



U.S. Department of Defense

Factor Rating Interpretation Guide Work-Life Balance

What is Work-Life Balance?

Work-Life Balance measures one's perception that the demands of their work and personal life are compatible.⁷

The following item is used to assess *Work-Life Balance* on the DEOCS using a five-point response scale from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*:

- I can easily balance the demands of my work and personal life.

Note: Survey questions may differ depending on whether the organization is a military unit, Military Service Academy, or civilian organization. Please see the sample survey for each population on the Assessment to Solutions web site (<https://www.defenseculture.mil/Assessment-to-Solutions/A2S-Home/>) for exact wording.

Why is it important?

Studies have shown that poor *Work-Life Balance* is associated with lower readiness and retention as well as an increased risk for suicide.^{1,2} The balance between work and nonwork can be particularly precarious for military personnel as their jobs may require frequent moves that uproot their spouse or partner and children, may involve long deployments away from family and friends, and thereby disrupt their social networks. As a result, a study of military personnel found poor *Work-Life Balance* to be associated with poor health symptoms such as headaches, mental confusion, and increased turnover intentions.^{1,3} Similarly, a 2017 study of the U.S. Air Force community supports this claim finding that *Work-Life Balance* was the second most reported challenge facing both Air Force personnel and their spouse. *Work-Life Balance* challenges included finding enough time for sleep, a healthy diet, or physical exercise (62%), finding time for recreation, stress relief, or family (59%), and many competing commitments such as work, school, and childcare (57%). This study found that airmen working 50 or more hours a week was associated with decreased satisfaction with military life or treatment of families and was linked to an increased desire to leave the Military.⁴ Lastly, a study of active duty U.S. soldiers found that work-family conflict was associated with increased risk of suicidal ideation.⁵ Similarly, a study of active duty U.S. Air Force members found that higher weekly hours worked was associated with higher rates of suicide ideation.⁶

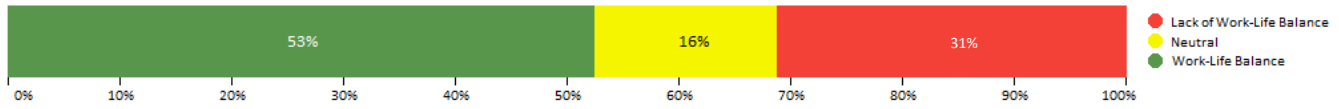
For more information on how to review your DEOCS results with these key outcomes in mind, please see the "Strategic Target Outcome Guide" in the Quick Links menu of the DEOCS dashboard.

How do I read my factor ratings?

The DEOCS dashboard displays results for *Work-Life Balance* in a stacked bar graph showing ratings for **Lack of Work-Life Balance**, **Neutral**, and **Work-Life Balance**. Because *Work-Life Balance* is a factor measured by a single question, you should interpret results as “X% of participants.” An example is shown below:

Work-Life Balance

This factor measures one’s perception that the demands of their work and personal life are compatible. A work-life balance is linked to higher retention, improved readiness, and a lower likelihood of suicide.



Favorable rating: 53% of participants reported having a work-life balance.

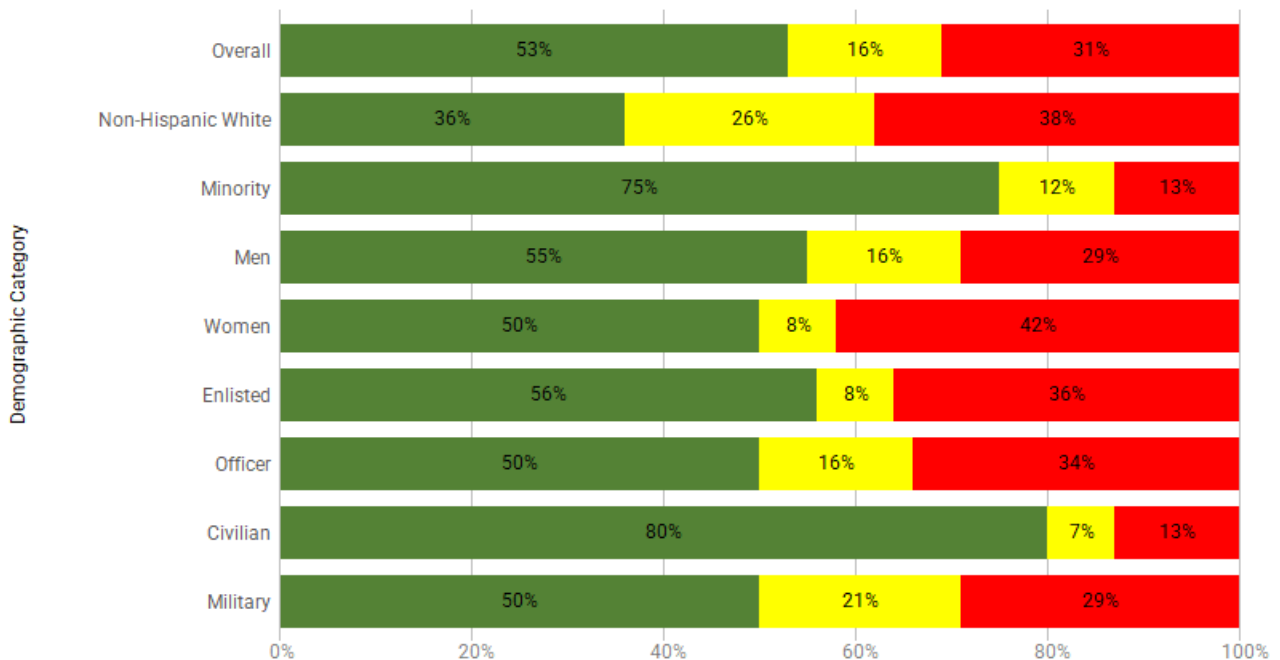
Neutral rating: 16% of participants reported neither having nor not having a work-life balance.

