

BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER  
ON  
AIR FORCE EXIT SURVEYS AND WOMEN'S RETENTION

PURPOSE

To provide a response to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) Request for Information #1 (June 2019), regarding the status of exit surveys, in relationship to the attrition of Air Force servicewomen.

BACKGROUND

In 2017, the DACOWITS recommended that the Secretary of Defense “direct the development and adoption of an exit survey or surveys to assess why the attrition level of women is higher than that for men at various career points”.

DISCUSSION

- The DACOWITS requested written responses to the following six questions:

-- a. How is the exit survey structured? Please provide a copy of your Service's exit survey.

Response: Beginning in 2017, the Air Force has conducted a Total Force Exit Survey annually. (Prior to 2017, it was conducted every other year.) We invite every member leaving the Air Force, from all three components, to participate in the exit survey. We've had a participation rate of 38% in 2017 and 29% in 2018. The survey is crafted in such a way that the 175 questions inform personnel policies. The Air Force also performs an annual Total Force Retention Survey, sent to a subset of members not identified as leaving. Both surveys are highly similar in nature. The 2017 exit survey questionnaire is attached: 2017\_Military\_Exit\_Survey\_FINAL.pfd.

-- b. Does the survey differentiate the reasons why men and women leave the military?

Response: Yes, survey responses can be differentiated by demographics and in particular, by gender. Further, there are questions to capture policy impacts geared toward increasing female retention.

-- c. Does the survey differentiate between career fields?

Response: Yes, survey responses can be differentiated by career field. Further, there are some career field specific focus group sections as well (such as rated).

-- d. Does the survey differentiate between rank/grade and years of service?

Response: Yes, survey responses can be differentiated by rank/grade and years of service.

-- e. If the survey data is releasable, please provide. If not, when are the findings projected to be released?

Response: Record level data is not releasable. Analysis of the data is provided by request from policy makers and career field Functional Authorities. Analyses of the 2018 Exit Survey data is underway and a findings out brief is under development. The brief should be available in time for the 11-12 June Committee meeting.

-- f. Has any analysis of the survey data been conducted? If so, what are the findings/recommendations?

Response: We recently received 2018 survey response data and are in the process of analyzing and developing an Air Force level briefing. The Air Force 2018 Exit Survey briefing will be provided to the Committee upon completion.

## SUMMARY

The Air Force continues its efforts to not only assess data related to the retention of women service members, but to address issues as they are identified. We will continue to work with the DACOWITS and other entities to ensure the success of this initiative.