SUPPORTING STATEMENT - PART A

Qualitative Research to Better Understand Military Food Insecurity  
OMB Control Number 0704-0665

1. Need for the Information Collection

Recent survey estimates of food insecurity among military members find that 24 percent of active duty military members report experiencing food insecurity in the past year, defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as uncertain access to adequate food for themselves or family members due to lack of resources. Among junior enlisted service members, the prevalence of food insecurity is 33 percent.

Analysis of survey data has revealed findings that are difficult to explain. For example, some service members experiencing food insecurity are financially secure; results reported by the 2020 Status of Forces Survey for Active Duty Service members conducted by the Department of Defense Office of People Analytics (OPA) indicate that 9% of service members who report being financially “comfortable” report experiencing low food security and 2% who report being financially “comfortable” report experiencing very low food security. Also, service members who live on the installation are more likely to be food insecure than those living off the installation, even though junior service members residing in barracks on post should have access to regular meals in the dining facilities at no-cost. It should be noted here that spouses and children do not have access to dining facilities; how this impacts food security will be explored in the study. Collectively, the survey results raise many questions that require further study: How do junior enlisted military members access food in their daily lives? What are the most convenient and affordable sources of food on installations and the surrounding communities? To what extent is food insecurity a temporary or chronic issue for young service members and their families? Are these sources of food adequately nutritious and of high quality, and how are these measures defined from person to person? Understanding the process by which service members and their families access food and the potential causal factors for disruption of regular access to adequate food for themselves and their families would help provide insight into potential avenues to alleviate food insecurity.

This study will use qualitative methods to gain a better understanding of food access among junior service members and their families, including the process by which members experience food insecurity, the range of potential causes of food insecurity, how and where members and their families access food daily, and what resources might help alleviate food insecurity. This study aligns with Section 601 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2022 (Public Law 117-81) to study food insecurity, and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness highlighted determining the causes of food insecurity as one of the “big plays” for 2022.

2. Use of the Information

The study will incorporate three sets of qualitative data collection respondents at each of 13 military installations selected based on specific recommendations from OSD, USDA, and the Services for the study:

1. Planned interviews or focus groups will be held with approximately 50 service-connected individuals at each installation selected for the study: 40 junior enlisted service members and 10 spouses of junior enlisted service members. We anticipate these individuals will participate in focus groups of up to 10 persons each.

2. We plan to interview 3-5 representatives from food service providers selected by installation staff (e.g., dining hall and commissary staff at each installation).

3. We also anticipate conducting up to 20 short, impromptu interviews with service members and spouses at locations such as installation dining facilities, commissaries, and other food access locations on- and off-post (e.g., community grocery stores).

In total, a maximum of 75 individuals will participate in the study at each location, for a total of 975 respondents across locations. These individuals will be selected by installation staff from a convenience sample.

Respondents in group 1 (planned interviews or focus groups) will be recruited by installation staff and command teams to participate in focus groups (or interviews, if they prefer). Recruitment instructions will ask that service members from a variety of occupational duties and personal backgrounds be invited. Respondents will be told that issues covered in the focus groups will include where they get their food, how food fits into their spending, and other challenges accessing food. Respondents in group 2 (food service provider interviews) will be identified by installation staff and recruited to participate in interviews to discuss how service members access food. Respondents in group 3 (impromptu interviews) will be approached by two researchers and asked to participate in a five-minute survey about their activities around food and meals. All interviews will follow a semi-structured format.

3. Use of Information Technology

While we plan to conduct all focus groups and interviews in person during site visits, any individual who expresses a preference to participate electronically (e.g., via a Microsoft Teams meeting) will be able to do so.

4. Non-duplication

The information obtained through this collection is unique and is not already available for use or adaptation from another cleared source.

5. Burden on Small Businesses

This information collection does not impose a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small businesses or entities.

6. Less Frequent Collection

This will be a one-time collection.

