

The Deployment Experience: Organizational Climate and Work Life

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Foreword

This report is based on analyses of the Navy-wide Personnel Survey (NPS). The NPS focuses on quality of work life topics, including satisfaction with Navy life, work climate, morale, training/education needs, leadership, communication, job security, organizational image and fairness, detailing, , job satisfaction, career development, availability of resources, and gender integration. This information is valuable to senior leadership and program managers in assessing Navy quality of service and in the evaluation of current Navy personnel policies.

The current study is the result of secondary analyses of data collected on the NPS during 2000, 2003, and 2005. The 2000 NPS was mailed to a stratified random sample of 20,000 active duty officers and enlisted personnel; the 2003 NPS to 13,960 personnel; and the 2005 NPS to 16,419 personnel. This survey was funded by and conducted for the Chief of Naval Personnel (N1). The author wishes to thank Dr. Kimberly Whittam, Project Director of the NPS, for her assistance in providing access to the NPS results.

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The Deployment Experience: Organizational Climate and Work Life



Background

- The Navy-wide Personnel Survey (NPS) was conducted from 1964–1972, was re-instituted in 1990, and continues today.
- During its history, the NPS has provided personnel feedback on issues of importance to leadership, policy makers, and program managers
- The Status of Forces Survey, with a more recent origin, performs the same function for the Department of Defense

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The Navy-wide Personnel Survey (NPS) was instituted in the 1960s at the Navy Personnel Research and Development Laboratory (NPRDL), Navy Yard, Washington, D C. Somer (1973) provides the abstracts of reports published from 1964–1972. For example, Braunstein and Muldrow (1972) presented the results of the 1969 NPS that addressed issues such as career incentives, retention, education, personnel services, and duties and conditions of Navy life. The original version of the NPS was discontinued in the 1970s.

In 1990, the Chief of Naval Personnel, Vice Admiral Boorda, recommissioned the Navy-wide Personnel Survey, and it continues today. Most recently, Whittam, Janega, and Olmsted (2005) presented the results of the 2003 Navy-wide Personnel Survey, covering topics such as satisfaction with Navy life, work climate, morale, training/education needs, leadership, detailing, job satisfaction, career development, availability of resources, and gender integration.

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Problem

- Anecdotal accounts attest to the negative aspects of deployments and the more positive aspects of shore duty
- However, there have been very few scientifically based studies that document the actual reactions of Sailors to their deployments
- Recent NPS data, however, provide the opportunity to document the attitudes of deployed Sailors on a host of personnel and command climate issues

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The number of studies devoted to the experiences of deployed Sailors is small. In an early study, LaRocco, Gunderson, Dean, James, Jones, and Sells (1975) collected survey data on a host of shipboard personnel issues, such as the job or task, leadership, work group, organizational communication, implementation of organizational policies, and work attitudes. However, there is no record of anything having been published on these topics.

Recently, Hosek, Kavanagh, and Miller (2006) addressed how deployments affect service members based on responses to Department of Defense (DOD) Status of Forces Surveys of Active Duty Personnel. The current report focuses exclusively on the deployments of Navy personnel.

Purpose

- To determine the 2005 attitudes of deployed Sailors on a variety of shipboard personnel and command climate issues
- To trace the development of these attitudes over time (2000, 2003, 2005)

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Often the belief among senior personnel is that shipboard life is inherently difficult, its basic nature cannot be altered, and adaptation to and successful performance within that environment is the mark of a good Sailor. However, the Global War on Terrorism and optimized manning (i.e., small crews with multi-tasking requirements) produce extraordinary strains and demands on today's shipboard crews. A crew that has high job satisfaction, believes in its leaders, and is committed to the Navy may be better able to withstand, and even flourish on, deployments that might otherwise greatly challenge them.

This study attempts to determine where deployed members stand on vital shipboard personnel issues, so that the Navy can capitalize on and reinforce positive attitudes and address, where possible, the factors producing negative attitudes.

Method: Overall Rationale

- Opinions of deployed personnel cannot be interpreted in a vacuum
- Thus, two yardsticks were employed to evaluate those opinions
 - Whether they were more or less favorable than the opinions of other groups (i.e., Sailors in sea duty billets but not deployed & Sailors in shore billets)
 - Whether opinions of deployed members have become more favorable or critical over time

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This study compares attitudes of deployed members to attitudes of those not deployed to identify areas that not only need attention, but are conducive to remedial action. For example, suppose deployed personnel believe that the chain of command lacks sufficient know-how. If substantiated, that is a problem that can be directly addressed through additional training.

