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

The HRBS allows leadership to better understand the health-related readiness of the force.

The HRBS is used to facilitate benchmarking in combination with Healthy People benchmarks (designed for the general U.S. population).

Results are weighted to represent the 2018 active component.

### Comparison with the U.S. General Population

The 2018 HRBS shows that active component soldiers met Healthy People 2020 goals for weight and had low rates of illicit drug use. Nevertheless, there are several areas of concern.

Most soldiers did not get appropriate amounts of sleep, and many reported a sleep-related lack of energy. Levels of binge drinking were above Healthy People 2020 goals, as were levels of use of tobacco and nicotine products.

Soldiers reported more serious psychological distress and PTSD than members of the adult general population did. Suicidal ideation and suicide attempts were also more common among soldiers than they are among members of the adult general population.

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

### Limitations

A low overall response rate (6.0 percent for the Army and 9.6 percent across all services) suggests that the results should be interpreted with caution and in conjunction with other existing data. Use of targeted incentives, modules administered to subsets of respondents, or a service member panel survey could help improve response rates and representation. The above comparisons with the general adult population do not control for demographic differences between the two populations.

Adapted from 2018 Department of Defense Health Related Behaviors Survey (HRBS): Results for the Active Component, by Sarah O. Meadows, Charles C. Engel, Rebecca L. Collins, Robin L. Beckman, Joshua Breslau, Terry L. Schell, and Molly Simmons, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-4222-OSD, 2021. 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/RR4222.

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