



U.S. Department of Defense

Factor Rating Interpretation Guide Sexually Harassing Behaviors

What is Sexually Harassing Behavior?

This factor measures unwelcome sexual advances and offensive comments or gestures of a sexual nature that occurred over the past three months.⁹ These behaviors are similar to DoD's policy definition of sexual harassment, but it is important to note the policy definition requires the behaviors to be sufficiently persistent and severe and this is not measured on the DEOCS.

The following items are used to assess *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* on the DEOCS using a four-point response scale from *Never* to *Often*. 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.

How often does someone from your unit...

- tell sexual jokes that make you uncomfortable, angry, or upset?
- embarrass, anger, or upset you by suggesting that you do not act how a man or a woman is supposed to act?
- display, show, or send sexually explicit materials (such as pictures or videos) that make you uncomfortable, angry, or upset?
- make sexual comments about your appearance or body that make you uncomfortable, angry, or upset?
- intentionally touch you in unwanted sexual ways?

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?

Numerous studies show that the presence of *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* is associated with lower readiness and retention^{1,2,3,4} and increased risk for suicide.⁵ A study of 13,001 U.S. Service women found that women who reported sexual harassment or assault were more likely to report poorer mental and physical health as well as difficulties completing their daily work activities. Overall, this report suggested that recent sexual harassment or assault represents a serious potential threat to military operations and readiness.⁶ Similarly, more severe *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* result in greater reported stress and are more likely to impede on an individual's ability to complete their work effectively.⁷ Additionally, a study examining the U.S. military Armed Forces found that experiencing sexual harassment predicts reduced intention to reenlist for both men and women.⁸ Additionally, the 2018 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members (WGRA) found that a large portion of Service members who experienced sexual harassment responded that their experience made them take steps to leave the Military. However, it is not clear how closely these separate intentions align with actual separation.⁹

The literature also indicates that the presence of sexually harassing behavior(s) is one of the best statistical predictors of individual risk for sexual harassment.¹⁰ For example, DoD's 2018 WGRA found that 79% of women and 68% of men reported experiencing more than one instance of sex-based military equal opportunity (MEO) violation suggesting a persistent and

permissive sexual harassment environment.^{9,11} This coincides with several studies that found a strong positive correlation between perceived organizational tolerance to sexual harassment and higher frequency of perceived occurrence of more serious sexual harassment.^{7,12,13}

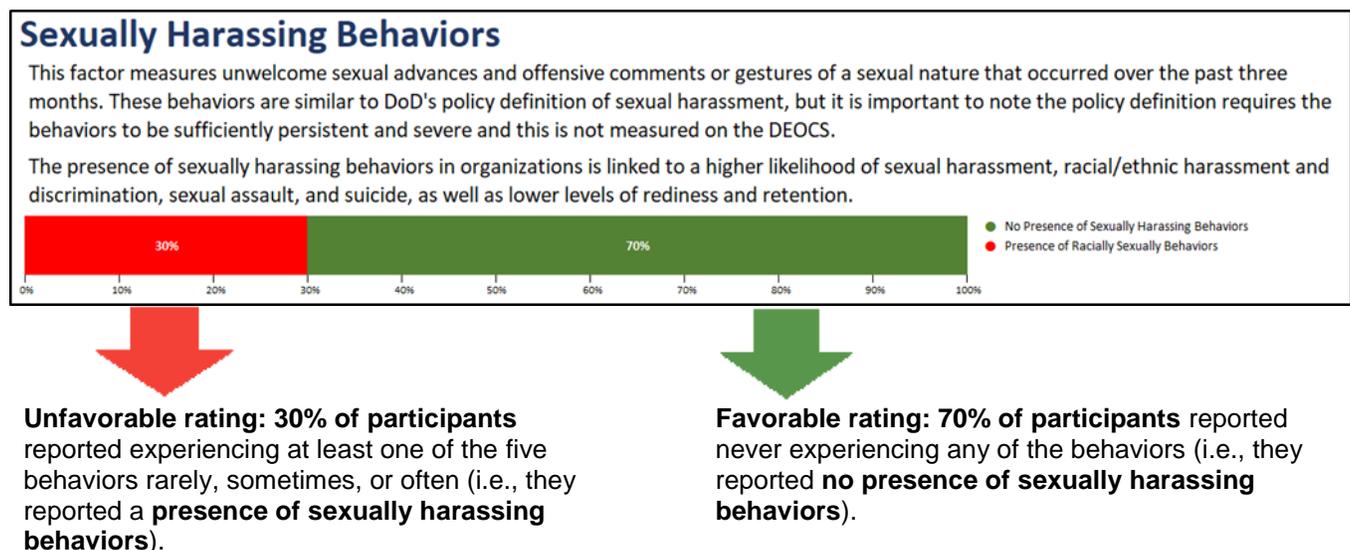
Furthermore, military studies have found that individuals who experience sexual assault experienced sexual harassment perpetrated by the same alleged offender(s) prior to the assault.¹⁴ Beyond the individual-level, U.S. military installation- and ship-level sexual harassment are among the top three predictors of installation and ship sexual assault rates.¹⁵ Similarly, military-specific research also supports the connection between unwanted experiences such as sexual harassment (both sexual quid pro quo and sexually hostile work environment) and a significant increase in the likelihood of rape.¹⁶ Additionally, as discussed in the evidence for *Racially Harassing Behaviors*, several studies have found a positive correlation between sexual harassment and racial harassment.^{17,18,19,20}

