

February 16, 2015



THINGS TO KNOW

Report on Military Service Academies shows decline in sexual assault

The Department of Defense's annual assessment focusing on sexual violence and the Military Service Academies' effectiveness of policies, training, and procedures has been released. The findings were collected via an anonymous survey. The report captures instances of sexual violence that involve cadets/midshipmen as victims and/or subjects of sexual assault investigations from June 1, 2013 to May 31, 2014.

In the report, an *unrestricted report* of sexual assault is investigated by a Military Criminal Investigative Organization. *Restricted reports* are made to specified parties within the DoD to allow the victim to seek care. *Restricted reports* are confidential and are not investigated. The number of sexual assaults reported to authorities does not necessarily reflect the total number of sexual assaults, because sexual assault is grossly under-reported. The full report, the *Annual Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies (MSA): Academic Program Year (APY) 2013-2014*, can be accessed online at <http://tinyurl.com/mb7rwyz>. Here are some highlights:

1. Rates of sexual harassment decreased for women, but stayed the same for men. Overall, there was an increase in reports of sexual harassment.

- According to the *2014 Service Academy Gender Relations Survey*, 48% of Academy women and 10% of Academy men indicated some form of sexual harassment. This data shows a decrease in the prevalence of sexual harassment for Academy women, down from 51% in 2012. Rates for men stayed the same.

There were 20 reported complaints of sexual harassment (one formal complaint and 19 informal complaints). During 2012-13, there were 11 informal complaints. The breakdown for 2013-14:

- The U.S. Naval Academy saw the most complaints, with 15 informal complaints
- The U.S. Air Force Academy received four informal complaints
- The United States Military Academy received one formal complaint

- Cadets on why they didn't report sexual harassment:

- Thought it was not important enough to report
- Took care of it themselves by confronting the person who harassed them
- Wanted to forget about it and move on

2. Overall rates of unwanted sexual contact decreased. However, there was an increase in reporting cases of unwanted sexual contact.

- Unwanted sexual contact includes attempted or completed sexual intercourse, anal or oral sex, and sexual touching. In 2013-14, 8.2% of women and 1.1% of men experienced unwanted sexual contact. This is a decrease from 2012-13, when 12.4% of women and 2.0% of men experienced unwanted sexual contact.
- Of the women who experienced unwanted sexual contact, 62% indicated that they and/or the offender had been drinking before the assault. Of males who experienced unwanted sexual contact, 14% indicated that they and/or the offender had been drinking before the assault.

- About one in six of the estimated 327 cadet/midshipman victims who experienced unwanted sexual contact made a restricted or unrestricted report. Compared with 2011-12, about one in 10 victims who experienced unwanted sexual contact reported it.
- The 16% reporting rate is the highest ever recorded for the Military Service Academies. What that means: “In other words, the gap between reporting and prevalence among cadets/midshipmen has decreased to its lowest point in academic program year 2013- 2014. When cadets and midshipmen who experienced sexual assault come forward to make a report, the department can provide victims with support and hold offenders appropriately accountable.”
- An estimated 16.2% of women and 3.7% of men indicated experiencing some form of unwanted sexual conduct prior to entering the Academy.

3. Rates of sexual assault decreased across the Academies

- During 2013-14, there were 61 reported cases of sexual assault (36 unrestricted reports and 25 reports remaining restricted). Two of the cases occurred prior to the victims’ military service. In 2012-13, there were 70 reported cases of sexual assault.
- Sexual assault is defined as penetrating sexual crimes (or attempts to commit these acts) between adults and includes: rape, sexual assault, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, and sodomy (orally or anally).
- Unrestricted reports increased — from 29 in the previous academic program year — to 36 in 2013-14. Conversely, restricted reports decreased — from 41 reports in the previous academic program year — to 25 reports in 2013-14.
- What this means (according to DoD): “The increase in unrestricted reports indicates that more victims at the Military Service Academies chose to participate in the military justice process, suggesting greater confidence in the system.”

4. Continued training and policy review remain crucial tools to combat sexual violence

- The DoD’s goals are to use prevention initiatives to reduce the number of incidents and encourage reporting. A review will address social and professional retaliation associated with the reporting of sexual assaults, and will outline appropriate social media conduct. It includes recommendations for changes to law and/or policy.
- In a January 2014 memorandum, then-Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel outlined five initiatives on which Military Service Academies should focus. To view the memorandum, visit <http://tinyurl.com/ku6f2du>. All Military Service Academies are taking action to:
 1. Enhance strategic planning
 2. Enhance program effectiveness
 3. Advance and sustain appropriate culture
 4. Enhance comprehension
 5. Expand alcohol policies
- There is room to improve training and educational opportunities. For example, the majority of midshipmen in the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) indicated they received sexual assault (prevention) training in the past year. In 2014, of those who received training:
 - 13% of women and 19% of men indicated the training was very effective
 - 10% of women and 15% of men indicated the training was not at all effective

SOURCE: United States Department of Defense. (2015). *Annual report on sexual harassment and violence at the military service academies, academic program year 2013-2014*. Retrieved from http://sapr.mil/public/docs/reports/MSA/APY_13-14_MSA_Report.pdf