



Are they living healthy?



Results from Air Force respondents to the HRBS

The **Health Related Behaviors Survey (HRBS)** is the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD)'s flagship survey for understanding the health, health-related behaviors, and well-being of active-duty service members.

- It allows leadership to better understand the readiness of the force.
- It is used to facilitate benchmarking in combination with Healthy People benchmarks (designed for the general U.S. population).
- Results are weighted to represent the 2015 active-duty force by service branch, pay grade, and gender.

Comparison to U.S. General Population

The 2015 HRBS shows that active-duty airmen generally have better health and health-related behaviors than the U.S. adult population.

Airmen exceed Healthy People 2020 goals for a healthy weight. Their rates of problematic alcohol use are also below those of the general population. Current rates of cigarette smoking are below those for U.S. adults, as are rates of prescription drug misuse and illicit drug use.

Airmen, however, fall short of Healthy People 2020 goals for adequate sleep. Rates of e-cigarette smoking, cigar smoking, and smokeless tobacco use are also higher than those for the general population.

Development of military-appropriate population benchmarks, especially by service branch, may facilitate goal-setting, command visibility, and incremental improvements in health-related readiness.

Limitations

A low overall response rate (14.2% for the Air Force and 8.6% across all services) suggests that the results should be interpreted with caution and in conjunction with other existing data. New ways to improve survey response rates are needed, including focusing survey content, shifting to a confidential rather than anonymous survey, and addressing information technology issues related to use of a non-DoD email address. The above comparisons to the general adult population do not control for differences in demographic composition.



Weight and sleep issues



20.3% were moderately or severely bothered by sleep-related **lack of energy**



7.5% took **sleep medications** daily or almost daily



63.1% were **overweight** or **obese** according to body mass index



50.1% reported **less sleep** than needed

More than **1/2**

Mental and Emotional Health



- 4.1%** met survey criteria for **probable depression**
- 6.8%** met survey criteria for **probable generalized anxiety disorder**
- 3.9%** met survey criteria for **probable posttraumatic stress disorder**
- 3.2%** **thought about attempting suicide** in the past year
- 0.6%** reported a **suicide attempt** in the past year
- 21.7%** reported a **self-perceived need** for mental health services in the past year
- 10.2%** reported that someone else told them they **needed mental health treatment** in the past year
- 21.8%** reported **mental health service use** in the past year
- 30.9%** said that seeking military mental health **treatment damages one's military career**

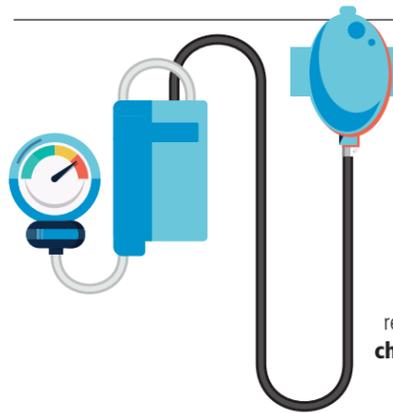
Substance Use



Alcohol, Tobacco, Illicit Drugs, and Prescription Drugs

- 20.5%** **binge drank** in the past month (5+ drinks for men or 4+ for women in one sitting)
- 2.7%** were **heavy drinkers** (5+ drinks 5 or more times in the past month)
- 65.3%** viewed military culture as **supportive of drinking**
- 9.0%** were current **cigarette smokers**
- 8.5%** were current **smokeless tobacco** users
- 10.5%** reported using **e-cigarettes** in the past month
- 0.6%** reported **illicit drug use** (mostly marijuana or synthetic cannabis) in the past year
- 3.3%** used prescription drugs without a valid prescription (i.e., **prescription drug misuse**) in the past year
- 0.5%** used more of a drug than prescribed (i.e., **prescription drug overuse**) in the past year

Physical Health and Functional Limitations



31.6% reported diagnosis of at least one of nine **chronic medical conditions** (e.g., high blood pressure) in their lifetime



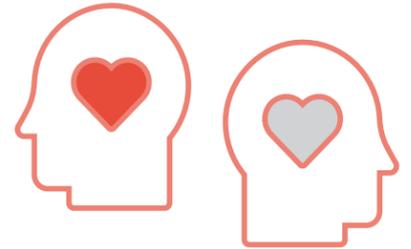
27.5% reported that **pain** bothered them a lot over the past 30 days



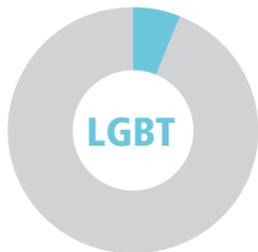
31.7% reported a **functional impairment** in at least one domain—work or school, social life, or family life

Sexual Behavior and Health

- 18.8%** had **more than one sex partner** in the past year
- 29.1%** had sex with a new partner **without a condom** in the past year
- 1.3%** reported contracting a **sexually transmitted infection** in the past year
- 20.3%** were at high risk for human immunodeficiency virus (**HIV**)
- 15.7%** of those not expecting or trying to conceive a child had vaginal **sex without using birth control** in the past year
- 2.1%** reported having or causing an **unintended pregnancy** in the past year



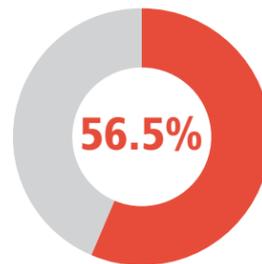
Sexual Orientation, Transgender Identity, and Health



5.3% identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (**LGBT**)

LGBT personnel were more likely than their peers to report moderate and severe depression, self-injury, suicide ideation and attempts, risky sexual behavior, binge drinking, and current cigarette use.

Deployment Experiences and Health



56.5% reported at least one **prior combat or noncombat deployment**

Among those who had ever deployed:

- 60.1%** reported exposure to **combat trauma**
- 18.3%** reported a deployment-related **injury**
- 5.4%** screened positive for deployment-related **mild traumatic brain injury**
- 2.7%** reported deployment-related **postconcussive symptoms**
- 62.0%** reported **substance use**, mostly alcohol or cigarettes, during their most-recent deployment



Adapted from 2015 Department of Defense Health Related Behaviors Survey (HRBS) of Active-Duty Service Members: Final Report, by Sarah O. Meadows, Charles C. Engel, Rebecca L. Collins, Robin Beckman, Matthew Cefalu, Jennifer Hawes-Dawson, Molly Doyle, Amii M. Kress, Lisa Sontag-Padilla, Rajeev Ramchand, and Kayla M. Williams, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1695-OSD, 2018. The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest. For the complete report detailing these and other findings, visit www.rand.org/t/RR1695.

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