



U.S. Department of Defense

Factor Rating Interpretation Guide Fairness

What is Fairness?

Fairness is the perception that formal and informal organizational policies, practices, and procedures regarding information sharing, job opportunities, and promotions are based on merit, inclusion, equality, and respect.¹⁰

The following items are used to assess *Fairness* on the DEOCS using a five-point response scale from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. Participants are asked to think about the past three months when responding, or to think about their time with their current unit/organization if they joined less than three months ago.

- Training opportunities, awards, recognition, and other positive outcomes are distributed fairly.
- Discipline and criticism are administered fairly.

Why is it important?

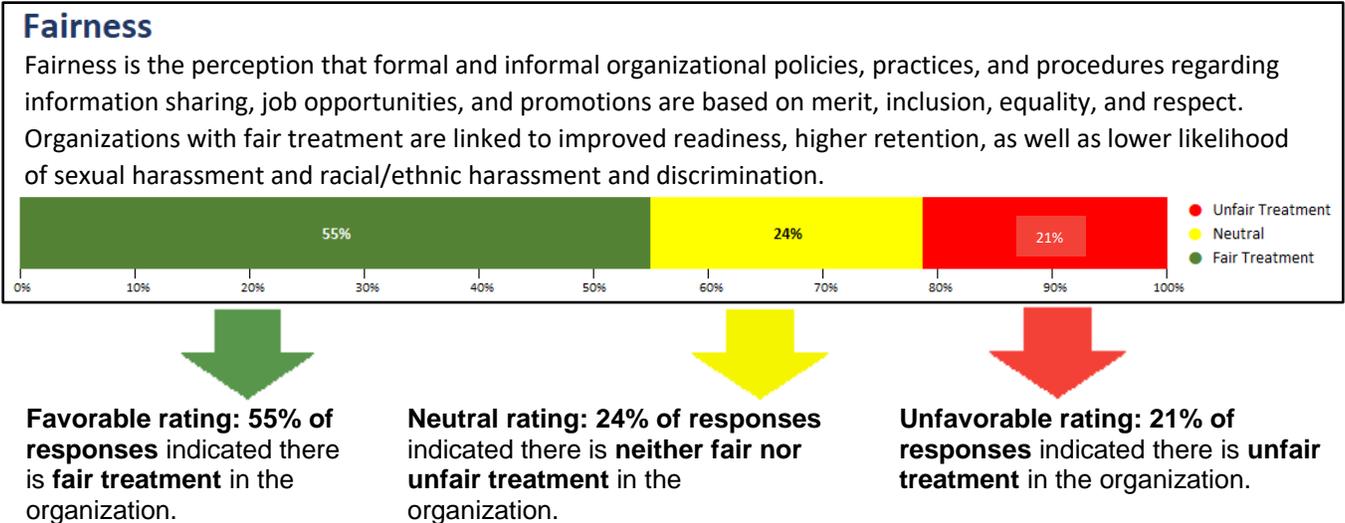
Research finds that perceptions of organizational *Fairness* are associated with increased readiness, retention, and likelihood of reduced risk for racial/ethnic harassment/discrimination and sexual harassment. Studies consistently show that employee's positive or negative perceptions of their workgroup and organization depends on their perception of whether their own treatment is the same as those extended to members of other groups. If employees feel they are being treated unfairly, they are more likely to develop a feeling of being undervalued and may withdraw. This can then lead to poor performance and turnover intentions.^{1,2} Similarly, a 2014 study found that perceptions of unfair treatment among clusters of employees, such as aging workers or those with disabilities, has been shown to negatively impact workgroup performance and decrease turnover intentions.^{3,4} Finally, a study of organizational justice in the federal workplace found that organizational justice was linked to employee satisfaction, loyalty to senior leadership, and cooperation⁵, which highlights links to increased work performance and lower risk of turnover intentions.

