



U.S. Department of Defense

Factor Rating Interpretation Guide Leadership Support

What is Leadership Support?

Leadership Support is the perception that leaders build trust, encourage goal attainment and professional development, promote effective communication, and support teamwork.⁵

The DEOCS asks participants to rate their immediate supervisor on *Leadership Support*. The following items are used to assess *Leadership Support* 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.

- I have trust and confidence in my immediate supervisor.
- My immediate supervisor listens to what I have to say.
- My immediate supervisor treats me with respect.
- My immediate supervisor cares about my personal well-being.
- My immediate supervisor provides me with opportunities to demonstrate my leadership skills.
- I would not experience reprisal or retaliation from my immediate supervisor if I went to them with concerns.

Note: Survey questions may differ depending on whether the organization is a military unit, Military Service Academy, or civilian organization. Please see the sample survey for each population on the Assessment to Solutions web site (<https://www.defenseculture.mil/Assessment-to-Solutions/A2S-Home/>) for exact wording.

Why is it important?

Research consistently shows that *Leadership Support* has an influence on readiness¹ and retention.^{2,3,4} A systematic narrative review of 50 studies showed that lack of *Leadership Support* can cause a significant health hazard in the military work environment and can negatively impact performance and increase turnover intentions.⁵ Similarly, a study of military employees found that supervisor support had a direct impact on the employee's mental health and turnover intentions. More specifically, increased supervisor support was linked to lower mental health issues (i.e., headaches, mental confusion) and higher retention intentions.⁶ This coincides with a study that examined the military status of active duty Army soldiers 12 months following a return from Iraq deployment. The study found that while Service members are prone to military attrition early in their career, individuals reporting lower levels of leader support were more than twice as likely to separate from Service as those reporting higher levels of support from their peers and leaders.⁷

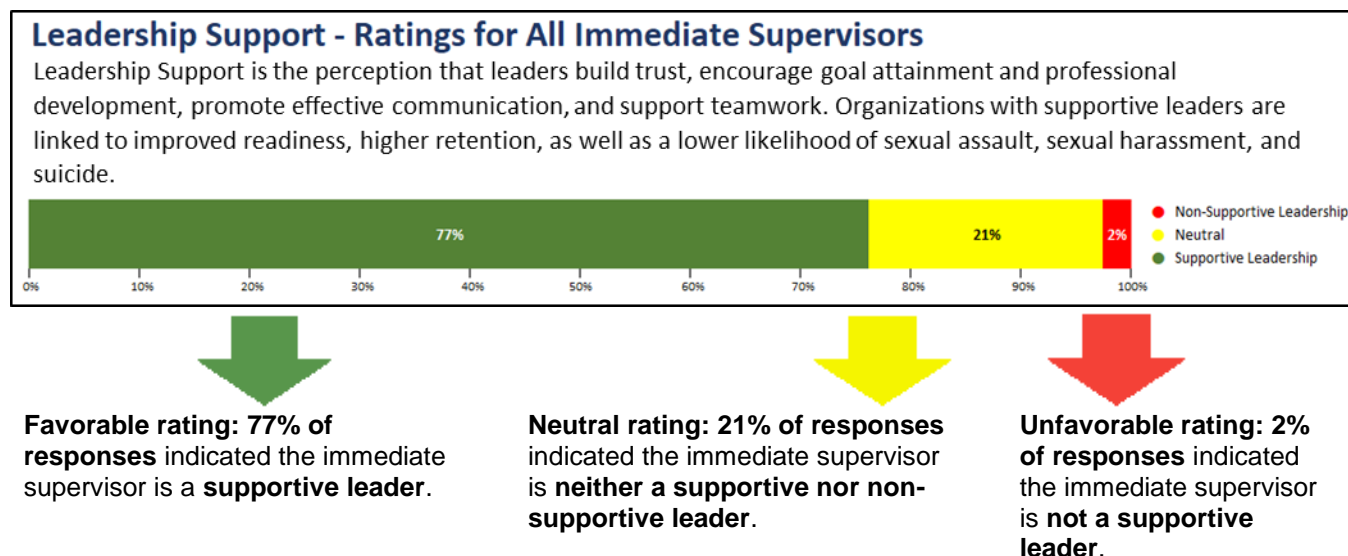
Research also links *Leadership Support* as a protective factor against sexual harassment, sexual assault, and suicidal ideation. For example, a study looking at harassment by leaders found that perceived positive *Leadership Support* was associated with establishing an ethical organizational climate which was associated with promoting formal sexual harassment policies through action.⁸ Similarly, a lack of perceived *Leadership Support* was shown to be associated with an increased risk for sexual assault within the unit and sexual harassment at the individual level.⁹ *Leadership Support* was also noted as a protective factor against suicidal behaviors. A study of Army National Guard soldiers found that perceiving unit leaders as

those who the soldier might trust and confide was associated with reduced suicidal behaviors.¹⁰

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.