Method: Procedures

- Responses from three administrations of the Navy Personnel Survey were analyzed (2000, 2003, 2005)
- Analyzed items had the same wording in all three surveys
- An item in the surveys permitted the researcher to identify individuals who were currently on deployments
- Scales were created by combining the responses to multiple items with conceptually similar content
- Responses to all three surveys were weighted using the same weighting procedure

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The 2000 Navy-wide Personnel Survey (NPS) was mailed to a stratified random sample of 20,000 active duty personnel (i.e., officers & enlisted); the 2003 NPS to 13,960 personnel; and the 2005 NPS to 16,419 personnel. These samples were stratified by paygrade, minority status (minority vs. non-minority) and gender. For the 2000 NPS, the number of Sailors that should be sampled in each of the strata was based on previous response rates by paygrade and the number of returns needed to produce a margin of error of ± 5 percentage points for the results. In place of that procedure, the Sample Planning Tool (Kavee & Mason, 2001) was used to perform the same function for the 2003 and 2005 NPS, since that tool optimizes sample allocation for complex stratified survey samples.

Scale scores were created by: (1) summing the numerically coded responses to items measuring conceptually similar concepts, such as job satisfaction; (2) computing a mean response for each individual; and (3) grouping the means into categories (i.e., 1–2.5 = unfavorable response, 2.5–3.5 = neutral, & 3.5–5.0 = favorable response).¹ Percentages are reported for each category. Differences of 10 points or more were considered to be meaningful (i.e., practically significant) to policy makers.

¹ Technically, 1–2.5 means 1 to > 2.49 but < 2.50 . The same type of interpretation applies to 2.5–3.5.

Responses to the 2000 NPS had originally been weighted by paygrade in the following way: The population proportion of each paygrade grouping (e.g., E-2 & E-3) was divided by its proportion in the return sample. Respondents in that grouping were weighted by the resulting factor. In contrast, responses to the 2003 and 2005 NPS had been “weighted to the population” (Lohr, 1999, pp. 266–267). Since information was not readily available to weight the 2000 NPS to the population, the other two surveys were re-weighted with the same procedure used for the 2000 survey.

Method: Respondent Sample Sizes

Group	2000	2003	2005	Total
Shore duty	1,396	1,798	1,838	5,032
Sea duty, not deployed	956	753	1,398	3,107
Deployed	349	596	298	1,243
Total	2,701	3,147	3,534	9,382

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Sample sizes are based on unweighted data. The samples represent both enlisted and officers.

The following item was used to classify Sailors' assignments as shore duty or sea duty.

“What type of duty or billet is your current assignment?”


- CONUS Shore Duty (Type 1)
- CONUS Homeported Deployable Sea Duty (Type 2)
- OCONUS Shore Duty (Type 3)
- OCONUS Homeported Deployable Sea Duty (Type 4)
- OCONUS “Preferred” Shore Duty (Type 6)
- Other Duty (i.e., Duty Under Instruction, special duty)

Types 1, 3, and 6 were classified as shore duty; Types 2 and 4 as sea duty; Type 5 no longer existed.

The following item was used to identify individuals who were currently on deployment when they completed the survey:

“Are you presently on deployment (i.e., scheduled time away from homeport for 30 days or more)?”

Crossing type of duty (shore/sea) and deployment status (yes/no) yielded the "sea duty, not deployed" group.



Method: Topics, Scales, and Items

Topic	Scale or Item	Number of Items	Response Format
Job satisfaction	scale	9	satisfied-dissatisfied
Navy job	item	1	satisfied-dissatisfied
Command leadership	item	1	agree-disagree
Leaders	scale	5	agree-disagree
Command resources	scale	4	agree-disagree
Career-personal life conflict	scale	3	agree-disagree
Impact of command level factors on morale	scale	5	positive-negative
Overall command morale	item	1	high, medium, low
Organizational Commitment	scale	4	agree-disagree
Reenlistment decision	item	1	agree-disagree

The scales are as follows:²

- *Job satisfaction scale* (e.g., amount of job responsibility)
- *Satisfaction with leaders scale* (e.g., adequacy of training & expertise)
- *Command resources scale* (e.g., command has adequately qualified personnel)
- *Career-personal life conflict scale* (e.g., career gets in way of personal life)
- *Impact of command level factors on morale* (e.g., unit/workgroup manning)
- *Organizational commitment scale* (e.g., Navy has personal meaning for me)

The following is an example of a single item measure: “I plan to reenlist (Enlisted) or continue (Officer) my career with the Navy at my next decision point.”

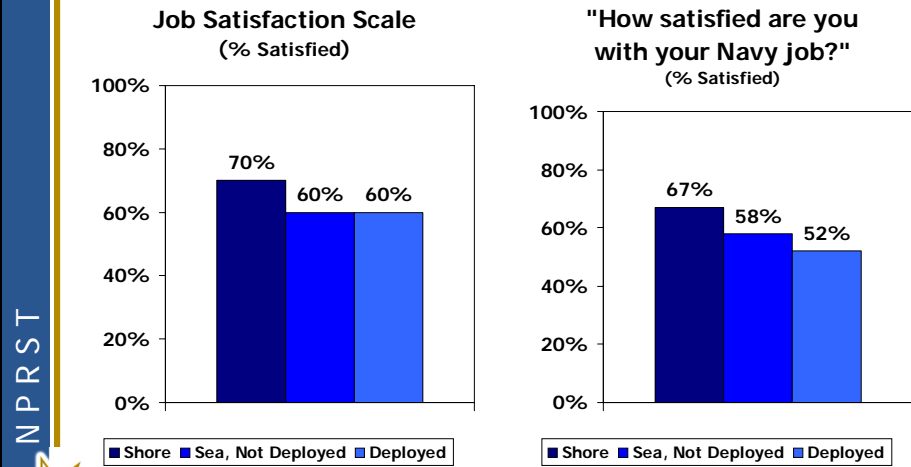
All items comprising the scales are included in Appendix A.

