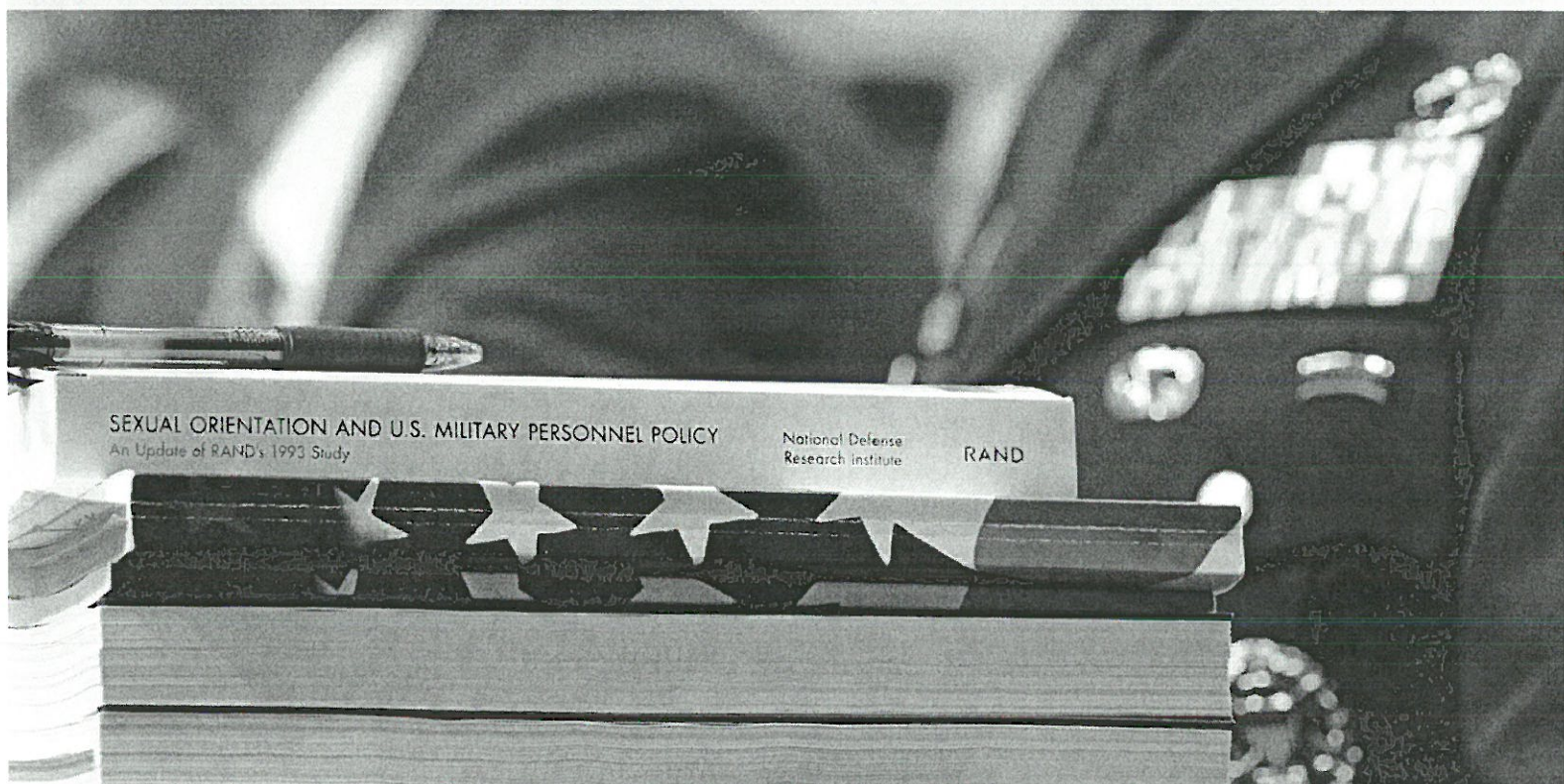


RAND REVIEW

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Gays in the Military

Eventually, New Facts Conquer Old Taboos

— By Bernard D. Rostker, Susan D. Hosek, and Mary E. Vaiana

Shifts in Responsibility: Global Trends Presage New Era in Home Health Care
—By Soeren Mattke

Most Wanted: Law Enforcement Agencies Pursue Elusive, Qualified Recruits
—By Jeremy M. Wilson and Laura Werber Castaneda

Ongoing Treatment: RAND Can Help Rein In U.S. Health Care Costs
—By James A. Thomson



Message from the Editor

Taboos, Stigmas, and Sacred Cows

Truth might hurt, but not nearly as much as falsehoods often do. Falsehoods can ruin lives by fueling discrimination and provoking ostracism. In a less nefarious vein, falsehoods can engender blind adherence to costly assumptions.

