

Deployment Health Assessments

U.S. Armed Forces

September 2020

(Data through August 2020)

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch

Update: Deployment Health Assessments, U.S. Armed Forces, September 2020

Since January 2003, pronounced fluctuations in the monthly numbers of pre- and post-deployment health assessment (PDHA) forms transmitted to the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch (AFHSB) generally have corresponded to times of departure and return of large numbers of service members who deployed. For the purposes of this report about service members' responses to the assessment questions, it is important to note that the denominator is the total number of service members who completed deployment-related assessments, not the total number of service members eligible for the assessments.

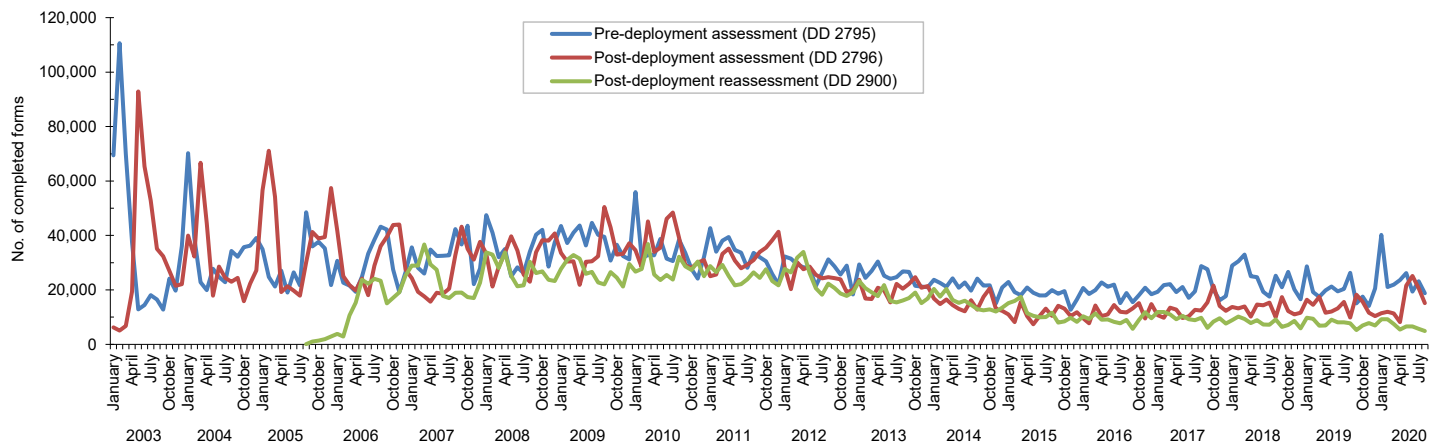
From January 2015 through August 2020, monthly counts of pre-deployment health assessment forms showed the greatest variation compared to the other deployment health assessment forms (Figure 1). The most pronounced fluctuations in monthly counts of pre-deployment health assessment forms during this period occurred from June 2017 through July 2020. (Figure 1). For the past 8 years, counts of post-deployment health reassessment (PDHRA) forms showed a pronounced downward trend; since June 2017, the monthly counts of these questionnaires were consistently lower than the monthly counts of PDHA forms. Moreover, the average monthly number of PDHRA forms (6,845) during the most recent 12 months (September 2019–August 2020) was the single lowest 1-year average since July 2006 (Table 1, data not shown). The average monthly number of PDHA forms (15,121) during the most recent 12 months was the highest 1-year average since November 2014 (Table 1, data not shown). This recent uptick in the number of PDHA forms reflects the spike in the monthly number of completed pre-deployment health assessment forms that occurred in January 2020 (Figure 1).

During the past 12 months, the percentages of total returned deployers who rated their health as either “fair” or “poor” ranged from 5.4% to 10.0% on PDHA questionnaires and from 6.4% to 9.3% on PDHRA questionnaires (Figure 2). The percentages of total service members who rated their health as either “fair” or “poor” on pre-deployment questionnaires during this period varied between 2.2% and 5.6%.

