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Sexual Harassment in the Marine Corps: Results of a 1994 Survey

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Sexual Harassment in the Marine Corps: Results of a 1994 Survey

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The purpose of this study was to analyze the sexual harassment items in the Marine Corps Equal Opportunity Survey (MCEOS). This survey was developed and administered to monitor sexual harassment among Marine Corps personnel, along with associated issues. The MCEOS was patterned after the Navy Equal Opportunity/Sexual Harassment (NEOSH) Survey. It was mailed in May 1994 to over 10,000 active duty Marines. Responses were weighted by gender, paygrade, and racial/ethnic group before computing percentages for relevant subgroups.

The results are very similar to those obtained with the 1993 NEOSH Survey. Women were sexually harassed more often than men, enlisted more often than officers, Caucasian women more often than Black women, and personnel in the lower paygrades/ranks more often than their seniors. Generalized sexual harassment was more common than harassment targeted at individuals. Perpetrators were most likely to be fellow Marines. Victims of sexual harassment rarely filed a complaint whereas those that did were usually not satisfied with the manner in which it was handled. It was recommended that: (1) the Marine Corps continue to monitor sexual harassment through the administration of the MCEOS biennially; (2) the results of the 1994 MCEOS be used in training; and (3) the source of dissatisfaction with the complaint system be determined.

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Foreword

The development, administration, and analysis of the Marine Corps Equal Opportunity Survey was funded by work request M00002795MDP5039. It was sponsored by the Equal Opportunity Branch of Manpower Policy (MPE), Marine Corps Headquarters.

The authors wish to thank Paul Rosenfeld for his review and comments on the report. In addition, the authors are indebted to the men and women of the United States Marine Corps who responded to the survey.

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Summary

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to analyze the sexual harassment items in the Marine Corps Equal Opportunity Survey (MCEOS). This survey was developed and administered to monitor sexual harassment among Marine Corps personnel, along with associated issues.

Approach

The MCEOS was patterned after the Navy Equal Opportunity/ Sexual Harassment (NEOSH) Survey. It was mailed in May 1994 to over 10,000 active duty Marines. Responses were weighted by gender, paygrade, and racial/ethnic group before computing percentages for relevant subgroups.

Findings

The results are very similar to those obtained with the 1993 NEOSH Survey. Women were sexually harassed more often than men, enlisted more often than officers, Caucasian women more often than Black women, and personnel in the lower paygrades/ranks more often than their seniors. Generalized sexual harassment was more common than harassment targeted at individuals. Perpetrators were most likely to be fellow Marines. Victims of sexual harassment rarely filed a complaint whereas those that did were usually not satisfied with the manner in which it was handled.

Recommendations

It was recommended that: (1) the Marine Corps continue to monitor sexual harassment through the administration of the MCEOS biennially; (2) the results of the 1994 MCEOS be used in training; and (3) the source of dissatisfaction with the complaint system be determined.

Contents

Background 1

Navy Equal Opportunity/Sexual Harassment Survey 1

Purpose 2

Approach 3

Survey Instrument 3

Sample and Administration 3

Data Weighting and Analysis 4

Results 7

Rates of Sexual Harassment 7

Rates by Paygrade and Rank 8

Rates by Race/Ethnicity 8

Nature of Harassment 9

Most Significant Sexually Harassing Event 11

Victims' Duty Station 11

Perpetrators 11

Actions Taken by Victims 13

Commands' Handling of Complaints 13

Reasons for Not Filing a Complaint 15

Consequences of Sexual Harassment 16

Physical and Psychological Symptoms 16

Absenteeism 17

Effect of Sexual Harassment on Feelings 18

Retention 19

Sexual Assault and Rape 20

Perceptions of Marine Corps' Commitment to Halting Sexual Harassment 21

Discussion 23

Conclusions and Recommendations 27

References 29

Appendix

Sexual Harassment Items from the Marine Corps Equal Opportunity/Sexual Harassment Survey A-0

Distribution List

List of Tables

1. 1994 MCEOS Sample 4

2. Nature of Sexual Harassment Behaviors Experienced 10

3. Characteristics of Harassers 12

4. Actions Taken by Victims of Harassment 13

5. How Commands Responded to Sexual Harassment Complaints 14

6. Effect Upon Enlisted Victims of Commands' Handling of Sexual Harassment Complaints 14

7. Why Victims Didn't Complain When Unable to Handle Sexual Harassment 15

8. Percentage of Victims Having Physical Reactions Because of Sexual Harassment 16

9. Psychological Reactions to Being Sexually Harassed 17

10. Lost Time Attributed to Sexual Harassment by Enlisted Victims 18

11. Percentage of Victims Who Reported a "Bad Effect" on Various Feelings 19

12. Impact of Sexual Harassment on Marine Corps Satisfaction and Retention 20

13. Responses of Enlisted Victims of Rape and Sexual Assault to Supplementary Questions 21

14. Perceptions of Marine Corps' and Command's Commitment to Reducing Sexual Harassment 22

List of Figures

1. Percentage of Marine Corps personnel who said they were sexually harassed 7

2. Percentage of Marine Corps women who said they were sexually harassed by rank or paygrade 8

3. Sexual harassment rates among Marine Corps women by racial/ethnic group 9

Background

Sexual harassment has become a critical issue for Navy leadership. The behaviors that occurred at the 1991 Tailhook Convention[1] and their aftermath have resulted in the establishment of a sexual harassment advice hot line, annual training in the prevention of sexual harassment, and implementation of a "zero tolerance" policy for cases of serious sexual harassment. In addition, promotions of officers involved in investigations of sexual harassment have been delayed and early retirements have occurred as a result of incidents of sexual harassment.

In July 1992, the Secretary of the Navy's Standing Committee on Military and Civilian Women in the Department of the Navy was chartered. One of the two working groups created to support the committee focused solely on sexual harassment. Among the recommendations from the working group that was forwarded by the Secretary of the Navy to the Commandant of the Marine Corps was that an equal opportunity climate survey be developed and conducted among active duty and civilian personnel. The stated purpose of this survey was "to assess effectiveness of sexual harassment training programs and to provide a baseline to evaluate changes in attitudes" (Department of the Navy, 1992).

The recommendation to conduct an equal opportunity survey also was forwarded to the Chief of Naval Operations. However, the Navy had a biennial survey that met the requirements set forth by the Standing Committee, the Navy Equal Opportunity/Sexual Harassment (NEOSH) Survey.

