

SUPPORTING STATEMENT - PART A

2024 Status of Forces Survey of Active-Duty Members – OMB Control Number 0704-0624

Summary of Changes from 2023 Status of the Forces Survey of Active-Duty Members (SOFA):

1. The burden has decreased due to an adjustment to the respondent wage.
2. Suicide section has been removed in 2024, this section will become rotating content and will be included again in 2025.
3. The Food Assistance section, last included on the 2022 SOFA, is included again in 2024. One open ended question was added to this section at the request of the policy office (Military Community & Family Policy) in order to provide qualitative data on food security.
4. Questions added by Combatting Trafficking in Persons, Housing, Military Community and Family Policy, and Compensation. New questions are highlighted in yellow. These items were included on previous SOFS.
5. We ask for an exemption from using the full race/ethnicity question, Figure 1, and request to use Figure 3. There are two valid reasons that agencies may seek a waiver request for assessing detailed race/ethnicity reporting categories, including risk of identification due to low cell sizes and undue burden on respondents. We are requesting an exemption to update the race and ethnicity question to Figure 3 in the Statistical Policy Directive 15 Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity (SPD 15) based on both of these grounds. Assessing the minimum reporting categories will maintain the level of information presented currently in SOFA, protects respondents as we would not be able to report out data by detailed categories, and minimize survey burden on an already extensive survey. In addition, we will not be able to report out our key constructs in a way that would protect identity using the detailed race/ethnicity questions in Figure 1 and because of that, these additional questions pose an undue burden on respondents in a survey that is already lengthy. It is misleading to ask this level of detail of respondents and not be able to report it out. Additionally, asking detailed racial/ethnic categories may have the unintended consequence of making respondents less likely to want to answer our other sensitive questions (for example, financial readiness questions) or participating at all given concerns about being identified which we already know has been an issue historically on surveys. Thus, if we are required to use the detailed Figure 1 question, we may have more missing data, lower data quality overall, and potentially lower response rates than we already have. Plus, we won't be able to report the data out as we already struggle to report data by minimum reporting categories for the SPD 15 1997 standards and have had to resort to higher level aggregations in reporting historically.
6. Pending funding and OGC approval, a \$5 incentive will be provided to junior enlisted.

1. Need for the Information Collection

The purpose of the Status of the Forces Survey of Active-Duty Members (SOFA) is to assess the attitudes and opinions of active-duty members and to provide key metrics to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (OUSDP&R). Results of this and subsequent surveys are used to provide direct feedback on key strategic indicators such as satisfaction and retention. These indicators provide primary data on personnel career plans, retention decisions, morale, commitment, and quality of life and historically provide the ability to evaluate the impact of policies and programs regarding readiness and retention. The surveys are benchmarks by which senior DoD officials can track trends over time.

Data from the surveys will be presented to the OSD(P&R), Military Departments, Congress, and DoD policy and program offices. Analysis will include OPA's standard products: a tabulation volume (a set of relative frequency distributions of each question, and cross-tabulations of survey questions by key stratifying variables), briefing slides and reports highlighting key findings, and a statistical methodology report. Ad hoc analyses requested by the policy office sponsors and other approved organizations may be conducted as needed and based on available staff. These projects take approximately one year to complete, including assessment design and development, fielding and administration, and data analysis and reporting.

In addition, as mandated by the FY2016 NDAA, Title VI, Subtitle F, Subpart 661, the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), now OPA, fields a financial literacy and preparedness survey within the SOFS annually. Results will be used by the Service Secretaries to evaluate and update financial literacy training and will be submitted in a report to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

2. Use of the Information

The population of interest consists of approximately 125,000 active-duty members who are in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force or Coast Guard and whose paygrade is up to and including pay grade O-6. This survey provides members with a chance to be heard on issues that directly affect them, including policies and programs for deployments, retention, and financial well-being. This may result in improved policies, programs, services, and benefits for active-duty members and their families.

