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 Marines generally have better health and health-related behaviors than the U.S. adult population, but there are some areas of concern. Only about one in three Marines get at least seven hours of sleep nightly, below the Healthy People 2020 goal that more than two in three adults get such sleep. Marines are more likely than other U.S. adults to engage in binge and heavy drinking. Their tobacco use, including cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, and e-cigarettes, also exceeds that for the U.S. population.

Physical Health and Functional Limitations

- 60.9% were overweight or obese according to body mass index
- 56.9% reported less sleep than needed
- 22.3% reported mental health service use in the past year
- 19.8% reported that someone else told them they needed mental health treatment in the past year
- 36.0% said that seeking military mental health treatment damages one’s military career

Mental and Emotional Health

- 13.5% met survey criteria for probable depression
- 9.1% met survey criteria for probable generalized anxiety disorder
- 7.7% thought about attempting suicide in the past year
- 2.4% reported a suicide attempt in the past year
- 29.3% reported a self-perceived need for mental health services in the past year

Sexual Behavior and Health

- 42.3% had more than one sex partner in the past year
- 19.4% reported that they had sex with a new partner without a condom in the past year
- 24.4% were at high risk for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- 17.8% of those not expecting or trying to conceive a child had vaginal sex without using birth control in the past year
- 4.1% reported having or causing an unintended pregnancy in the past year

Sexual Orientation, Transgender Identity, and Health

- 4.4% identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT)

Deployment Experiences and Health

- 57.0% reported at least one prior combat or noncombat deployment
- 63.0% reported exposure to combat trauma
- 27.4% reported a deployment-related injury
- 12.4% screened positive for deployment-related mild traumatic brain injury
- 8.4% reported deployment-related postconcussive symptoms
- 77.2% reported substance use, mostly alcohol or cigarettes, during their most recent deployment

Substance Use

- Alcohol, Tobacco, Illicit Drugs, and Prescription Drugs
- 42.6% binge drank in the past month (5+ drinks for men or 4+ for women in one sitting)
- 12.4% were heavy drinkers (5+ drinks 5 or more times in the past month)
- 74.1% believed military culture is supportive of drinking
- 20.7% were current cigarette smokers
- 23.4% were current smokeless tobacco users

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 Coffula, Jennifer Hoven-Damesen, Molly Doyle, Ayes M. Kawa, Lisa Sonta-Phillips, Sonye 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.