Navy Equal Opportunity/Sexual Harassment Survey

The NEOSH Survey was developed in 1989 (Culbertson, Rosenfeld, Booth-Kewley, & Magnusson, 1992). The sexual harassment section of the survey is analyzed and reported separately from the equal

[1]At the September 1991 convention of the Tailhook Association in Las Vegas, Nevada, 83 women and 7 men were sexually assaulted. A total of 117 officers were implicated for deeds of sexual misconduct or conduct unbecoming an officer (Department of Defense, Inspector General, 1993), though none were found to be guilty. Tailhook became a watershed for addressing sexual harassment in the Department of the Navy.

opportunity portion. The first administration of the NEOSH Survey resulted in rates of sexual harassment over the previous year as follows: for women officers, 26 percent; for enlisted women, 42 percent; for men officers, 1 percent; for enlisted men, 4 percent (Culbertson, Rosenfeld, Booth-Kewley, & Magnusson, 1992). Two years later, it was found that these rates had increased significantly (Culbertson, Rosenfeld, & Newell, 1993). The researchers conjectured that raised consciousness of sexual harassment, resulting from Professor Anita Hill's testimony at the confirmation hearings for Judge Clarence Thomas and the Tailhook Convention, had influenced the respondents. In 1993, when the NEOSH Survey was administered for the third time, the rates of sexual harassment had dropped (Thomas, Newell, & Eliassen, 1995). The cause of the change was believed to be due to the emphasis put upon prevention of sexual harassment the Navy had undertaken since 1992.

Purpose

As a result of the recommendation of the Standing Committee, the Navy Personnel Research and Development Center was tasked to develop, administer, and analyze a survey for the Marine Corps patterned after the NEOSH Survey. This report documents the results of the first administration of the Marine Corps Equal Opportunity Survey (MCEOS).

Approach

Survey Instrument

The sexual harassment section of the MCEOS consists of 32 questions, 7 of which address sexual assault and rape (see Appendix). The Department of the Navy's definition of sexual harassment introduces this section so that respondents have a common frame of reference when answering the questions. It is followed by a series of statements concerning the unit's and Marine Corps' commitment to preventing sexual harassment. Respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements.

As with the NEOSH Survey, two questions are used to determine the rates of sexual harassment. They are worded, "During the past year, have you been sexually harassed while on duty?" and "During the past year, have you been sexually harassed on base or ship while off duty?" Personnel who respond "yes" to either question are asked to indicate from a list of nine behaviors how frequently (from never to weekly) they experienced each form of sexual harassment. Victims of sexual harassment choose the one incident that had the greatest effect upon them as the reference point for questions concerning the perpetrator, what action they took following the harassment, and how the incident affected them. These items are presented in a multiple-choice format.

While rape and sexual assault are felonies and not considered by many experts to be sexual harassment, questions concerning these behaviors are included in the survey. Respondents are first asked if they experienced sexual assault, attempted rape, or actual rape over the past year while on duty or on base/ship. Victims are then queried further about their relationship with the attacker and the involvement of drugs or alcohol.

Sample and Administration

The sampling design was based upon the requirement to obtain reliable estimates of the perceptions of minority groups in the Marine Corps. That is, the goal of the sampling plan was to obtain sufficient respondents in each of 12 cells (i.e., 3 racial/ethnic groups by gender

by officer/enlisted) so that the sampling error would not exceed ±5 percent. The sample was stratified on the basis of racial/ethnic group separately for officers and enlisted of each gender. Relatively small groups, such as Hispanic women officers, were oversampled. Table 1 shows the number of surveys that were mailed out and the number of surveys mailed back.

Table 1

1994 MCEOS Sample

Administrative Sample	
Surveys mailed	10,222
Surveys delivered[a]	9,313
Surveys returned	4,492
Surveys analyzed[b]	4,431
Response rate (Returns/Mailed)	48%
Respondent Sample	
Enlisted men	1,372
Enlisted women	1,332
Officer men	1,390
Officer women	337

[a]Surveys could not be delivered to 909.
[b]Because gender or race/ethnicity was missing, 61 surveys were eliminated.

The surveys were mailed in May 1994 to 10,222 active duty Marines. The cut-off date for inclusion in the analysis was 3 months later in August 1994. Two follow-up postcards were sent 2 and 4 weeks later as reminders to complete the survey. The response rate, adjusted for surveys that could not be delivered, was 48 percent.

Data Weighting and Analysis

Post-stratification weighting (Henry, 1990) of the data by gender, paygrade, and racial/ethnic group was performed so the respondents would accurately reflect the proportions of these groups in the Marine Corps population at the time of survey administration. All of the results presented in this report are based on weighted data.

For clarity of presentation, responses to items using five-point scales were collapsed into three categories, representing "agree,"

"neither agree nor disagree," and "disagree." The chi-square test was used to analyze frequency data (expressed as percentages in the text) for statistical significance. Because of the large samples and numerous comparisons made, a significance level of $p \leq .01$ was adopted.

Results

Rates of Sexual Harassment

Figure 1 shows that 21 percent of female officers, 1 percent of male officers, 37 percent of enlisted females, and 3 percent of enlisted males said they had been sexually harassed over the past year while on duty, or while off duty but on a base or ship. These rates for women and men, officer and enlisted are almost identical to those obtained by the Navy in the October 1993 administration of the NEOSH Survey (Thomas et al., 1995). The margin of error is $\pm$ 2 percent. Because very few male respondents stated that they had been sexually harassed (42 enlisted, 15 officers), the only additional analysis performed on their surveys was to examine the nature of the harassment.

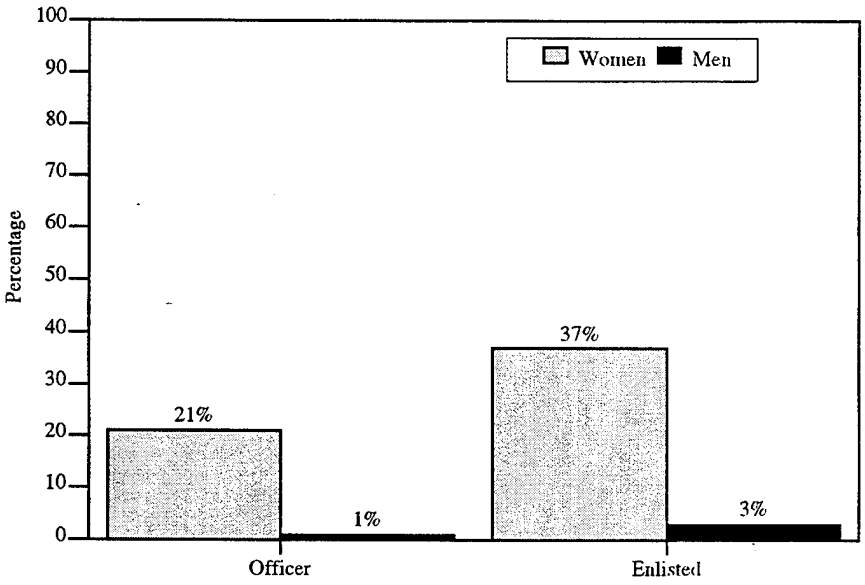

Figure 1. Percentage of Marine Corps personnel who said they were sexually harassed.