In general, the percentages of “exposure concerns” self-reported on PDHA and PDHRA forms were higher among reserve component members than among active component members; a similar pattern is apparent for the percentages of “health concerns” self-reported on PDHA forms (Table 2, Figure 3). Active component Marine Corps members were 1.6 times as likely to report 2 or more PTSD symptoms at the time of the PDHRA compared to the time of the PDHA (Table 2).

At the time of return from deployment, 18.9% of active component and 15.5% of reserve component service members reported any depression symptoms. Service members in the active and reserve components were 3.7 and 9.2 times as likely, respectively, to receive a mental health referral 3–6 months after deployment, compared to the time of their return from deployment. Moreover, at the time of the PDHRA, reservists were 2.0 times as likely to receive a mental health referral as members of the active component (Table 2).

Figure 1. Numbers of deployment health assessment and reassessment forms,^a by month, U.S. Armed Forces, January 2003–August 2020



No., number.

^aPre-deployment health assessment forms are completed 30–90 days before departure for deployment. Post-deployment assessment forms are completed 1–30 days after return from deployment. Post-deployment health re-assessment forms are completed 90–180 days after return from deployment.

Table 1. Number of deployment-related health assessment forms, by month, U.S. Armed Forces, September 2019–August 2020

	Pre-deployment assessment DD 2795		Post-deployment assessment DD 2796		Post-deployment reassessment DD 2900	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	261,755	100.0	181,455	100.0	82,138	100.0
Average	21,813		15,121		6,845	
2019						
September	15,114	5.8	18,240	10.1	5,282	6.4
October	17,518	6.7	15,728	8.7	6,954	8.5
November	14,127	5.4	11,625	6.4	7,814	9.5
December	20,555	7.9	10,367	5.7	6,910	8.4
2020						
January	40,188	15.4	11,483	6.3	9,219	11.2
February	21,071	8.0	11,961	6.6	9,202	11.2
March	21,992	8.4	11,338	6.2	7,447	9.1
April	23,590	9.0	8,156	4.5	5,430	6.6
May	26,176	10.0	21,562	11.9	6,567	8.0
June	19,431	7.4	25,170	13.9	6,641	8.1
July	23,181	8.9	20,647	11.4	5,714	7.0
August	18,812	7.2	15,178	8.4	4,958	6.0

Source: Defense Medical Surveillance System (DMSS) as of 03-SEP-2020
Prepared by Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch (AFHSB)

Data Source: Defense Medical Surveillance System

Figure 2. Percentages of deployment health assessment forms with self-assessed health status rated as either “fair” or “poor,” by month, U.S. Armed Forces, September 2019–August 2020

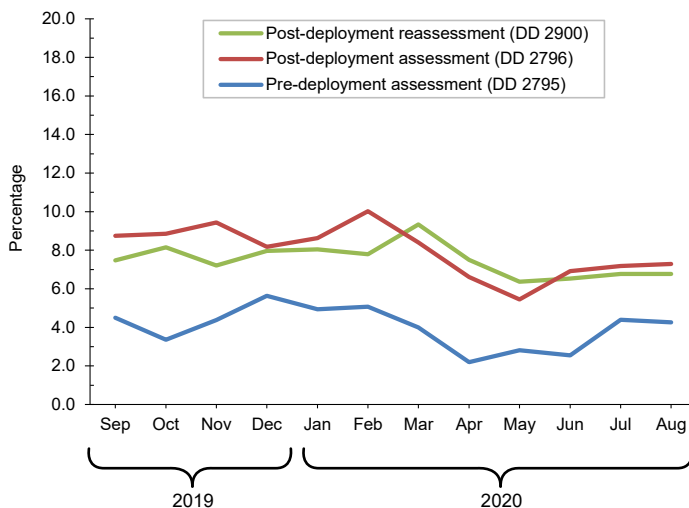


Table 2. Percentage of service members who endorsed selected questions or received referrals on health assessment forms, U.S. Armed Forces, September 2019–August 2020