The web survey will be hosted on the operations contractor's secure website. Respondents enter the survey through a .mil site (<https://www.dodsurveys.mil>). This site will state the source of the survey's certification and invite sample members to enter a personal ticket number (one secure ticket number is assigned to each sample member and remain linked to that member for the duration of the project. That ticket number will be printed [along with the survey URL] in each letter, and email sent to that individual) and click "Continue." The sample members will be redirected to the operations contractor's secure website

(<https://www.surveysdrc.com>). Sample members next will see a welcome page, which provides a brief survey description and give them access to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). The next two pages will request the respondent create a Personal Identification Number (PIN) and provided the Privacy Advisory. If the sample members agreed to do the survey, they will click “Continue” to begin the survey. Respondents complete the survey via the secure website and there are no paper survey instruments used for this data collection. Respondents complete the survey by hitting “submit” on the survey web site. Respondents are sent communications to participate in the survey, which includes an email announcement and email/postal reminders for members who have not submitted a survey. We will send up to 12 communications. These documents are attached to this package. Once surveys are submitted, our survey contractor, DRC, handles and processes the surveys. Specifically, once a respondent completes an online survey, data are stored in an indexed file on the web (data) server. Prior to providing each dataset to OPA, the operations contractor copied the indexed file to their internal network using File Transfer Protocol (FTP), converted the data to a sequential format, and processed the validate program to read and load the data to the dataset. The data were then converted to SAS and processed according to OPA-approved administration plans and coding schemes.

Data from this survey will be presented to the OSD(P&R), Military Departments, Congress, and DoD policy and program offices. Analysis will include OPA’s standard products: a tabulation volume (a set of relative frequency distributions of each question, and cross-tabulations of survey questions by key stratifying variables), briefing slides and reports highlighting key findings, and a statistical methodology report. Ad hoc analyses requested by the policy office sponsors and other approved organizations may be conducted as needed and based on available staff.

3. Use of Information Technology

OPA administers the Status of the Forces Surveys via the web. All responses (100%) are collected electronically. We use proprietary software developed by OPA’s operations contractor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) to administer the survey on the web. Digitally signed e-mails, electronic files, and web-based technology will be used for respondent communications and data collection. To reduce respondent burden, web-based surveys use “smart skip” technology to ensure respondents only answer questions that are applicable to them.

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

In order to meet Congressional requirements to gather information on the financial well-being of active duty members, we need to administer the Status of the Forces Surveys of Active Duty Members annually.

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 February 13, 2024. The 60-Day FRN citation is 89 FRN 10057.

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

A 30-Day Federal Register Notice for the collection published on Monday July 22, 2024. The 30-Day FRN citation is 89 FRN 59066.

Part B: CONSULTATION

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

9. Gifts or Payment

Pending funding and approval, a \$5 incentive will be included in the 2nd postal letter to junior enlisted members. This group is targeted because of their historically lower response rates (~5%).

10. Confidentiality

The survey website includes a Privacy Advisory/Additional Information webpage that all sample members view before taking the survey. This page will include the instruction "Click Continue if you agree to take the survey." Informed consent is indicated by clicking the 'Continue' button and answering the survey questions. OPA does not expect the data collection procedures to involve any risk to participants although the survey includes some sensitive questions related to suicide prevention. Survey respondents will not experience any individual or personal direct benefit from participating in the survey. However, by participating in the survey, they will assist OSD(P&R) in evaluating programs, which may assist active duty members in the future. Participants can withdraw from the study at any time, and can also request that their data be withdrawn from the study after they've

submitted it. Procedures for withdrawing data are provided on the survey communications.

The System of Record Notice (SORN) for this collection is DHRA 03 (Survey Data and Assessment [July 28, 2021, 86 FR 40498]). The SORN is located at (applicable URL on www.federalregister.gov) <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/07/28/2021-16054/privacy-act-of-1974-system-of-records>.

The data collection are covered by a PIA (Survey Database, [December 18, 2020], DHRA/OPA). PIA is published at: <https://www.dhra.mil/Portals/52/Documents/Privacy/PIA/OPA%20-%20Survey%20Database.pdf>

Datasets containing survey responses will never contain names, addresses, or e-mail addresses; rather, they will include only randomly generated Identification (ID) numbers. The initial file constructed by OPA during the data collection process will be the “sample file” that contains a record for each individual selected at random to be in the survey. This file will contain administrative record data that will be used to create the sampling strata and will be required for planned analyses of responses. OPA will append a randomly generated ID number to the records before sending the file to OPA’s operations contractor – this number will be the permanent link that can be used to link record data to survey response data that could be required for future analyses. The sample file will contain the OPA randomly generated ID number, names, addresses, and DoDIDs that allow OPA’s operations contractor to control the mailings and obtain additional address information as required. This file will be tightly controlled at OPA and OPA’s operations contractor behind firewalls with password-protected access on a need-to-know basis.

