

SUPPORTING STATEMENT – PART B

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

1. Description of the Activity

As shown in Table 1 below, the responder universe for the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) consists of a probability-based sample of active-duty, Reserve, and National Guard members of the US military, identified through service rosters as of October 1, 2000 (Panel 1), October 1, 2003 (Panel 2), October 1, 2006 (Panel 3), October 1, 2010 (Panel 4), and June 1, 2020 (Panel 5). Individuals invited to participate are not chosen based on location. While most invited individuals reside in the United States, service members can be stationed or deployed to almost any area of the world. Invitations are mailed to the current postal address of the service members, regardless of city, state, and country.

The responder universe for the Millennium Cohort Family Study (Family Cohort Study; FCS), consists of the spouses of married personnel who enrolled in Panel 4 and were invited to enroll in Panel 5 of the MCS.

Table 1: Responder Universe for the MCS and the FCS

Panel	Dates Enrolled	Years of Service at Enrollment	Oversampled Groups	Number Invited	Total Enrolled (% of contacted)	Total Members of the Public (% of participants)
1	Jul 2001- Jun 2003	All durations (cross-section of military population)	Females, National Guard/ Reserves, and prior deployers	213,949	77,047 (36%)	69,233 (90%)
2	Jun 2004- Feb 2006	1-2 years	Females and Marine Corps	122,410	31,110 (25%)	22,172 (71%)
3	Jun 2007- Dec 2008	1-3 years	Females and Marine Corps	153,649	43,439 (28%)	27,793 (64%)
4	June 2011- Apr 2013	2-5 years	Females and married	246,230	50,052(20%)	27,638 (55%)
5	Sept 2020- Aug 2021	1-5 years	Females and married	443,951	58,609 (13%)	0 (0%)
Panel	Dates Enrolled	Years of Service at Enrollment	Oversampled Groups	Number Invited	Total Enrolled (% of contacted)	Total Members of the Public (% of participants)
Family Panel 1	June 2011- July 2013	N/A	Males	22,417	9,871 (44%)	9,871 (100 %)
Family Panel 2	January 2021- August 2021	N/A	Males	194,000	18,223 (9%)	18,223 (100%)

Table 2: Selected Baseline Characteristics of MCS Responders Compared with Invited Sample

	Panel 1		Panel 2		Panel 3		Panel 4		Panel 5	
	Responders N= 77,047	Invited N= 256,248	Responders N=31,110	Invited N=150,000	Responders N=43,440	Invited N=200,000	Responders N=50,052	Invited N=250,000	Responders N=58,609	Invited N=443,951
Age (years); mean ± sd	33.8 ± 9.2	31.0 ± 9.0	23.9 ± 5.2	23.1 ± 4.4	24.0 ± 4.2	23.2 ± 3.6	26.4 ± 4.9	25.2 ± 4.1	26.3 ± 4.6	24.9 ± 4.0
Years of Service; mean ± sd	12.1 ± 8.0	10.1 ± 7.7	1.4 ± 0.5	1.4 ± 0.5	2.5 ± 1.2	2.4 ± 1.1	3.7 ± 1.5	3.6 ± 1.3	3.2 ± 1.4	3.2 ± 1.4
Sex; N (%)										
Male	56,415 (73.2)	194,749 (76.0)	19,167 (61.6)	112,139 (74.8)	27,941 (64.3)	152,264 (76.1)	36,331 (72.6)	200,000 (80.0)	40,531 (69.2)	347,775 (78.3)
Female	20,632 (26.8)	61,499 (24.0)	11,943 (38.4)	37,861 (25.2)	15,499 (35.7)	47,736 (23.9)	13,721 (27.4)	50,000 (20.0)	18,078 (30.8)	96,176 (21.7)
Service Branch; N (%)										
Army	36,481 (47.4)	112,573 (43.9)	14,995 (48.2)	61,588 (41.1)	15,798 (36.4)	81,168 (40.6)	22,657 (45.3)	127,663 (51.1)	20,687 (35.3)	204,648 (46.1)
Navy	13,435 (17.4)	50,114 (19.6)	4,941 (15.9)	24,982 (16.7)	6,746 (15.5)	32,464 (16.2)	7,165 (14.3)	38,437 (15.4)	6,702 (11.4)	56,016 (12.6)
Marine Corps	3,941 (5.1)	18,446 (7.2)	2,576 (8.3)	30,000 (20.0)	6,802 (15.7)	50,000 (25.0)	4,742 (9.5)	35,837 (14.3)	6,416 (10.9)	50,005 (11.3)
Air Force	22,357 (29.0)	72,110 (28.1)	8,276 (26.6)	30,201 (20.1)	12,918 (29.7)	32,879 (16.4)	14,260 (28.5)	43,846 (17.5)	23,097 (39.4)	124,778 (28.1)
Coast Guard	833 (1.1)	3,005 (1.2)	322 (1.0)	3,229 (2.2)	1,176 (2.7)	3,489 (1.7)	1,228 (2.5)	4,217 (1.7)	1,707 (2.9)	8,504 (1.9)
Paygrade; N (%)^a										
Junior Enlisted	20,996 (27.3)	109,721 (42.8)	25,971 (83.5)	133,033 (88.7)	35,437 (81.6)	176,603 (88.3)	32,128 (64.2)	188,729 (75.5)	35,762 (61.0)	309,504 (69.7)
Senior Enlisted	38,300 (49.7)	107,031 (41.8)	1,511 (4.9)	7,256 (4.8)	3,016 (6.9)	11,641 (5.8)	10,041 (20.1)	41,301 (16.5)	10,982 (18.7)	84,505 (19.0)
Officer	17,723 (23.0)	39,496 (15.4)	3,628 (11.7)	9,711 (6.5)	4,985 (11.5)	11,756 (5.9)	7,883 (15.8)	19,970 (8.0)	11,865 (20.2)	49,942 (11.2)