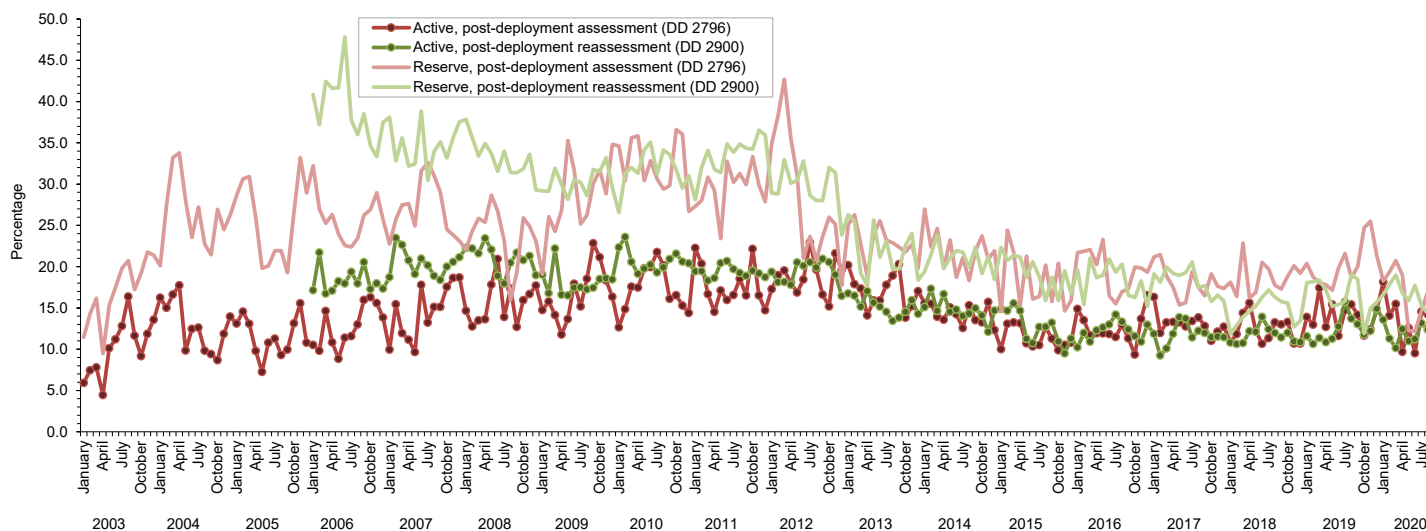
	Army			Navy			Air Force			Marine Corps			All active component service members		
	Pre-deploy DD2795	Post-deploy DD2796	Reassessmt DD2900	Pre-deploy DD2795	Post-deploy DD2796	Reassessmt DD2900	Pre-deploy DD2795	Post-deploy DD2796	Reassessmt DD2900	Pre-deploy DD2795	Post-deploy DD2796	Reassessmt DD2900	Pre-deploy DD2795	Post-deploy DD2796	Reassessmt DD2900
Active component	n= 98,230 %	n= 55,683 %	n= 22,853 %	n= 5,681 %	n= 5,621 %	n= 4,352 %	n= 40,157 %	n= 32,469 %	n= 25,436 %	n= 15,361 %	n= 16,276 %	n= 10,151 %	n= 159,429 %	n= 110,049 %	n= 62,792 %
General health "fair" or "poor"	6.7	10.3	10.7	2.8	7.1	6.4	1.7	4.6	4.3	3.9	7.2	9.4	5.0	8.0	7.6
Health concerns, not wound or injury	6.9	17.8	10.7	5.3	15.7	11.6	3.6	10.7	8.9	4.8	11.7	10.7	5.8	14.7	10.1
Health worse now than before deployed	na	72.5	73.6	na	73.2	75.6	na	64.0	71.7	na	71.2	76.3	na	69.8	73.4
Exposure concerns	na	12.6	12.9	na	18.1	20.7	na	15.0	10.5	na	9.7	11.5	na	13.2	12.2
PTSD symptoms (two or more)	na	6.7	8.9	na	6.6	7.5	na	3.9	3.4	na	3.2	5.1	na	5.4	6.0
Depression symptoms (any)	na	22.5	22.3	na	22.5	22.3	na	12.6	10.7	na	17.7	19.8	na	18.9	17.2
Referral indicated by provider (any)	5.4	12.9	12.7	5.9	26.7	18.9	7.4	18.1	9.8	7.2	21.0	16.0	6.1	16.3	12.5
Mental health referral indicated ^a	1.6	2.5	10.1	0.9	6.0	16.4	1.4	3.4	8.7	0.8	2.4	14.5	1.4	2.9	10.7
Medical visit following referral ^b	98.3	98.3	97.1	87.6	84.6	88.7	99.1	98.6	99.2	96.4	91.0	90.7	98.0	95.7	95.2
	Army			Navy			Air Force			Marine Corps			All reserve component service members		