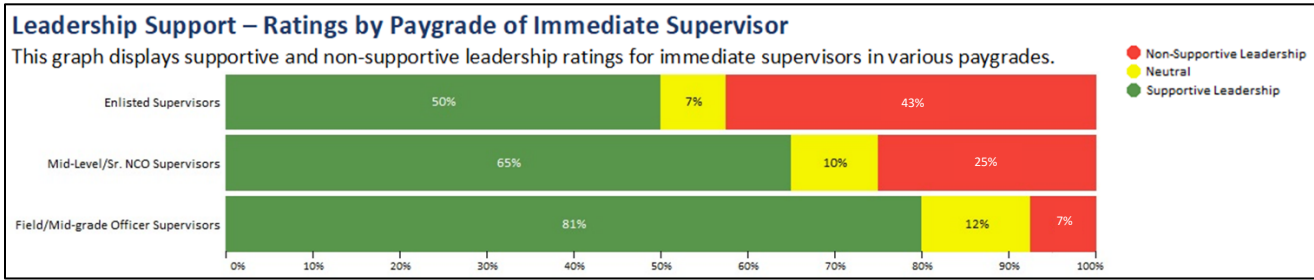
How do I read my factor ratings?

The DEOCS dashboard displays results for *Leadership Support* in a stacked bar graph showing ratings for **Non-Supportive Leadership**, **Neutral**, and **Supportive Leadership**. Because *Leadership Support* 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:



If your unit/organization had enough participants, you may also see these ratings broken down by paygrade of immediate supervisor in additional stacked bar graphs. On the survey, participants were asked to select the paygrade of their immediate supervisor and at least five responses were needed in order to display these results. For example, if you see *Leadership Support* ratings for enlisted supervisors, this means that at least five participants indicated their immediate supervisor was an enlisted member and answered the six questions about *Leadership Support*. If your unit/organization has immediate supervisors who are enlisted members, but you do not see ratings for them, it may be because there were fewer than five participants who indicated their immediate supervisor was an enlisted member.

The example below shows results for multiple paygrades of immediate supervisors, including enlisted supervisors, mid-level or senior NCO supervisors, and field or mid-grade officer supervisors. An example of how to read these ratings is provided for field or mid-grade officer supervisors, but the other paygrades can be interpreted in a similar manner.



Favorable rating: 81% of responses indicated the field or mid-grade officer supervisors are **supportive leaders**.

