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 reserve component.

Comparison with the U.S. General Population

Marine Corps reservists reported healthy body weights and met Healthy People 2020 goals for normal weight and obesity. They presented concerns in several other areas, however. Fewer than half of Marine Corps reservists reported getting adequate sleep, well below the Healthy People 2020 goal. Binge and heavy drinking were higher among Marine Corps reservists than the general population, and the rate of binge drinking did not meet the Healthy People 2020 goal. Their levels of tobacco and nicotine use were also greater than those for general population. Marine Corps reservists did not meet Healthy People 2020 goals for cigarette smoking and use of smokeless tobacco.

Their levels of psychological distress were greater than those of the general population, as were their levels of probable PTSD. Marine Corps reservists reported suicidal thoughts at a greater frequency than the 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 (3.4 percent for the Marine Corps Reserve and 9.4 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 allocated to subsets of respondents, or a service member panel survey could help to 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 Marine Corps Reservists

Results from Marine Corps Reserve Respondents to the HRBS

**Weight and Sleep Issues**

- 56.1% were overweight or obese, according to body mass index
- 41.5% met age-appropriate sleep quantity requirements
- 21.8% were moderately or severely bothered by sleep-related lack of energy
- 5.4% took sleep medications to help them sleep at least three times weekly

**Mental and Emotional Health**

- 9.1% met criteria for serious psychological distress in the past 30 days
- 12.2% met criteria for serious psychological distress in the past 12 months
- 7.5% met criteria for probable posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the past 30 days
- 8.5% had thought about attempting suicide in the past 12 months
- 0.8% reported a suicide attempt in the past 12 months
- 3.7% needed mental health services in the past 12 months but did not receive them
- 20.1% reported mental health service use in the past 12 months
- 32.7% said that seeking military mental health treatment damages one’s military career

**Substance Use**

- Alcohol, Tobacco, Illicit Drugs, and Prescription Drugs
  - 42.9% 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)
  - 9.6% were heavy drinkers (binge drinking at least one to two days a week in the past 30 days)
  - 27.0% viewed military culture as supportive of drinking
  - 36.3% reported any current tobacco or nicotine use
  - 13.8% were current cigarette smokers
  - 15.8% were current smokeless tobacco users
  - 14.1% were current e-cigarette users
  - 3.0% reported illicit drug use (mostly marijuana or synthetic cannabinoids) in the past 12 months
  - 2.3% 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)

**Physical Health and Functional Limitations**

- 32.4% reported one or more chronic medical conditions (e.g., high blood pressure) in the past 12 months
- 23.1% reported that pain (including headache) had bothered them a lot over the past 30 days
- 4.5% screened positive for mild traumatic brain injury

**Sexual Behavior and Health**

- 24.1% had had more than one sexual partner in the past 12 months
- 36.6% had sex with a new partner without using a condom in the past 12 months
- 1.8% reported contracting a sexually transmitted infection in the past 12 months
- 24.9% were at high risk for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- 14.5% 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
- 3.7% reported having or causing an unintended pregnancy in the past 12 months

**Sexual Orientation, Identity, and Health**

- 4.1% identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB)

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; cigarette, e-cigarette, and smokeless tobacco use; illicit drug use; unwanted sexual contact,* and having been physically assaulted. These results are not specific to the Marine Corps Reserve.

* 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.

**Deployment Experiences and Health**

- 36.9% reported at least one prior combat or noncombat deployment

Among those who had ever deployed:
- 72.3% reported at least one lifetime combat deployment
- 48.7% reported past exposure to combat trauma (i.e., knowing someone wounded in combat)
- 36.7% reported a deployment in the past 12 months

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