

NPRST



Navy Personnel Research, Studies, and Technology
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research at work

2010 Navy Pregnancy and Parenthood Survey

Purpose

Although women make up about 15% of the active duty Navy, their opportunities have expanded in recent years. Women officers are now being assigned to submarines and the Congressionally mandated Military Leadership Diversity Commission and the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services have called for DoD to repeal gender-based assignment policies (Military Leadership Diversity Commission final report, 2011). Along with these expanded opportunities, Navy leadership continues to monitor the impact of pregnancy and parenthood issues on both men and women service members, as well as on the overall readiness of the Navy. These data do not exist in current medical or personnel databases and may be difficult to accurately extrapolate. The Navy-wide Pregnancy and Parenthood Survey has served, since 1988, as the primary source of metrics related to pregnancy, single parenthood, and related topics. The survey meets the requirements of SECNAVINST 1000.10 to collect objective data for evaluating pregnancy policies.

Approach

The 2010 Pregnancy and Parenthood Survey was administered by NPRST from September to November 2010 to a stratified random sample of about 14,400 women and 9,900 men in paygrades E2-E9 and O1-O5. Respondents were sent letters containing their unique user login as well as the survey website. Respondents were sent three reminder letters during the course of the administration period. As in previous years, the survey contained a common core of items for both men and women, including items about parenthood, single parenthood, family planning, sabbaticals, attitudes towards birth control and health care providers, and sources of training on sexual and reproductive health; the only differences were in gender-specific wording (e.g., “father a child” vs. “become pregnant”) and the addition of a section for women that asked about their pregnancy experiences and attitudes towards the maternity uniform outer garment. Survey items were skipped automatically if they were not applicable to a respondent based upon the respondent’s previous answers. All identifying information was removed from the data before analysis to maintain the anonymity of respondents. Results were statistically weighted by paygrade and gender to be representative of the entire Navy population.

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The recurring Navy Pregnancy and Parenthood Surveys are sponsored by the Office of Women's Policy within the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

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Findings

Over 5,000 men and women responded to the survey, yielding weighted response rates of 24% for men and 27% for women, similar to response rates on other recent Navy surveys. Margins of error for overall questions were no more than +/-2.6% for women and 4.0% for men.

Overall, trend results are consistent. Pregnancy rates are similar to previous years; results show that about 9% of enlisted women and 6% of officer women are pregnant at any point-in-time (snapshot), and about 13% of Navy women were pregnant in the previous fiscal year. Few women have orders to their next duty station when they become pregnant; those aboard deployable units are most likely to be not deployed, in workups, or have just returned from deployment when they become pregnant. Over 1/3 of enlisted and 3/4 of officer pregnancies are planned. Most officer women and almost half of enlisted women are not required to transfer or move because of their pregnancy. The percentage of enlisted women who breastfeed after giving birth continues to increase.

Single parenthood rates are similar to 2008 rates, with there being about 12,000 single Navy fathers and 6,000 single Navy mothers. Women are more likely than men to have custody (either sole or joint) of their children. Over half of enlisted women were unmarried when their child was born; about half of enlisted men and women officers and the majority of men officers become single parents through divorce. Although compliance with the Family Care Plan (which designates child care arrangements in the event of a deployment) is not 100%, most single parents and dual-military parents do have some type of child care plan in place in case they are deployed.

About half of enlisted women indicate their sea/shore rotation is good for family planning. About 6 in 10 of all Sailors believe the current operational deferment policy (12 months deferment post-delivery) should be left as is; almost 1/3 indicate that opening the operational deferment up to fathers would motivate them to remain in the Navy. The Career Intermission Pilot Program as defined on the survey has no impact on motivation to remain in the Navy for most Sailors.

Attitudes towards family planning are similar to previous results, although more enlisted than ever before indicate that birth control is the responsibility of the woman. Most usually use birth control, predominantly the pill and/or condom; a larger percentage than ever before indicate that they do not use birth control because they do not want to.

Most training about sexually transmitted infections and/or diseases occurs at General Military Training (GMT) for both genders. Training about birth control is most likely to occur for women with their health care providers while men are most likely to learn about birth control at GMT. Most think sexual health training should be taught at boot camp and/or GMT once a year.

Trends over the last 10 or more years show consistent findings (within a 10 percentage point window) in six key areas: (1) point-in-time and annual pregnancy rates have been relatively consistent since 1992; (2) rates of pregnancy planning have been consistent for both enlisted (currently

37%) and officers (currently 70%); (3) rates of single parenthood and single parent custody have been consistent since 1999 (currently 5% of men and 15% of women); (4) completion of the Family Care Plan has been consistent for women (currently almost 80%), while it has increased for men (currently about 50%) since 2001; (5) family planning attitudes have been similar since 2001, although slightly more enlisted women indicate they would have sexual intercourse without birth control if their partner wanted them to (now at 40%) and all groups have increased beliefs that birth control is the responsibility of the woman; and (6) about ¾ of most groups (since 1997) usually use birth control, although rates have dropped for enlisted men to about 66%.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the survey, a number of general recommendations are offered:

1. Publicize survey results
 - a. Publish Navy NewsStand article – “Debunking the Myths”
 - b. Provide press release to *Navy Times* and other media
 - c. Create Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) public service announcements
 - d. Include MCPON on future strategic communication plans
 - e. Post to Navy Personnel Command Website
 - Leverage the parent piece (i.e., Navy for Moms)
 - f. Provide follow-on briefings to Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Navy Bureau of Medicine, and others as requested
2. Research current training/education program efforts
3. Provide briefing on Navy pregnancy and parenthood policies at officer and enlisted leadership courses

NPRST is the Navy's Manpower and Personnel (M&P) research laboratory, dedicated to shaping the Navy's human resources vision while providing the research and products to attain it. Our goal is to improve Navy M&P processes and the life of every Sailor, from initial service application through retirement. For more information, please see our website www.nprst.navy.mil or contact us at nprstpao.fct@navy.mil.



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