Our cover story on gays in the military, however, shows that facts can eventually conquer taboos. Since 1993, evidence has become available to show that gays are nearly as prevalent in the military as they are in civilian life and, as important, that gay service members generally intend to remain discreet about revealing their sexual orientation, even if allowed to serve without restriction. Evidence has also shown that cohesion in combat stems not from preconceived, shared values and attitudes but rather from the shared dedication to the mission. Therefore, little will likely change in the U.S. military with the repeal of its "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, although there might be fewer cases of substance abuse and mental disorders among gay service members, because they will no longer need to hide their sexual orientation.

Then there is the stigma against the mentally ill. Our perspectives article on "Facing the Music" discusses how the January shooting of U.S. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords by an allegedly mentally ill gunman elicited all the wrong reactions (having to do with blame) and none of the right ones (having to do with health and safety). Because when it comes to mental illness, society tends to place stigma above science.

And then there are the sacred cows. Two of our news articles challenge common assumptions driving U.S. energy policy. One article undercuts the idea that alternative liquid fuels can yield direct military benefits; the other finds that a federal tax on crude oil would yield more benefits than could the nation's current means of funding the transportation system. But in these cases, blind faith in alternative fuels and blind denials of oil taxes amount to costly falsehoods.

In all four of these cases, RAND researchers have not made themselves popular by compiling evidence that challenges old taboos, widespread stigmas, and sacred cows. But in the long run, revealing the truth will hurt far less.

—John Godges

Correction

The Winter 2010–2011 issue of *RAND Review* identified Charley Shimanski as regional chief executive officer for the American Red Cross. His correct title is senior vice president, disaster services, for the organization.

RAND REVIEW

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Spring 2011

Vol. 35, No. 1

4 News

- Breast cancer advice
- Health insurance exchanges
- Alternative fuel goals
- Refinery tax prospects
- British pint prices
- Outer space debris

10 Perspectives

Above the Fray

U.S. Diplomat Surveys a World of Progress, Priorities

12 Perspectives

Facing the Music

Time to Treat Serious Mental Illness Seriously, Say Experts

14 COVER STORY Gays in the Military

Eventually, New Facts Conquer Old Taboos

By Bernard D. Rostker, Susan D. Hosek, and Mary E. Vaiana

21 Shifts in Responsibility

Global Trends Presage New Era in Home Health Care

By Soeren Mattke

25 Most Wanted

Law Enforcement Agencies Pursue Elusive, Qualified Recruits

By Jeremy M. Wilson and Laura Werber Castaneda

30 Publisher's Page Ongoing Treatment

RAND Can Help Rein In U.S. Health Care Costs

By James A. Thomson

On the Cover

The latest RAND report on gays in the military sits in front of General Carter Ham, commander of the United States Army Europe and cochairman of the Pentagon's Comprehensive Review Working Group, during the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., on December 2, 2010.

AP IMAGES/ALEX BRANDON

Gays in the Military

Eventually, New Facts Conquer Old Taboos

**By Bernard D. Rostker, Susan D. Hosek,
and Mary E. Vaiana**

Bernard Rostker, a RAND senior fellow, was formerly U.S. undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness. Susan Hosek is codirector of the RAND Center for Military Health Policy Research. Mary Vaiana is communications director for RAND Health.

any of us at RAND were unpopular in the eyes of some U.S. military leaders when we issued our first report on gays in the military in 1993. Our conclusions, declaring that sexual orientation was “not germane” to military readiness and characterizing the issue as one of conduct rather than orientation, were at odds with what the Pentagon had expected. Defense officials shelved our report. President Clinton, lacking support from the Pentagon or from the U.S. Congress to end discrimination against gays in the military, adopted the alternative policy that came to be known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” which precluded gay men and women from serving in the U.S. military if they revealed their sexuality.