² A 5-point response format was provided for all scales, with the exception of Overall Command Morale, for which a 3-point format was provided.

2005 Results



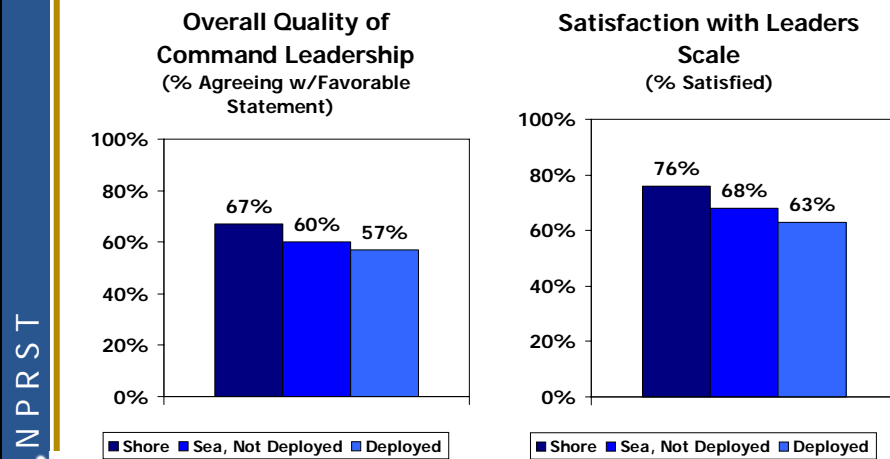
2005 Results



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In both instances (the job satisfaction scale & the item assessing overall satisfaction with the job), personnel in shore assignments were more favorable than those on deployment. Thus, results supported the thrust of anecdotal accounts.

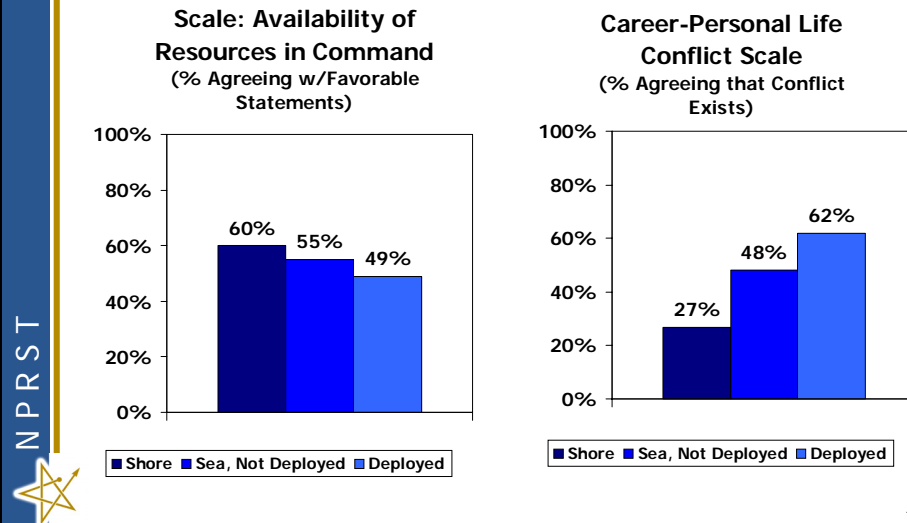
2005 Results (cont.)



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The item “overall, I am satisfied with my command leadership” constituted the first measure, a scale the second. On both leadership measures, a significantly greater number of shore personnel agreed with the item than did deployed personnel (at least 10 percentage points). As expected, the results for personnel in sea billets (but not deployed) fell between the other two groups.

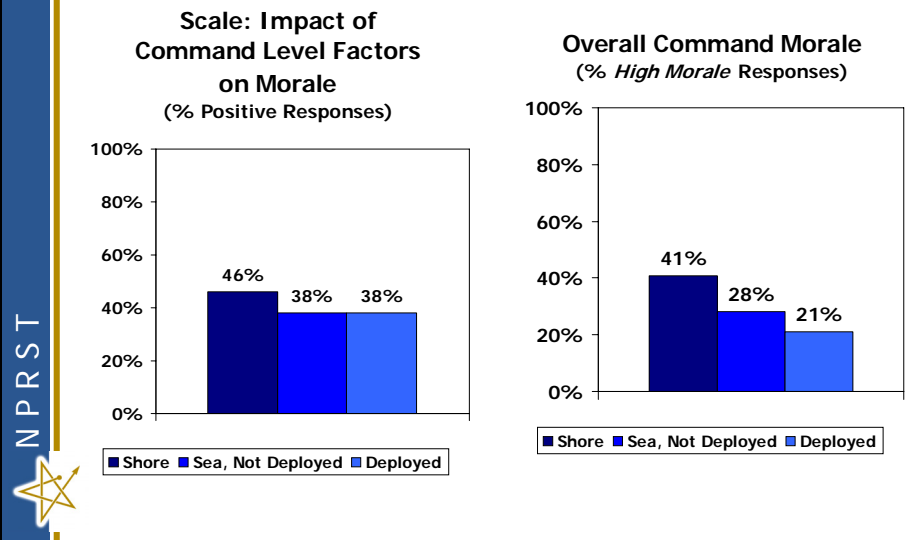
2005 Results (cont.)