Rates by Paygrade and Rank

Surveys of sexual harassment, conducted among military and civilian personnel, consistently find that incident rates are negatively related to organizational status and/or age.

Figure 2 shows that Marine Corps women in the lowest ranks or paygrades experience the most sexual harassment. The differences did not achieve significance for officers, but did for enlisted women ($X^2(2, N = 1{,}328) = 41.61, p = \leq .001$).

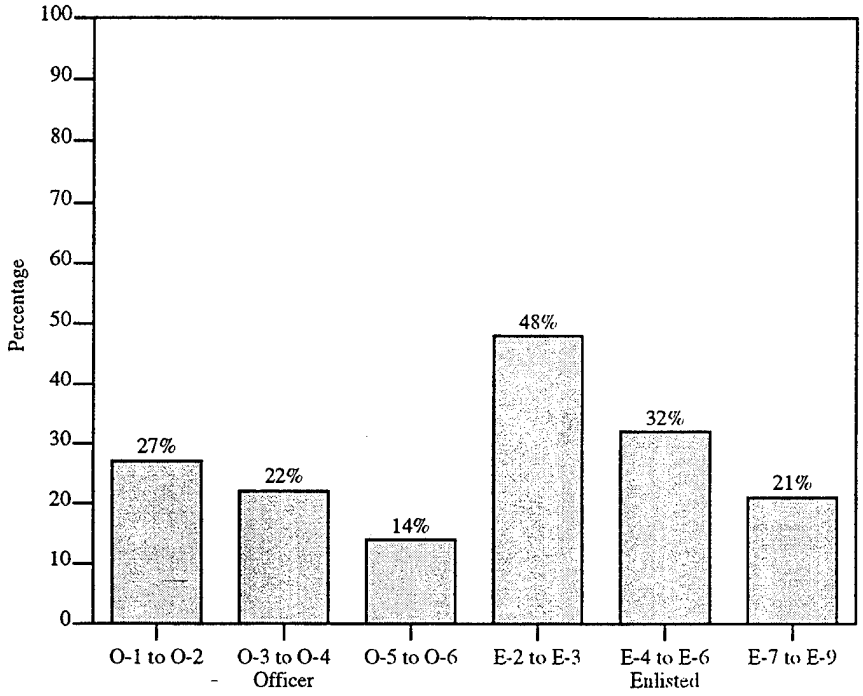

Figure 2. Percentage of Marine Corps women who said they were sexually harassed by rank or paygrade.

Rates by Race/Ethnicity

Figure 3 presents the sexual harassment rates for officer and enlisted women by race/ethnicity. Black enlisted women had a significantly lower rate of sexual harassment than did white enlisted women ($X^2(2, N = 1{,}214) = 9.98, p = \leq .01$), but the difference for women officers did not achieve significance. These results are consistent with Navy findings in all three administrations of the NEOSH Survey (Culbertson et al., 1992, 1993; Thomas et al., 1995) and of the 1988 Defense Manpower Data Center survey of sexual harassment among military personnel (Harris & Firestone, 1995). Despite the high rate for Hispanic officers, they did not experience significantly more sexual harassment than white or black officers. Only 14

Hispanic officers responded to the survey, resulting in a potentially unreliable estimate of their rate of sexual harassment.

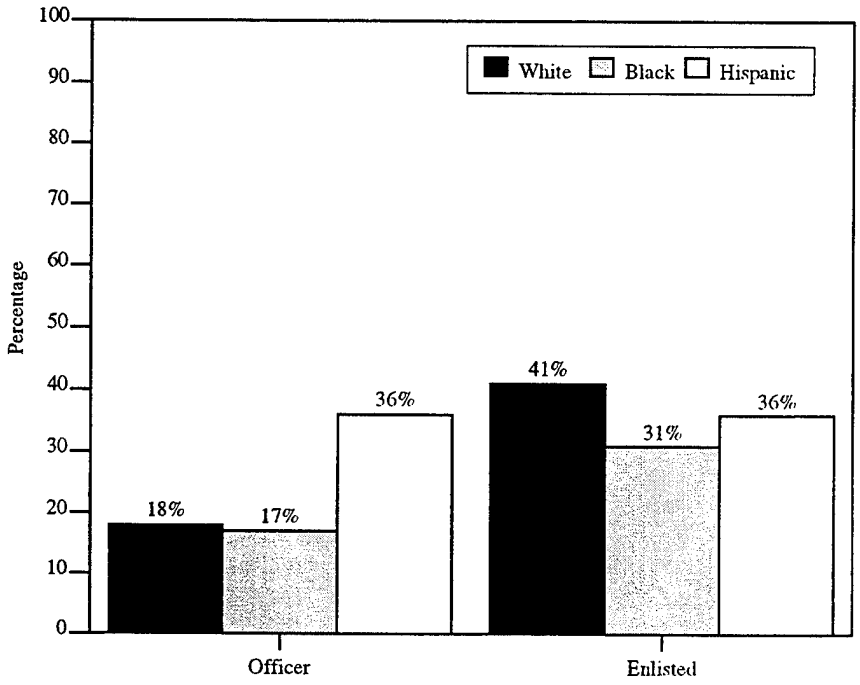

Figure 3. Sexual harassment rates among Marine Corps women by racial/ethnic group.

Nature of Harassment

A list of nine sexually harassing behaviors appears in the MCEOS. Victims are asked to indicate how often (ranging from never to once a week or more) they have been the target of each behavior in the past 12 months. Table 2 presents the percentage of officer and enlisted women who experienced a behavior at least once.[2] The behaviors have been divided into two categories, representing environmental and individual harassment (Firestone & Harris, 1994). Environmental harassment is not necessarily, though may be, directed at a particular person; individual harassment is always targeted at a specific person.

[2]This table is based on all women, not just victims, to avoid any misunderstanding that might lead to the conclusion that sexual harassment is rampant in the Marine Corps (e.g., 47% of enlisted victims versus 23% of all enlisted respondents were deliberately touched in a sexual manner.)

Table 2

Nature of Sexual Harassment Behaviors Experienced

	Officer			Enlisted		
	Total (%)	Once Only (%)	More than Once (%)	Total (%)	Once Only (%)	More than Once (%)
Environmental						
Sexual teasing, jokes	19	3	16	36	4	32
Sexual looks, staring	17	1	16	35	4	31
Sexual whistles, calls	13	2	11	32	6	26
Individual						
Letters, phone calls	8	4	4	15	6	9
Deliberate touching	5	3	2	23	8	15
Pressure for dates	5	2	3	26	8	18
Pressure for sexual favors	2	1	1	13	5	8
Stalking or invasion of residence	2	1	1	7	5	2
Actual or attempted rape/sexual assault	[a]	[a]	-	8	7	1

Note. Multiple responses allowed.
[a]Less than .5 percent.

