



2018 Navy Personal and Professional Choices Survey Summary



Purpose

This survey is designed to collect objective data for evaluating personnel issues that affect Sailors and their families, including family planning, medical care, pregnancy and parenthood, work/life balance and retention. Similar data may not exist in current personnel databases, so the Navy-wide Personal and Professional Choices Survey (formerly named the Pregnancy and Parenthood Survey) has served as the primary source of metrics related to these topics since 1988. This survey is executed in accordance with SECNAVINST 1000.10A.

Approach

In coordination with Navy's Research, Assessment and Modeling Branch (OPNAV N1T), Navy's Office of Talent Optimization (OTO) administered the 2018 Personal and Professional Choices Survey via Max.gov from 17 January through 26 February 2018. OTO sent survey invitation and reminder emails to a stratified random sample of 29,103 active duty women (46% of all active duty women) and 49,800 active duty men (19% of all active duty men) in pay grades E2-E9, CWO2-CWO5 and O1-O6 using email addresses registered in the Navy Standard Integrated Personnel System (NSIPS). Women were intentionally oversampled in the survey population to increase the validity of the results on topics unique to female Sailors (e.g., pregnancy, breastfeeding).

In the survey, men and women were asked a set of core questions about retention influencers, work/life balance, parenthood, family planning, birth control, adoption and overall leave policies. Men with children were asked additional questions about paternity leave, while women were asked additional questions about OB/GYN care, maternity leave and pregnancy experiences, including breastfeeding. Survey items were automatically skipped if they were not applicable to a respondent, based upon the respondent's previous answers.

Findings

The survey received responses from 12,682 participants (8,040 men and 4,642 women), yielding an overall response rate of 16%. The 2018 survey sample was 142% larger than the 2016 survey sample and produced 166% more responses. The confidence level of the 2018 dataset is 99% with a margin of error of $\pm 1\%$. Final survey results are unweighted, and all results below pertain only to the men and women who participated in the 2018 survey.

Marital Status and Colocation: Results indicate that Navy careers negatively impact the personal lives of men and women, with 52% of unmarried women and 45% of unmarried men reporting that serving in the Navy has decreased the likelihood they will get married. Although women in the Navy are less likely to be married than men (56% vs. 77%), women who are married are more likely to be in a dual-military relationship (either married or long-term partnership) than men (42% vs. 6%). Over half (56%) of Sailors in a dual-military relationship are satisfied with their ability to co-locate with their spouse, while only 21% are dissatisfied. 60% of married Sailors claim their Navy career has negatively impacted their spouses' employment opportunities. The 2018 survey included five more questions on marital status and colocation than the 2016 survey.

Family Planning: Attitudes towards family planning are similar to previous survey results with no significant changes. About half (43%) of Sailors agree their sea/shore flow is adequate for family planning, with officers more likely than enlisted to agree (50% vs. 39%). Of Sailors planning to Stay Navy until retirement, 49% think sea/shore rotations are adequate for family

planning, compared to only 30% who are undecided on their career plans or planning to get out, indicating that family planning may motivate some to leave the Navy. 13% of Sailors have used or considered using infertility treatments, and 21% are interested in freezing their sperm/eggs.

Birth Control and OB/GYN Care: The biggest issue with military OB/GYN care is access, with only half (48%) of women reporting easy access to OB/GYN care regardless of duty station. An additional 22% report easy access but only while on shore duty. Only 19% of participants indicated dissatisfaction with the quality of care provided by their OB/GYN and most are comfortable discussing contraception with their military provider (69%). While over half (56%) of Sailors report that Navy provides enough information on how to access birth control, they are less likely to believe the Navy provides enough information on potential birth control side effects (44%) and emergency contraception access (36%). Less than a quarter (22%) of women are aware that emergency contraception is available at their military treatment facility (MTF) without a prescription. Of the 48% of women who requested birth control before their most recent deployment, 89% received enough to last the entire deployment, a slight increase from 2016. Most women (58%) have used or considered using birth control for menstrual suppression.

