



The number of sexual assaults reported in the U.S. military rose 11 percent last year, the Defense Department said Tuesday, but Pentagon officials conceded that they still don't know how common sexual assaults are because many troops fear retribution if the attacks come to the attention of their commanders.

Despite the suspected underreporting, sexual assault is more common in the military than it is among the civilian population, the report suggests — two for every 1,000 service members, versus 1.8 per 1,000 civilian women and one per 1,000 civilian men, according to statistics compiled by the Family Violence Prevention Fund.

During the past year, the Defense Department has campaigned to encourage victims of sexual assault to come forward, and officials said they think that effort led to the increase. "Our goal was to get more people to report" assaults, said Kaye Whitley, the director of the Defense Department's sexual assault prevention and response office, which compiled the report.

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