	Pre-deploy DD2795	Post-deploy DD2796	Reassessmt DD2900	Pre-deploy DD2795	Post-deploy DD2796	Reassessmt DD2900	Pre-deploy DD2795	Post-deploy DD2796	Reassessmt DD2900	Pre-deploy DD2795	Post-deploy DD2796	Reassessmt DD2900	Pre-deploy DD2795	Post-deploy DD2796	Reassessmt DD2900
Reserve component	n= 46,791 %	n= 46,687 %	n= 5,380 %	n= 3,249 %	n= 2,058 %	n= 2,306 %	n= 19,072 %	n= 15,561 %	n= 10,022 %	n= 871 %	n= 1,028 %	n= 999 %	n= 69,983 %	n= 65,334 %	n= 18,707 %
General health "fair" or "poor"	1.4	7.7	8.8	1.1	10.4	10.3	0.8	4.5	5.0	0.8	11.3	8.6	1.2	7.1	6.9
Health concerns, not wound or injury	2.4	14.2	11.3	3.1	37.5	13.7	1.8	9.5	6.9	2.5	23.3	8.7	2.3	14.0	9.1
Health worse now than before deployed	na	72.4	69.8	na	75.0	77.7	na	72.7	74.3	na	78.1	77.0	na	72.7	73.5
Exposure concerns	na	15.8	12.2	na	40.6	36.8	na	16.0	12.8	na	20.4	16.5	na	16.7	15.8
PTSD symptoms (two or more)	na	6.5	8.0	na	9.0	10.7	na	3.0	3.2	na	6.7	9.3	na	5.7	5.8
Depression symptoms (any)	na	16.9	16.6	na	22.4	24.2	na	10.0	9.3	na	23.2	19.3	na	15.5	13.8
Referral indicated by provider (any)	2.3	13.5	16.2	6.7	43.4	39.2	3.4	16.7	22.0	5.7	43.0	31.6	2.8	15.6	23.0
Mental health referral indicated ^a	0.5	2.0	11.6	0.7	6.4	38.5	0.5	2.3	21.4	1.0	6.7	31.4	0.5	2.3	21.2
Medical visit following referral ^b	84.8	99.7	55.2	94.7	93.1	57.5	90.1	83.1	79.0	96.7	95.5	34.6	87.8	94.1	68.0

PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder

^aIncludes behavioral health, combat stress and substance abuse referrals.

^bRecord of inpatient or outpatient visit within 6 months after referral.

Figure 3. Percentages of service members with completed assessments who endorsed exposure concerns on post-deployment health assessments or reassessments, by component, by month, U.S. Armed Forces, January 2003–August 2020



Data Source: Defense Medical Surveillance System