



# Barriers to Reporting Military Sexual Trauma

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## Introduction

- ✓ This is a qualitative analysis of barriers to reporting military sexual assault.
- ✓ Military sexual trauma (MST), as defined by the DOD, captures three mutually exclusive categories: penetrative, non-penetrative, and attempted penetrative sexual crimes (NDRI, 2014).
- ✓ Organizations like the Department of Defense (DOD) and the National Defense Research Institute (NDRI) conduct surveys annually regarding military sexual trauma: types of military sexual trauma reported, what is known about the perpetrators, the gender of those reporting trauma, and the approximate number of sexual assaults that go unreported.
- ✓ These surveys give insight into the enormity of the problem.
- ✓ With so many service members not reporting their sexual assaults, it is imperative to examine barriers to reporting.

## Statistics

Of the active duty component of the armed services, 1.5% experienced at least one MST in the year prior to the report (NDRI, 2014).

Specifically, 4.9% (n = 9,600) of servicewomen and 1% (n = 10,600) of servicemen report sexual assault in the last year (NDRI, 2014).

Those who were assaulted indicated an average of more than two assaults in the past year.

The DOD SAPRO (2017) report estimates that only 1/3 of MST survivors reported their assault.

### Prevalence of MST by Military Branch (NDRI, 2014)

	Women	Men
Marine Corps	7.86%	1.13%
Army	6.48%	1.48%
Navy	4.69%	0.95%
Air Force	2.9%	0.29%

## Barriers to Reporting

Female survivors:  
68% “wanted to forget and move on”  
58% did not want anyone else to know of the assault  
52% did not report due to shame and embarrassment

Male survivors:  
47% “wanted to forget and move on”  
39% did not want others to know of the assault  
37% were too ashamed and embarrassed to report  
37% did not feel that their assault was “serious enough” to report

## Considerations

Fact: The United States Marine Corps (USMC) reported the most sexual assaults in 2016 and the Air Force reported the least.

Question: Is this because more survivors felt comfortable reporting in the USMC, or were more people sexually assaulted in the USMC?

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If MST is more common than is reported, how do we work toward a more accurate assessment of MST, and how do we help those who have not yet reported?

## Important Note

The statistics in this presentation, provided by the DOD, likely underestimate the actual occurrence of MST, as rape and sexual assault are the most underreported violent crimes in the U.S. (Holland et al., 2016).

## References

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