

August 2007 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members: Internal Management Controls, Performance Management, Programs and Services, and Commissaries and Exchanges Briefing

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to summarize a briefing on four topics covered in the *August 2007 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members* (SOFS-A): internal management controls, performance management, programs and services, and commissaries and exchanges. Trend comparisons are made (when available) for Service members overall, by Service, and by paygrade. August 2007 results are also presented for each question for an additional 34 demographic subgroups.

Summary of Topics Covered in Briefing

Internal Management Controls

- 10% of members reported they were familiar with internal management controls to a large extent; 52% were not familiar with internal management controls.
- 12% of members reported they were familiar with the "Check It" logo.
 - 52% of these members reported they learned about the logo from videos, 50% from posters, 31% from articles, 25% from presentations, and 19% from other sources.
 - 65% of these members reported they understood the message the logo represents to a large extent; 4% did not understand the logo's message.
 - 49% of these members reported that the internal management control awareness campaign was useful to the area in which they worked; 13% reported it was useless.
- 17% of members agreed their knowledge of internal management controls has increased in the last year, whereas 17% disagreed.

Performance Management

- 22% reported they were aware of the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) evaluation system.
 - 49% of these members reported they think NSPS will have a positive impact on Department of Defense personnel practices; 11% think it will have a negative impact.
- On average, members reported 122.5 people in their work group.
- Members with more than one person in their work group reported, on average, 13.4 federal civilian employees in their work group.

- At least half of members with federal civilian employees in their work unit agreed that *they have the job-relevant knowledge and skills to accomplish organizational goals (75%), they get the job done (69%), the work assignment process for them is fair and appropriate (59%), and the work unit is able to recruit civilian employees with the right skills (58%)*.
- 12% of members reported they had supervised federal civilian employees in the past 12 months.
 - At least half of these members agreed they *were skillful in counseling on performance expectations and conduct problems (69%), have/had useful, current performance plans for all of them (62%), and can/could easily assign and realign work among them (51%)*.

Programs and Services

- 34% of members used tuition assistance programs for college/higher education—**8 percentage points higher than the low of 1999**.¹
- About two thirds of members with children between the ages of 5 and 17 reported their children attended a *public traditional school (64%)*; while 18% reported their children attended a *Department of Defense-run school—6 percentage points higher than the low of August 2005*.²
 - About three fourths of these members were satisfied with the *public traditional school (72%—unchanged from August 2005)* and the *DoD-run school (76%—unchanged from August 2005)* their children attend.
- More than two fifths of members used on-base bowling centers (56%—unchanged since July 2003), outdoor recreation programs or facilities (53%—unchanged since July 2003), libraries (46%—**7 percentage points lower than the low of July 2003**), and community (recreation) center programs or facilities (45%—**9 percentage points higher than the low of July 2003**).
- 53% of members deployed for more than 30 days at the time the survey was fielded were satisfied with their access to the Internet.
- 83% of members reported they would use off-base recreation programs at a reduced cost.
- 82% of members agreed the military provides programs that meet the unique cultural and ethnic needs of military members and their families—**3 percentage points higher than the low of July 2003**.
 - About two fifths of identified members who disagreed reported that more programs incorporating cultural traditions (44%—7 percentage points lower than the high of August 2005) would be helpful in meeting cultural and ethnic needs of members and their families.

¹Green font indicates a positive difference from the referenced survey.

²Underline indicates a difference from the referenced survey that is considered neither negative nor positive.

Commissaries and Exchanges

- 90% indicated they or their family used a commissary in the past 12 months—3 percentage points lower than the high of July 2003.
 - More than four fifths of these members were satisfied with quality of merchandise (86%), quality of service they receive (83%), and their commissary overall (81%)—all unchanged since July 2003.
 - 68% of these members indicated safety and security were better at the commissary than other stores in the community—unchanged from August 2005.
 - These members reported it takes them an average of 15 minutes to get to the nearest commissary—unchanged from August 2005.
- 90% indicated they or their family used an exchange in the past 12 months—3 percentage points lower than the high of July 2003.
 - At least two thirds of these members were satisfied with the quality of merchandise (75%—unchanged since July 2003); convenience (71%—unchanged from August 2005); quality of service (70%—**5 percentage points lower than the high of July 2003**); exchange, in general (68%—unchanged since July 2003); and hours of operation (66%—unchanged from August 2005).
 - 65% of these members indicated safety and security were better at the exchange than other stores in the community —unchanged from August 2005.
 - These members reported it takes them an average of 15 minutes to get to the nearest exchange—unchanged from August 2005.
- 58% of members indicated the exchange as a benefit of military service is important.
- The average number of times members and/or their families shop at military exchanges in an average month was 12.4 times.
- 63% of members indicated it is important that exchanges contribute a portion of profits to quality of life programs.

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.

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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
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.³ 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.⁴

Tests of Significance for Subgroups

When reporting current survey results, the mean (or proportion) of each subgroup is compared⁵ 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 items from SOFS administered between July 2002 and August 2007 are presented with Service and paygrade group comparisons. When comparing results across survey administrations, statistical tests are 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.

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

³ 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.

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⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.