**Our conclusions
were at odds with
what the Pentagon
had expected.**

But in the ensuing 17 years, our 1993 report became required reading for anyone interested in the topic. In March 2010, on request from the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, U.S. Secretary

of Defense Robert Gates asked us to update the report to inform a Pentagon working group that had been established to review the issues associated with repealing Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.

Between March 1 and October 1 of last year, more than 50 RAND researchers from a wide range of disciplines met with leaders of seven allied militaries; visited domestic law enforcement organizations, federal agencies, private corporations, and universities; held focus groups with service members; conducted a confidential Internet survey of gay and lesbian service members; tracked changes in public attitudes; and scoured the academic literature to update the conclusions of our 1993 report. The Pentagon working group members wanted timely information to use in their own deliberations, and they received our report as they started writing theirs.

The Pentagon released its report on November 30. Consistent with the information in our report, the Pentagon group recommended repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell and incorporated much of our material into its own report (in its 151 pages, the word “RAND” appears 109 times). Secretary Gates endorsed the Pentagon group’s report and recommendations. On December 18, the U.S. Senate followed the U.S. House of Representatives in voting to repeal Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell. Four days later, President Obama signed the legislation into law. Final repeal now awaits certification by Obama, Gates, and Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that repeal will not harm military readiness, followed by a 60-day waiting period.



AP IMAGES/ALEX BRANDON

U.S. Joint Chiefs Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Defense Department General Counsel Jeh Johnson, and General Carter Ham, commander of the United States Army Europe and cochairman of the Pentagon's Comprehensive Review Working Group, take their seats prior to testifying before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., on December 2, 2010.

In one respect, the story of RAND's long involvement is one of endurance, showing how a government contractor can do things that a government cannot always do for itself: gather objective information, feed it into high-level deliberations, and sustain a trusted relationship despite the delivery of unwanted evidence. In another respect, the story of RAND's involvement is one of quickly gleaning new information and placing it into a useful context. The remainder of this essay focuses on that updated information. Here are some of the new facts we found.

Gay Visibility, Prevalence, and Disclosure

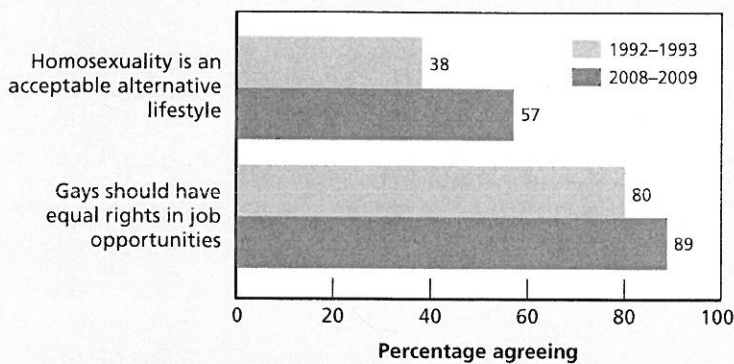
Since 1993, gay men and lesbians have become increasingly visible in American society. The proportion of the civilian population who say they know someone who is gay or lesbian has grown from 42 percent in 1992 to 77 percent in 2010, with younger people reporting higher numbers than older people. As CBS News emphasized in May 2010, "more than six in ten Americans say they have a close friend, work colleague, or relative who is gay or lesbian." Some argue that increased visibility is the catalyst that has helped to shift public opinion in favor of additional protections against discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation.

Public opinion has always been a core issue in the debate concerning Don't Ask, Don't Tell. In just the past 17 years, U.S. public opinion about gay men and lesbians has become substantially more positive, indicating greater tolerance, acceptance, and inclusion. Figure 1 shows that today, in contrast to 1993, more than half of Americans support the right of gay men and women to choose their lifestyle, and almost everyone agrees that gay people should have equal rights in job opportunities. Public opinion data also show an increase among those who favor allowing gay people to serve openly in the military. Most polling now shows a majority of Americans in support (see Figure 2).