Finally, the presence of *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* is also linked to an increased risk of suicidal ideation and suicide. For example, a 2019 study found that experiencing sexual harassment was one of the strongest predictors of suicidal ideation among women veterans.²¹ Similarly, a study of soldiers in the Military found that, at the individual-level, sexual harassment was associated with a fivefold increase of risk for suicide. At the group-level, units or companies having higher levels of sexual harassment also had soldiers three times more at risk for suicide.⁵

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?

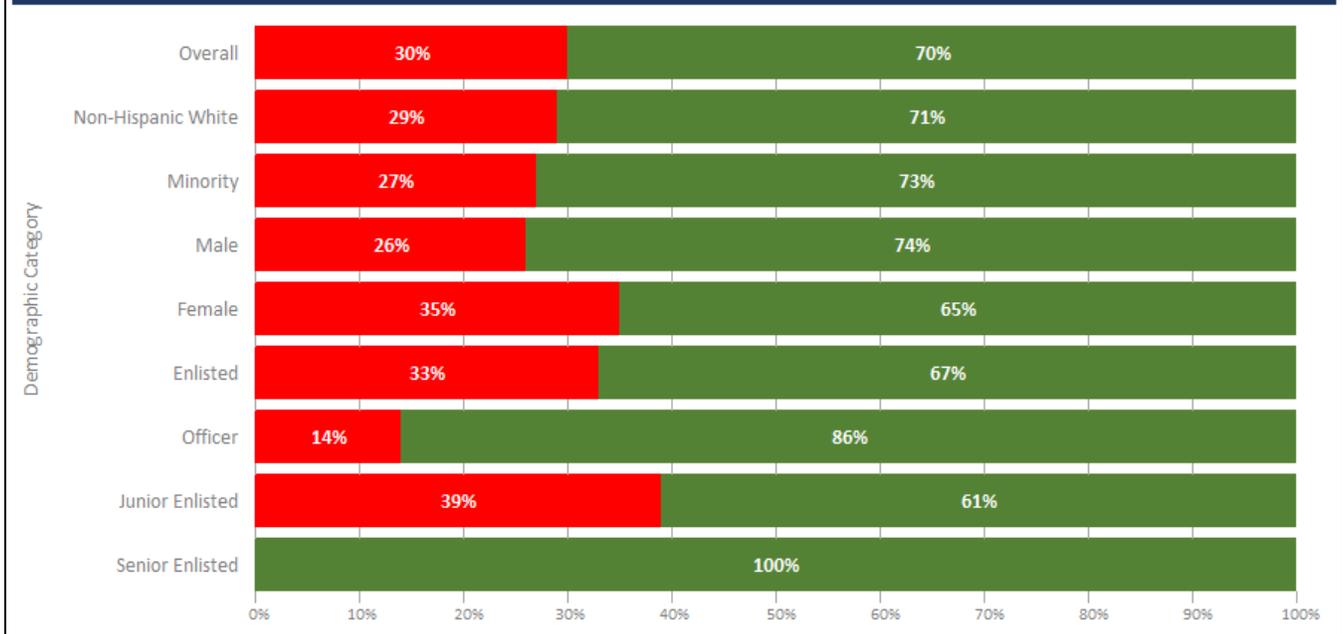
The DEOCS dashboard displays results for *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* in a stacked bar graph showing ratings for **Presence of Sexually Harassing Behaviors** and **No Presence of Sexually Harassing Behaviors**. While *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* is a factor that is measured by multiple questions, because of the way it is calculated, you should interpret the results as “X% of participants.” An example is shown below:



