

# The Influence of the Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention Program on Norms and Society in the United States Army

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## ABSTRACT

The U.S. Army has used the Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention program (SHARP) since 2008 as a way to address the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment among its ranks. However, current research by the Department of Defense show that the rate of both assault and harassment has not significantly declined over the years. Existing literature also discussed that there are a number of cultural norms within the Army and military as a whole that continue to perpetuate an environment where concepts of male masculinity and gender inequality exist. The research for this study involved survey of soldiers was conducted to get a better sense of how they thought the program influenced the Army as a whole and themselves as an individual. While the SHARP program is effective in educating soldiers that the problems of sexual violence exist, the key finding is that it does not target the societal and gendered norms that have existed in the Army that perpetuate a culture which is conducive to harassment and assault. However, progress, such as increased reporting and increased awareness, highlight that SHARP is not inherently broken. Instead, it must evolve in its educational focus to have greater results in the reduction of sexual assault and harassment incidents in the future.

## MOTIVATIONS

- How effective is the current sexual assault and harassment prevention program used by the U.S. Army?
- The Department of the Army estimates only 30% of all sexual assaults are reported by soldiers
- Women are more likely to be assaulted in the Military than in the general public.
- The program is often held in low regard by soldiers.
- Is gender inequality to blame for the persistence of high sexual assault rates?