A broad set of literature finds that perceived organizational *Fairness* climate is correlated with incidences of sexual harassment.^{6,7} An employee's perception that their organization is procedurally just and will fairly deal with unacceptable behavior are more likely to have fewer incidences of sexual harassment. As shown in a study of U.K. police officers, participants who reported higher levels of perceived organizational tolerance to harassment and lower perceptions of organizational justice reported experiencing more frequent sexual harassment.⁸ Additionally, in a study of military members, when greater value is placed on justice climates there are lower incidences of sexual harassment. The authors suggest that justice climate, when managed successfully, is a protective factor against incidences of sexual harassment.⁹

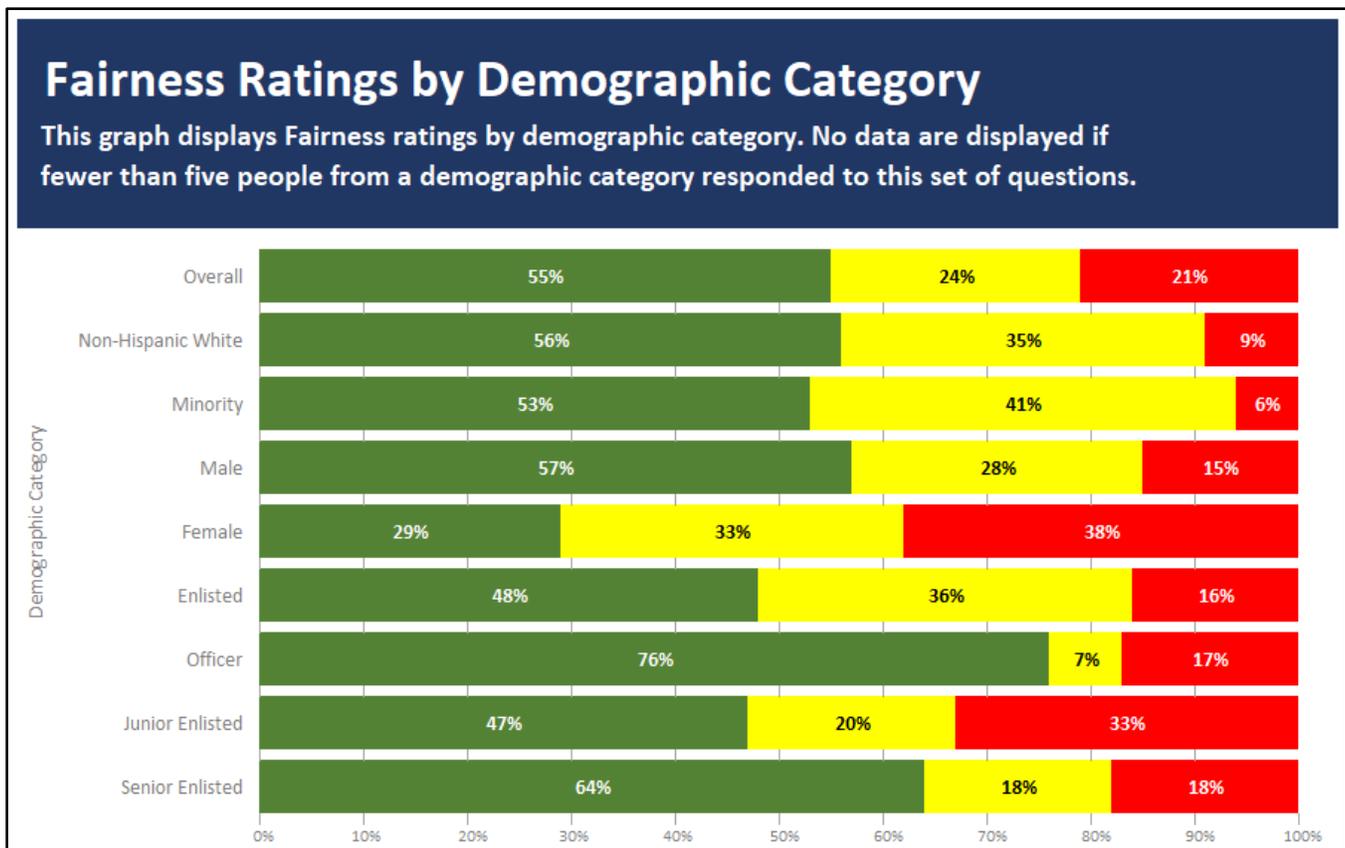
For more information on how to review your DEOCS results with these key outcomes in mind, please see the "Strategic Target Outcome Guide" in the Quick Links menu of the DEOCS dashboard.

How do I read my factor ratings?

The DEOCS dashboard displays results for *Fairness* in a stacked bar graph showing ratings for **Unfair Treatment**, **Neutral**, and **Fair Treatment**. Because *Fairness* is a factor that is measured by multiple questions, you should interpret the results as “X% of responses” (not participants). An example is shown below



For the graph showing results by demographic categories, the percentages represent the percentage of responses from each demographic category that were favorable, neutral, or unfavorable.