Personnel believed that resources necessary for commands to execute their missions were more available in shore commands than in deployed commands.

Not surprisingly, fewer shore personnel (27%) than deployed personnel (62%) perceived conflict between their careers and personal life. The magnitude of the difference is larger than that found elsewhere and should be confirmed in future studies, and if found, should be addressed.

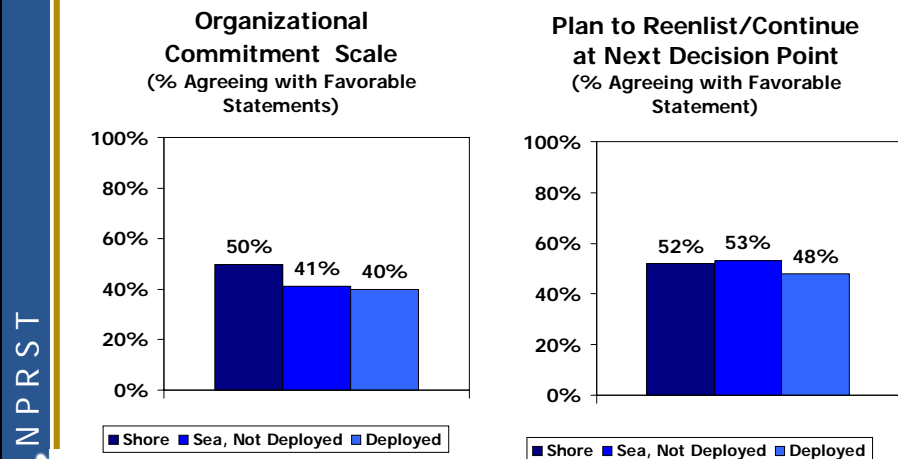
2005 Results (cont.)



Results on the first scale reflect the percentage of Sailors who answered *strong positive effect or positive effect*. Differences among the groups did not meet the minimum criterion for significance (± 10 points), although they are in the expected direction (shore duty > sea duty, not deployed > deployed).

The second set of results was in response to a single item: "How would you rate the overall morale of your present (or most recent) command (*high, medium, low*)?" A significantly greater number of personnel on shore duty than on deployment (20 point difference) rated command morale as *high*. However, as will be seen in the trend results, twice as many Sailors on deployment in 2005 rated morale as *high* (21%) than did their counterparts in 2000 (10%).

2005 Results (cont.)



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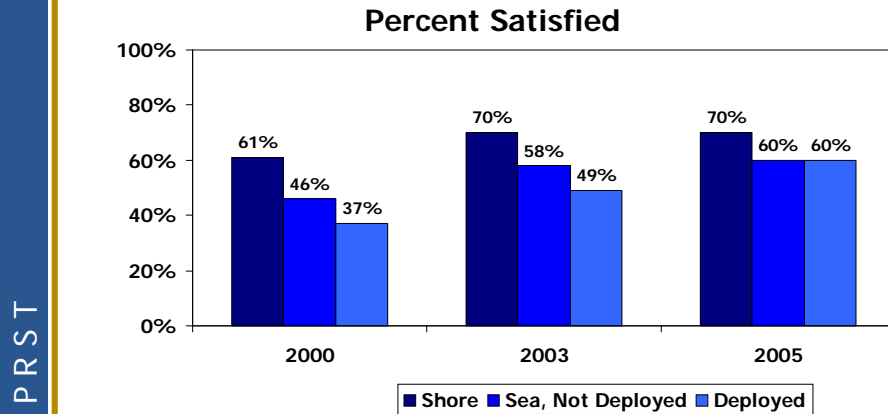
Significantly more personnel in shore billets than on deployment agreed with statements expressing commitment to the Navy (e.g., “I feel a strong sense of belonging to the Navy”).

The second set of results was in response to the 5-point agree/disagree statement: “I plan to reenlist (enlisted) or continue (officer) my career with the Navy at my next decision point.” There was not a significant difference in *agree* responses between Sailors on shore duty (52%) and those on deployment (48%).

