

## SUPPORTING STATEMENT - PART A

2024 Status of the Forces Survey of Reserve Component Members – OMB Control Number  
0704-0616

### Summary of Changes from 2023 Status of Forces Reserve Survey:

1. The burden has increased due to an increase in response time and respondent wage.
2. Removed the Suicide Prevention section, per the sponsor (Defense Suicide Prevention Office) this section will now be included every other year on the SOFS.
3. Removed the following sections: Details on Activations/Deployments (will be included every other year), Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program
4. Added the following sections: Detailed Retention, Attitudes Toward Military Service/Lifestyle, Childcare, Food Assistance, and Transition Assistance (These new items are highlighted in yellow in the questionnaire).
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 SOFR, 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. To bolster response rates, pending funding and OGC approval, a \$5 incentive will be given to junior enlisted.

### 1. Need for the Information Collection

The *2024 Status of the Forces Survey of Reserve Component Members (SOFR)* is the primary source for reliable and generalizable survey data to assess the attitudes and opinions of Reserve component members and to assess programs and policies. The survey is conducted by the Office of People Analytics (OPA) for the Defense Human Resources Agency (DHRA), Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness (USD, P&R). Results of this survey 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 with regard to readiness and retention. The *SOFR* provides unique, ongoing, reliable data to equip DoD policymakers with the information they need to make strategic, data-driven decisions for the Reserve component.

In addition, as mandated by the FY2016 NDAA, Title VI, Subtitle F, Subpart 661, OPA, fields a financial literacy and preparedness survey within the SOFRS 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.

The legislation authorizing the USD (P&R) to conduct these surveys is provided under 10 United States Code (USC), Sections 136, 1782 and 2358, and 37 USC, Section 1008(b).

Specifically: “The Secretary of Defense, in order to determine the effectiveness of Federal programs relating to military families and the need for new programs, may conduct surveys of: (1) Reserve component members of the armed forces (2) family members of such members.” (10 USC 1782).

## 2. Use of the Information

This survey provides an opportunity for Reserve and National Guard members to directly expand policymaker’s knowledge by sharing opinions on issues that directly affect them. Success of current efforts and shortfalls in programs and policies are identified through this survey. The survey results ensure decisions are based on current and statistically reliable data. The population of interest for the 2024 SOFR will consist of approximately 800,000 Selected Reserve component members from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard who are below flag rank.

In 2024, the total number of questions is 125, similar to the 127 questions on the 2023 SOFR. 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 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.

OPA will administer the 2024 SOFR as a web-based survey only. Respondents may access the survey via the web on a device they select. 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. Reserve members that do not complete the survey may receive 11 scheduled reminder letters and emails. Only non-respondents will receive all communications. The letters include a QR code for respondents to quickly access the survey (letters/emails 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.

- Postal Mail: OPA will send 4 letters to all sampled Reserve members who have not completed the survey. All letters sent to respondents will include a Quick Response (QR) code linking respondents to the survey. Members that complete the survey will not receive additional notifications once they submit their responses.
- Email: OPA will also send members up to 8 emails. These include 1 Email Announcement, and 7 Email Reminders.

Respondents who indicate by phone, fax, postal mail, or e-mail that they do not want to participate in the survey will be coded as actively refusing to participate and will not receive additional invitations to complete the SOFR. Information on the survey website will inform sample members [Privacy Advisory and Informed Consent Statement and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)], "Once you start answering the survey, if you desire to withdraw your answers, please send an e-mail request to [Survey@mail.mil](mailto:Survey@mail.mil) or leave a message any time, toll-free, at 1-800-881-5307." Upon such notification, OPA's operations

contractor will delete the person's survey responses and code the person as actively refusing to participate.

Survey participants will be presented with the Agency Disclosure Notice, Privacy Advisory, and additional information on the uses of survey results before they are able to access the survey. Web survey participants indicate their consent to take the survey by clicking "Click Continue if you agree to take the survey."

### 3. Use of Information Technology

The web survey will be administered on proprietary software developed by OPA's operations contractor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC). Digitally signed e-mails and web-based technology will be used for respondent communications and for data collection. To reduce respondent burden, web-based surveys use "smart skip" technology to ensure respondents only answer questions that are applicable to them. All postal letters will also include a respondent specific QR code for respondents to quickly access the survey via mobile platforms.

### 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 Reserve component members, we need to administer the Status of the Forces Surveys of Reserve Component Members annually.

Without this survey, DoD would not have current data to guide limited resources to the appropriate programs, policies, and services related to Reserve members. Less frequent collection of the data may not capture significant trends early enough to impact outcomes, for example the impact of stress, satisfaction, and food security on member resilience and readiness. A lack of generalizable DoD wide survey data could lead policy offices and the Services to conduct their own research, elevating the potential for duplication/greater survey burden, less methodological rigor, lower response rates and higher costs for DoD research. It could also, result in the use of non-probability based convenience samples to collect this data which may not accurately estimate the Reserve component population.

### 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 Tuesday, February 13, 2024. The 60-Day FRN citation is 89 FRN 10053.

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 59067.

## 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 jr enlisted. This group is targeted because of their historically lower response rates (~5%).

### 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.

The *SOFR* includes a privacy advisory that respondents view before taking the survey. The web-based advisory includes the instruction “Click Continue if you agree to take the survey.”