Pregnancy: Navy's point-in-time pregnancy rate is relatively consistent with previous years, as about 9% of women are pregnant at any given time. About 17% of women reported being pregnant in FY-17, consistent with previous annual pregnancy rates. The majority of female officer pregnancies (76%) are planned compared to female enlisted pregnancies (47%), which is relatively consistent with previous years. Consistent with 2016, 20% of women were unmarried when they became pregnant, and a majority (74%) indicate the father was either a current or former servicemember. A quarter (25%) of women report being assigned to a deployable unit when they found out they were pregnant. Of these pregnant women attached to deployable unit, only 15% were *actually* deployed when they found out they were pregnant, consistent with 2016 results. Significantly more women in 2018 continued to work in the same job after becoming pregnant (65%) than in 2016, when only 15% of enlisted Sailors and 36% of officers continued in the same job. From 2016 to 2018, fewer women received information on antenatal and/or postpartum depression (33% decrease), physical fitness during pregnancy (20% decrease) and Shaken Baby Syndrome (15% decrease). Most women gave birth at a MTF (77%), an increase from 2014 and 2016, despite the majority of women preferring to give birth at a civilian hospital (52%). After childbirth, 86% of women took at least 31 days of convalescent leave, 61% took at least 31 days of maternity leave and 9% voluntarily shortened their operational deferment, primarily for career reasons. Most women (87%) passed both the Body Composition Assessment (BCA) and Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA) after the six-month postpartum exemption expired, with officers more likely to pass than enlisted Sailors, consistent with 2016 results. Most (76%) women were breastfeeding/pumping when they returned to work (down from 83% in 2016), with officers more likely than enlisted Sailors to breastfeed or pump at work. While most (88%) report that they were given time to breastfeed or pump at work, less than half report having access to a designated nursing room (45%) or refrigerator (43%). Half (48%) of women did not breastfeed or pump as long as they planned, with the most common issues being time constraints and difficulty producing milk.

Adoption: While only 1% of Sailors have completed the adoption process, 36% of these adoptions have occurred within the last three fiscal years. Enlisted Sailors are more likely than officers to start the adoption process, and women are more likely than men to start the process without a spouse or long-term partner (38% vs. 4%). Of Sailors who did not complete the adoption process, women are more likely to cite work-related factors than men (72% vs. 33%). The vast majority of adoptive parents did not take adoptive leave or regular leave following the adoption (84% and 74%, respectively). Written comments indicate Sailors are interested in

adoption but are concerned about their ability to adopt while in the Navy due to geographic instability. The 2018 survey included five more questions on adoption than the 2016 survey.

Parenthood and Childcare: Men in the Navy are more likely to have children than women (70% vs. 48%). There was an 11% increase in the percentage of men who are parents from 2016 to 2018 with no corresponding increase for women. The percentage of men and women with children is relatively consistent through ages 26-28 (32%), after which time the percentage of female parents significantly lags behind that of male parents. The percentage of female parents later increases to 68% at ages 33-35, compared to male parents at 75%, indicating that women may be waiting until later in their Navy career to have children or are leaving the Navy altogether. Approximately half (45%) of Sailors without children report that serving in the Navy has decreased the likelihood they will have or adopt children. Although most Sailors rely on the other parent to care for their child while deployed (64% of women and 96% of men), women are consistently more likely than men to report that a non-parent relative cares for their children (30% vs. 3%), consistent with 2016 results. Single parent rates have increased slightly from 2016, with women more likely to be single parents with sole custody than men (10% vs. 1%).

Leave Policies: Most Sailors (87%) believe both married and unmarried parents should qualify for parental leave. Leave satisfaction rates vary between men and women, with 48% of female parents, 37% of male parents and 20% of all adoptive parents satisfied with the amount of parental leave they were able to take. Although 58% of Sailors agree that their co-workers understand the importance of men taking parental leave, 37% of male parents report not taking any paternity leave after the birth of their child. Comments indicate that many Sailors believe paternity leave (also referred to as secondary caregiver leave) should be increased. The 2018 survey included nine more questions on leave policies than the 2016 survey.

Work/Life Balance and Command Attitudes: Sailors were most likely to hear the leaders at their current command *talk* about work/life balance (61%), but only 47% see their command leaders *demonstrate* work/life balance. The biggest discrepancy occurs with senior Navy leaders: 51% of Sailors report hearing senior leaders talk about work/life balance but only 29% have seen leaders demonstrate balance. A quarter (26%) of men think having a child negatively impacts a female Sailor's career, compared to 53% of women. Similarly, 67% of men agree that their command is supportive of pregnant Sailors, compared to only 55% of women. Most (59%) women who have been pregnant while in the Navy indicate they continued to feel valued by their command after informing them they were pregnant, although officers are more likely to than enlisted Sailors to report this perception (72% vs. 53%). While half (51%) of women felt valued by their new command (consistent with 2016 survey), only 34% believe they were transferred to a career-enhancing position. Most Sailors (60%) support female Sailors taking operational deferments after pregnancy. The 2018 survey included seven more work/life balance and command attitude questions than the 2016 survey.

Career Intentions and Retention Influencers: Most Sailors (65%) plan to remain in the Navy until retirement (consistent with 2016 survey). Men and women who plan on remaining in the Navy are more likely to have children than those who are undecided or planning to get out. Women and men indicate similar key influencers in their decision to stay in or leave the Navy compared to the 2014 and 2016 surveys. The primary influencers to stay include: job security/stability, loyalty to Nation/service, healthcare and education benefits, pay and retirement benefits. The primary influencers to leave include: impact of your Navy career on your spouse/family, impact of your Navy career on ability to have a family, work/life balance and unpredictable schedule.