In 1993, few studies had been conducted to estimate the prevalence of gay people in the general population or the military. Today, we know much more. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health even allows a direct comparison of the prevalence of gay individuals in the military with that in the civilian population. This nationally representative survey, which has followed 20,745 adolescents since high school graduation dating back to 1994 and has asked

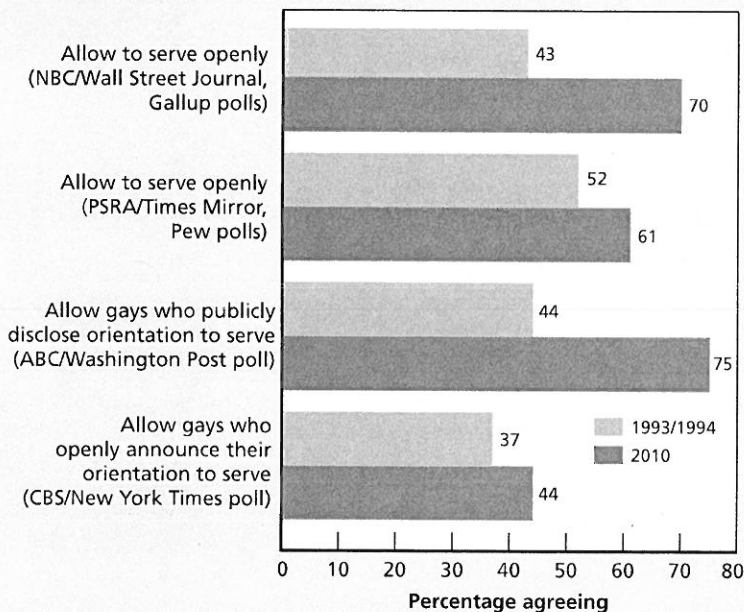
Some argue that increased visibility is the catalyst that has helped to shift public opinion.

Figure 1—With Greater Visibility of Gay and Lesbian People Has Come Greater Acceptance



SOURCE: Gallup, "Gay and Lesbian Rights," Gallup, Inc., 2010. As of February 11, 2010: www.gallup.com/poll/1651/Gay-Lesbian-Rights.aspx

Figure 2—Most Recent Polls Show a Majority of Americans Now Favor Allowing Gays to Serve Openly in the Military



SOURCE: *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: An Update of RAND's 1993 Study*, 2010.

Professionals can develop trust rapidly in intense performance situations. Cohesion in combat stems not from preconceived, shared values and attitudes but rather from the shared dedication to the mission.

them about their sexual orientation and military service, allows us to estimate what fraction of military men and women identify themselves as gay compared with that of those who have no military service.

Figure 3 shows our best estimates of the fractions of men and women in the civilian population and in the military who self-identify as gay or bisexual, based on the survey data. The fraction of self-identified gay or bisexual men in the military is close to that in the civilian population in the same age group—2.2 percent of men in the military versus 3.2 percent in the general population. In contrast, self-identified lesbian or bisexual women serve in the military at disproportionately high rates—10.7 percent of women in the military versus 4.2 percent in the general population.

Applying these rates to the active-duty military population of 1.4 million serving in 2008 (nearly 1.2 million men and 200,000 women) suggests a military population of 26,000 men and 21,000 women who might self-identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. For the reserve component, the numbers would be 15,000 men and 16,000 women (among 840,000 total members in 2008).

There is a big difference between self-identification and sexual expression. The national survey data also provide distinct estimates of the fractions of young men and women who have ever had same-sex sexual experiences before, during, or after military service. Overall, the level of same-sex sexual experience among individuals currently or recently in the military (9.1 percent) does not differ statistically from that of their peers in the U.S. civilian population (10.4 percent). Nor does the percentage of current or recent military men with same-sex sexual experience (5.1 percent) differ significantly from the percentage of the general population of young men who report same-sex sexual experience (6.5 percent). However, as shown in Figure 4, current or recent military women report significantly more same-sex sexual experience (27.5 percent) than do young women in the civilian population (13.9 percent).

Multiple studies show that gay people are more likely to disclose their sexual orientation to individuals with whom they have a close relationship. In general, studies of the U.S. population suggest that about one-fourth of gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals keep their sexual orientation strictly secret; about one-fourth are completely open about their sexual orientation; and the other half fall somewhere in the middle, disclosing their sexual orientation to select individuals. The

results from one study comparing disclosure to friends and neighbors illustrate this point (see Figure 5).