## METHODS

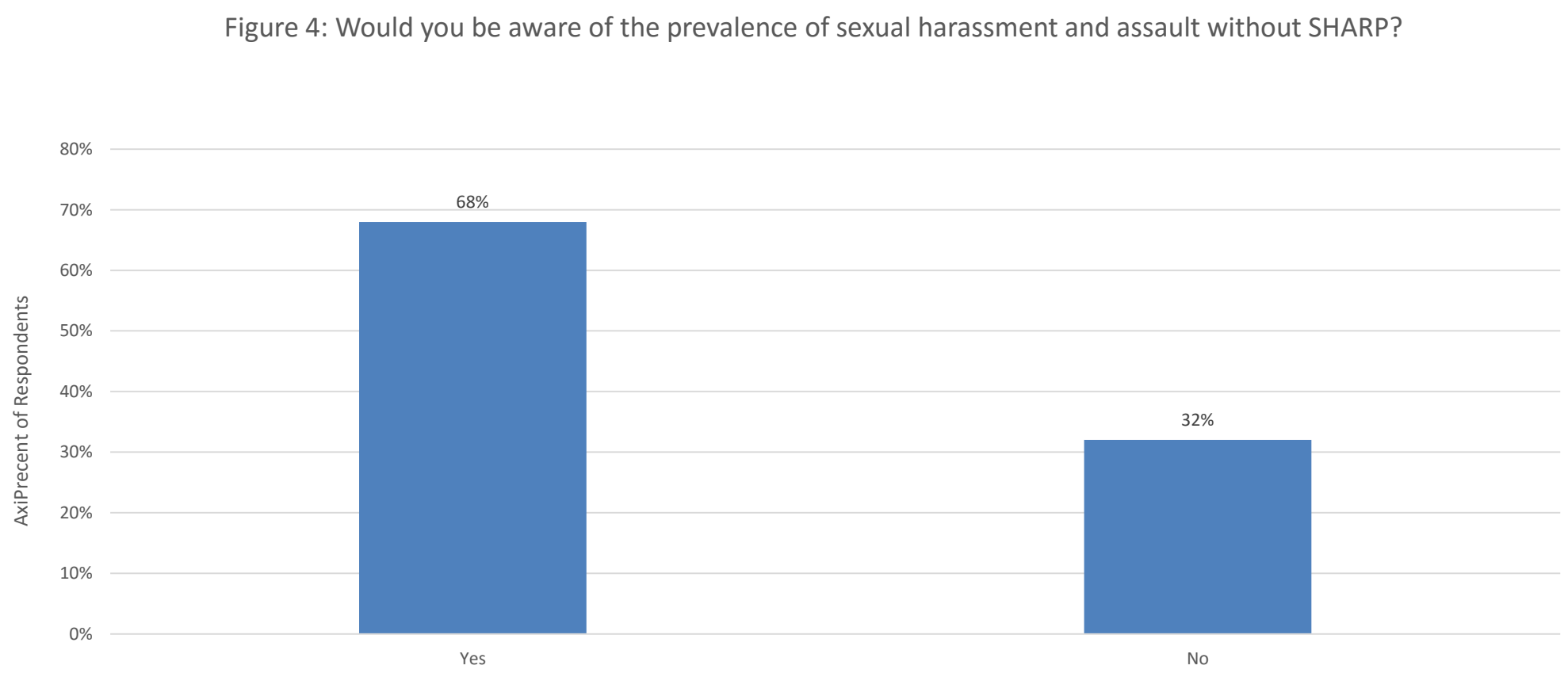
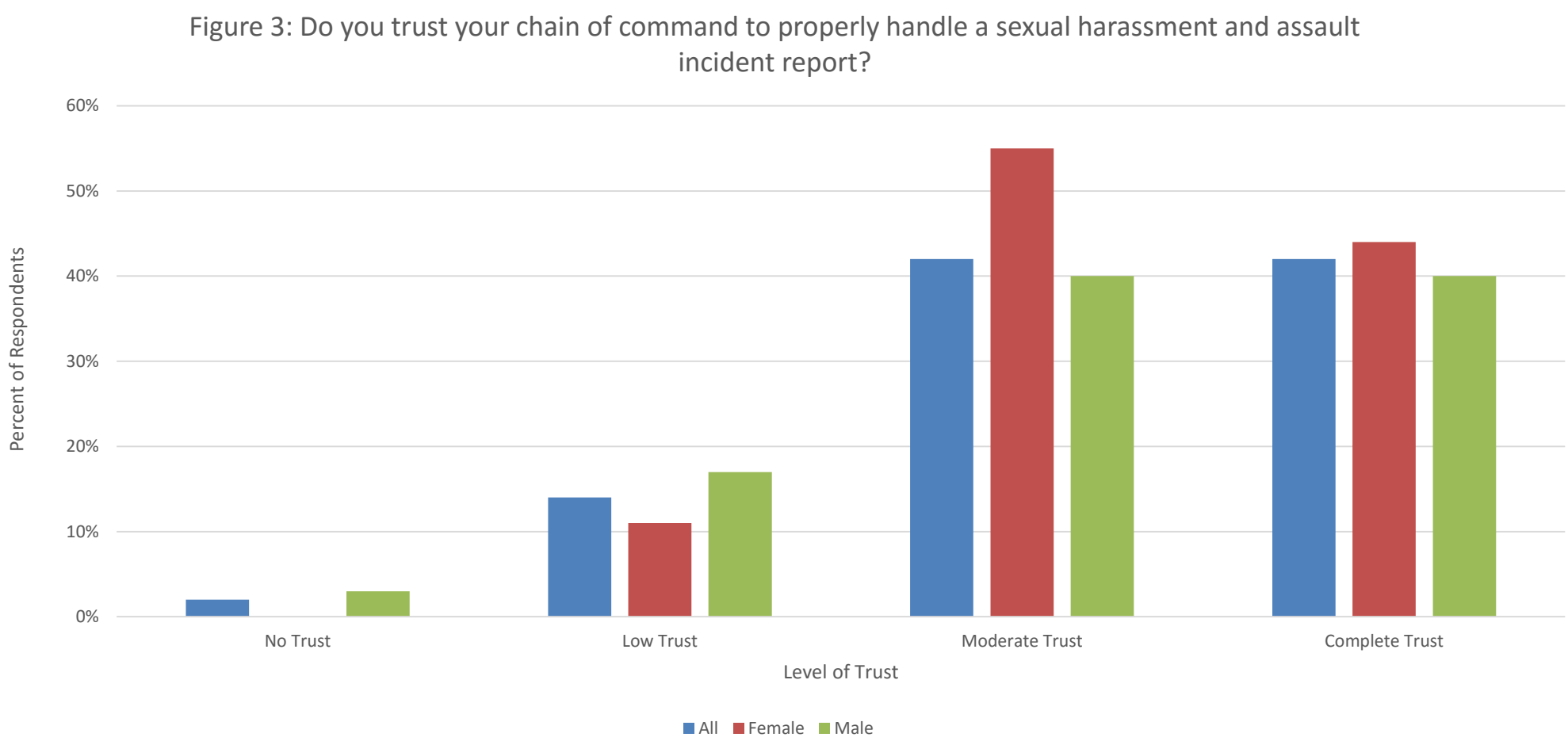
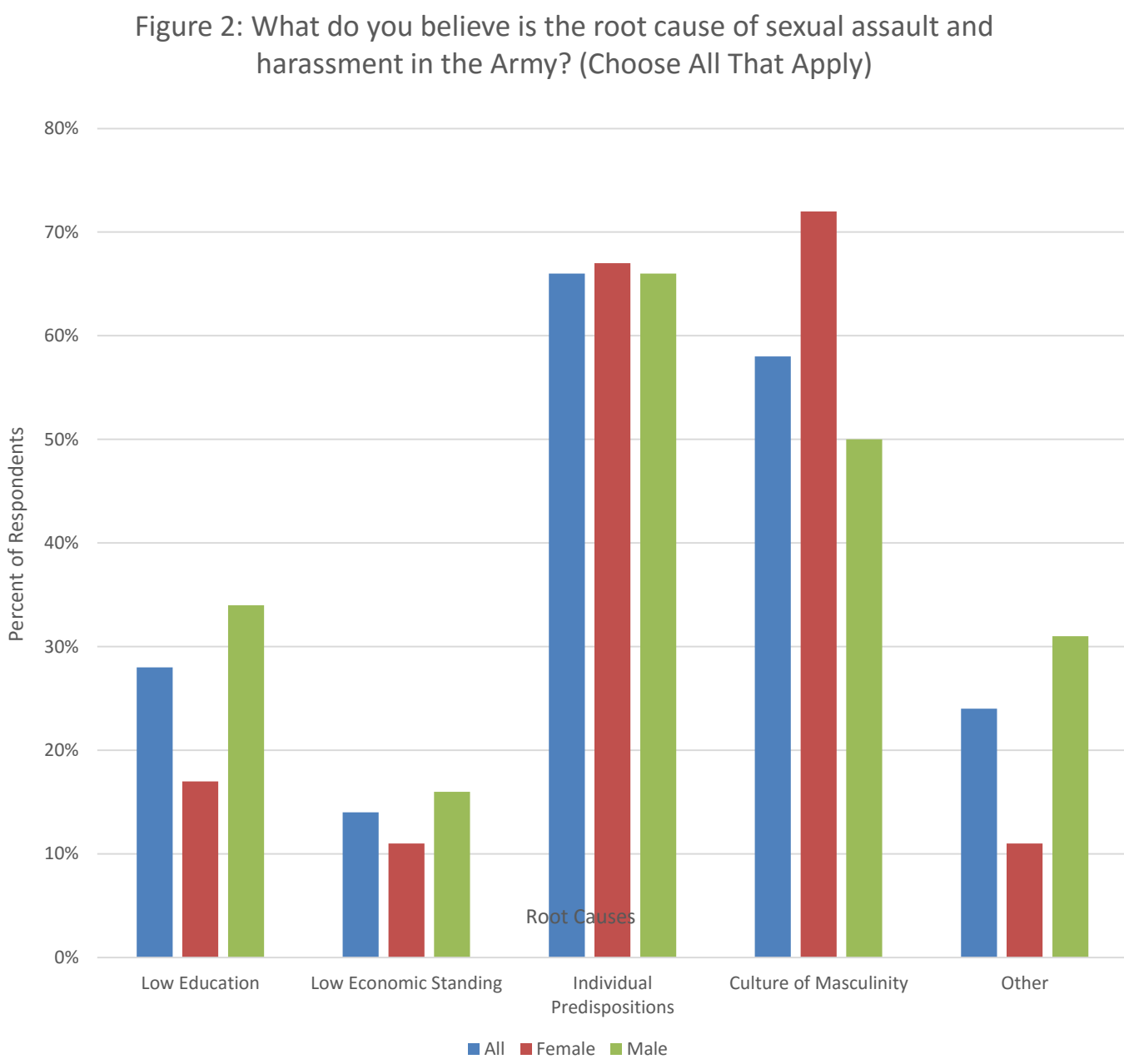
