will be requested to take the short form survey, which will be designed to be taken in 10 minutes or less.
- Small sub-studies. To improve response rates to the survey, RAND will propose and, if approved by the appropriate authorities, employ commonly accepted techniques in civilian research to increase survey response rates. These sub-studies are still under design.
- While the Department has identified a number of requirements for the survey, the RAND Corporation is solely responsible for the survey's methodology, instrument design, data collection, and analysis. RAND has sub-contracted with Westat, a civilian research firm, to deploy and administer the survey.

Deadlines:

- Top-line prevalence rates will be provided to SAPRO no later than 1 November 2014, for inclusion into DoD's report to the President.
- Detailed results will be made available to the Department in time for the FY14 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military, due to Congress by April 30, 2015.