Environmental harassment occurred more frequently than individual harassment. These seemingly mild forms of harassment were seldom one-time events, however, suggesting that the work environment had become sexualized.[3] Enlisted women were more likely than officers to be the target of all forms of sexual harassment. The differences were statistically significant for sexual teasing/jokes and sexual looks/staring.[4]

[3]A sexualized working environment is one in which sexual teasing, innuendos, and horseplay is common and tolerated.

[4]Sexual teasing, jokes ($z = 2.64$, $p < .01$, two-tailed); sexual looks, staring ($z = 2.73$, $p < .01$, two-tailed).

The nature of the harassment experienced by men was also analyzed. Over 99 percent of officers and enlisted stated that they had never experienced most of these behaviors. The only exception was sexual teasing or jokes, which was cited by 1.6 percent of the enlisted men.

Most Significant Sexually Harassing Event

The question addressing sexually harassing behaviors permitted multiple responses so that the prevalence of specific behaviors can be tracked through future administrations of the MCEOS. To investigate variables associated with sexual harassment, it was necessary to focus the respondents on a single incident. As a consequence, they were asked to think about the one experience, from the list of sexually harassing behaviors, that had the greatest effect upon them. Thirteen of the questions that follow these instructions were answered with that one experience in mind.

Victims' Duty Station

Eighteen percent of the victims, as compared to 14 percent of the female respondents, were stationed overseas when they were sexually harassed. This difference was not statistically significant. Specific Marine Corps unit at the time of the harassing event is not queried in the survey.

Perpetrators

Victims of sexual harassment were asked about the number, sex, organizational status, and military status of their harasser(s). Table 3 presents the responses of officers and enlisted women to these questions.

Table 3

Characteristics of Harassers

Characteristics	Officer (%)	Enlisted (%)
Number of Perpetrators		
Only 1	44	57
2-3	44	31
4 or more	12	12
Gender		
Male	100	98
Female	-	-
Both (more than 1 person)	-	2
Organizational status[a]		
Fellow Marine	30	52
Immediate supervisor	18	14
Higher level supervisor	27	23
Co-worker	19	25
Subordinate	21	7
Other	15	17
Military/Civilian Status[a]		
Marine officer	69	7
Other officer	8	[b]
Marine enlisted	33	89
Other enlisted	3	8
Government employee/contractor	4	5
Overseas host national	3	-
Other	2	3

[a]Respondents were instructed to choose all categories that apply.
[b]Less than .5 percent.

Most enlisted victims were harassed by just one person, whereas officer victims were more likely to be harassed by two or more people. Virtually all of the harassers were men. No one reported being harassed by a single woman, though 2 percent of the enlisted were harassed by a mixed-sex group.

Table 3 shows that perpetrators were most likely to be fellow Marines. Because respondents could identify their harasser in more than one category on this item, an additional analysis was performed to investigate whether the fellow Marine was a supervisor, coworker, or subordinate. Only 6 percent of the officers and 16 percent of the enlisted identified their harasser as belonging to two categories. Thus, most perpetrators were not in the chain of command or co-workers of the victims.

Actions Taken by Victims

As shown in Table 4, approximately half of the officer and enlisted victims told their harassers to stop the behavior. While the proportion of victims who avoided their harasser suggests that female Marines lacked assertiveness in dealing with sexual harassment, this was not the case. Only 7 percent of the officer victims and 13 percent of the enlisted victims only avoided their harasser (i.e., the remainder also took some other form of action). Approximately 20 percent of women who had been sexually harassed apparently ignored the behavior. Officer and enlisted responses to this question did not differ significantly.

Table 4

Actions Taken by Victims of Harassment

Actions	Officer (%)	Enlisted (%)
Told the person(s) to stop	48	53
Avoided the person(s)	40	63
Reported it to my immediate supervisor	24	24
Threatened to tell or told others	21	21
Got someone else to speak to the person(s)	19	28
Reported it to someone besides my supervisor	19	25
Used the chain of command to fix the problem	10	14
Sought assistance from legal, medical, family service center, or the DON counseling line	9	8
Reported the incident to NCIS, military police, or IG hotline	3	4
Did something not listed above	21	17
Did not take any action	17	20

Note. Multiple responses allowed.

Commands' Handling of Complaints

Very few of the victims formally complained about the incident--only 9 percent of the officers and 17 percent of the enlisted. Due to the small number of officers, only the responses of enlisted women were analyzed for questions regarding the reactions of the command and effect upon the individual of filing a complaint.

Table 5 shows that half of the commands took action against the perpetrator of sexual harassment and 8 percent corrected the damage experienced by victims. However, a quarter of the commands did

nothing and 12 percent took action against the victim. Sixty-five percent of the women who formally complained about being sexually harassed were not satisfied with the manner in which their commands handled their complaint.

Table 5

How Commands Responded to Sexual Harassment Complaints

Took action against the perpetrator	51%
Did nothing	25%
Took action against victim	12%
Unknown	12%
Complaint is still being processed	9%
Corrected the damage done to victim	8%
Did something not listed	19%

Note. Multiple responses allowed.

Victims were asked how their commands' handling of their complaint affected them. Table 6 presents their responses. Women's feelings towards the Marine Corps either did not change or became worse as an aftermath of filing a complaint; their feeling about their command also were apt to have suffered. The majority of respondents saw no change in the job-related areas that were measured, or in their feelings about themselves.

Table 6

Effect Upon Enlisted Victims of Commands' Handling of Sexual Harassment Complaints

Effect upon my . . .	Became Worse (%)	No Change (%)	Became Better (%)
Feeling about USMC	46	45	9
Feeling about command	48	36	16
Feeling about work	27	66	7
Feeling about myself	21	69	10
Ability to work with others	25	69	6
Time and attendance at work	12	84	4
Fitness for service	15	85	-

Reasons for Not Filing a Complaint

Table 7 indicates that 51 percent of the officers and 39 percent of the enlisted felt they had successfully stopped the harassing behavior through their own actions. When this presumably effective group is removed from the analysis, the major reason why the remaining victims did not complain was their expectation that unpleasantness in their working environment would result. Officers, in particular, expressed this concern. Half of the officers and 43 percent of the enlisted women were deterred from formally complaining by the belief that no action would be taken to right the wrong. This is a particularly relevant finding, since it may explain why so few women were willing to risk the negative repercussions of reporting sexual harassment.

Table 7

Why Victims Didn't Complain When Unable to Handle Sexual Harassment

Actions	Officer (%)	Enlisted (%)
Solved the problem myself	51	39
Thought it would make my work situation unpleasant	69	47
Did not think anything would be done	50	43
Thought my performance evaluation or chances of promotion would suffer	33	22
Too embarrassed	30	19
Thought I would not be believed	21	23
Did not know what to do	10	22
Too afraid	15	16
Did not want to hurt the person who bothered me	4	14
Thought it would take too much time and effort	4	12
Perpetrator was not at my duty station	3	3
Was talked out of complaining by peer or supervisor	2	4
None of the reasons above	26	37

Notes.
1. Multiple responses allowed.
2. All percentages except the first pair are for women who did not solve the problem themselves.