Unfavorable rating: 31% of participants reported not having a work-life balance.

For the graph showing results by demographic categories, the percentages represent the percentage of participants from each demographic category who reported favorable, neutral, or unfavorable responses.

Work-Life Balance Ratings by Demographic Category

This graph displays Work-Life Balance ratings by demographic category. No data are displayed if fewer than five people from a demographic category responded to this set of questions.



The first bar will always show the overall results and will be the same percentages that are shown in the stacked bar graph. The next bars will represent various demographic categories

for your organization. These results can help determine whether some groups of people in your organization have particularly high or low perceptions of climate factors. In addition, you may have different categories than in the example above. If your organization did not have any participants from a particular demographic category or had fewer than five participants from a particular category, you would not see those categories in your graph. For more information on how the demographic groups are created, please see the “Data Overview” in the Quick Links menu of the DEOCS dashboard.

In this example, the favorable ratings (marked in green) can be interpreted as:

- 36% of non-Hispanic White participants reported having a work-life balance, while 75% of minority participants reported having a work-life balance;
- 55% of male participants reported having a work-life balance, while 50% of female participants reported having a work-life balance;
- 56% of enlisted participants reported having a work-life balance, while 50% of officers reported having a work-life balance;
- 80% of civilian participants reported having a work-life balance, while 50% of military participants reported having a work-life balance.


The neutral ratings (marked in yellow) can be interpreted as:

- 26% of non-Hispanic White participants reported neither having nor not having a work-life balance, while 12% of minority participants reported neither having nor not having a work-life balance;
- 16% of male participants reported neither having nor not having a work-life balance, while 8% of female participants reported neither having nor not having a work-life balance;
- 8% of enlisted participants reported neither having nor not having a work-life balance, while 16% of officers reported neither having nor not having a work-life balance;
- 7% of civilian participants reported neither having nor not having a work-life balance, while 21% of military participants reported neither having nor not having a work-life balance.


The unfavorable ratings (marked in red) can be interpreted as:

- 38% of non-Hispanic White participants reported not having a work-life balance, while 13% of minority participants reported not having a work-life balance;
- 29% of male participants reported not having a work-life balance, while 42% of female participants reported not having a work-life balance;
- 36% of enlisted participants reported not having a work-life balance, while 34% of officers reported not having a work-life balance;
- 13% of civilian participants reported not having a work-life balance, while 29% of military participants reported not having a work-life balance.

You may also see trends over time for your *Work-Life Balance* favorable rating if there are previous 5.0 surveys with the same unit identification code (UIC) and the same commander/leader.

When applicable, trends over time are available in the dashboard by clicking on this icon: . They also appear in the PDF reports as a table. Even if your report includes trends over time, the results may not be comparable in certain circumstances. It is important to understand differences in roster size and roster composition at different time points as these items may impact comparability of trend results. Take a close look at the number of participants registered, surveys returned, and the response rate for any surveys for which trends are available to report; use caution when comparing trends over time if there are big differences in these numbers between surveys. Other things, such as deployments or changes in policy,

may also make trends less comparable. For more information on factor rating trends, please see the “Data Overview” in the Quick Links menu of the DEOCS dashboard.

Finally, you may see an alert icon  for your *Work-Life Balance* ratings. This means that your unit’s/organization’s favorable rating for *Work-Life Balance* is **very low** compared to the other favorable ratings for this factor in your Service component. When applicable, this alert icon appears in the dashboard inside the “Protective Factors – Favorable Ratings” heading; click on the icon to see if *Work-Life Balance* is listed in the table. The alert icon may also appear in the *Work-Life Balance* section of the PDF reports. To identify whether your *Work-Life Balance* ratings receive an alert, cut-off scores were created by rank-ordering all favorable ratings for this factor within a Service component. If your favorable rating for *Work-Life Balance* is below your Service component’s cut-off score, this icon will appear in your report. There are unique cut-off scores for each factor within each Service component. Because of this, you may notice that some of the factors for which you have an alert have very different ratings. For more information on how these alerts are created, please see the “Data Overview” in the Quick Links menu of the DEOCS dashboard.