With the likely repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, gay men and lesbians who serve in the military will be permitted to disclose their sexual orientation to other service members. However, data from multiple studies and from our own survey of gay military personnel suggest that few will choose to disclose their orientation.

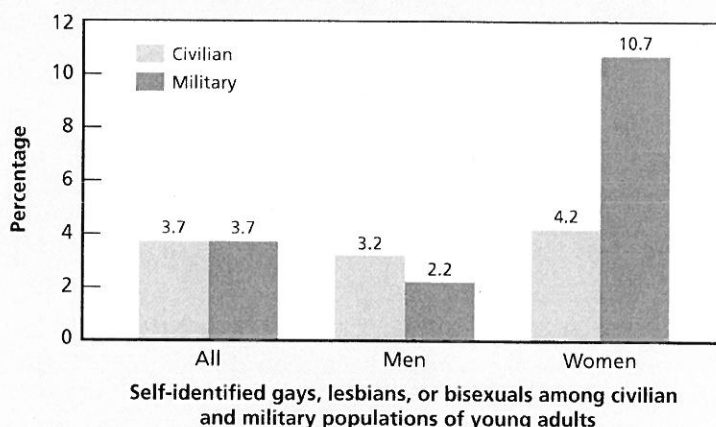
Current research on the general population also helps us understand the positive and negative consequences of disclosing sexual orientation. Disclosure may be associated with better job attitudes, higher-quality interpersonal relationships, and better mental health. Conversely, concealing information about oneself, including information about sexual identity, may lead to psychological problems, including preoccupation with concealing the information, anxiety, and social isolation. On the other hand, a few studies report that people who disclosed their sexual identity, or had it become known involuntarily, experienced negative reactions, such as verbal and physical victimization.

Issues of Concern to the Military

A number of issues from the 1993 debate have remained controversial. The 1981 U.S. military policy stating that "homosexuality is incompatible with military service" is based on the premise that a gay military member's presence "adversely affects the ability of the Military Services to maintain discipline, good order, and morale." Congress codified this unit cohesion-based argument in the Don't Ask, Don't Tell law of 1993. The 1981 policy also raises concerns about the military's ability to "recruit and retain members of the armed force" if gay individuals are allowed to serve. And in 1993, the debate also highlighted health issues, specifically human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and the safety of the blood supply.

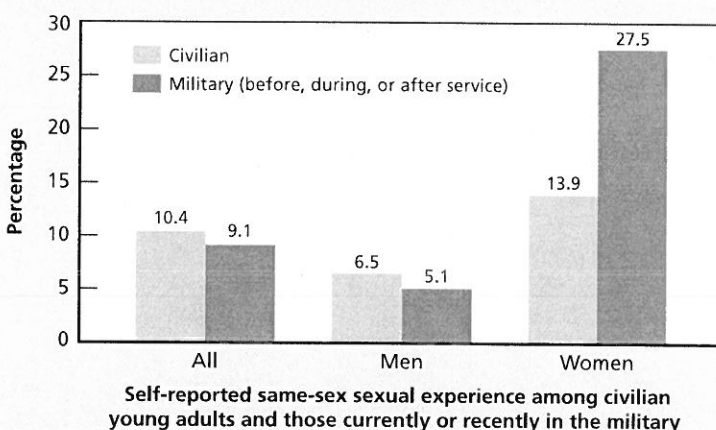
But research since 1993 has continued to find that the performance of a group influences its cohesion more than cohesion influences its performance. Interpersonal liking is not essential to effective unit performance. What is important is shared commitment to the unit's task-related goals. Personal trust in one's comrades is distinct from personal liking, and professionals can develop this kind of trust rapidly in intense performance situations. Cohesion in combat stems not from preconceived, shared values and attitudes but rather from the shared dedication to the mission.

Figure 3—Overall, the Fraction of Self-Identified Gay People in the Military Is Similar to That in the Civilian Population . . .