The first bar will always show the overall results and will be the same percentages that are shown in the stacked bar graph. The next bars will represent various demographic categories

for your organization. These results can help determine whether some groups of people in your organization have particularly high or low perceptions of climate factors. In addition, you may have different categories than in the example above. If your organization did not have any participants from a particular demographic category or had fewer than five participants from a particular category, you would not see those categories in your graph. For more information on how the demographic groups are created, please see the “Data Overview” in the Quick Links menu of the DEOCS dashboard.

In this example, the favorable ratings (marked in green) can be interpreted as:

- 56% of responses from non-Hispanic White participants indicated fair treatment, while 53% of responses from minority participants indicated fair treatment;
- 57% of responses from male participants indicated fair treatment, while 29% of responses from female participants indicated fair treatment;
- 48% of responses from enlisted participants indicated fair treatment, while 76% of responses from officers indicated fair treatment;
- 47% of responses from junior enlisted participants indicated fair treatment, while 64% of responses from senior enlisted participants indicated fair treatment.

The neutral ratings (marked in yellow) can be interpreted as:

- 35% of responses from non-Hispanic White participants indicated neither fair nor unfair treatment, while 41% of responses from minority participants indicated neither fair nor unfair treatment;
- 28% of responses from male participants indicated neither fair nor unfair treatment, while 33% of responses from female participants indicated neither fair nor unfair treatment;
- 36% of responses from enlisted participants indicated neither fair nor unfair treatment, while 7% of responses from officers indicated neither fair nor unfair treatment;
- 20% of responses from junior enlisted participants indicated neither fair nor unfair treatment, while 18% of responses from senior enlisted participants indicated neither fair nor unfair treatment.

The unfavorable ratings (marked in red) can be interpreted as:

- 9% of responses from non-Hispanic White participants indicated unfair treatment, while 6% of responses from minority participants indicated unfair treatment;
- 15% of responses from male participants indicated unfair treatment, while 38% of responses from female participants indicated unfair treatment;
- 16% of responses from enlisted participants indicated unfair treatment, while 17% of responses from officers indicated unfair treatment;
- 33% of responses from junior enlisted participants indicated unfair treatment, while 18% of responses from senior enlisted participants indicated unfair treatment.

You may also see trends over time for your *Fairness* favorable rating if there are previous surveys with the same unit identification code (UIC) and the same commander/leader.

When applicable, trends over time are available in the dashboard by clicking on this icon: . They also appear in the PDF reports as a table. Even if your report includes trends over time, the results may not be comparable in certain circumstances. It is important to understand differences in roster size and roster composition at different time points as these items may impact comparability of trend results. Take a close look at the number of participants registered, surveys returned, and the response rate for any surveys for which trends are available to report; use caution when comparing trends over time if there are big differences in these numbers between surveys. Other things, such as deployments or changes in policy, may also make trends less comparable. For more information on factor rating trends, please

see the “Data Overview” in the Quick Links menu of the DEOCS dashboard.

Finally, you may see an alert  for your *Fairness* ratings. This means that your unit’s/organization’s favorable rating for *Fairness* is **very low** compared to the other favorable ratings for this factor from all other units/organizations that completed a DEOCS. When applicable, this alert icon appears in the dashboard inside the “Protective Factors – Favorable Ratings” heading; click on the icon to see if *Fairness* is listed in the table. The alert icon may also appear in the *Fairness* section of the PDF reports. To identify whether your *Fairness* ratings receive an alert, cut-off scores were created by rank-ordering all favorable ratings for this factor. If your favorable rating for *Fairness* is below the cut-off score, this icon will appear in your report. There are unique cut-off scores for each factor. Because of this, you may notice that some of the factors for which you have an alert have very different ratings. For more information on how these alerts are created, please see the “Data Overview” in the Quick Links menu of the DEOCS dashboard.

How are my unit’s/organization’s ratings created?

Fairness ratings are created by combining responses to two questions from a five-point *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree* scale, as shown in the example below.

Fairness Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Training opportunities, awards, recognition, and other positive outcomes are distributed fairly.	9% (18)	11% (22)	26% (54)	34% (70)	21% (43)	100% (207)
Discipline and criticism are administered fairly.	4% (19)	14% (29)	22% (45)	19% (40)	36% (75)	100% (208)
	Unfair Treatment		Neutral	Fair Treatment		Total responses 415
	$(18+22+19+29) / 415 =$ 21%		$(54+45) / 415 =$ 24%	$(70+43+40+75) / 415 =$ 55%		

The table above displays the percentage of responses (and number of responses in parentheses) for each question across the five response options (*Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, *Agree*, and *Strongly Agree*). For the first question, 22 participants selected *Disagree*; this represents 11% of participants that responded to this question ($22 / 207 = .106$ or 11%).