*7.* Paperwork Reduction Act Guidelines

This collection of information does not require collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the guidelines delineated in 5 CFR 1320.5(d)(2).

8. Consultation and Public Comments

Part A: PUBLIC NOTICE

A 60-Day Federal Register Notice (FRN) for the collection published on August 22, 2022. The 60-Day FRN citation is 87 FR 51391.

No comments were received during the 60-Day Comment Period.

A 30-Day Federal Register Notice (FRN) for the collection published on January 20, 2023.   
The 30-Day FRN citation is 88 FRN 3723.

Part B: CONSULTATION

No additional consultation apart from soliciting public comments through the Federal Register was conducted for this submission.

9. Gifts or Payment

Respondents will not be offered monetary payments for participation in the study, but researchers will serve food at the focus group sessions (e.g., a meal or snack), and participants in impromptu interviews will be offered a small snack (e.g., fresh fruit or a protein bar). Food will be offered as an incentive to participate in the focus groups and interviews and to encourage participants to think about their experiences with accessing food.

10. Confidentiality

A Privacy Act Statement is not required for this collection because we are not requesting individuals to furnish personal information for a system of records.

A System of Record Notice (SORN) is not required for this collection because records are not retrievable by PII.

A Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) is not required for this collection because PII is not being collected electronically.

Temporary. Cut off upon completion of research project. Destroy 30 years after cutoff in accordance with DAA-0330-2021-0008-0001.

11. Sensitive Questions

We will be asking respondents to describe their experiences with food insecurity, which might include experiencing financial difficulties. Respondents could feel uncomfortable discussing their financial situation and difficulty affording food. Financial questions are common in survey assessments of food insecurity, and responses will be kept confidential within the RAND research team. Respondents can choose not to reveal information about their specific financial difficulties, and they will be given the option to participate in a private interview rather than a focus group.

Investigating the role of financial difficulties in the experience of food access and food insecurity is critical to the goals of this project: to understand the process by which service members access food and the potential causal factors for disruption of regular access to adequate food for themselves and their families. This information would help provide insight into potential avenues to alleviate food insecurity among military service members and their families.

12. Respondent Burden and its Labor Costs

Part A: ESTIMATION OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

1. Collection Instrument(s)

Planned focus groups or interviews with junior service members

1. Number of Respondents: 520
2. Number of Responses Per Respondent: 1
3. Number of Total Annual Responses: 520
4. Response Time: 1 hour
5. Respondent Burden Hours: 520 hours

Planned focus groups or interviews with spouses of junior service members

1. Number of Respondents: 130
2. Number of Responses Per Respondent: 1
3. Number of Total Annual Responses: 130
4. Response Time: 1 hour
5. Respondent Burden Hours: 130 hours

Interviews with service providers

1. Number of Respondents: 65
2. Number of Responses Per Respondent: 1
3. Number of Total Annual Responses: 65
4. Response Time: 30 minutes
5. Respondent Burden Hours: 32.5 hours

Impromptu interviews with service members

1. Number of Respondents: 260
2. Number of Responses Per Respondent: 1
3. Number of Total Annual Responses: 260
4. Response Time: 10 minutes
5. Respondent Burden Hours: 43.3 hours
6. Total Submission Burden (Summation or average based on collection)
   1. Total Number of Respondents: 975
   2. Total Number of Annual Responses: 1
   3. Total Respondent Burden Hours: 725 hours

Part B: LABOR COST OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

1. Collection Instrument(s)

Planned focus groups or interviews with junior service members

1. Number of Total Annual Responses: 520
2. Response Time: 1 hour
3. Respondent Hourly Wage: $14.05
4. Labor Burden per Response: $14.05
5. Total Labor Burden: $7,306.00

Planned focus groups or interviews with spouses of junior service members

1. Number of Total Annual Responses: 130
2. Response Time: 1 hour
3. Respondent Hourly Wage: $19.90
4. Labor Burden per Response: $19.90
5. Total Labor Burden: $2,587.00

Interviews with service providers (installation-based food-service providers which may include managers of commissary, dining facility and mess hall administration, etc.)