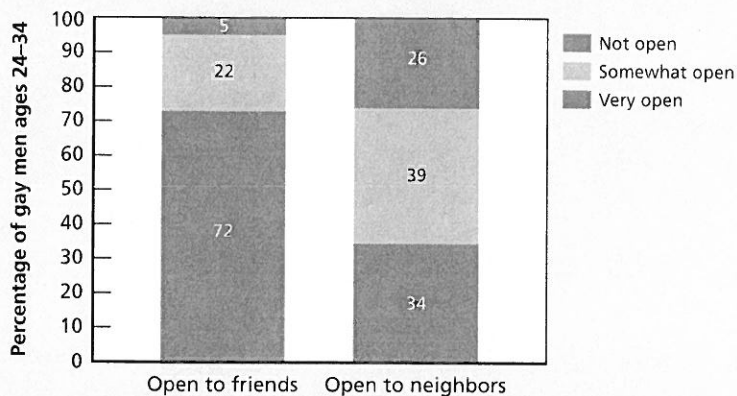
SOURCE: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, 2009.

Figure 4— . . . But There Is More Same-Sex Sexual Behavior Than Gay Self-Identification Among Young Adults in General



SOURCE: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, 2009.

Figure 5—In General, Gay People Disclose Their Sexual Orientation Selectively



SOURCE: "The Decision to Tell," *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2002, pp. 1-22, Robert D. Schope.



AP IMAGES/HARRY HAMBURG

Former U.S. military members Anthony Woods, Stacy Vasquez, David Hall, and Todd Belok join a news conference in Washington, D.C., on March 3, 2010, to discuss the effort to repeal the military's ban on openly gay service members.

Estimates of how the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell might affect recruitment are uncertain. Data from defense department surveys of youth and young adults in 2010 project either a slight decrease or a slight increase in enlistments if the law is repealed. We can be reasonably confident that any effect would be small. Other countries also report that the sizable declines in recruitment that had once been predicted in surveys prior to removing restrictions on the service of gay members did not in fact occur.

Regarding retention, 10 percent of active-duty U.S. personnel said they were not planning to leave when their obligation ended but would leave sooner in the event of repeal. However, fewer than 6 percent also said

that repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell was more important than any of their top three reasons for staying. We do not know how many of this latter group would actually leave sooner, but we can assume that they are the group most likely to leave because of repeal.

By service, the portions of this group identified as most likely to leave ranged from 2 percent among those in U.S. Coast Guard non-operational occupations to more than 12 percent among U.S. Marines in combat arms occupations. These estimates, however, are also quite uncertain. Survey evidence also supports the view, often expressed in the focus groups we conducted, that compensation-related factors are more likely to

influence retention decisions than is the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. If the repeal does in fact result in lower retention, it could be offset by increases in reenlistment bonuses, military pay, and allowances, just as many of the negative effects of frequent, long, and hostile U.S. Army deployments in 2005 and 2006 were offset.

Meanwhile, rates of HIV infection in the military are unlikely to increase if currently serving gay men are able to disclose their sexual orientation—even if the number of gay military members increases—because of improved HIV screening policies and the small fraction of gay personnel. Advances in treatment since 1993 have also made HIV/AIDS a chronic condition with few health consequences during the early years of infection, when military service is likely. Depression, anxiety, suicide, binge drinking, and substance abuse are more common among gay individuals but are unlikely to substantially affect readiness, given the overall prevalence of these problems in the military and the small percentage of gay service members.

Indeed, should the percentage of gay service members remain stable, repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell might be expected to *reduce* rates of substance abuse and mental disorders. The stress of hiding one's sexual orientation might create or further exacerbate mental health problems among gay service members and limit the social support they receive. When gay service members are no longer required to hide their sexual orientation, the stress and feelings of stigmatization might be reduced, perhaps also reducing substance abuse and mental disorders.

Focus Groups, Confidential Survey

Our focus groups with military personnel, as well as our confidential Internet survey of gay and lesbian personnel, indicate that many service members today know or believe they are serving with gay men and lesbians. The feedback also indicated how the attitudes of service members have changed since 1993, how their concerns vary regarding Don't Ask, Don't Tell and its pending repeal, and how they believe such a repeal should be managed.