Note that percentages are calculated out of the total number of participants responding to that question and not the total number of participants taking the survey. Participants can skip questions, so you may notice that total responses to questions vary. In the above example, 207 people responded to the first question so all percentages in this row use 207 as the denominator. 208 people responded to the second question, so all percentages in this row use 208 as the denominator. In addition, factor ratings may not always add to 100% due to rounding.

- The **unfavorable** rating, named **Unfair Treatment**, is a combination of all responses of *Strongly Disagree* and *Disagree* from **both** questions.

- For this example, 18 people strongly disagreed with the first question, while 22 disagreed. In addition, 19 people strongly disagreed with the second question and 29 disagreed. In total, 88 responses were either *Strongly Disagree* or *Disagree* to these two questions ($18+22+19+29 = 88$).
- To produce an overall score for **Unfair Treatment** representing unfavorable reactions to these two questions, the total number of responses (88) is divided by the total number of people who responded to both *Fairness* questions. 207 people responded to the first question, and 208 the second, for a total of 415 responses to both questions. **This produces an Unfair Treatment rating of 21% ($88 / 415 = .2120$).**
- To create the **Neutral** rating, the same process above is followed, except the score is created from only one response option. The *Neither Agree nor Disagree* responses are added from both questions.
 - For this example, there are 99 *Neither Agree nor Disagree* responses across both questions ($54+45 = 99$). This total is divided by the total number of responses to all of the questions ($99 / 415 = .2386$). **This rounds to a Neutral rating of 24%.**
- To create the **favorable** rating, named **Fair Treatment**, the *Strongly Agree* and *Agree* responses are combined.
 - For this example, that is $70+43+40+75 = 228$ total responses of either *Strongly Agree* or *Agree*. This total is divided by the total number of responses to all of the questions ($228 / 415 = .5494$). **This rounds to a Fair Treatment rating of 55%.**

How do I know if my factor ratings are good or bad?

The DEOCS team is working on a data-driven approach that will help you understand what a rating means for an organization's likelihood of positive or negative outcomes. In the meantime, we recommend using the following strategies to help put your *Fairness* ratings into context and understand whether actions should be taken to address low favorable ratings:

1. If applicable, review the information in the alert icon  to see if your *Fairness* ratings are called out. This icon would appear in the dashboard and in the PDF reports if your unit's/organization's favorable rating for *Fairness* is very low compared to all other units/organizations that completed a DEOCS. You should consider taking action to raise this rating.
2. Look at the Item Summary table on the *Fairness* details page to understand which questions may be driving your favorable rating. This factor is created from two questions, so compare the percentage of participants who selected *Strongly Agree* or *Agree* to each question. If there is one question that has a lower percentage of participants who selected *Strongly Agree* or *Agree*, this question is the one driving a lower favorable rating and could help you pinpoint more specific actions to increase your favorable rating for *Fairness*.
3. Examine the bar graph showing the overall favorable rating for *Fairness* and the favorable ratings by various demographic groups. Look at each group's rating in relation to the overall unit/organization rating. If any groups have particularly low favorable ratings for *Fairness*, this could help you plan actions to increase your favorable rating within areas of your organization.

4. If applicable, review your *Fairness* favorable rating trends over time. You can view these trends by clicking on this icon  in the dashboard; they also appear as a table in the PDF reports. Take note if your ratings are going down over time. You may need to take action to reverse this trend.

Factor Improvement Tools for Fairness

The following resources may be useful as you make plans or take action to improve your *Fairness* ratings. Each resource listing contains a description, a link, and the relevant audience. Some resources may be more appropriate for the commander/leader, unit/organization personnel, survey administrators, or the Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce (IPPW); the relevant audience advises which group may benefit from use of the recommended resource.

- **DoD Board on Diversity and Inclusion Report.** Summary and recommendations on diversity and inclusion in the Military.
<https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/18/2002554852/-1/-1/0/DOD-DIVERSITY-AND-INCLUSION-FINAL-BOARD-REPORT.PDF>
Audience: Commander/Leader, survey admin, IPPW

Scientific Research References on Fairness

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10. Colquitt, J.A. (2001). On the dimensionality of organizational justice: A construct validation of a measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 386-400.
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