1. Number of Total Annual Responses: 65
2. Response Time: 30 minutes
3. Respondent Hourly Wage: $19.77
4. Labor Burden per Response: $9.89
5. Total Labor Burden: $642.53

Impromptu interviews with service members

1. Number of Total Annual Responses: 260
2. Response Time: 10 minutes
3. Respondent Hourly Wage: $14.05
4. Labor Burden per Response: $2.34

Total Labor Burden: $608.83

1. Overall Labor Burden
   1. Total Number of Annual Responses: 975
   2. Total Labor Burden: $11,144.00

The respondent hourly wage for junior service members (focus groups and impromptu interviews) was determined using the wages for an E3 paygrade service member with 3 years of service, as reported in the 2022 Monthly Basic Pay Tables: <https://www.dfas.mil/Portals/98/Documents/militarymembers/militarymembers/pay-tables/2022%20Military%20Pay%20Tables.pdf?ver=eyZKK478XVelcSQoEG7xFA%3d%3d>

The respondent hourly wage for spouses of junior service members (focus groups and impromptu interviews) was determined using the estimated average 2023 annual income for spouses married to junior and mid-career enlisted service members ($41,388), as reported in James V. Marrone, Trail, Thomas E., Panis, Tina, Knapp, David, Miller, Laura L., and Thompson, Nathan, *The Employment Effects of the My Career Advancement Account Scholarship for Military Spouses An Analysis of the 2011 Cohort*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-A2112-1, 2023.

The respondent hourly wage for service providers was determined by using the May 2021 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm#35-0000>

13. Respondent Costs Other Than Burden Hour Costs

There are no annualized costs to respondents other than the labor burden costs addressed in Section 12 of this document to complete this collection.

14. Cost to the Federal Government

Part A: LABOR COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

1. Collection Instrument(s)

Review of Qualitative Data Collection on Access to Food on and Near Military Installations

1. Number of Total Annual Responses: 975
2. Processing Time per Response: .17 hours
3. Hourly Wage of Worker(s) Processing Responses : $45.99
4. Cost to Process Each Response: $7.82
5. Total Cost to Process Responses: $7,622.84
6. Overall Labor Burden to the Federal Government
   1. Total Number of Annual Responses: 975
   2. Total Labor Burden: $7,622.84

Part B: OPERATIONAL AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

1. Cost Categories
   1. Equipment: $0
   2. Printing: $0
   3. Postage: $0
   4. Software Purchases: $0
   5. Licensing Costs: $0
   6. Other: Cost of the contract ($1,400,000) Contract #: HQ003421D0006. This includes printing, travel, and postage.
   7. Total Operational and Maintenance Cost: $1,400,000

Part C: TOTAL COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

1. Total Labor Cost to the Federal Government: $7,623.00
2. Total Operational and Maintenance Costs: $1,400,000
3. Total Cost to the Federal Government: $1,407,623.00

15. Reasons for Change in Burden

This is a new collection with a new associated burden.

16. Publication of Results

Data collection will begin in September 2023 and end in November 2024. The draft final report is expected to be complete in July 2024. Study results will be published in a peer-reviewed RAND research report. The tentative title is *Food Security Challenges for Junior Enlisted Active-Duty Service Members and Their Families*. Expected publication is December 2024. The final report will discuss food access and challenges by demographic groups (e.g., service member or spouse, marital status, family status) and relevant context variables (e.g., housing situation, work context, rural communities, installation context).

17. Non-Display of OMB Expiration Date

We are not seeking approval to omit the display of the expiration date of the OMB approval on the collection instrument.

18. Exceptions to “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Submissions”

We are not requesting any exemptions to the provisions stated in 5 CFR 1320.9.