

December 2007 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members: Tempo and Military OneSource Briefing

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to introduce a briefing on five topics included in the *December 2007 Status of Forces Surveys of Active Duty Members*: tempo, deployments since September 11, 2001, impact of deployment, OPS/PERSTEMPO, and Military OneSource. Trend comparisons are made (when available) for Service members overall, by Service, and by paygrade, and results for an additional 34 demographic subgroups are also presented.

Summary of Topic Covered in Briefing

Tempo

- 11% of members reported being currently deployed for more than 30 days—5 percentage points higher than the low of December 2004¹.

Deployments Since September 11, 2001

- 64% of members reported participating in any operation at least once since September 11, 2001—13 percentage points higher than the low of August 2004.
 - These members reported being deployed an average of 2.3 times and an average of 428 days.
 - 88% of these members reported being deployed to a combat zone or imminent danger/hostile fire area—9 percentage points higher than the low of March 2005.
 - 57% of these members reported being involved in combat operations—6 percentage points higher than the low of August 2005.
 - 41% of these members reported deployments were longer than expected—**6 percentage points higher than the low of December 2006**².
 - 16% of these members reported being currently deployed to a combat zone—5 percentage points higher than the lows of December 2004 and December 2006.
- 16% of members reported being under stop-loss at some time since September 11, 2001.

¹ Underline indicates a difference from the referenced survey that is considered neither negative nor positive.

² **Red font** indicates a negative difference from the referenced survey.

Impact of Deployments

- At least a quarter of members who were deployed at least once since 9-11-01 reported their greatest concerns while away were their *spouse's job or education demands* (29%—unchanged from August 2005), *managing expenses and bills* (28%—8 percentage points lower than the high of August 2005³), *difficulty maintaining emotional connection with spouse or family* (27%), *difficulty sleeping* (26%—unchanged from April 2006), and *safety of their family in the community* (25%—unchanged from August 2005).
- More than two-fifths of members deployed at least once since 9-11-01 reported they *appreciated their family and friends* (51%—13 percentage points lower than the high of August 2005) and *life* (41%—12 percentage points lower than the high of August 2005) more after deployment.
- 68% of members deployed at least once since 9-11-01, but not currently deployed reported they did not want support services after returning home—5 percentage points higher than the low of April 2006.
- At least one third of members who received support services after returning home from a deployment since 9-11-01 received support from *family readiness/support groups* (51%), *other military-sponsored programs* (37%), and *faith based organizations* (33%).
- At least half of members who received support services after returning home from a deployment since 9-11-01 reported they spoke with someone about *coping with stress* (55%), *family issues* (50%), and *marital issues* (50%).
- 41% indicated readjustment was *easy* following deployment, whereas 20% reported it was *difficult*—unchanged from April 2006.
- More than one-third of members who were deployed at least once since 9-11-01 and had children under 22 years old reported their children had increased *fear/anxiety* (38%) and *problem behavior at home* (35%), but became *closer to family members* and had increased *pride in having a military parent* (both 31%) (unchanged from April 2006).
- More than three-quarters of members who were deployed at least once since 9-11-01 and had children under 22 years old reported the following factors were important for coping with deployments: *spouse/guardian ability to maintain a stable household routine* (84%), *communications with the deployed parent* (82%), *spouse/guardian support for the deployment* (81%), *way family members deal with the deployment* (80%), and *geographic stability during the deployment* (78%) (unchanged from April 2006).

Details on OPS/PERSTEMPO

- At least half of active duty members reported participating in *mission support TAD/TDY* (61%—unchanged from November 2003) and *unit training* (49%—11 percentage points

³ Green font indicates a positive significant difference from the referenced survey.

higher than the low of November 2003, but 4 percentage points lower than the high of December 2005) while away in the 12 months before filling out the survey.

- 54% of members who were deployed at least once since September 11, 2001 were satisfied with deployment compensation and incentives, whereas 25% were dissatisfied—unchanged from December 2005. Almost three quarters (73%) indicated they were dissatisfied because *considering the risk and hardship, compensation was too little*—unchanged from December 2005.
- Members who were away in the 12 months before filling out the survey were most likely to indicate they used the Internet (93%—unchanged from December 2005) and commercial telephones (71%—unchanged from December 2005).
 - More than two thirds of these members (69%—6 percentage points lower than December 2005) indicated satisfaction with the Internet and 59% indicated satisfaction with commercial telephone service—unchanged from December 2005.
 - Members' reports of the monthly cost of these communication services remained unchanged from December 2005—highest cost with commercial telephones (\$31 a month) and lowest cost with DSN telephones (using payment methods other than prepaid calling cards) (\$10 a month).
- More than half (52%—unchanged from December 2005) indicated they used the postal/telegram service while away at least one day in the past 12 months.
 - About 10% of these members were dissatisfied with the postal/telegram service. Reasons for dissatisfaction included too much delay in receiving mail (57%) and did not receive all of the letters/packages that were sent (32%) (unchanged from December 2005).

Military OneSource

- 23% accessed Military One Source in the past 12 months—4 percentage points higher than the low of December 2006.
 - 56% of these members reported being satisfied with Military OneSource—unchanged from April 2006.
- 59% of those who had not used Military OneSource in the past 12 months said it was because they were not familiar with it—22% percentage points lower than the high of December 2004.