Last year, we conducted 22 focus groups with military personnel at ten military installations across the United States, leading separate groups for men and women and for individual ranks. In total, we talked with about 200 service members from all five military branches.

Repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell might be expected to reduce rates of substance abuse and mental disorders.

Unlike focus group members in 1993, participants in 2010 displayed virtually no hostility toward gay people. Almost all participants said that they personally knew gay men and lesbians who were serving, despite the prohibition on revealing sexual orientation. For the most part, participants respected the service of the gay or lesbian service members they knew and did not believe those gay individuals should be separated from the service. Nonetheless, opinions about repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell were extremely diverse and actively debated.

Potential problems with the new policy that were frequently mentioned included harassment of gay service members by heterosexuals, sexual harassment of heterosexuals by gay service members, increased administrative workload, and changes in military culture and community life. Participants worried that problems might occur if gay men were included in infantry units (though this concern was often expressed by those who were not actually members of ground combat units). In contrast, few problems were expected from allowing known lesbians to serve.

Focus group participants generally agreed that successful implementation of a new policy would require good leadership. This included giving clear and direct orders outlining unacceptable behavior for both gay and heterosexual personnel, consistency in enforcement throughout the chain of command, and zero tolerance for harassment. In contrast to 1993, there was widespread agreement that the military could rise to this challenge if ordered to do so.

For our confidential Internet survey of gay, lesbian, and bisexual personnel, we worked with nine organizations that either serve as personal and professional networks for gay service members and veterans or represent them. We asked the organizations to enlist the cooperation of individuals currently on active duty to complete the survey and then to ask others whom they knew to complete it as well. In all, 208 individuals who indicated that they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual completed the survey. A disproportionate share of these respondents were officers. A fifth of the sample was female, which was a higher fraction than in the population of all service members but likely a smaller fraction than in the population of gay service members.

When asked to identify personal costs that they attributed to the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, the vast majority of the 208 respondents said it had put gay

personnel at risk for blackmail or manipulation and had an adverse effect on their personal and unit relationships. To a much lesser extent, they reported being teased or mocked. A sizable fraction—35 percent of respondents—attributed mental health problems to the policy. Seven percent reported having been threatened or injured by other members of the military because of their sexual orientation (see Figure 6).

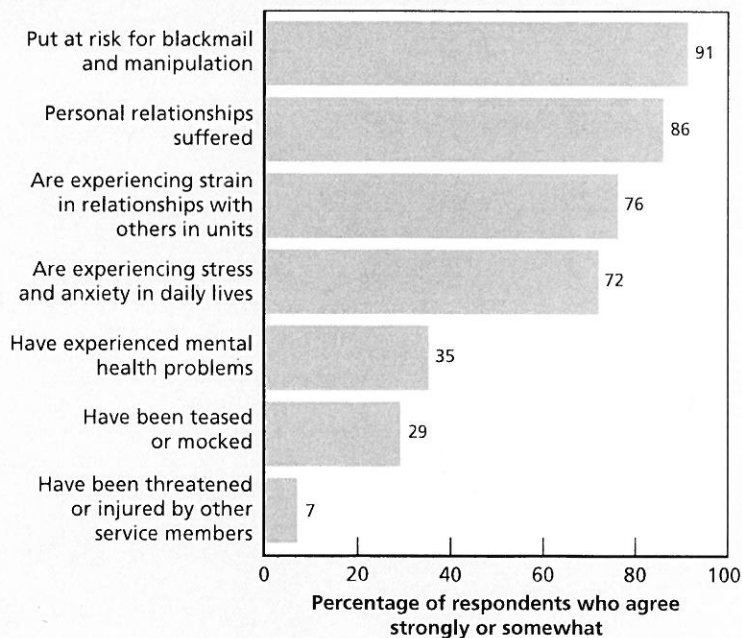
More than half of the respondents said they would not stay in the military unless the policy was repealed. About two-thirds reported being much more likely to stay if the policy were repealed.

Regarding an issue often cited as important for retention decisions, almost all gay respondents (93 percent) agreed that “gays and lesbians in the military have dependents who are missing out on opportunities and support systems that other military families can use.”

About half of the gay respondents who now pretend to be heterosexual or who avoid talking about their personal lives said they would disclose their orientation selectively, “depending on circumstances and who is involved.” Eighty percent of those who disclose

The attitudes of service members have changed since 1993.

