



Results and Analysis of Four Major Polls on Service Member Attitudes about Openly Gay Service

By Nina Agrawal, Research Assistant, Palm Center

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This research memo reports and analyzes the four major polls on service member attitudes toward openly gay service. The poll results described below are divided according to the following categories of questions that were asked of respondents:

- 1) Their opinion on whether gays should be allowed to serve openly
- 2) Their personal level of comfort around gay people
- 3) Their view of the impact on recruitment of current or reformed policy

Military Times (2009)

“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ Survey Results (Active Duty),” *Military Times*, November 2009

http://militarytimes.com/projects/polls/2010_dadt_results.php

From Nov 11- Nov 30, 2009, the *Military Times* conducted a voluntary, confidential survey of its readers in regard to “don’t ask, don’t tell.” Survey data were filtered to include responses from active duty service members only (3,030 respondents).

According to the *Military Times*’ statement on methodology, respondents were on average older and more senior in rank than the overall military population, which, according to other polls (see, for instance, the Annenberg poll cited below), would predict less tolerance of homosexuality than average.

1) The poll asked respondents, “All in all, do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military?” 14.5% “strongly favored” and 15% “favored” allowing openly gay service; at the other end of the spectrum 36.8% “strongly opposed” and 14.2% “opposed” allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly. The remainder felt neutral (18.7%) or declined to answer (0.8%). (Question 11)

The combined 51% who opposed openly gay service represented a 7-point drop in opposition from the results of the previous year’s *Military Times* poll, available [here](#).

2) The poll also asked respondents (divided into Army/Marine Corps and Navy/Marine Corps/Coast Guard) about living arrangements, worded as follows: “If the policy were overturned, how comfortable would you be sharing the following living facilities with an openly gay service member of the same gender?” The question listed a series of shared living spaces, including bunks, the shower, the gym, and on-post family housing areas. Of Army and Marine Corps respondents, 57.6% said they would be “uncomfortable” sharing a shower, while 30.3% would be “comfortable.” Similarly, of Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard respondents, 54.5% were “uncomfortable” with the idea of sharing a shower with an openly gay service member of the same gender, and 32.6% were “comfortable.” In both groups the remaining percentage of people was neutral or declined to answer. In contrast, 49.9% of Army and Marine Corps respondents and 48.6% of Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard respondents were “comfortable” sharing an on-post family housing area; this was the living scenario in which the most number of respondents in both groups felt comfortable. (Questions 15, 16)

3) In addition, the survey asked respondents “how effective the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy is” at accomplishing some of its purported objectives, such as maintaining order, cohesion, morale, and readiness; recruiting and retaining personnel; and reducing harassment against gay personnel. For each objective one-fifth to one-third of respondents answered that the policy was “ineffective.” Specifically, when asked “how effective is the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy at recruiting and retaining military personnel,” 42.2% said it was “effective” and 30.7% said it was “ineffective,” with the rest finding it neutral or declining to answer. (Question 14)

In 2008, the previous year's *Military Times* poll found that up to 24 percent of respondents claimed they would consider leaving the military if the ban were lifted. Those results, cited [here](#), are undercut by [further research](#) questioning the predictive utility of opinion polls in institutional contexts.

VetVoice Foundation (2010)

“National Survey of 510 Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans,” February 8-23, 2010

<http://www.vetvoicefoundation.com/new?id=0002>

From February 8-23, 2010, VetVoice, a project of VoteVets.org, conducted a national, bipartisan telephone survey of 510 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. The results were divided by age.

1) Interviewers asked the veterans, “Do you favor or oppose allowing openly gay men and lesbian women to serve in the military, or aren’t you sure?” If veterans gave a yes or no answer, they were further asked, “Do you feel that way strongly or not-so-strongly?” 34% “favored” allowing openly gay service (including 24% “favor- strongly”), while 36% opposed it (29% “oppose- strongly”), 28% “weren’t sure,” and 2% “didn’t know.” (Question 11, p. 4)

2) Interviewers also asked, “Personally, how comfortable are you in the presence of gays and lesbians?” Overall, 73% were comfortable (37% “very comfortable” and 35% “somewhat comfortable”) while 24% were uncomfortable (17% “somewhat uncomfortable” and 7% “very uncomfortable”). (Question 10, p. 3)

3) Finally, interviewers asked, “Generally speaking, what would best describe your personal opinion if gay and lesbian people were allowed to serve openly in the military?” 42% responded “it would be acceptable” to them, 31% stated they “would not like it, but it would be acceptable,” and 25% said they “would not like it, and it would be unacceptable.” (Question 12, p. 4)

Zogby International (2006)

“Opinions of Military Personnel on Gays in the Military,” December 2006

http://www.zogby.com/CSSMM_Report-Final.pdf

From October 24-26, 2006, Zogby International conducted online interviews of 545 U.S. military personnel who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan, or in combat roles directly supporting those operations. The poll was commissioned by the Palm Center at the University of California, Santa Barbara (then called the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military).

1) Respondents were asked, “Do you agree or disagree with allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military?” Respondents were closely split: a plurality (37%) disagreed with the idea (“strongly disagree”: 21%; “disagree”: 16%) while 26% agreed they should be allowed (“strongly agree”: 9%; “agree”: 17%). (Question 13, pp. 14-15)

2) Respondents were also asked, “Personally, how comfortable are you in the presence of gays and lesbians?” Three-quarters of those surveyed (73%) stated that they felt comfortable around gays and lesbians (29% were “very comfortable” and 44% were “somewhat comfortable”); 19% were uncomfortable, including 15% who were “somewhat uncomfortable” and 4% who “very uncomfortable.” (Question 24, pp. 20-21)

3) Asked, “Would you still have joined the military if gays and lesbians were allowed to serve openly,” nearly four out of five (78%) said they would, while 42% said “definitely yes” and 35% said “probably yes.” (Question 27, pp. 22-23)

Annenberg (2004)

National Annenberg Election Survey, *NEAS 04*, news release, 2004

http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/Downloads/Political_Communication/naes/2004_03_2military-data_10-16_pr.pdf

From September 22 to October 5, 2004, the University of Pennsylvania's National Annenberg Election Survey polled 655 adults who had either served on active duty between February and October of 2004 or who were family members of those who had served but were unavailable for an interview. The results were compared to the responses of 2,436 adults polled nationally from September 27 to October 3.

1) Annenberg asked those polled, "Should gays and lesbians be allowed to serve openly in the military, or shouldn't they be allowed to serve openly?" Of the total military sample, 42% said "yes," they should be allowed to serve openly, and 50% said "no," they should not. Among regulars and guard reserve members only, 34% said "yes" while 57% said "no." Among commissioned officers and their families, 39% said "yes" while 53% said "no." Finally, among junior enlisted personnel and their families, 50% said "yes" and 43% said "no"; this was the first time a statistical majority of any group of active duty service members supported openly gay service. (Table A, p. 6; Table B, p. 8)

2) Participants were further asked to give their reason for supporting or opposing the allowance of openly gay service. Among those in the total military sample who supported inclusion, 27% said they did so because sexual orientation was "unrelated to job performance," while 10% said homosexuality "did not bother" them. Among those in the total military sample who opposed inclusion, 8% expressed being uncomfortable around homosexuals, stating they simply "did not like it," and 15% believed "homosexuality is wrong." (Table A, p. 6)