Survey Methodology

Data Sources

The *Status of Forces Surveys* (SOFS) is a series of Web-based surveys of the total force that allows the Department of Defense to (1) evaluate existing programs/policies, (2) establish baselines before implementing new programs/policies, and (3) monitor progress of programs/policies and their effects on the total force. By design, each SOFS includes a series of leading indicators to track changes over time.

The first Web-based SOFS for active duty members was conducted in July 2002. Regular administrations, approximately every four months, commenced in March 2003. Table 1 provides detailed information (e.g., administration dates, sample size, and response rate) on active duty survey administrations, to include the *1999 Survey of Active Duty Personnel* (1999 ADS) which had similar content.

Table 1.
Details on Survey Administrations

Survey	Administration Dates	Sample Size	Response Rate	Margin of Error ^a
December 2007	19 Nov 07 – 10 Jan 08	63,076	33%	±1.2%
August 2007	6 Aug – 13 Sept 07	37,652	32%	±1.6%
April 2007	26 Mar – 3 May 07	65,965	32%	±1.1%
December 2006	20 Nov 06 – 5 Jan 07	37,061	32%	±1.4%
August 2006	24 July – 31 Aug 06	39,389	28%	±1.5%
April 2006	27 Feb – 6 Apr 06	39,313	33%	±1.3%
December 2005	28 Nov 05 – 5 Jan 06	36,567	36%	±1.3%
August 2005	22 Aug – 27 Sep 05	35,461	35%	±1.4%
March 2005	25 Feb – 11 Apr 05	30,939	37%	±1.4%
December 2004	22 Nov 04 – 6 Jan 05	35,044	39%	±2.6%
August 2004	26 Jul – 2 Sep 04	38,112	40%	±1.4%
April 2004	5 Apr – 13 May 04	33,414	39%	±1.3%
November 2003	3 Nov – 11 Dec 03	33,607	38%	±1.4%
July 2003	21 Jul – 28 Aug 03	32,844	35%	±1.5%
March 2003	10 Mar – 17 Apr 03	34,929	35%	±1.4%
July 2002	8 Jul – 13 Aug 02	37,918	32%	±1.5%
<i>1999 Survey of Active Duty Personnel</i>	17 Sep 99 – 4 Jan 00	66,040	51%	±0.8%

^aThis is the full sample margin of error for estimates of 50% and represents the overall margin of error for the study.

The target population for all active duty SOFS consists of active duty members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force (1) who have at least six months service at the time the questionnaire is first fielded, (2) who are below flag rank when the sample is drawn six months before the survey, and

(3) excluding National Guard and Reserve members in active duty programs. Weights are used so that estimates from the survey represent the population.

The 1999 ADS was a large-scale, paper-and-pencil survey. The target population for the 1999 ADS consisted of all active duty Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard members below flag rank who had served at least six months of service at the time of survey mailings, as well as Reservists on active duty with the same rank and length of service requirements. In order to maximize comparability between the SOFS and the 1999 ADS, Coast Guard members and Reserve component members in full-time, active duty programs were excluded from the 1999 ADS data before analyses were conducted for this survey note.

Margins of Error

The complex sample designs used in SOFS and the 1999 ADS require weighting to produce population estimates such as percentages.⁴ This means that the typical rules of thumb for interpreting the validity of an estimate, such as the number of respondents, will overstate the reliability of the estimate. For this report, variance estimates were calculated using SUDAAN[®] PROC DESCRIPT (Research Triangle Institute, 2004).

By definition, sample surveys are subject to sampling error. Standard errors are estimates of the variance around population parameters, such as percentages or means, and are used to construct margins of error (i.e., confidence interval half-widths). Margins of error reported for the surveys overall in Table 1, and elsewhere in this report, are based on 95% confidence intervals.⁵

Tests of Significance for Subgroups

When reporting current survey results, the mean (or proportion) of each subgroup is compared⁶ to its respective “all other” group. The “all other” group refers to the total population minus the group being assessed. For example, Army’s “all other” group consists of Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force members. Excluding the subject group from the total enables an accurate test of whether the group differs from those not in the group.

Tests of Significance for Trends

Trend analyses on leading indicator items from SOFS administered between July 2002 and December 2007 are presented with Service and paygrade group comparisons. Limited comparisons of deployment status are also presented. In addition, several leading indicator items also appeared in the 1999 ADS. When comparable data exist, the 1999 results are also provided for an additional historical perspective on these issues. When comparing results across survey administrations, statistical tests are

⁴ As a result of differential weighting, only certain statistical software procedures, such as SUDAAN PROC DESCRIPT, correctly calculate standard errors, variances, or tests of statistical significance for stratified samples.

©Copyright 2004 by Research Triangle Institute, P.O. Box 12194, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-2194

⁵ The margin of error represents the degree of certainty that the percentage or mean would fall within the interval in repeated samples of the population. For example, if 55% of individuals selected an answer and the margin of error was ± 3 in repeated surveyed samples from the population, the percentage of individuals selecting the same answer would be between 52% (55 minus 3) and 58% (55 plus 3) in 95% of the samples.

⁶ DMDC used *t* tests in this survey note to test the difference between two means or proportions. This survey note highlights only differences significant at the $\alpha = .01$ level.

used to compare current estimates with previous results based on unrounded estimates. Statistically significant changes of more than one percentage point for proportions and five percent for means are noted. Previous proportions and means that are statistically significant from the current results are highlighted in their respective tables; absolute differences between previous and current results are also shown in the summary of findings.

Prepared by: Kristin Williams
Program Evaluation Branch
Human Resources Strategic Assessment Program, DMDC

For further information see <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/surveys>.