For the graph showing results by demographic categories, the percentages represent the percentage of participants from each demographic category who reported unfavorable or favorable responses.

Sexually Harassing Behaviors Ratings by Demographic Category

This graph displays Sexually Harassing Behaviors ratings by demographic category. No data are displayed if fewer than five people from a demographic category responded to this set of questions.



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

- 29% of non-Hispanic White participants reported experiencing at least one of the sexually harassing behaviors *Rarely*, *Sometimes*, or *Often*, while 27% of minority participants reported experiencing at least one of the sexually harassing behaviors *Rarely*, *Sometimes*, or *Often*;
- 26% of male participants reported experiencing at least one of the sexually harassing behaviors *Rarely*, *Sometimes*, or *Often*, while 35% of female participants reported experiencing at least one of the sexually harassing behaviors *Rarely*, *Sometimes*, or *Often*;
- 33% of enlisted participants reported experiencing at least one of the sexually harassing behaviors *Rarely*, *Sometimes*, or *Often*, while 14% of officers reported experiencing at least one of the sexually harassing behaviors *Rarely*, *Sometimes*, or *Often*;
- 39% of junior enlisted participants reported experiencing at least one of the sexually harassing behaviors *Rarely*, *Sometimes*, or *Often*, while 0% of senior enlisted participants reported experiencing at least one of the sexually harassing behaviors

Rarely, Sometimes, or Often.

The favorable ratings (marked in green) can be interpreted as:

- 71% of non-Hispanic White participants reported never experiencing any of the sexually harassing behaviors, while 73% of minority participants reported never experiencing any of the sexually harassing behaviors;
- 74% of male participants reported never experiencing any of the sexually harassing behaviors, while 65% of female participants reported never experiencing any of the sexually harassing behaviors;
- 67% of enlisted participants reported never experiencing any of the sexually harassing behaviors, while 86% of officers reported never experiencing any of the sexually harassing behaviors;
- 61% of junior enlisted participants reported never experiencing any of the sexually harassing behaviors, while 100% of senior enlisted participants reported never experiencing any of the sexually harassing behaviors.

You may also see trends over time for your *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* unfavorable 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. 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 seven questions on DEOCS 5.0 and is now measured by only five questions. 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 *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* ratings. This means that your unit's/organization's unfavorable rating for *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* is **very high** compared to the other unfavorable ratings for this factor from all other units/organizations that completed a DEOCS. When applicable, this alert icon appears in the dashboard inside the “Risk Factors – Unfavorable Ratings” heading; click on the icon to see if *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* is listed in the table. The alert icon may also appear in the *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* section of the PDF reports. To identify whether your *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* ratings receive an alert, cut-off scores were created by rank-ordering all unfavorable ratings for this factor. If your unfavorable rating for *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* is above 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.