How are my unit’s/organization’s ratings created?

Work-Life Balance ratings are created using the responses to a single question from a five-point *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree* scale, as shown in the example below.

Work-Life Balance Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I can easily balance the demands of my work and personal life (or Academy life).	11% (10)	20% (18)	16% (14)	42% (38)	11% (10)	100% (90)
	Lack of Work-Life Balance		Neutral	Work-Life Balance		Total responses 90
	$(10+18) / 90 =$ 31%		$14 / 90 =$ 16%	$(38+10) / 90 =$ 53%		

The table above displays the percentage of responses (and number of responses in parentheses) for the *Work-Life Balance* question across the five response options (*Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, *Agree*, and *Strongly Agree*). For example, 18 participants selected *Disagree*; this represents 20% of participants that responded to this question ($18 / 90 = .200$ or 20%).

Note that percentages are calculated out of the total number of participants responding to that question and not the total number of participants taking the survey. Participants can skip questions, so you may notice that total responses to questions vary. In addition, factor ratings may not always add to 100% due to rounding.



- The **unfavorable** rating, named **Lack of Work-Life Balance**, is a combination of responses of *Strongly Disagree* and *Disagree*.
 - For this example, 10 people strongly disagreed while 18 disagreed. In total, 28 responses were either *Strongly Disagree* or *Disagree* ($10+18 = 28$).
 - To produce an overall score for **Lack of Work-Life Balance** representing unfavorable reactions to this question, the total number of responses (28) is

divided by the total number of people who responded to the question (90). **This produces a Lack of Work-Life Balance rating of 31% (28 / 90 = .3111).**

- To create the **Neutral** rating, the same process above is followed, except the score is created from only one response option, *Neither Agree nor Disagree*.
 - For this example, there are 14 *Neither Agree nor Disagree* responses. This total is divided by the total number of responses to the question (14 / 90 = .156). **This rounds to a Neutral rating of 16%.**
- To create the **favorable** rating, named **Work-Life Balance**, the *Strongly Agree* and *Agree* responses are combined.
 - For this example, that is 38+10 = 48 total responses of either *Strongly Agree* or *Agree*. This total is divided by the total number of responses to the question (48 / 90 = .533). **This rounds to a Work-Life Balance rating of 53%.**

How do I know if my factor ratings are good or bad?

The DEOCS team is working on a data-driven approach that will help you understand what a rating means for an organization's likelihood of positive or negative outcomes. In the meantime, we recommend using the following strategies to help put your *Work-Life Balance* ratings into context and understand whether actions should be taken to address low favorable ratings:

1. If applicable, review the information in the alert icon  to see if your *Work-Life Balance* ratings are called out. This icon would appear in the dashboard and in the PDF reports if your unit's/organization's favorable rating for *Work-Life Balance* is very low compared to others in your same Service component. You should consider taking action to raise this rating.
2. Examine the bar graph showing the overall favorable rating for *Work-Life Balance* and the favorable ratings by various demographic groups. Look at each group's rating in relation to the overall unit/organization rating. If any groups have particularly low favorable ratings for *Work-Life Balance*, this could help you plan actions to increase your favorable rating within areas of your organization.
3. If applicable, review your *Work-Life Balance* favorable rating trends over time. You can view these trends by clicking on this icon  in the dashboard; they also appear as a table in the PDF reports. Take note if your ratings are going down over time. You may need to take action to reverse this trend.

Factor Improvement Tools for Work-Life Balance

The following resources may be useful as you make plans or take action to improve your *Work-Life Balance* ratings. Each resource listing contains a description, a link, and the relevant audience. Some resources may be more appropriate for the commander/leader, unit/organization personnel, survey administrators, or the Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce (IPPW); the relevant audience advises which group may benefit from use of the recommended resource.

- **Work-Life Balance.** Steps one can take to create a healthy work-life balance. <https://www.mhanational.org/work-life-balance>

Audience: Commander/Leader, unit personnel, survey admin, IPPW

- **Work & Life Balance – Dispelling the Myth!** Details how to create a work-life balance.

<https://www.acc.af.mil/News/Article/2371460/work-life-balance-dispelling-the-myth/>

Audience: Commander/Leader, unit personnel, survey admin, IPPW

- **Work-Life Balance in the Military.** Discusses work-life balance for military members and their families.

<https://www.hprc-online.org/social-fitness/teams-leadership/work-life-balance-military>

Audience: Commander/Leader, unit personnel, survey admin, IPPW

Scientific Research References on Work-Life Balance

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