

2016 Navy Pregnancy and Parenthood Survey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Purpose

This survey is designed to collect objective data for evaluating pregnancy policies IAW SECNAVINST 1000.10A, Department of the Navy (DON) Policy on Parenthood and Pregnancy. Navy leadership continues to monitor pregnancy and parenthood trends, and the impact of these issues on all service members as well as on Navy readiness. Relevant data may not exist in current medical or personnel databases, so the Navy-wide Pregnancy and Parenthood Survey (conducted biennially since 1988) has served as the primary source of metrics related to pregnancy, single parenthood, and related topics.

Approach

Naval Air Warfare Center Training Systems Division (NAWCTSD) Air Branch 4635 (Manpower and Personnel Studies) administered the 2016 Pregnancy and Parenthood Survey from August 2016 until November 2016. Researchers sent survey invitation letters to a stratified random sample of 22,924 women (38% of all Active Duty women) and 9,665 men (4% of all Active Duty men) in pay grades E2-E9 and O1-O5 (this number reflects the count after incomplete or erroneous addresses were removed from the sample.). These letters included a unique user login for each service member as well as the survey website address. Before the survey closed, NAWCTSD employees sent two reminder letters to participants at their command address and sent three reminder emails to each participant at their email address of record in the Navy Standard Integrated Personnel System (NSIPS).

In the survey, men and women were asked a common core of items about retention influencers, parenthood, family planning, sabbaticals, attitudes towards birth control and health care providers, and adoption leave; the only differences in these common questions were in gender-specific wording (e.g., “father a child” vs. “become pregnant”). Men were asked additional questions about paternity leave, while women were asked additional questions about maternity leave and pregnancy experiences while in the Navy, including breastfeeding. Survey items were automatically skipped if they were not applicable to a respondent, based upon the respondent’s previous answers. To maintain anonymity of respondents, the survey manager removed all login information from the data before analysis. NAWCTSD researchers statistically weighted results by pay grade and gender strata to be representative of the entire Navy population at the time of survey administration.

Findings

Responses to the survey were received from 4,802 men and women, yielding return rates of 14% for men and 20% for women after correcting the sample size for return-to-sender errors. Only 3,614 women and 1,153 men completed 50% or more of the survey. The margin of error for overall questions was $\pm 7.0\%$.

Results overall are similar to previous results. The majority of women report not being a parent, while men are nearly evenly split between “not a parent” and “married parent.” Single parenthood rates are similar to 2014 rates; there are about 9,600 single Navy fathers and 5,400 single Navy mothers (4% of Navy men and 10% of Navy women). Women continue to be more

likely than men to have sole custody of their children. Single parents account for roughly 10% of enlisted women, 55% of whom were unmarried when the child was born. Divorce encompasses the largest percentage of single parenthood for enlisted men (65%), officer women (60%), and officer men (88%). Service members report the other parent to be the primary child caregiver during a deployment for 60% of enlisted and 75% of officer female single parents, which is a sharp increase from past surveys. This increase is accompanied by a decrease in grandparent caregivers and non-relative caregivers. For male single parents, caregiving trends have remained relatively constant over time, with the other parent consistently reported as the primary caregiver (94% for enlisted and 98% for officers).

Attitudes towards family planning are also similar to previous results. About half of Navy men and women indicate their sea/shore flow is good for family planning, ranging from 39% for enlisted women to 68% for officer men. About 20% of women (only 11% of officer women) and 22% of men in the Navy have not discussed family planning while in the Navy with anyone, the primary reason being that they are not yet prepared to think about having a family. This is a significant decrease from the number of men and women who had not discussed family planning with anyone according to the 2014 survey, an indicator that service members are becoming more intentional about family planning. The majority of the Navy has heard Navy leadership (e.g., CNO, MCPON), command leadership, and/or their immediate supervisor discuss the importance of work life balance. Some of the Navy (20%) has considered using infertility treatments. While women are slightly more interested in freezing their eggs than men are in freezing their sperm, most people indicate, that egg and sperm freezing policies have no impact on their motivation to remain in the Navy.

Results show that additional exposure of the Career Intermission Program (CIP) is needed in the Navy, as a substantial number of enlisted women (47%), officer women (27%), enlisted men (47%), and officer men (29%) have never heard of CIP. Of those who are familiar with CIP, the majority believe that it has no impact on their motivation to remain in the Navy. However, enlisted women (29%) and officer women (37%) do appear to be more motivated by CIP than their male counterparts.

Paternity leave has no impact on the motivation of most service members to remain in the Navy, although maternity leave does motivate women to stay in the Navy (50% enlisted, 60% officer). Enlisted men (75%) and officer men (74%) are not motivated by maternity leave. Women are nearly split between whether operational deferment due to pregnancy motivates them to stay in the Navy or if the policy has no impact on their motivation. Men are not motivated by operational deferment. Finally, the majority of service members are not motivated by adoption leave to remain in the Navy, although female officers report the highest motivation rate (42%).