Trend Results (2000, 2003, 2005)



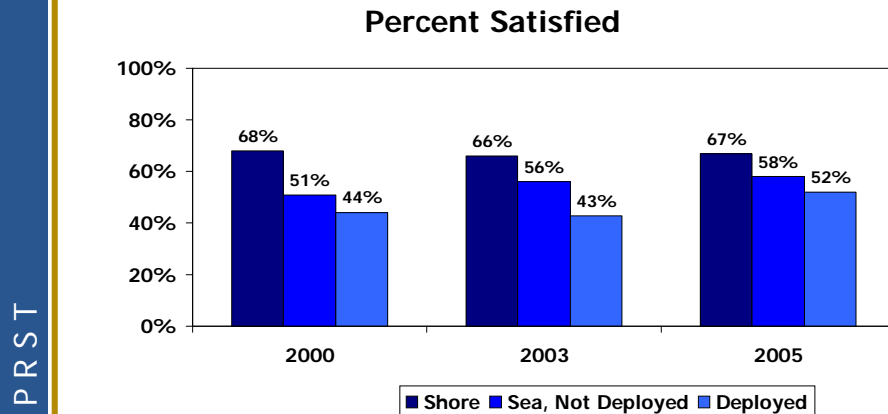
Job Satisfaction Scale



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Although two groups, sea duty but not on deployment, and deployed, showed a significant increase in job satisfaction from 2000 to 2005, the increase in job satisfaction of deployed members was striking (2000, 37%; 2003, 49%; 2005, 60%). Since this study is descriptive in nature, follow-up focus groups would be needed to identify the specific factors giving rise to this upward trend.

"How Satisfied are You with Your Navy Job?"

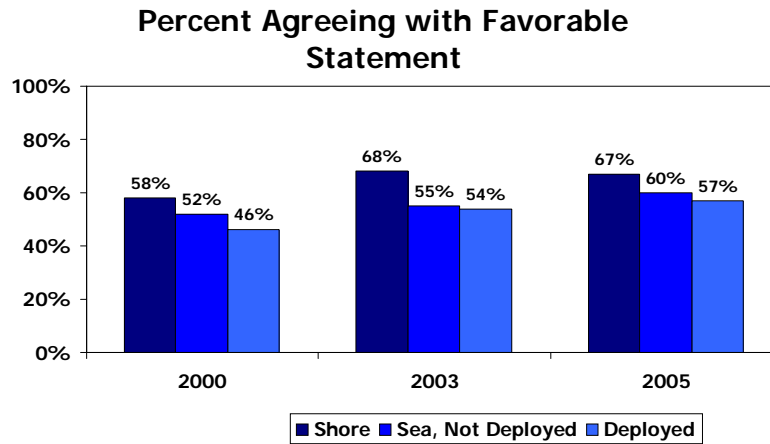


17

Both individuals on sea duty but not deployed and those deployed evidenced a moderate, but not significant upward trend. These non-significant results were in response to a single item, while the significant results previously discussed were in response to a job satisfaction *scale* (a score tabulated across items).

Aside from differences produced by different measurement strategies, the item "How satisfied are you with your Navy job?" may be interpreted differently depending on the respondent. To some respondents, "job" may represent the day-to-responsibilities of their billets, while to other respondents, "job" may simply express the fact that they work for the Navy.

Overall Quality of Command Leadership

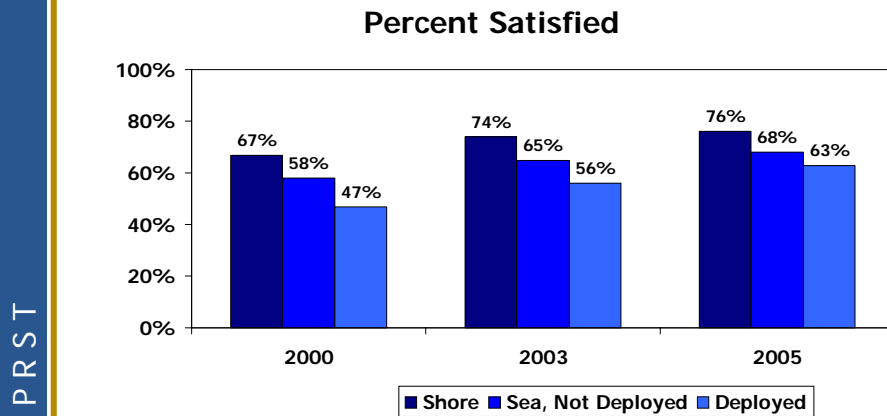


18

Results reflected responses to the following 5-point agree/disagree item “Overall, I am satisfied with my command leadership.”

Opinions of personnel on shore duty improved significantly between 2000 and 2003 and then held steady. Opinions of personnel on sea duty but not deployed increased moderately between 2000 and 2005, but not significantly. Opinions of personnel on deployment improved steadily over time, with the difference between 2000 and 2005 reaching significance. It is speculated that this reported improvement in leadership may be due, in part, to the significant improvement in job satisfaction found with the aforementioned job satisfaction scale.