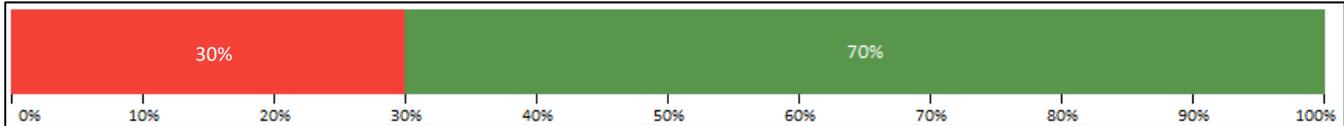
How are my unit's/organization's ratings created?

Sexually Harassing Behaviors ratings are created from the responses to five questions on a four-point *Never* to *Often* scale. Because these behaviors are more serious, the scoring is slightly different and the threshold to be included in the percentage reporting "presence of behavior" is low. The DEOCS team considers any experience of any of these behaviors to be problematic. Therefore, the unfavorable factor ratings represent the percentage of participants who reported experiencing any behavior with any frequency. In order to create these ratings, participants are grouped into one of two categories depending on how they responded to the set of five questions:

- "presence of behavior" = respondent reported experiencing at least one behavior either *Rarely*, *Sometimes*, or *Often*
- "no presence of behavior" = respondent reported *Never* experiencing any or at least half of the behaviors (and did not report experiencing any behavior *Rarely*, *Sometimes*, or *Often*).

Because of this, you cannot recreate these ratings using the Item Summary table on the *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* details page in the DEOCS dashboard. The Item Summary table displays aggregate responses to the five questions that are used to create the *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* ratings; you would need access to individual-level data to understand whether an individual should be categorized as reporting a "presence of the behavior" or "no presence of the behavior." An example using mock data is below.

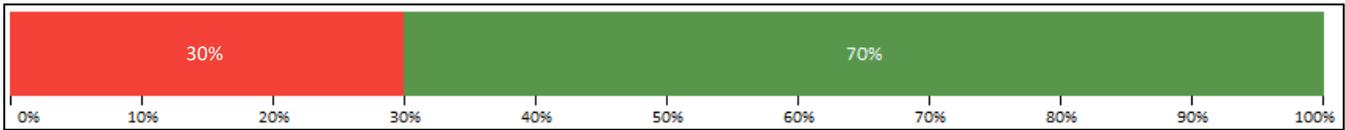
In this example, a unit has 10 members. They receive the following *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* results in the DEOCS dashboard:



Interpretation: 30% of participants reported experiencing at least one of the five behaviors *Rarely*, *Sometimes*, or *Often*. In other words, 30%, or a total of three individuals, reported a presence of sexually harassing behaviors in the unit.

Individual-level data: This rating is created based on how each individual responded across the seven behaviors. The table below shows responses from the three individuals who were included in this rating.

	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5
Participant 1	Rarely	Never	[no answer]	[no answer]	[no answer]
Participant 2	Rarely	Never	[no answer]	Sometimes	Never
Participant 3	Often	Rarely	Often	Often	Often



Interpretation: 70% of participants reported *Never* experiencing all five behaviors or *Never* experiencing at least three of the behaviors (and did not report experiencing any behavior *Rarely*, *Sometimes*, or *Often*). In other words, 70%, or seven individuals, reported no presence of sexually harassing behaviors in the unit.

Individual-level data: This rating is created based on how each individual responded across the five behaviors. The table below shows the responses from the seven members who were included in this score.