Consequences of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment costs the military in ways other than resources spent on processing complaints and taking corrective action. In the MCEOS, other costs were investigated; namely, psychological distress, physical symptoms, and absenteeism experienced by victims. In addition, questions were asked about the effect that sexual harassment had upon victims' feelings about the Corps and themselves, and upon their intentions to remain in the Marine Corps.

Physical and Psychological Symptoms

Victims were asked if they had experienced any physical effects as a result of being sexually harassed. Table 8 shows that 59 percent of the officers and 46 percent of the enlisted victims did not react physically to the incidents. The most common symptoms experienced by the remaining victims were sleeping difficulties, headaches, and nausea.

Table 8

Percentage of Victims Having Physical Reactions Because of Sexual Harassment

Reactions	Officer (%)	Enlisted (%)
Difficulty sleeping	23	27
Headaches	18	29
Nausea	14	21
Loss/gain of appetite	7	18
Panic attacks	5	6
Sexual difficulties	-	8
Irregular menstrual periods	-	7
Other physical effects	10	10
No effects	59	46

Note. Multiple responses allowed.

As shown in Table 9, almost all Marine Corps women reacted psychologically to being sexually harassed. Anger, disgust, and irritation, which were the most common reactions, are usually not inwardly directed and can be healthy responses to harassing incidents. However, 45 percent of the victims experienced stress, which could affect their job performance and/or require medical intervention, as could the remaining symptoms in the list.

Table 9

Psychological Reactions to Being Sexually Harassed

Reactions	Officer (%)	Enlisted (%)
Anger	77	67
Disgust	52	56
Stress	45	46
Irritation	41	47
Mistrust of others	32	50
Anxiety	20	22
Depression	17	28
Humiliation	16	28
Low self-esteem	16	22
Sadness	10	22
Self-blame	9	20
Fear	7	22
Other psychological effects	4	4
No effects	5	10

Note. Multiple responses allowed.

Absenteeism

Victims of sexual harassment were asked if they had reported to sick call or taken unplanned leave as a result of the experience. Those who responded "yes," were further questioned about how many hours or days of work were missed during the year due to sexual harassment. Table 10 presents the results of the analysis of these questions for enlisted women only. None of the officers went to sick call as a result of being sexually harassed. However, 13 percent of the officer victims took unplanned leave or liberty, for an average of 11 days.

An estimated 4,394 work days were lost by enlisted women due to sexual harassment in the preceding year. This estimate was based on the percentages and means obtained from the sample, which were applied to the population of enlisted women in fiscal year 1994. Since the sick call question asked about number of hours lost, the time was converted to days (assuming an 8-hour day). The resulting estimate was 966 sick days and 3,428 leave days were lost over the 1-year period by Marine Corps women due to sexual harassment.

Table 10

Lost Time Attributed to Sexual Harassment by Enlisted Victims

Did being sexually harassed over the past year result in your reporting to sick call?	
No	93%
Yes	7%
Mean number of hours missed from work	45.2
Did being sexually harassed during the past year result in your using leave or liberty that you had not planned to use?	
No	88%
Yes	12%
Mean number of days missed from work	11.7
Estimate of impact on the Marine Corps	
Number of enlisted women who were harassed[a]	2,440
Number who reported to sick call	171
Number who took unplanned leave/liberty	293
Number of sick days lost	966
Number of leave days taken	3,428
Total days lost in prior 12 months	4,394

[a]Based on population of 6,520 enlisted women in FY 1994, and a harassment rate of 37.42.

Effect of Sexual Harassment on Feelings

Victims of sexual harassment were asked if the experience had a bad effect on their feelings toward the Marine Corps, their command, their work, and themselves. As shown in Table 11, feelings toward the Corps were more likely to suffer than feelings toward the local command. Moreover, about a third of the respondents stated that the harassing incident had a slight to moderate effect upon their feelings about work, themselves, and ability to work with others.

Table 11

Percentage of Victims Who Reported a "Bad Effect" on Various Feelings

	No Bad Effect		Slight or Moderate Effect		Large or Extreme Effect	
Bad effect upon . . .	Officer (%)	Enlisted (%)	Officer (%)	Enlisted (%)	Officer (%)	Enlisted (%)
Feeling about USMC	38	41	44	35	18	24
Feeling about command	54	50	24	29	22	21
Feeling about work	50	51	36	29	14	20
Feeling about myself	60	53	35	33	5	14
Ability to work with others	66	55	28	33	6	12
Time and attendance at work	95	85	5	11	-	4
Fitness for service	96	84	4	12	-	4

Retention

Four items in the equal opportunity section of the MCEOS address satisfaction and intention to remain in the Marine Corps. The responses of officer and enlisted women who had or had not been sexually harassed were compared to determine whether their experiences negatively impacted on satisfaction and retention. Because the relevant items are located in the first section of the survey, they are not likely to have been subject to a negative response set due to being sexually harassed, which was queried in the second section.

Officers who had been sexually harassed differed from those who had not on only one of the items--their satisfaction with the Marine Corps. Enlisted victims differed from non-victims on all four items. Table 12 indicates that victims were more likely than non-victims to state their intention to leave the Corps because of dissatisfaction; they were less likely to agree that experiences at their current command encouraged them to remain, they were less satisfied with the Marine Corps, and fewer intended to stay for 20 years.

Table 12

Impact of Sexual Harassment on Marine Corps Satisfaction and Retention

Impact	Officer		Enlisted	
	Harassed (%)	Not Harassed (%)	Harassed (%)	Not Harassed (%)
I plan to leave the Marine Corps because I am dissatisfied.				
Agree	37	30	35	20
Neither agree nor disagree	11	19	21	20
Disagree	52	52	44	60
	χ^2 (2, N = 1,289) = 1.90		χ^2 (2, N = 1,240) = 39.76*	
My experiences at this command have encouraged me to stay in the Marine Corps.				
Agree	9	22	12	22
Neither agree nor disagree	28	30	26	30
Disagree	63	48	62	48
	χ^2 (2, N = 1,310) = 5.29		χ^2 (2, N = 1,263) = 27.63*	
In general, I am satisfied with the Marine Corps.				
Agree	24	56	47	66
Neither agree nor disagree	45	16	21	16
Disagree	31	27	32	18
	χ^2 (2, N = 1,353) = 27.93*		χ^2(2, N = 1,300) = 51.95*	
I intend to stay in the Marine Corps for at least 20 years.				
Agree	20	38	26	40
Neither agree nor disagree	9	12	13	17
Disagree	71	50	61	43
	χ^2 (2, N = 1,204) = 5.93		χ^2 (2, N = 1,140) = 38.43*	

*p < .001.