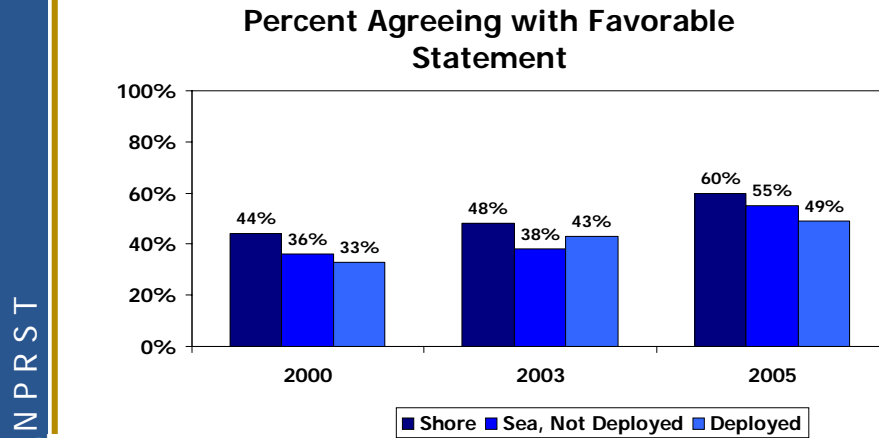
Satisfaction with Leaders Scale



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The improvement in attitudes of deployed members towards leaders within their commands was striking, the difference in positive responses increasing from 47 percent in 2000 to 63 percent in 2005. In addition, attitudes of personnel in shore billets also improved significantly between 2000 and 2005 (67% vs. 76%).

Scale: Availability of Resources in Command

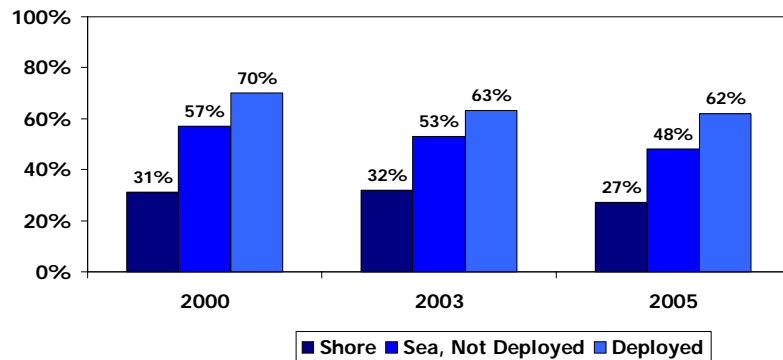


20

All three groups reported that resources within their commands improved significantly between 2000 and 2005 for all groups; from 44 percent to 60 percent for personnel in shore billets; from 36 percent to 55 percent for personnel in sea billets but not deployed; and from 33 percent to 49 percent for deployed members.

Career-Personal Life Conflict Scale

Percent Agreeing That Conflict Exists



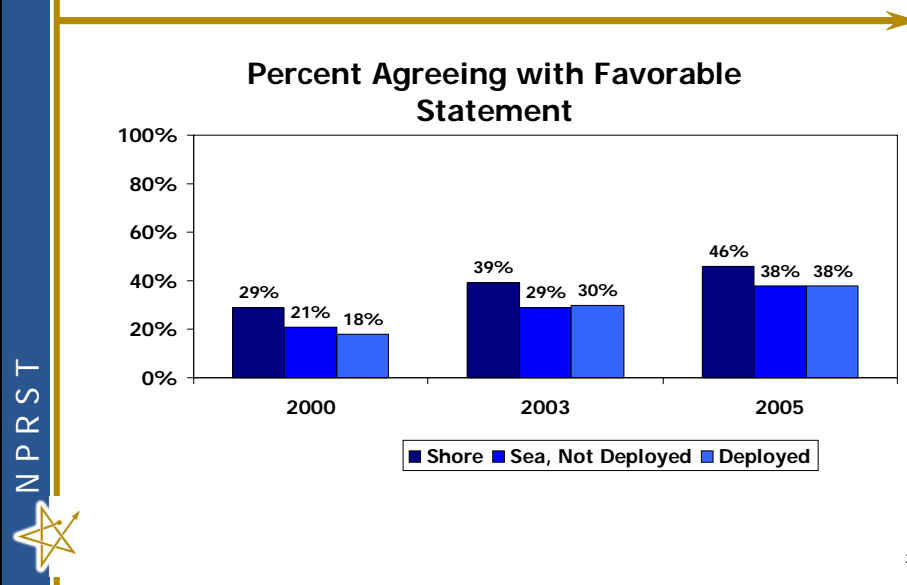
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All three groups reported less conflict in 2005 than in 2000, but the differences were not significant. Expected within-year results were obtained when comparing the three groups. For all three years the NPS was administered, shore duty personnel reported less career-personal life conflict than those in sea duty billets but not deployed, who in turn reported less conflict than those currently on deployment.

