



ARMY RESILIENCE DIRECTORATE

Report: Sharp Rise in Prevalence of Sexual Assaults in Army for FY21

ARLINGTON, Va. – There was a significant increase in the prevalence and reports of sexual assaults across the Army last year, according to the Department of Defense's annual fiscal-year report on this crime, which was released Sept. 1.

"We are extremely concerned and disappointed by the increase in prevalence of unwanted sexual contact for both men and women in the active-duty Army," Dr. James Helis, director of the Army Resilience Directorate, said about the Fiscal Year 2021 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military.

The FY22 Workplace and Gender Relations (WGR) survey, which was delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, reveals that 8.4 percent of women and 1.5 percent of men in the Army experienced some form of unwanted sexual contact during the previous 12 months.

"We own the results of this report and acknowledge that we have a long way to go in preventing these crimes and building trust with our Soldiers," Helis said.

He added that it was imperative that the department delay the report's release, which would have normally occurred in April, so the results of the WGR could be included. "We needed an up-to-date assessment of our efforts to prevent and respond to these offenses, including important factors such as trust in the organization and demographics of the population affected to better focus our efforts."

Helis said that while the Army is proceeding with major investments in and structural reforms to the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program, there is much work to be done.

"The Army is making every effort to achieve a culture of dignity and respect," Helis said. "Sexual assault and harassment harm victims, their Families, their teammates and undermine the readiness of units and our Army."

"Everybody has a role to play in enforcing Army values and preventing these heinous acts. Soldiers should feel safe among other Soldiers, and victims should feel confident in reporting, knowing they will be supported by their chain of command and their teammates."

In FY21 the Army saw the highest reporting rate of sexual assaults ever recorded. There were a total of 4,081 reports of sexual assault within the active and U.S. Army Reserve components.

"The numbers are reflective of an approximate 23 percent increase in reporting from the previous fiscal year," SHARP Director Jill Londagin said, "which makes this the fifth consecutive year of the highest number of reports ever recorded for the total Army."

Londagin said the "Army encourages reporting to ensure that victims get the support and care they need." The reporting combined with prevalence data helps commanders and leaders to have a better understanding of the breadth and depth of sexual assault in formations.



"We believe the high number of reports may be reflective of victim confidence in SHARP response services," Londagin said, "noting that the program's staff received good marks on surveys that assess satisfaction with support services and resources."

Londagin said, "the Army has made substantial strides in updating and improving policies and programs as a result of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee report and the Defense Department's Independent Review Commission recommendations. These reports provide an in-depth assessment of how sexual assault and sexual harassment cases are handled in the military and the negative effect that these incidents have on the service."

Based on Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III's approval of the commission's recommendations, the Army is putting together a primary prevention workforce, known as the Integrated Prevention Advisory Group, as well as making the most significant reforms in how the service prevents and responds to sexual harassment, sexual assault and retaliation since the inception of the SHARP program.