Sexual Assault and Rape

Victims of sexual assault or attempted/actual rape while on duty or on base answered additional questions about the experience. Because less than 1 percent of the women officers were victimized, the data presented in Table 13 are based on enlisted women only.

Most of the victims of sexual assault/rape knew their assailants, but were not related to them. Very few had engaged in consensual sex with their assailants prior to the incidents. Similar to what has been reported in civilian literature (Unger & Crawford, 1992), drugs or alcohol were involved in 69 percent of the cases. Very few cases of sexual assault/rape were reported. The majority of women who did report the incident were not satisfied with the manner in which their commands handled the complaint.

Table 13

Responses of Enlisted Victims of Rape and Sexual Assault to Supplementary Questions

Responses	Yes (%)	No (%)
Did you know your assailant?	76	24
Was your assailant related to you?	2	98
Had you previously had voluntary sexual relations with your assailant?	9	91
Had either you or your assailant been drinking or taking drugs?		
No, neither of us	-	31
Yes, my assailant	47	-
Yes, I had been	-	-
Yes, both of us	23	-
Did you file a grievance after the rape/assault?	27	73
If yes, were you satisfied with the way your command handled it?	36	64

Perceptions of Marine Corps' Commitment to Halting Sexual Harassment

The MCEOS contained a series of statements regarding the Marine Corps' and the local command's commitment to preventing, investigating, and adjudicating sexual harassment. Table 14 shows the percentage of officer and enlisted respondents who agreed[5] with the statements. The first four items are worded negatively, whereas the last seven items are worded positively. While the two types of items are interspersed in the survey, the table is arranged in this manner for ease of interpretation.

Significantly different proportions of Marines endorsed the first three negatively worded statements, indicating that the perceptions of female Marines, officer and enlisted, were less positive than the perceptions of men. Over 60 percent of the women believe that sexual harassment is a problem in the Marine Corps, and almost half agree that it is occurring in their unit. Men were more likely than women to believe that charges of sexual harassment are often a ruse used to cover up unsatisfactory performance.

[5]"Strongly agree" and "Agree" responses were aggregated for this analysis; "Not applicable/don't know" responses were eliminated.

Table 14

Perceptions of Marine Corps' and Command's Commitment to Reducing Sexual Harassment

	Percentage Agreeing			
	Officer		Enlisted	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Sexual harassment is a problem in the Marine Corps	61	25	64	33
	$\chi^2 = 182.15$**		$\chi^2 = 354.92$**	
Sexual harassment is occurring at this command	43	13	50	13
	$\chi^2 = 135.50$**		$\chi^2 = 423.59$**	
People at this command who sexually harass others usually get away with it	24	8	40	14
	$\chi^2 = 53.74$**		$\chi^2 = 215.67$**	
Complaints of sexual harassment are often made to cover up poor performance	19	30	13	21
	$\chi^2 = 11.70$*		$\chi^2 = 35.86$**	
I know what words or actions are considered sexual harassment	98	97	94	90
	$\chi^2 = .10$ ns		$\chi^2 = 15.68$**	
Actions are being taken in the Marine Corps to prevent sexual harassment	86	95	79	89
	$\chi^2 = 36.85$**		$\chi^2 = 51.78$**	
Actions are being taken at this command to prevent sexual harassment	80	92	72	82
	$\chi^2 = 51.72$**		$\chi^2 = 57.06$**	
Command leadership enforces Marine Corps sexual harassment policy	84	94	72	85
	$\chi^2 = 30.81$**		$\chi^2 = 75.25$***	
Sexual harassment is not tolerated at this command	78	94	67	86
	$\chi^2 = 73.28$**		$\chi^2 = 143.56$**	
Sexual harassment training is taken seriously at this command	67	84	59	71
	$\chi^2 = 63.99$		$\chi^2 = 54.10$**	
I feel free to report sexual harassment without fear of bad things happening to me	66	87	54	77
	$\chi^2 = 87.47$**		$\chi^2 = 201.06$**	

*$p < .00$.
**$p < .001$.
ns = not significant.

The overall rate of endorsement of the positively worded items was high. Thus, the majority of Marines know what sexual harassment is, believe that the Corps and their commands are taking preventative action, and do not fear reprisal for reporting sexual harassment. Women's and men's agreement with these items differed significantly (with one exception), indicating that men had the more optimistic view.

Discussion

Because the 1994 MCEOS was the first service-wide survey of sexual harassment conducted for the Marine Corps, there is no way of knowing whether the rates of harassment are declining, stable, or increasing. However, comparisons to the results of the 1993 NEOSH Survey indicate that female Marines, both officer and enlisted, were sexually harassed at the same rate as women in the Navy (Thomas et al., 1995). Even though the knowledge that Marines are no more prone to harass than sailors provides some comfort, the battle against sexual harassment is far from won. Part of the problem lies with the disproportionate gender ratios in the military. The Marine Corps, in particular, has a low representation of women. These women, while not novelties, draw attention in the overwhelmingly male milieu. Some of the attention is welcome and proffered in a gentlemanly manner; other attention constitutes sexual harassment.

The organizational explanation for sexual harassment is that it arises from hierarchical relationships at work (Tangri, Burt, & Johnson, 1982). Accordingly, women at low organizational levels experience more sexual harassment than those at mid- or upper levels. The MCEOS results were consistent with this pattern, particularly for enlisted women. Black women, who would be expected to be the most powerless group of all because of their double minority status (i.e., female and black), did not report more sexual harassment than white women. Instead, the rates for enlisted blacks were significantly lower than those of enlisted whites. The NEOSH Survey has yielded the same puzzling result in all three administrations of the survey. Navy researchers[6] have hypothesized that black women interpret men's behavior differently than white women (i.e., don't label some behaviors as harassing); or, that black women are more apt to confront their harasser and stop the behavior than are white women.

Harassment that obviously was targeted at an individual was less common than environmental harassment. However, because the behaviors in the latter category were experienced several times during the 12 month-period by most victims, the workplace may

[6]During 1995, 10 focus groups were conducted with African-American women in the Navy to explore the reasons for their low rate of sexual harassment. The results have not been released yet.

have become sexualized. Women often try to adapt to such environments to gain acceptance from men. In doing so, they may promote an escalation of the harassment. Research conducted with military populations demonstrated that individually targeted harassment rarely occurs where non-specific environmental harassment is absent (Firestone & Harris, 1994).

Most of the sexual harassment uncovered in the survey was perpetrated by fellow Marines who were not co-workers or in the chain of command of the victims. However, sexual harassment by supervisors was relatively high, at least in comparison to what has been reported for the Navy (Thomas et al., 1995). Marine Corps women officers, in particular, were harassed by their supervisors more than their Navy peers. It is difficult to understand why this was occurring.