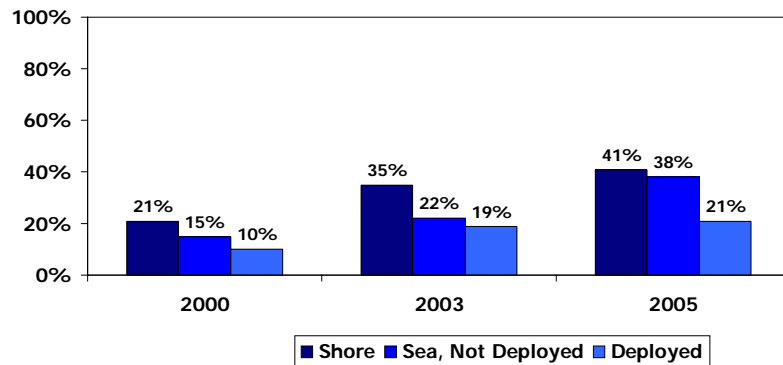
Scale: Impact of Command Level Factors on Morale



Results focus on the percentage of individuals who reported a *highly positive* or *positive* impact of command-level factors on morale. Although obtained percentages are low, they improved significantly over time for all three groups. Specifically, percentages improved between 2000 and 2005 from 29 percent to 46 percent for personnel in shore billets; from 21 percent to 38 percent for personnel in sea billets but not deployed; and from 18 percent to 38 percent for deployed members.

Overall Command Morale

Percent of *High Morale* Responses

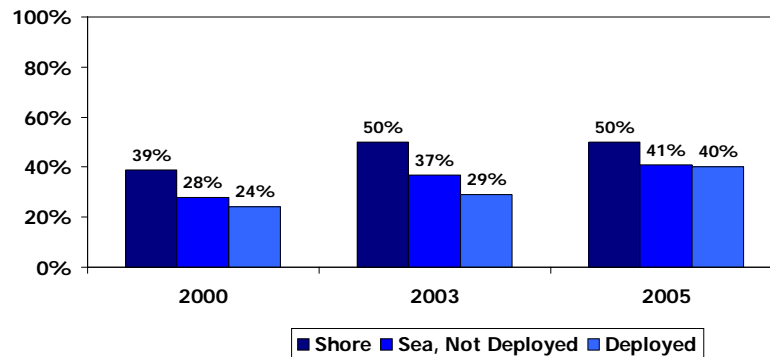


23

Individuals were asked to indicate, in response to a single item, whether they thought morale at their command was high, medium, or low. All three groups evidenced a significant improvement in attitudes over time. However, less than 50 percent of all the groups at each of the three points in time believed that morale was high at their commands.

Organizational Commitment Scale

Percent Agreeing with Favorable Statement



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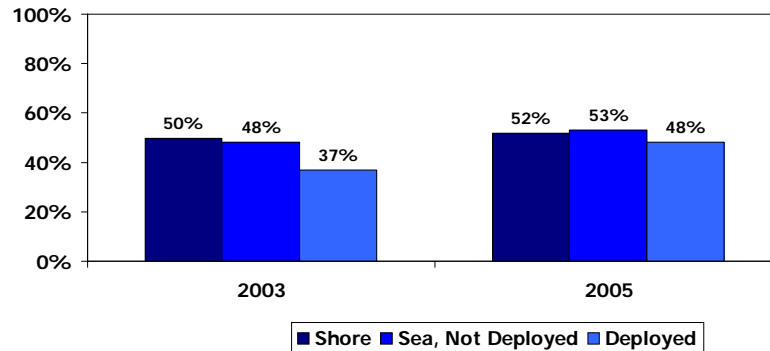


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For all three groups, degree of organizational commitment significantly increased over time. Percentages increased between 2000 and 2005 from 39 percent to 50 percent for the shore duty group; from 28 percent to 41 percent for personnel in sea duty billets, but not deployed; and from 24 percent to 40 percent for deployed members.

Plan to Reenlist/Continue at Next Decision Point

Percent Agreeing with Favorable Statement



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Results reflected responses to the following 5-point agree-disagree item: “I plan to reenlist (enlisted) or continue (officer) my career with the Navy at my next decision point.” Results were only available for the 2003 and 2005 NPS. (Different items on this topic were asked in the 2000 NPS.)

Results for Sailors in shore duty billets and individuals in sea billets but not deployed were similar for both years. However, favorable responses for deployed members increased significantly from 2003 (37%) to 2005 (48%).

Summary

- In 2005, shore personnel expressed more favorable attitudes than deployed personnel on several measures
 - Job satisfaction scale
 - Overall quality of command leadership
 - Satisfaction with leaders scale
 - Scale: availability of resources in command
 - Organizational commitment scale
- However, it is important to note that on all these measures, the attitudes of deployed members had improved significantly—and in some cases, dramatically--over time.
- On two measures—impact of command level factors on morale and reenlistment plans—the attitudes of deployed members improved significantly over time to the point where they were the same as shore duty personnel in 2005



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For the *job satisfaction scale*, 70 percent of shore personnel vs. 60 percent of deployed personnel were satisfied in 2005. Over the five years (2000–2005), *satisfied* percentages for deployed personnel increased from 37 percent (2000) to 49 percent (2003) to 60 percent (2005).