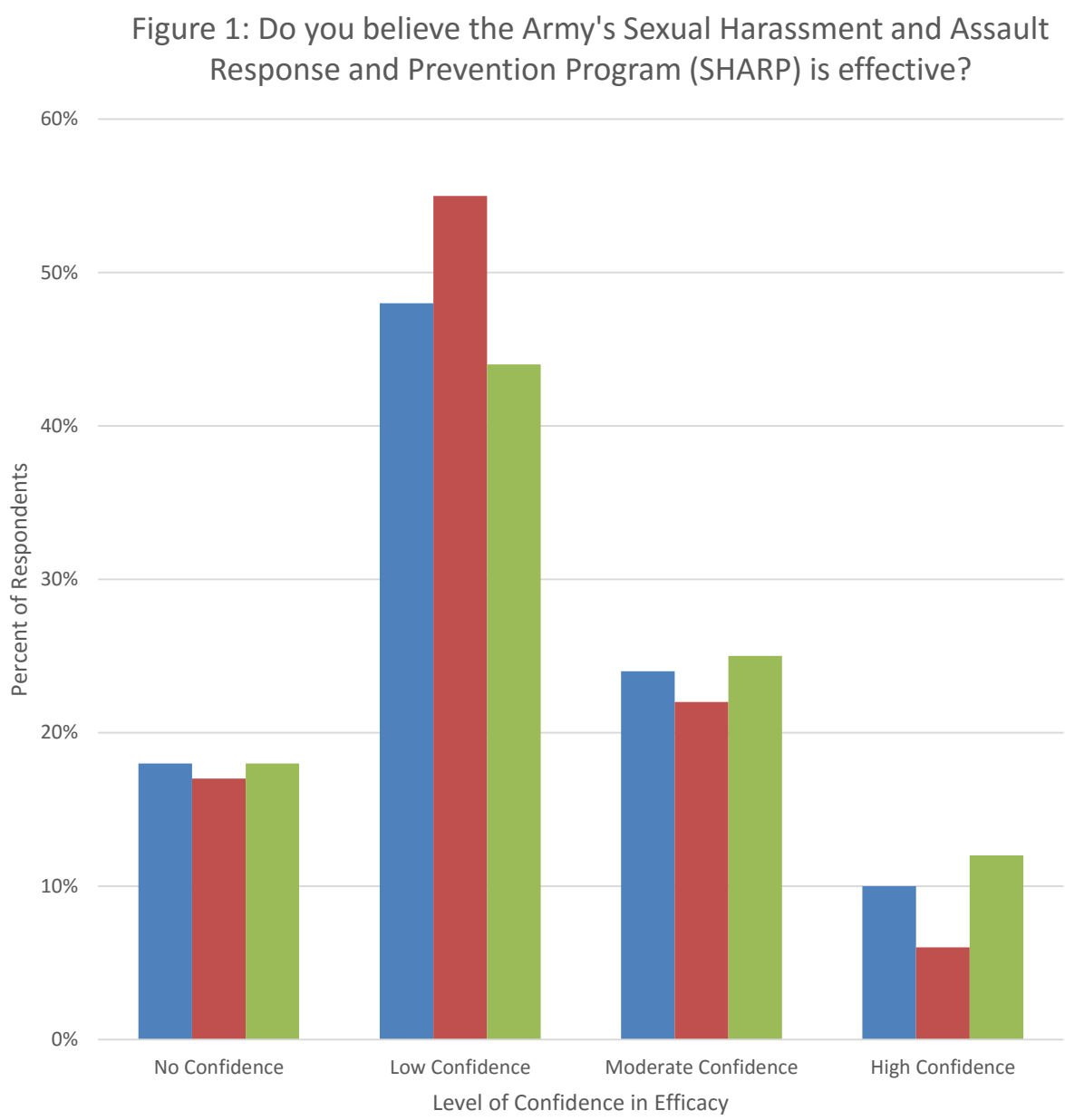
- Data was collected through a survey of 54 soldiers through Boston University Qualtrics Survey Software to ask general questions regarding SHARP and their experience with the program..

