

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Sponsor / Study Title: Department of Defense / “Understanding Social Interactions and Sexual Behavior in the Military”

Protocol Number: HSR 22.24

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Key Information

Please read this form carefully. Reading this form may help you decide whether to participate in this study.

- **Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to research and understand how service members’ social interactions (e.g., dating, interactions with colleagues, friendships) and sexual behaviors relate to positive and negative experiences during military service. This research may inform Department of Defense (DoD) efforts to improve service member wellbeing.
- **Procedure:** Participants will complete an *anonymous* online survey about social interactions, sexual behaviors, and other experiences during and prior to military service on a personal device. The survey platform does NOT collect IP address, name, and/or e-mail addresses, so we won’t be able to link your identity to your survey responses in any way. Individual survey responses will not be shared with your Command or unit leaders. Researchers at the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) will store survey responses in their secure facility. IDA is an independent research organization that is not a part of DoD.
- **Compensation:** Participants who submit a survey will receive an Amazon gift certificate in the amount of \$20.
 - Participants are advised to complete this survey on a personal device. Participants must complete the survey outside of duty hours and on a personal device to receive the gift certificate.
 - To protect your identity and to keep your responses anonymous, the survey does not ask for your name or other contact information. To claim a gift certificate, you must submit your email address at a [separate link](#). We will have no way to connect your email address to your survey response.
- **Risks:** You may feel uncomfortable reading or answering some sensitive survey questions (e.g., questions referencing sexual behavior, command climate, childhood experiences).

- **Time:** 20 to 30 minutes
- **Consent:** You are being asked for your consent to take part in this study; participation is completely voluntary.
 - If you decide not to take part in this study, there is no punishment or penalty to you.
 - If you decide to participate, you are free to stop the survey at any time.
 - Your participation in the survey is anonymous. Your answers will not be shared with your Command or other unit leaders.
 - If you choose to participate in the study, you will give your consent by clicking the “I consent to participate” button below.
 - Before you agree to participate, be sure you understand what the study is about, as described below, including the risks and possible benefits to you.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how service members’ social interactions (e.g., with dating partners, colleagues, and friends) and sexual behavior relate to positive and negative experiences during military service. We are conducting this research because DoD wants to improve wellbeing and foster resiliency during military service. A better understanding of how personal and professional relationships in the military relate to negative behaviors will directly inform DoD’s prevention strategy. DoD is providing funding to the IDA because it wants an independent assessment. The results of this research will be summarized and submitted to DoD. No individual survey responses will be shared with your Command or other unit leaders.

About 3,000 people will participate in this study.

Explanation of Procedures

The study will recruit service members from all branches of DoD to participate in an anonymous survey that will take 20-30 minutes. The survey asks about your opinions and experiences, as they relate to social behaviors, dating, sexual experiences, command climate, and wellbeing. There are no alternative procedures. The only alternative is not to participate.

Risks and Discomforts

One risk of participating in this research is that you may feel uncomfortable reading and answering some of the survey questions. Questions asking about dating, sexual experiences, wellbeing, command climate and social behaviors may seem personal or make you feel uncomfortable. Some questions also ask about behaviors that may be illegal, in certain circumstances. As such, the survey is anonymous, and all questions are completely optional. You have the option to skip questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. You can stop the survey at any time. There is a very small risk that your anonymity could be compromised if you report a combination of uncommon demographic characteristics that few Service members share. In order to protect your anonymity, we are only asking about demographic information at aggregated levels. We have carefully constructed our questions to ensure that no combination of responses to demographic questions will result in identification of any individual or small group.

To further protect your anonymity, please ensure that you complete this survey on a personal device and not on a military-issued device. There may be other risks that are unknown.

Benefits

This study is for research purposes only. There is no direct benefit to you from your participation in the study. Information learned from the study may help other people in the future.

Compensation

This study gives you the chance to share your opinions on military command climate, social norms, and challenges service members may experience. After submitting the survey, you will be eligible to receive a gift certificate. If you wish to claim this gift certificate, you will be directed to a separate link with instructions for retrieving it. If you choose to follow this link to a separate webpage to claim the gift certificate, you will be asked for contact information (an email address to send the gift card). To protect your identity, there is no way to connect your email provided on this separate webpage to your survey responses.

