

Navy Has the Highest COVID Vaccination Rate in DoD; Marine Corps the Lowest



Navy Seaman Denisse Estrada-Suarez administers the COVID-19 vaccine during a Tiger Team visit to Marine Forces Special Operations Command at Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 15, 2021. *NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER CAMP LEJEUNE*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has the highest rate, 77%, of active duty personnel who have gotten at least one vaccination shot against COVID-19 virus, while the Marine Corps, at 58%, has the lowest, according to Defense Department health officials.

At a June 29 Pentagon briefing to update reporters on the Defense Department's success in battling the coronavirus pandemic, officials announced efforts to determine why just 68% of the military overall have been vaccinated with at least one dose, and how to encourage more services members to roll up their sleeves to get their first and follow-on shots.

"The pandemic is not over, and we are not done with all-out efforts to encourage vaccination," said Dr. Terry Adirim, acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

In addition to the Navy at one end of the active duty vaccination rate and the Marines at the other, officials said the first shot vaccination rate was 70% for the Army and 61% for the Air Force. There were no numbers for the Space Force and officials did not address reasons for the disparity of vaccination numbers among the services.

While COVID-19 case counts are dropping across the department and base commanders have been reducing local health protection condition (HPCON) levels, Adirim said recent data shows the

unvaccinated or under-vaccinated are more susceptible to COVID variants, which are far more dangerous, especially the delta variant.

According to the military health system, the delta variant of COVID-19 is more transmittable, causes more severe disease, and results in higher cases of hospitalization and death than any other strain of the virus.

Of the 21 military personnel currently hospitalized with COVID, none were vaccinated, said Army Lt. Gen. Ronald Place, director of Defense Health Agency. He and Adirim said they were concerned about the risks posed to unvaccinated personnel at installations located in states and counties in the United States with low vaccination rates.

“The Delta variant poses a threat to unvaccinated personnel,” said Adirim, adding that the best way to beat it was through vaccination. Officials noted that a single dose of anti-COVID vaccine was only 33% effective against the Delta variant, while getting a second dose was 88% effective.