



Appendix F: Department of Defense Memorandum to Congress – September 17, 2020





PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

SEP 17 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
President of the Senate
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to provide a response regarding the administration of the Workplace and Gender Relations Surveys, including the Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of the Active Duty (WGRA), 10 U.S.C. § 481; the Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of the Civilian Workforce (WGRC), 10 U.S.C. § 481 a(c); and the Service Academy Gender Relations Survey (SAGR), 10 U.S.C. §§ 7461(c), 8480(c), and 9461(c), which are required every two years on different schedules specified in law.

The Department is committed to providing Congress with accurate assessments of sexual assault and sexual harassment throughout the Department of Defense. However, prevalence rates of sexual assault and sexual harassment obtained through these surveys will likely be skewed and difficult to interpret given the constraints of preventing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) spread within the Department through social distancing, telework, and other operational changes. In addition, COVID-19 response efforts within the force would likely limit survey response rates, further complicating interpretation of results. As a result, we expect these unique conditions would prevent us from providing accurate feedback on the Department's efforts to address sexual assault, and therefore not provide reliable information to compare with survey results from prior and subsequent years.

To more accurately calculate estimated prevalence rates and assess progress, we intend to postpone the administration of these surveys. Although we will defer the surveys for Fiscal Year 2020, the Department will still submit the congressionally-mandated annual Military Service Academy Report and the annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military, to provide assessments based on data and input obtained from activities and resources other than surveys.

I am sending identical letters to the Speaker of the House and the congressional defense committees. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to our Service members.

Sincerely,

Matthew P. Donovan