Birth control usage is now at the lowest percentage for most groups; only 73% of women and 68% of men use birth control more than 75% of the time. The most common methods continue to be birth control pills and/or condoms. Men primarily get their birth control over the counter, while women receive theirs from a Navy medical provider. Of women who use short-term birth control prescriptions, most choose to keep their birth control with them while on deployment. Of these women, 76% of enlisted and 83% of officers report receiving enough birth control to cover their most recent deployment. Both men and women report a significant decrease in the

availability of emergency contraception where they are stationed, compared to 2014. The majority of men and women who do not use birth control do not use it because they do not want to or because they are pregnant or trying to get pregnant. However, it should be noted that both male enlisted (19%) and male officers (38%) report not using birth control because they are not comfortable discussing it, a significant increase from 2014.

Compared to 2014, more men in the Navy have fathered a child since the onset of paternity leave in October 2008 (83%), but fewer men have taken paternity leave (80%), averaging 2-3 weeks combined annual and paternity leave. More men take parental leave for an adoption (100% enlisted and 65% officer) than women (11% enlisted and 51% officer), with the average man taking about two weeks and the average woman taking about three weeks of combined annual and parental leave.

Pregnancy rates are slightly lower than previous years; about 8% of enlisted women and 7% of officer women are pregnant at any point-in-time (snapshot), and about 11% of Navy women became pregnant in FY15. The majority of female officer pregnancies (76%) are planned versus female enlisted pregnancies (41%), which is relatively equal to previous years. Few women assigned to shore or non-deployable units have orders to a ship or deployable unit when they become pregnant; those assigned to deployable units are most likely to have just returned from a deployment (within the last 93 days for enlisted and 111 days for officer women, on average). Service members report the father of the child being in the military for 65% of enlisted women and 48% of officer women. Only 36% of officer women and 15% of enlisted women continued to work in the same place after becoming pregnant. Of those who were transferred, women were 10 weeks pregnant and female officers were 11 weeks pregnant on average when they moved, with officers being more pleased than enlisted with their new command. Over half of Navy women give birth in a Military Treatment Facility. On average, women use about seven to eight weeks of leave (seven weeks of convalescent and one week of annual leave combined) after they give birth. Over half (53%) of enlisted women and 81% of officer women are able to successfully complete their next regularly scheduled Physical Fitness Assessment after the expiration of their six-month post-pregnancy waiver, with an additional 30% of enlisted and 13% of officer women receiving a medical waiver longer than six months. Only 39% of enlisted and 55% of officer women think that six months is enough time to physically recover from a pregnancy. Most women (92% enlisted and 97% officer) breastfed or pumped after giving birth, many of whom continued to do so even after returning to duty. Most women have access to adequate nursing facilities (e.g., nursing room not in a restroom, hot running water, storage for breast milk). Enlisted mothers breastfed for seven months and officer mothers for nine months, on average, although both groups originally planned to breastfeed for approximately 11 months; most mothers stopped breastfeeding because other needs interfered.

Women and men indicate similar key influencers in their decision to stay in the Navy, although results for women tend to be lower than for men, and results for enlisted personnel tend to be lower than for officers, a pattern continued from 2014. In addition, results for female officers have significantly decreased from 2014 to 2016. The strongest influencers to stay include: Job Security/Stability, Loyalty to Nation/Service, Benefits/Pay, and Retirement. The primary influencers to leave relate to family and unpredictability: Impact of your Navy career on your spouse/family, Impact of career on ability to have a family, Work/Life Balance, and Predictable

Schedule. Negative influencers relating to family have less of an impact in 2016 than in 2014, indicating a possible positive effect by recent retention initiatives designed to mitigate the impact of military service on service members' families (i.e. Sailor 2025).

Trends over the last 14 or more years show consistent findings year-to-year (within a 10 percentage point window) in four key areas: (1) rates of single parenthood and single parent custody have been consistent since 1999, with the exception of female officer custody, which has increased from 6% to 15%; (2) about 65% of enlisted and 75% of officers usually use birth control, similar to rates found since 1997; (3) point-in-time and annual pregnancy rates have been relatively stable since 1992; and (4) rates of pregnancy planning have been consistent.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the survey, a number of general recommendations are offered:

1. Publicize survey results.
 - a. Publish Executive Summary on public-facing NPC website.
 - b. Publish article on survey results to Navy.mil website.
 - c. Provide follow-on briefings as requested.
2. Provide results to stakeholders: BUMED, N13, N17, and N1T.
 - a. Better define boundaries between birth control discussions during annual medical visits and parenthood/family planning discussions during military training and leadership meetings.
3. Evaluate increasing the response options for "Why did you not use birth control?" based on participant qualitative feedback.
4. Evaluate renaming the future versions of the survey to remove the word "pregnancy," to encourage more responses from male participants.
5. Coordinate future surveys with the broader Navy Survey Strategy developed by N1T.