For active component service members
demographic differences between
and representation. The above
to subsets of respondents, or
incentives, modules administered
be interpreted with caution
and 9.6 percent across all services)
Limitations
setting, command visibility, and
branch, could facilitate goal-
appropriate population

Population
results represent the 2018 active
component.
Comparison with the U.S. General Population
The 2018 HRBS shows that active component Marines met or surpassed weight goals for the general population. The proportion of Marines who were obese is below the Healthy People 2020 target for the general population, while the proportion who were of normal weight is above the target. Marines present many other health concerns, however. Few reported getting adequate amounts of sleep. Their levels of binge and heavy drinking were above Healthy People 2020 targets and general population levels. Their levels of use of tobacco and nicotine products were above Healthy People 2020 targets. Their levels of serious psychological stress and probable PTSD were above general population rates. Their rates of suicidal ideation and attempts were greater than those for the general population. Many Marines reported engaging in risky sexual behaviors; Marines were more likely, for example, than members of the general population to have sex with a new partner without using a condom.

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 (81 percent for the Marine Corps and 96 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.

Assessing the Health Readiness of Active Component Marines
Results from Marine Corps Respondents to the HRBS

Weight and Sleep Issues
- 57.8% were overweight or obese, according to body mass index
- 27.3% met age-appropriate sleep quantity requirements
- 20.8% were moderately or severely bothered by sleep-related lack of energy
- 6.9% used sleep medications to help them sleep at least three times weekly

Mental and Emotional Health
- 12.8% met criteria for serious psychological distress in the past 30 days
- 19.6% met criteria for serious psychological distress in the past 12 months
- 13.0% met criteria for probable posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the past 30 days
- 10.1% had thought about attempting suicide in the past 12 months
- 1.6% reported a suicide attempt in the past 12 months
- 6.9% needed mental health services in the past 12 months but did not receive them
- 24.9% reported mental health service use in the past 12 months
- 36.1% said that seeking military mental health treatment damages one’s military career

Physical Health and Functional Limitations
- 39.8% reported one or more chronic medical conditions (e.g., high blood pressure) in the past 12 months
- 35.6% reported that pain (including headaches) had bothered them a lot over the past 30 days
- 6.8% screened positive for mild traumatic brain injury

Sexual Behavior and Health
- 25.6% had more than one sexual partner in the past 12 months
- 42.3% had sex with a new partner without using a condom in the past 12 months
- 4.0% reported contracting a sexually transmitted infection in the past 12 months
- 27.8% were at high risk for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- 16.9% of those not expecting or trying to conceive a child did not use birth control during their most recent vaginal sex in the past 12 months
- 3.5% reported having or causing an unintended pregnancy in the past 12 months

Sexual Orientation, Identity, and Health
- 5.5% identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB)

Deployment Experiences and Health
- 56.7% reported at least one prior combat or noncombat deployment

Substance Use
Alcohol, Tobacco, Illicit Drugs, and Prescription Drugs
- 44.9% had engaged in binge drinking in the past 30 days (five or more drinks for men or four or more for women on one occasion)
- 15.3% were heavy drinkers (binge drinking at least once or two days a week in the past 30 days)
- 34.0% viewed military culture as supportive of drinking
- 49.0% reported any current tobacco or nicot ine use
- 27.7% were current cigarette smokers
- 19.8% were current smokeless tobacco users
- 22.6% were current e-cigarette users
- 2.5% reported illicit drug use (mostly marijuana or synthetic cannabinoids) in the past 12 months
- 1.6% reported prescription drug misuse in the past 12 months (use without a prescription or use in greater amounts, more frequently, or for longer than prescribed)

Significantly greater percentages of LGB personnel than non-LGB personnel reported serious psychological distress and probable PTSD, suicidal thoughts and attempts, binge- and heavy drinking, e-cigarette and smokeless tobacco use, illicit drug use, and unwanted sexual contact.* These results are not specific to the Marines.

* Unwanted sexual contact in the HRBS is a broader construct than sexual assault, and these survey responses do not represent official reports of sexual assault.

Adapted from Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Health Affairs, Data Brief 2022-11, “DoD’s flagship survey helps the Department of Defense fulfill its mission to support a diverse, strong and ready force.” For more information on RAND and our work, visit www.rand.org.

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 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.

Significantly greater percentages of LGB personnel than non-LGB personnel reported serious psychological distress and probable PTSD, suicidal thoughts and attempts, binge- and heavy drinking, e-cigarette and smokeless tobacco use, illicit drug use, and unwanted sexual contact.* These results are not specific to the Marines.

* Unwanted sexual contact in the HRBS is a broader construct than sexual assault, and these survey responses do not represent official reports of sexual assault.

www.rand.org