The most common response of female Marines to being sexually harassed was to confront the perpetrator. As has been found in civilian and military literature, very few victims formally complained about the incident. The major reasons for not complaining were that they successfully handled the situation, or they wanted to avoid the anticipated unpleasantness in the work environment. A disconcerting finding was that half of the Marines who could not stop the harassment themselves failed to complain because they felt their commands would not take action. This is a particularly relevant finding, since it may explain why so many women were unwilling to risk the negative repercussions of reporting sexual harassment. Women who did complain about the sexually harassing incident were not satisfied with the manner in which their commands handled the issue. As a consequence, their feelings about their unit and, to a lesser extent, the Marine Corps, suffered.

Only about half of the victims experienced physical symptoms after being sexually harassed, but almost all had a psychological reaction. The women who became angry or disgusted probably responded in a healthy way, in that they avoided self-blame. Of greater concern are the women who suffered stress, anxiety, or depression. While only a small number of the victims missed work because of being sexually harassed, the effect upon their satisfaction and probable retention in the Marine Corps was substantial. The cost of replacing these officers and enlisted women is not inconsequential.

Rape and sexual assault were addressed in a separate set of questions because of their serious nature and the fact that they are felonies and not, strictly speaking, sexual harassment. The percentage of Marine Corps women who had been affected was consistent with Navy numbers, as was the degree to which alcohol or drugs were involved. Because these incidents were rarely

reported, military statistics on the frequency of rape and sexual assault are severe underestimates. This problem is not unique to the military. Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987) estimated that the actual rate of rape in the United States is 10 to 15 times the estimates provided in the annual FBI crime reports.

The findings regarding perceptions of the Marine Corps' efforts in preventing and adjudicating sexual harassment were very positive. While it is impossible to discern from these data how much progress has been made in eradicating sexual harassment, the attitude of most Marines is that a good faith effort is being made by the Corps.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions are drawn from this analysis.

1. Rates of sexual harassment in the Marine Corps were comparable to Navy rates. However, more of the Marine Corps harassment reportedly was perpetrated by supervisors than was reported in the Navy.

2. African-American women experienced less sexual harassment than Caucasian women.

3. Environmental sexual harassment was more common than harassment targeted at an individual. Because the former was rarely a single event, some working environments in the Marine Corps may have become sexualized and hostile to women.

4. Female Marines reacted to sexual harassment by confronting the perpetrator, but rarely used the formal complaint system. Those women who did complain were not happy with the manner in which their complaint was handled.

5. Sexual harassment impacted on female Marines by decreasing their satisfaction with the Corps and their units, and negatively affecting their intentions to remain in the service.

It is recommended that:

1. Sexual harassment in the Marine Corps be monitored by readministering the MCEOS on a biennial basis.

2. The results of the analysis of the sexual harassment items in the 1994 MCEOS be used in training Equal Opportunity Advisors, and in annual prevention of sexual harassment training for service members. In particular, the responsibility of seniors in preventing sexual harassment of women at the bottom of the chain of command needs to be emphasized.

3. The source of the dissatisfaction of victims of sexual harassment and rape/assault with the formal complaint system be determined.

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Appendix

Sexual Harassment Items from the Marine Corps Equal Opportunity/Sexual Harassment Survey

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination that involves unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1) **submission to or rejection of such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a person's job, pay, or career, or**
2) **submission to or rejection of such conduct by a person is used as a basis for career or employment decisions affecting that person, or**
3) **such conduct interferes with an individual's performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.**

Any person in a supervisory or command position who uses or condones implicit or explicit sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, pay, or job of a military member or civilian employee is engaging in sexual harassment. Similarly, any military member or civilian employee who makes deliberate or repeated unwelcomed verbal comments, gestures, or physical contact of a sexual nature is also engaging in sexual harassment.

Both men and women can be victims of sexual harassment; both women and men can be sexual harassers; people can sexually harass persons of their own sex.

39. How much do you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/Don't Know
a. Sexual harassment is a problem in the Marine Corps	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. Actions are being taken in the Marine Corps to prevent sexual harassment	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. Actions are being taken at this command to prevent sexual harassment	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. The leadership at this command enforces the Marine Corps' policy on sexual harassment	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. Sexual harassment is occurring at this command	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. People at this command who sexually harass others usually get away with it	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. I feel free to report sexual harassment without fear of bad things happening to me	○	○	○	○	○	○
h. Sexual harassment training is taken seriously at this command	○	○	○	○	○	○
i. I know what kinds of words or actions are considered sexual harassment	○	○	○	○	○	○
j. Sexual harassment is not tolerated at this command	○	○	○	○	○	○
k. Complaints of sexual harassment are often made to cover up a person's poor performance	○	○	○	○	○	○

40. During the past year, have you been sexually harassed while on duty?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

41. During the past year, have you been sexually harassed on base or ship while off duty?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

If you <u>HAVE NOT</u> been sexually harassed during the past year while on duty, or on base or ship while off duty (i.e., answered "NO" to <u>both</u> questions 40 and 41), please continue with QUESTION 62 on page 13.

If you <u>HAVE</u> been sexually harassed during the past year while on duty, or on base or ship while off duty (i.e., answered "YES" to <u>either</u> question 40 or 41), please continue with QUESTION 42.

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42. During the past year, how often have you been the target of the following sexual harassment behaviors while on duty, or on base or ship?

	Never	Once	Once a Month or Less	2-4 Times a Month	Once a Week or More
a. Unwanted sexual whistles, calls, hoots, or yells	○	○	○	○	○
b. Unwanted sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, or questions	○	○	○	○	○
c. Unwanted sexual looks, staring, or gestures	○	○	○	○	○
d. Unwanted letters, phone calls, or materials of a sexual nature	○	○	○	○	○
e. Unwanted pressure for dates	○	○	○	○	○
f. Unwanted deliberate touching, leaning over, cornering, or pinching	○	○	○	○	○
g. Unwanted pressure for sexual favors	○	○	○	○	○
h. Actual or attempted rape or sexual assault	○	○	○	○	○
i. Stalking or invasion of residence	○	○	○	○	○

Fill in the circle that corresponds to the ONE experience from QUESTION 42 that had the greatest effect on you.

Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ Ⓔ Ⓕ Ⓖ Ⓗ Ⓘ

Answer the rest of the questions about that ONE experience.