Anonymity

IDA has taken steps to protect your privacy and to keep your responses anonymous. The survey platform does NOT collect IP address, name, and/or e-mail addresses, so we won't be able to link your identity to your survey responses. The survey also does not ask for personal information that can identify individuals with uncommon traits. To protect your identity, you will **not** sign the consent form, instead, you will click on the "I consent to participate" button below. Lastly, if you choose to claim the gift certificate, you will be directed to a separate survey to collect your email address. Thus, it will be impossible to link your email address to your survey responses because this is done through a separate webpage. You may also submit the survey without claiming the gift certificate if you do not wish to provide your email address.

This research is conducted by IDA, an independent research organization that is not part of DoD or government. We will safely store all the data we collect in our facility. At the end of the study, IDA will transmit the anonymous data set to DoD through a secure platform, but we will delete the lists of email addresses used to send out the survey and gift certificates. No individual survey responses will be shared with your Command or other unit leaders. While every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of your information, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Your private information, with identifiers removed, could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from you.

This research is covered by a Certificate of Confidentiality. Unless otherwise mandated by law, we cannot be forced to disclose identifiable sensitive information in any Federal, State, or local civil, criminal, administrative, legislative, or other proceeding without your consent.

Information or documents protected by this Certificate cannot be disclosed to anyone else who is not connected with the research except, if there is a federal, state, or local law that requires disclosure (see below); if you have consented to the disclosure, including for your medical treatment; or if it is used for other scientific research, as allowed by federal regulations protecting research subjects.

The Certificate cannot be used to refuse a request for information from personnel of the United States federal or state government agency sponsoring the project that is needed for auditing or program evaluation by the agency which is funding this project or for information that must be disclosed in order to meet the requirements of the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA). You should understand that a Certificate of Confidentiality does not prevent you from voluntarily releasing information about yourself or your involvement in this research. If you want your research information released to an insurer, medical care provider, or any other person not connected with the research, you must provide consent to allow the researchers to release it.

The Certificate of Confidentiality will not be used to prevent disclosure as required by federal, state, or local law of, for instance, child abuse or neglect, harm to self or others, and communicable diseases.

Lastly, The Certificate of Confidentiality does not prevent us from disclosing your information for any purpose that you have consented to in this document.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is completely optional. There are no right or wrong answers, only what is right for you. We ask that you answer each question as truthfully as you can. You may skip questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. Choosing not to participate, or stopping participation, will not result in a punishment or a penalty or a loss of benefits to you. You may choose to stop participating at any time before submitting the survey and do not need to provide a reason.

Any new important information that is discovered during the study and which may influence your willingness to continue participation in the study will be provided to you.

The Investigator or the sponsor can stop your participation at any time without your consent for the following reasons:

- If you fail to follow directions for participating in the study;
- If it is discovered that you do not meet the study requirements;
- If the study is canceled; or
- For administrative reasons.

Cost of Participation

There will be no cost to you for taking part in this study.

Whom to Contact about This Study

During the study, if have questions, concerns or complaints about the study such as:

- Payment or compensation for being in the study, if any;
- Your responsibilities as a research participant;
- Eligibility to participate in the study;
- The Investigator's or study site's decision to withdraw you from participation;

Please contact the Investigator at the telephone number listed on the first page of this consent document.

An institutional review board (IRB) is an independent committee established to help protect the rights of research participants. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, contact:

- By **mail**:
Study Subject Adviser
Advarra IRB
6100 Merriweather Dr., Suite 600
Columbia, MD 21044
- or call **toll free**: 877-992-4724
- or by **email**: adviser@advarra.com

Please reference the following number when contacting the Study Subject Adviser:
Pro00070948.

Consent to Participate

You are being asked to take part in this research study of your own free will. There will not be any punishment or penalty to you if you decide not to participate. You may stop participating in this study at any time before submitting the survey. To protect your identity and keep your answers anonymous, you will not be asked to provide any contact information in this survey.

If you choose to participate in the survey, you will give your consent by clicking the "I consent to participate" button below and submitting the survey. By doing so, you agree to participate in this study as it was explained to you above.