For the *overall quality of command leadership scale*, 67 percent of shore personnel vs. 57 percent of deployed personnel voiced favorable attitudes in 2005. Over time, the number of deployed personnel voicing favorable attitudes increased from 46 percent to 54 percent to 57 percent.

For the *satisfaction with leaders scale*, 76 percent of shore personnel vs. 63 percent of deployed personnel were satisfied in 2005. Over time, *satisfied* percentages of deployed members increased from 47 percent to 56 percent to 63 percent.

For the *available resources in command scale*, 60 percent of shore personnel vs. 49 percent of deployed personnel reported favorable attitudes in 2005. Over time, the number of deployed personnel reporting favorable attitudes increased from 33 percent to 43 percent to 49 percent.

For the *organizational commitment scale*, 50 percent of shore personnel vs. 40 percent of deployed personnel agreed in 2005 with statements reflecting commitment to the Navy. Over time, the number of deployed personnel agreeing increased from 24 percent to 29 percent to 40 percent.

For the *impact of command level factors on morale scale*, 46 percent of shore personnel and 38 percent of deployed personnel indicated in 2005 that the impact was positive. Over time, the number of deployed personnel selecting *positive impact* responses increased from 18 percent to 30 percent to 38 percent.

For the reenlistment/career-continuance item, 52 percent of shore personnel and 48 percent of deployed personnel indicated in 2005 that they planned to reenlist at their next decision point. The number of deployed personnel expressing such plans increased from 37 percent in 2003 to 48 percent in 2005.

Recommendations

- As a result of the Navy's commitment to smaller crews and thus multi-tasking demands, the attitudes of deployed Sailors should be assessed on a regular basis.
- Focus groups should be conducted to identify the factors producing the improved attitudes of deployed personnel found in the current study
- Having identified those factors, actions should be taken to ensure that they are maintained and become a permanent part of the deployment experience
- A renewed effort should be made to improve the quality of deployments where possible

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As the Navy shifts to smaller ships with smaller crews, shipboard life will become more arduous as crewmembers are required to successfully perform multiple functions. The more satisfying the jobs (e. g., spare parts & supplies are readily available), the more effective the leaders, and the higher the morale, the more effective the crew as they strive to fulfill the ship's mission.

The improvement of crew attitudes over time towards deployments was highly encouraging. However, current results also showed that only half of deployed personnel were satisfied with their jobs, and only 34 percent believed that command conditions (e.g., immediate supervisor, command leadership, manning) had a favorable impact on their morale. Further, only 21 percent reported that morale on their ships was high.

In short, attitudes toward organizational climate and work life aboard ships have significantly improved over time, but additional improvements are still needed. Focus groups can identify the factors producing improved attitudes, while also identifying problems needing renewed attention. With the Global War on Terrorism continuing in all probability well into the future, the benefits of conducting such focus groups would substantially outweigh the costs.

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APPENDIX: Scales

Scales

Job Satisfaction

This scale combined 5-point satisfaction-dissatisfaction items that queried personnel on

- Amount of freedom I am given to do my job
- Amount of responsibility I have in my job
- Amount of challenge in my job
- Feeling of accomplishment I get from doing my job
- Job security
- Opportunity for personal growth and development on the job
- Physical working conditions of my work site
- Availability of parts and supplies to get the job done
- Flexibility of my command in dealing with family/personal issues

Satisfaction with Leaders

This scale was comprised of these 5-point agree-disagree items.

- My immediate supervisor has adequate training/expertise to do his/her job
- My immediate supervisor deals well with superiors in the chain of command
- Overall, I am satisfied with my immediate supervisor
- My command leadership has adequate training/expertise to do his/her job
- My command leadership deals well with superiors in the chain of command

Command Resources

Four 5-point agree-disagree items comprised this scale.:

- My command has adequately qualified personnel to successfully execute our mission
- My command has adequate tools to successfully execute our mission

- My command has adequate spare parts and/or supplies to successfully execute our mission
- My command has adequate Navy support services (e.g., MWR, PSD, Housing) to successfully execute our mission

Career-Personal Life Conflict

Three 5-point agree-disagree items comprised this scale.

- My Navy career gets in the way of my ability to have or maintain a personal life
- My Navy career causes a significant amount of separation from my family or other important people in my personal life
- I have difficulty juggling the demands of my personal life and my Navy career

Impact of Command Level Factors on Morale

This scale was constructed from responses to: “What kind of effect have the following aspects of Navy life had on morale at your present (or most recent) command? (5-point positive-negative response scale).”

- Supply of spare parts/supplies
- Immediate supervisor
- Command leadership
- Unit/work group manning
- Performance of the crew, work team, or ship on exercises

Organizational Commitment

Five 5-point agree-disagree items comprised this scale.

- The Navy has a great deal of personal meaning for me
- I feel like I’m ‘part of the family’ in the Navy
- I feel ‘emotionally attached’ to the Navy
- I do not think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to the Navy
- I feel a strong sense of belonging to the Navy

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