	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5
Participant 4	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never
Participant 5	Never	Never	Never	Never	[no answer]
Participant 6	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never
Participant 7	Never	[no answer]	Never	[no answer]	Never
Participant 8	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never
Participant 9	Never	Never	[no answer]	[no answer]	Never
Participant 10	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never

The aggregate data would appear in the Item Summary table like this:

Sexually Harassing Behaviors Questions	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Total
Question 1	70% (7)	20% (2)	0% (0)	10% (1)	100% (10)
Question 2	89% (8)	11% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (9)
Question 3	86% (6)	0% (0)	0% (0)	14% (1)	100% (7)
Question 4	71% (5)	0% (0)	14% (1)	14% (1)	100% (7)
Question 5	88% (7)	0% (0)	0% (0)	13% (1)	100% (8)

Note that percentages in the above table are calculated out of the total number of participants to that question and not the total number of participants to the full survey. Participants can skip questions, so you may notice that total responses to questions vary. In addition, factor ratings may not always add to 100% due to rounding.

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 *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* ratings into context and understand whether actions should be taken to address high unfavorable ratings:

1. If applicable, review the information in the alert icon  to see if your *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* ratings are called out. This icon would appear in the dashboard

and in the PDF reports if your unit's/organization's unfavorable rating for *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* is very high compared to all other units/organizations that completed a DEOCS. You should consider taking action to lower this rating.

2. Look at the Item Summary table on the *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* details page to understand how often participants reported experiencing the five behaviors. While the overall unfavorable factor rating provides a high-level view, it is still important to understand which of the five behaviors is reported to occur most often. Actions can be taken to address all behaviors that occur, or you may feel it is more appropriate to only address behaviors that occur more frequently (e.g., only those reported to occur *Sometimes* or *Often*, or only those reported to occur *Often*.)
3. Examine the bar graph showing the overall unfavorable rating for *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* and the unfavorable ratings by various demographic groups. Look at each group's rating in relation to the overall unit/organization rating. If any groups have particularly high unfavorable ratings for *Sexually Harassing Behaviors*, this could help you plan actions to decrease your unfavorable rating in specific areas of your organization.
4. If applicable, review your *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* unfavorable 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 up over time. You may need to take action to reverse this trend.

Factor Improvement Tools for Sexually Harassing Behaviors

The following resources may be useful as you make plans or take action to improve your *Sexually Harassing Behaviors* 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.

- **A Culture that Fosters Sexual Assaults and Sexual Harassment Persists Despite Prevention Efforts, a New Pentagon Study Shows.** Discusses the ongoing issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment that persists in the Military. It discusses how leadership is key to preventing sexual harassment and assault and how “lower levels” of sexual harassing behaviors are often not properly addressed.
<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2020/04/30/a-culture-that-fosters-sexual-assaults-and-sexual-harassment-persists-despite-prevention-efforts-a-new-pentagon-study-shows/>
Audience: Commander/Leader, unit personnel, survey admin, IPPW
- **Continuum of Harm.** Illustration of the continuum of harm; describes how sexual harassment and sexual assault are related. Also useful in understanding why the command climate of a unit is important in preventing sexual harassment and sexual assault.
<https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/sharp/pages/continuum.html>
Audience: Commander/Leader, unit personnel, survey admin, IPPW
- **Effects of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment on Separation.** Discusses the relationship between sexual assault and separation from the Military.
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR870z10.html

Audience: Commander/Leader, survey admin, IPPW

- **Organizational Characteristics Associated with Risk of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment.** Examines organizational and operational characteristics associated with sexual assault risk and sexual harassment risk broken down by installation, gender, command echelon, and career management field.

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RRA1000/RRA1013-1/RAND_RRA1013-1.pdf

Audience: Unit personnel, survey admin, IPPW

- **Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment.** Health resources for those who have been sexually assaulted. Includes self-care strategies and resources to deal with sexual assault and sexual harassment and links to other resources for suicide risk, depression, and alcohol misuse.

<https://health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Centers-of-Excellence/Psychological-Health-Center-of-Excellence/PHCoE-Clinician-Resources/Sexual-Assault-and-Sexual-Harassment>

Audience: Commander/Leader, unit personnel

- **The Relationship Between Sexual Assault and Harassment in the U.S. Military.** Discuss the relationship between sexual harassment and assault, as well as recommendations to improve the command climate around these issues.

https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3162.html

Audience: Unit personnel, survey admin, IPPW

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