		What is your current rank category? (Please choose most current rank category)							How many years have you served in the U.S. Army?						
		Cadet (1)	E1-E4 (2)	E5-E9 (3)	W1-W4 (4)	O1-O3 (5)	O4-O6 (6)	O7-O11 (7)	Mean	Total	1-3 (1)	4-6 (2)	7-10 (3)	10+ (4)	Total
What is your gender?	Male (1)	38.24%	11.76%	2.94%	0.00%	35.29%	11.76%	0.00%	3.18	100.00%	67.65%	17.65%	5.88%	8.82%	100.00%
		56.52%	100.00%	50.00%	0.00%	66.67%	80.00%	0.00%		65.38%	65.71%	66.67%	66.67%	60.00%	65.38%
	Female (2)	55.56%	0.00%	5.56%	0.00%	33.33%	5.56%	0.00%	2.72	100.00%	66.67%	16.67%	5.56%	11.11%	100.00%
		43.48%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	33.33%	20.00%	0.00%		34.62%	34.29%	33.33%	33.33%	40.00%	34.62%
	Total	44.23%	7.69%	3.85%	0.00%	34.62%	9.62%	0.00%	-	100.00%	67.31%	17.31%	5.77%	9.62%	100.00%
		100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%		100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

- The survey link was posted on Facebook and sent to officers and soldiers I have encountered personally.
- I supplemented my research with data from the *DoD Report to the President of the United States on Sexual Assault Prevention and Response* and data collected by the *2014 RAND Military Workplace Study*.

## RESULTS

- Figure 1 reveals that a majority of respondents in my survey do not believe that the SHARP program is effective. Women are shown to have a higher degree of low confidence as opposed to males.
- Figure 2 displays that most participants of my survey believe sexual assault and harassment is attributed overwhelmingly to two main causes: individual predispositions and a cult of masculinity. The majority of women chose the cult of masculinity.
- Figure 3 shows that there is a high level of trust in the chain of command of survey respondents highlighting that the lack of reporting is not due to the chain of command. Instead issues concerning shame and perceptions of masculinity tend to prevent others from reporting. These issues are not addressed by the SHARP program.
- Figure 4 exhibits that 32% of respondents from my survey would not be aware of the prevalence of sexual harassment without SHARP.



## CONCLUSIONS

- The SHARP program is effective at providing information on how to report sexual assaults and its prevalence in the ranks.
- SHARP training is seen as burdensome and its current curriculum considered inadequate of bringing about the cultural change needed to reduce sexual assault.
- SHARP is ineffective when it comes to addressing the root causes of sexual violence, such as gender inequality.
- Women continue to feel they are victims of a male-dominated society that is not addressed by SHARP. While sexual assault affects both men and women, the majority of both genders still believe a culture of masculinity is to blame for the prevalence of sexual violence.