Figure 6—Gay Service Members Attribute Several Personal Problems to the “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” Policy



SOURCE: RAND survey of gay, lesbian, and bisexual military personnel.

selectively now expect to continue this behavior. As seen in Figure 7, the large majority said they would continue to be selective in revealing their sexual orientation (as gay men and lesbians are in civilian life).

Three-fourths of respondents said they would take a “wait and see” attitude before adjusting to a policy repeal. When asked what features of implementing a repeal would make them more comfortable about disclosing their sexual orientation, to the extent that they wished to do so, the strongest support was for clear leadership commitment, establishing clear conduct standards for everyone, and enforcing zero tolerance for harassment based on sexual orientation.

conduct standards for everyone, and enforcing zero tolerance for harassment based on sexual orientation.

Some commanders told us that sexual harassment of women by men poses a far greater threat to unit performance than anything related to sexual orientation.

Agents of Change

We visited the militaries of Australia, Canada, Germany, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom—all of which now have years of experience with gay personnel serving in their forces without any restrictions. These militaries have all recently engaged in combat operations, many alongside the U.S. military. None of these allied militaries reported that

having openly gay service members had affected unit performance or the ability to meet recruitment and retention goals. No country provides special accom-

modations for privacy or special training on sexual orientation.

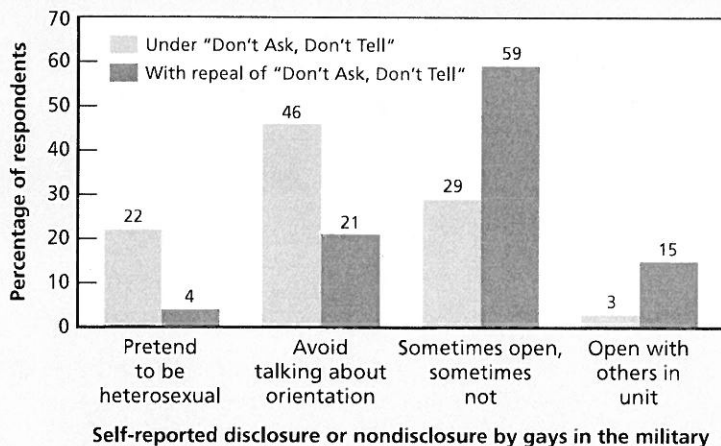
In several countries, officials volunteered that it was much harder to integrate women into the force than to allow gay people to serve without restriction. Some commanders told us that sexual harassment of women by men poses a far greater threat to unit performance than anything related to sexual orientation.

In the United States, we visited police and fire departments and federal agencies that have allowed gay people to serve openly. All reported that they had integrated openly gay people without serious problems, without negative effects on performance, and without making specific accommodations—by applying a strict policy of nondiscrimination.

Many of the most important lessons about implementing organizational change of this kind remain unchanged since 1993. Leaders at all levels of the organization, not just the top echelons, need to signal their support for the new policy. Communication of the change should convey the importance of behavioral compliance and of sanctions for noncompliance. Critical to such change in the military is the code of professional conduct that emphasizes treating all others with respect. Leaders should stress that it is behavior that must conform, not attitudes.

At root, the issue of letting openly gay people serve in the military has to do with how the change might affect military effectiveness. The officials, commanders, and service members we met in foreign militaries all reported that the policy change had not degraded unit performance in combat or otherwise. Quite the opposite, some commanders said the change had actually improved performance because gay personnel could now devote full attention to their jobs. ■

Figure 7—With the Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” Few Gays in the Military Will Disclose Their Sexual Orientation Widely



SOURCE: RAND survey of gay, lesbian, and bisexual military personnel.

Related Reading

Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: Options and Assessment, RAND Corporation, RAND/MR-323-OSD, 1993, 548 pp., ISBN 0-8330-1441-2, \$49.50. As of press time: www.rand.org/t/MR323

Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: An Update of RAND’s 1993 Study, National Defense Research Institute, RAND/MG-1056-OSD, 2010, 444 pp., ISBN 978-0-8330-5129-5, \$28.50. As of press time: www.rand.org/t/MG1056

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