43. At the time of that sexual harassment experience, what was your marital status?
- ○ Single, never married
- ○ Married
- ○ Divorced/separated/widowed

44. At the time of that sexual harassment experience, where were you stationed?
- ○ Command in Continental U.S. (CONUS), including Alaska and Hawaii
- ○ Command outside the Continental U.S. (OCONUS), excluding Alaska and Hawaii

45. At the time of that sexual harassment experience, how many people harassed you?
- ○ 1 person
- ○ 2-3 people
- ○ 4 or more people

46. Was the person(s) who sexually harassed you then: (pick all that apply)
- ○ Your immediate supervisor (leader)
- ○ Other higher level supervisor(s) (leader(s))
- ○ Your co-worker(s)
- ○ Your subordinate(s)
- ○ Your fellow Marine(s) (peer(s))
- ○ Other

47. Was the person(s) who sexually harassed you then: (pick all that apply)
- ○ Marine officer
- ○ Marine enlisted
- ○ Civilian government employee/Contractor
- ○ Overseas host national
- ○ Other military officer
- ○ Other military enlisted
- ○ Other not included in above categories

48. Was the person(s) who sexually harassed you then:
- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Both male and female

49. Blacken ALL the actions you took after being sexually harassed then.
- ○ I avoided the person(s)
- ○ I called the Department of the Navy's Advice Counseling Line
- ○ I told the person(s) to stop
- ○ I threatened to tell or told others
- ○ I got someone else to speak to the person(s) about the behavior
- ○ I reported it to my immediate supervisor (leader)
- ○ I reported it to someone besides my supervisor
- ○ I sought assistance at the Family Service Center
- ○ I sought legal assistance
- ○ I sought medical assistance
- ○ I used the chain of command to fix the problem
- ○ I reported it to the NCIS/military police
- ○ I called an IG Hotline
- ○ I did not take any action
- ○ I did something not listed above

50. Did you file (make) a complaint about that experience of sexual harassment?
- ○ No
- ○ Yes

51. If a complaint was filed (made), how did your chain of command handle it? (pick all that apply)
- ○ Not applicable; no complaint was made
- ○ Took action against the person(s) who harassed me
- ○ Took action against me
- ○ Corrected the damage done to me
- ○ I don't know what happened
- ○ The complaint is still being processed
- ○ Did nothing
- ○ Did something not listed above

52. If a complaint was made, were you satisfied with the way your chain of command handled it?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

53. If no complaint was filed (made), pick ALL the reasons why it was not.

- ○ Not applicable; a complaint was made
- ○ I did not know what to do
- ○ I did not think anything would be done
- ○ I thought it would take too much time and effort
- ○ I was too afraid
- ○ I was too embarrassed
- ○ I thought I would not be believed
- ○ I thought it would make my work situation unpleasant
- ○ I thought my performance evaluation or chances for promotion would suffer
- ○ I did not want to hurt the person who bothered me
- ○ I solved the problem by my other actions
- ○ The person was not at my duty station
- ○ I was talked out of filing a grievance by a peer or supervisor (leader)
- ○ Some other reason not listed above

54. Did the sexual harassment experience have a bad effect on:

	No Bad Effect	Slight Bad Effect	Moderate Bad Effect	Large Bad Effect	Extreme Bad Effect	Not Applicable/Don't Know
a. your feelings about the Marine Corps	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. your feelings about your command	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. your feelings about work	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. your ability to work with others on the job	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. your time and attendance at work	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. your fitness for service	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. your feelings about yourself	○	○	○	○	○	○

55. If you made a sexual harassment complaint, how did the command's handling of the complaint affect:

	Became Much Worse	Became Worse	Didn't Change	Became Better	Became Much Better	Not Applicable/Don't Know
a. your feelings about the Marine Corps	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. your feelings about your command	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. your feelings about work	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. your ability to work with others on the job	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. your time and attendance at work	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. your fitness for service	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. your feelings about yourself	○	○	○	○	○	○

56. Which of the following did you experience during the past year because of instances of sexual harassment? (pick all that apply)

- ○ Headaches
- ○ Upset stomach, nausea
- ○ Hives
- ○ High blood pressure
- ○ Difficulty sleeping
- ○ Loss/gain of appetite
- ○ Panic attacks
- ○ Sexual difficulties
- ○ Irregular menstrual periods
- ○ Other physical effects (write in)_____
- ○ No physical effects experienced

57. Which of the following did you experience during the past year because of instances of sexual harassment? (pick all that apply)

- ○ Anger
- ○ Sadness
- ○ Depression
- ○ Disgust
- ○ Anxiety
- ○ Fear
- ○ Low self-esteem
- ○ Self-blame
- ○ Humiliation
- ○ Mistrust of others
- ○ Stress
- ○ Irritation
- ○ Other psychological effects (write in)_____
- ○ No psychological effects experienced

58. Did being sexually harassed during the past year result in your reporting to sick call?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

59. If yes, how many hours of work during the past year did you miss?

HOURS		
0	0	0
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5
6	6	6
7	7	7
8	8	8
9	9	9

60. Did being sexually harassed during the past year result in your using leave or liberty that you had not planned to use?
- ○ No
- ○ Yes

61. If yes, how many days of unplanned leave or liberty did you take?

DAYS		
0	0	0
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5
6	6	6
7	7	7
8	8	8
9	9	9

62. During the past year, have you been sexually harassed by Marine Corps personnel while off-base and off-duty?
- ○ No
- ○ Yes

63. During the past year, have you been sexually harassed by Marine Corps personnel while at an off-base Marine Corps sponsored event?
- ○ No
- ○ Yes

If you HAVE NOT experienced attempted or actual rape or sexual assault during the past year while on duty, or on base or ship while off duty, YOU HAVE FINISHED THE SURVEY. Thank you very much for your help. You may enter any comments on page 14. Please put the survey form in the enclosed envelope and mail it back to us.

If you HAVE experienced attempted or actual rape or sexual assault during the past year while on duty, or on base or ship while off duty, please CONTINUE.

RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

For purposes of answering these questions, "rape" is defined as sexual intercourse (penetration), generally with force, against one's will. "Sexual assault" is physical sexual contact against one's will.

64. During the past year, have you been the target of the following behaviors while on duty, or on base or ship while off duty?

A. Sexual assault
- ○ No
- ○ Yes

B. Attempted rape
- ○ No
- ○ Yes

C. Actual rape
- ○ No
- ○ Yes

Fill in the circle that corresponds to the ONE experience from QUESTION 64 that had the greatest effect on you.

Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ
Sexual assault	Attempted rape	Actual rape

Answer the rest of the questions about that ONE experience.

65. Were drugs or alcohol involved?

- ○ No, neither I nor the person who assaulted me had been drinking alcohol or taking drugs
- ○ Yes, the person who assaulted me had been drinking alcohol or taking drugs
- ○ Yes, I had been drinking alcohol or taking drugs
- ○ Yes, both of us had been drinking alcohol or taking drugs

66. Was the person who assaulted you someone you knew?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

67. Was the person who assaulted you related to you (e.g., spouse, other relative)?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

68. Had you previously had voluntary sexual relations with the person who assaulted you?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

69. Did you make a complaint about the assault?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

70. If a complaint was made, were you satisfied with the way your chain of command handled it?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

COMMENTS

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!

You have now finished the survey. Please put the form in the enclosed return envelope and mail it back to us.
If the return envelope is missing, please mail the form to:
Navy Personnel Research and Development Center
Code 01E(PR)
53335 Ryne Road
San Diego, CA 92152-7250

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