To protect the privacy of research subjects, OPA will conduct a disclosure and confidentiality analysis with multiple combinations of demographic characteristics to ensure there are at least ten (10) respondents in any cell for any report. If there are less than ten (10) respondents in any cell, variables will be grouped until the threshold of ten (10) per cell is met.

OPA currently has an SF-115 request for disposition authority for all survey records, to include the reports, labeled DAA-0330-2021-0008. That has a temporary retention of 30 years for confidential data, permanent retention of 30 years for public use data, and permanent retention of 30 years for reports.

11. Sensitive Questions

NA.

12. Respondent Burden and its Labor Costs

Part A: ESTIMATION OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

1) Collection Instrument(s)

Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members

- a) Number of Respondents: Approximately 16,500
 - b) Number of Responses Per Respondent: 1
 - c) Number of Total Annual Responses: 16,500
 - d) Response Time: 0.25 hours
 - e) Respondent Burden Hours: 4,125 hours
- 2) Total Submission Burden (Summation or average based on collection)
- a) Total Number of Respondents: 16,500
 - b) Total Number of Annual Responses: 16,500
 - c) Total Respondent Burden Hours: 4,125 hours

Part B: LABOR COST OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

1) Collection Instrument(s)

Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members

- a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 16,500
 - b) Response Time: 0.25 hours
 - c) Respondent Hourly Wage: \$25.33
 - d) Labor Burden per Response: \$6.33
 - e) Total Labor Burden: \$104,445
- 2) Overall Labor Burden
- a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 16,500
 - b) Total Labor Burden: \$104,445

Source for average military wage:

[2024 Pay Table-Capped-FINAL.xlsx \(defense.gov\)](#)

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

Contractor Costs:

- 1) Collection Instrument(s) 2024 Status of Forces Active Duty Survey
 - a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 16,500
 - b) Processing Time per Response: .280 hours
 - c) Hourly Wage of Worker(s) Processing Responses: \$80.50
 - d) Cost to Process Each Response: \$22.54
 - e) Total Cost to Process Responses: \$371,910

- 2) Overall Labor Burden to the Federal Government

- a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 16,500
- b) Total Labor Burden: \$371,910

Government Costs

- 3) Collection Instrument(s) 2024 Status of Forces Active Duty Survey
 - a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 16,500
 - b) Processing Time per Response: .05 hours
 - c) Hourly Wage of Worker(s) Processing Responses: \$117.95
 - d) Cost to Process Each Response: \$5.90
 - e) Total Cost to Process Responses: \$97,439
- 4) Overall Labor Burden to the Federal Government
 - a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 16,500
 - b) Total Labor Burden: \$573,794

Part B: OPERATIONAL AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

- 1) Cost Categories
 - a) Equipment: \$0
 - b) Printing: \$ (See f)
 - c) Postage: \$103,373
 - d) Software Purchases: \$0
 - e) Licensing Costs: \$ (see f)
 - f) Other (printing, paper, incentive, etc.): \$366,873
- 2) Total Operational and Maintenance Cost: (P: Add a) through f) in this section)
\$470,246.

Part C: TOTAL COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- 1) Total Labor Cost to the Federal Government: \$573,794
- 2) Total Operational and Maintenance Costs: \$470,246
- 3) Total Cost to the Federal Government: \$\$1,044,040M

15. Reasons for Change in Burden

There has been a decrease in burden since the previous approval due to an adjustment to the respondent wage.

16. Publication of Results

The 2024 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members will field in the fall for approximately 12 weeks. Data analysis and reporting will occur from the time the survey is closed through a year later. After the survey quality assurance review is completed,

tabulation volumes, briefings, and reports are created. The financial well-being items, which are Congressionally mandated, are reported to the Financial Readiness Office in early fall to be included in their report to Congress. Data may still be analyzed after the mandatory report date for further analyses to support research.

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.