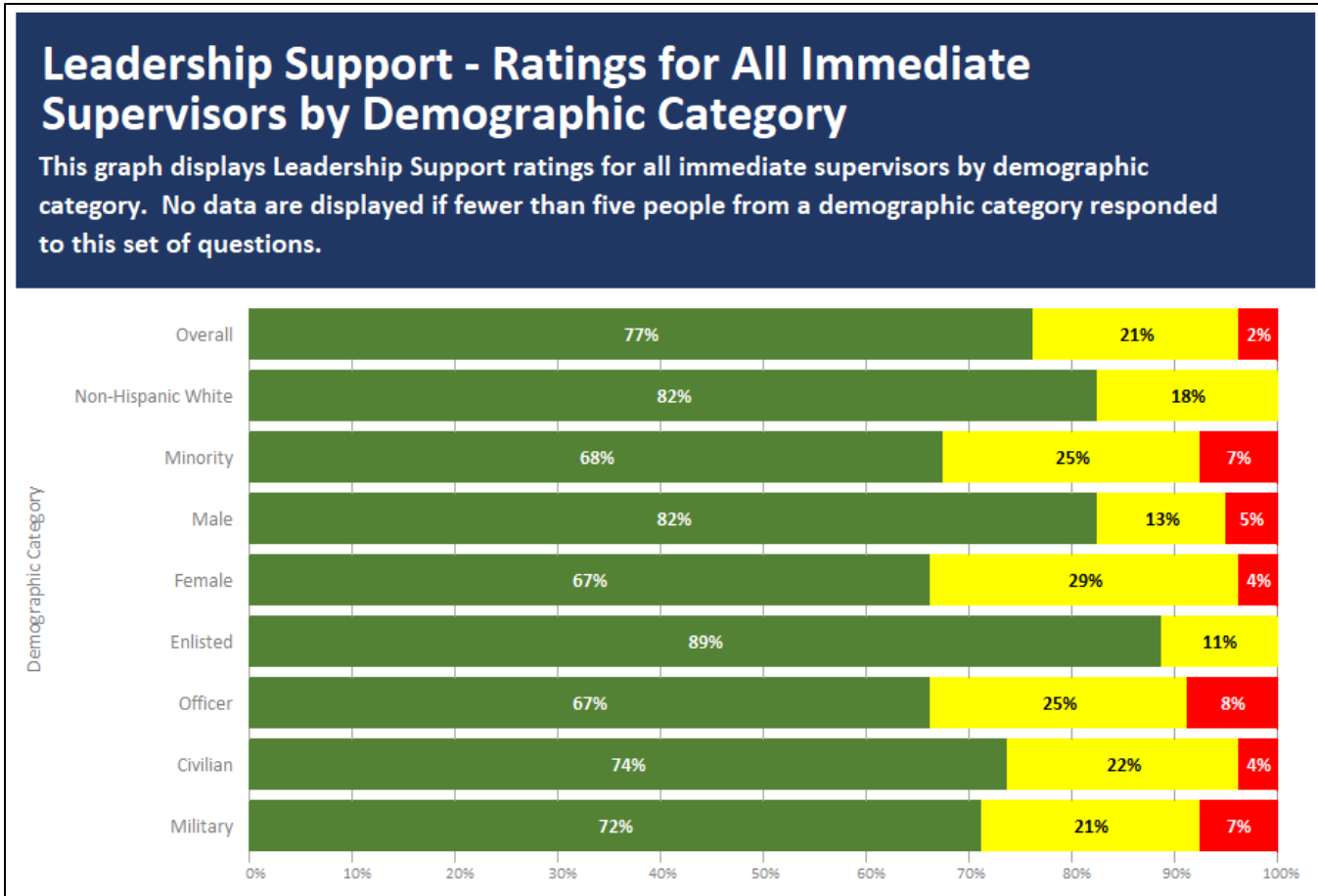


Neutral rating: 12% of responses indicated the field or mid-grade officer supervisors are **neither supportive nor non-supportive leaders**.



Unfavorable rating: 7% of responses indicated the field or mid-grade officer supervisors are **not supportive leaders**.

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:

- 82% of responses from non-Hispanic White participants indicated the immediate supervisor is a supportive leader, while 68% of responses from minority participants indicated the immediate supervisor is a supportive leader;
- 82% of responses from male participants indicated the immediate supervisor is a supportive leader, while 67% of responses from female participants indicated the immediate supervisor is a supportive leader;
- 89% of responses from enlisted participants indicated the immediate supervisor is a supportive leader, while 67% of responses from officers indicated the immediate supervisor is a supportive leader;
- 74% of responses from civilian participants indicated the immediate supervisor is a supportive leader, while 72% of responses from military participants indicated the immediate supervisor is a supportive leader.

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


- 18% of responses from non-Hispanic White participants indicated the immediate supervisor is neither supportive nor non-supportive, while 25% of responses from minority participants indicated the immediate supervisor is neither supportive nor non-supportive;
- 13% of responses from male participants indicated the immediate supervisor is neither supportive nor non-supportive, while 29% of responses from female participants indicated the immediate supervisor is neither supportive nor non-supportive;
- 11% of responses from enlisted participants indicated the immediate supervisor is neither supportive nor non-supportive, while 25% of responses from officers indicated the immediate supervisor is neither supportive nor non-supportive;
- 22% of responses from civilian participants indicated the immediate supervisor is neither supportive nor non-supportive, while 21% of responses from military participants indicated the immediate supervisor is neither supportive nor non-supportive.

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


- 0% of responses from non-Hispanic White participants indicated the immediate supervisor is not a supportive leader, while 7% of responses from minority participants indicated the immediate supervisor is not a supportive leader;
- 5% of responses from male participants indicated the immediate supervisor is not a supportive leader, while 4% of responses from female participants indicated the immediate supervisor is not a supportive leader;
- 0% of responses from enlisted participants indicated the immediate supervisor is not a supportive leader, while 8% of responses from officers indicated the immediate supervisor is not a supportive leader;
- 4% of responses from civilian participants indicated the immediate supervisor is not a supportive leader, while 7% of responses from military participants indicated the immediate supervisor is not a supportive leader.

You may also see trends over time for your *Leadership Support* favorable ratings 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. First, the questions used to measure this factor changed from the DEOCS 5.0 to the current version, DEOCS 5.1. It was measured using nine questions on DEOCS 5.0 and is now measured by only six questions. There were also slight wording changes between versions. Use caution when comparing trends from DEOCS 5.0 to 5.1 for this factor in particular. Second, it is important to understand differences in roster size and roster composition at different time points as these items may also 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 *Leadership Support* ratings for immediate supervisors. This means that your unit's/organization's favorable rating for *Leadership Support* 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 *Leadership Support* is listed in the table. The alert icon may also appear in the *Leadership Support* section of the PDF reports. To identify whether your *Leadership Support* ratings receive an alert, cut-off scores were created by rank-ordering all favorable ratings for this factor. If your favorable rating for *Leadership Support* 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?