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](http://www.federalregister.gov))

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/07/28/2021-16054/privacy-act-of-1974-system-of-records>.

A Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA): The surveys including the collection of emails are covered by a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) (Survey Database, 12/18/2020, DHRA/OPA); <https://www.dhra.mil/Portals/52/Documents/Privacy/PIA/OPA%20-%20Survey%20Database.pdf>

The current disposition authority for survey data is N1-330-03-001, item 8. FILE NUMBER: 1805-09 FILE TITLE: Survey and Census Database FILE DESCRIPTION: Records of census forms completed by military members, civilians, and all persons eligible for DoD benefits. Information in this database are used for policy planning purposes, manpower and benefits research, and other manpower research activities, included are: Survey and Census database master file, codebooks, record layouts, and other technical information required

to use the database. OSD Records Disposition Schedules SERIES 1800 342 DISPOSITION: Permanent. Cutoff on completion of the report for the DoD office requiring the creation of the report. Transfer master file and system documentation to NARA at cutoff in accordance with the standards of 36 CFR 1228.270 and 36 CFR 1234. AUTHORITY: N1-330-03-00

Reports would fall under FILE NUMBER: 103-01.2 FILE TITLE: Policy Files – Evaluation FILE DESCRIPTION: Analyses, studies, and substantive correspondence and memos that evaluate or assist in the evaluation of a process, procedure, or function. These files accumulate in the offices of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense, immediate offices of the Under and Assistant Secretaries of Defense, or any element of any OSD Component involved in making, promulgating, or analyzing policy relating to a Component's mission. They are not to be confused with Policy and Precedent (102-05.1), Publications (102-06.1), or Instruction (103-02.1) files. NOTE: Use 101-14 for background papers associated with policy case files. DISPOSITION: Permanent. Retire to the WNRC when superseded or obsolete. Transfer to NARA 25 years after cutoff. AUTHORITY: N1-330-93-001, item 2 PRIVACY ACT: Not applicable

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

The 2024 *SOFR*, does not contain sensitive questions.

12. Respondent Burden and its Labor Costs

Part A: ESTIMATION OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

1) Collection Instrument(s)

2024 Status of Forces Survey of Reserve Component Members

- a) Number of Respondents: Approximately 16,515
- b) Number of Responses Per Respondent: 1
- c) Number of Total Annual Responses: 16,515
- d) Response Time: 0.33 hours
- e) Respondent Burden Hours: 5,450 hours

2) Total Submission Burden

- a) Total Number of Respondents: 16,515
- b) Total Number of Annual Responses: 16,515
- c) Total Respondent Burden Hours: 5,450 hours

Part B: LABOR COST OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

1) Collection Instrument(s)

2024 Status of Forces Survey of Reserve Component Members

- a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 16,515
- b) Response Time: 0.33 hours
- c) Respondent Hourly Wage: \$53
- d) Labor Burden per Response: \$17.49
- e) Total Labor Burden: \$288,847

2) Overall Labor Burden

- a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 16,515
- b) Total Labor Burden: \$288,847

*Source for average military wage:*

[2024 Pay Table w Drill Pays.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 Reserve Survey

- a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 16,515
- b) Processing Time per Response: .390 hours
- c) Hourly Wage of Worker(s) Processing Responses : \$80.50
- d) Cost to Process Each Response: \$31.40
- e) Total Cost to Process Responses: \$518,571

2) Overall Labor Burden to the Federal Government

- a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 16,515
- b) Total Labor Burden: \$518,571

Government Costs

3) Collection Instrument(s) 2024 Status of Forces Reserve Survey

- a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 16,515
- b) Processing Time per Response: .05 hours
- c) Hourly Wage of Worker(s) Processing Responses : \$99.81
- d) Cost to Process Each Response: \$4.99
- e) Total Cost to Process Responses: \$82,418

4) Overall Labor Burden to the Federal Government

- a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 16,500
- b) Total Labor Burden: \$889,836

## Part B: OPERATIONAL AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

- 1) Cost Categories
  - a) Equipment: \$0
  - b) Printing: \$ (See f)
  - c) Postage: \$110,674
  - d) Software Purchases: \$0
  - e) Licensing Costs: \$ (see f)
  - f) Other (printing, paper, incentive): \$59,658
  
- 2) Total Operational and Maintenance Cost: \$376,573

## Part C: TOTAL COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- 1) Total Labor Cost to the Federal Government: \$889,836
  
- 2) Total Operational and Maintenance Costs: \$376,573
  
- 3) Total Cost to the Federal Government: \$1,266,409

### 15. Reasons for Change in Burden

The burden has increased since the previous approval due to an increase in response time and respondent wage.

### 16. Publication of Results

The 2024 Status of Forces Survey of Reserve Component Members will field 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 results of this survey are presented to senior DoD policymakers. The financial well-being items, which are Congressionally-mandated are reported to the Financial Readiness Office and to be included in their report to Congress. Data may still be analyzed after the mandatory report date for further analyses to support research. Leading indicators (stress, readiness, retention, and tempo) and Quality of Life measures will be posted on a secure, internal, restricted, CAC-required DoD server which allows access to DoD Personnel to view the tabulated data to support and inform policymakers servicing military members.

### 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.