Leadership Support ratings for all immediate supervisors are created by combining responses to six questions from a five-point *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree* scale, as shown in the example below.

Leadership Support Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I have trust and confidence in my immediate supervisor.	1% (3)	1% (5)	24% (108)	46% (206)	28% (124)	100% (446)
My immediate supervisor listens to what I have to say.	1% (4)	2% (7)	23% (102)	43% (193)	32% (142)	100% (448)
My immediate supervisor treats me with respect.	1% (5)	0% (2)	14% (62)	55% (243)	30% (132)	100% (444)
My immediate supervisor cares about my personal well-being.	1% (6)	1% (3)	19% (85)	49% (217)	30% (131)	100% (442)
My immediate supervisor provides me with opportunities to demonstrate my leadership skills.	1% (4)	1% (5)	24% (107)	30% (132)	44% (196)	100% (444)
I would not experience reprisal or retaliation from my immediate supervisor if I went to them with concerns.	1% (6)	1% (5)	22% (98)	31% (137)	45% (200)	100% (446)
	Non-Supportive Leadership		Neutral	Supportive Leadership		Total responses 2,670
	55 / 2,670 = 2%		562 / 2,670 = 21%	1,128 / 2,670 = 77%		

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, five participants selected *Disagree*; this represents 1% of participants that responded to this question ($5 / 446 = .011$ or 1%).


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, 446 people responded to the first question so all percentages in this row use 446 as the denominator. 448 people responded to the second question, so all percentages in this row use 448 as the denominator. In addition, factor ratings may not always add to 100% due to rounding.

- The **unfavorable** rating, named **Non-Supportive Leadership**, is a combination of all responses of *Strongly Disagree* and *Disagree* from the **six** questions in the *Leadership Support* scale.
 - For this example, three people strongly disagreed with the first question, while five disagreed. In addition, four people strongly disagreed with the second question and seven disagreed, five people strongly disagreed with

- the third question and two disagreed, and so on. A total of 55 responses were either *Strongly Disagree* or *Disagree* to these six questions ($3+5+4+7+5+2+6+3+4+5+6+5 = 55$).
- To produce an overall score for **Non-Supportive Leadership** representing unfavorable reactions to these six questions, the total number of responses (55) is divided by the total number of people who responded to all of the *Leadership Support* questions. 446 people responded to the first question, 448 the second, and so on for a total of 2,670 responses to the questions. **This produces a Non-Supportive Leadership rating of 2% ($55 / 2,670 = .0206$).**
 - 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 all six questions.
 - For this example, there are 562 *Neither Agree nor Disagree* responses across all questions ($108+102+62+85+107+98 = 562$). This total is divided by the total number of responses to all of the questions ($562 / 2,670 = .2105$). **This rounds to a Neutral rating of 21%.**
 - To create the **favorable** rating, named **Supportive Leadership**, the *Strongly Agree and Agree* responses are combined.
 - For this example, that is $206+124+193+142+243+132+217+131+132+196+137+200 = 2,053$ total responses of either *Strongly Agree* or *Agree*. This total is divided by the total number of responses to all of the questions ($2,053 / 2,670 = .7689$). **This rounds to a Supportive Leadership rating of 77%.**

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 *Leadership Support* 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 *Leadership Support* ratings for immediate supervisors are called out. This icon would appear in the dashboard and in the PDF reports if your unit's/organization's favorable rating for *Leadership Support* 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 *Leadership Support* details page to understand which questions may be driving your favorable rating. This factor is created from six questions, so compare the percentage of participants who selected *Strongly Agree* or *Agree* to each question. If there are questions that have a lower percentage of participants who selected *Strongly Agree* or *Agree*, these questions are driving a lower favorable rating and could help you pinpoint more specific actions to increase your favorable rating for *Leadership Support*.
3. Examine the bar graph showing the overall favorable rating for *Leadership Support* 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 *Leadership Support*, this could help you plan actions to increase

your favorable rating within areas of your organization.

4. If applicable, review your *Leadership Support* 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 Leadership Support

The following resources may be useful as you make plans or take action to improve your *Leadership Support* 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.

- **Attitude Reflects Leadership: The Role of Emotional Intelligence.** Explains emotional intelligence and provides resources for tests to measure emotional intelligence.
<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2021/February/Attitude-Reflects-Leadership/>
Audience: Commander/Leader, unit personnel, survey admin, IPPW
- **People First: PMCS Your Soldiers.** Discusses the importance of counseling and leaders checking in with their personnel more regularly to ensure their well-being and getting to know them better to increase trust.
<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2021/April/People-First-PMCS-Your-People/>
Audience: Commander/Leader, unit personnel, survey admin, IPPW

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