^a Junior Enlisted personnel include those with paygrade of E00 through E04
Senior Enlisted personnel include those with paygrade of E05 through E09
Officers include all commissioned and warrant officers

As seen in Table 2 above, the responder universe for the MCS is generally representative of the service members invited to join at the time of recruitment. As is typical in survey research, older individuals and female service members were more likely to enroll in the Cohort. Given that the invited sample for Panel 1 was comprised of a cross-section of service members that were on active rosters at the time of recruitment, these individuals had more years of service than the subsequently enrolled Panels 2, 3, 4, and 5. In addition, Panel 1 responders had approximately 2 more years of service compared with the invited sample, which is consistent with the paradigm of older personnel being more likely to respond. Air Force members were more likely to respond across all five panels, while Marine Corps personnel were less likely to respond at each recruitment. This likely reflects the younger age of service members in the Marine Corps. Also consistent with survey research dynamics is that higher ranking individuals are more likely to respond, which is reflected in the MCS enrollment; most notably among service members who are officers.

Table 3: Selected Baseline Characteristics of FCS Responders Compared with Invited Sample

	Panel 1*	
	Responders N= 9,871	Invited N= 28,603
Age (years); mean ± sd	28.5 ± 5.8	27.6 ± 5.1
Years of Service; mean ± sd	5.2 ± 1.7	3.8 ± 1.6
Sex; N (%)		
Male	1,272 (12.9)	21,984 (76.9)
Female	8,599 (87.1)	6,619 (23.1)
Service Branch; N (%)		
Army	4,563 (46.2)	12,949 (45.3)
Navy/Coast Guard	1,683 (17.1)	4,698 (16.4)
Marine Corps	932 (9.4)	2,649 (9.3)
Air Force	2,693 (27.3)	8,307 (29.0)
Education; N (%)		
Less than high school diploma	133 (1.3)	51 (0.2)
High school diploma	1,145 (11.6)	5,477 (19.1)
Some college	4,568 (46.4)	15,469 (54.1)
Bachelor's degree	2,841 (28.9)	5,414 (18.9)
Master's/PhD degree	1,162 (11.8)	2,192 (7.7)

As you can see in Table 3 above, FCS responders are generally representative of the invited spouse sample. Despite oversampling for male spouses, female spouses were more than twice as likely to respond. Additionally, spouses with some college education, were more likely to respond than those with less or more education.

Table 4: MCS and FCS Follow-Up Response Rates

Table 4: Follow-up Response Rates Total # of Responders per Cycle (% follow-up rate)					
Panel (# in Panel)	2004-2006	2007-2008	2011-2013	2014-2016	2019-2021
Panel 1 (n=77,047)	55,021 (71%) Wave 2	54,790 (71%) Wave 3	51,678 (67%) Wave 4	51,146 (66%) Wave 5	39,964 (53%) Wave 6
Panel 2 (n=31,110)	Enrollment of Panel 2	17,152 (55%) Wave 2	15,149 (49%) Wave 3	14,793 (48%) Wave 4	10,437 (34%) Wave 5
Panel 3 (n=43,439)		Enrollment of Panel 3	22,071 (51%) Wave 2	19,991 (46%) Wave 3	13,836 (32%) Wave 4
Panel 4 (n=50,052)			Enrollment of Panel 4	27,233 (54%) Wave 2	17,737 (36%) Wave 3
Panel 5 (n=58,609)					Enrollment of Panel 5
Family Panel 1 (n=9,871)			Enrollment of Panel 1	6,618 (67%) Wave 2	3,966 (40%) Wave 3
Family Panel 2 (n=18,223)					Enrollment of Panel 2

Panel 1 of the MCS targeted 256,400 service members of whom 213,949 were determined to have valid addresses allowing for study contact attempt. Of those, 77,047 (36%) submitted a Panel 1 baseline questionnaire. Among the 77,047 Panel 1 participants, 55,021 (71%) submitted a first follow-up survey, 54,790 (71%) submitted a second follow-up survey, 51,678 (67%) submitted a third follow-up survey, 51,146 (66%) submitted a fourth follow-up survey, 38,356 (52%) submitted a fifth follow-up survey and 39,964 (53%) submitted a sixth follow-up survey. A total of 62,902 (89.7%) of Panel 1 participants have submitted at least one follow-up survey.

Panel 2 of the MCS targeted 150,000 service members of whom 122,410 were determined to have valid addresses allowing for study contact attempt. Of those, 31,110

(25%) submitted a Panel 2 baseline questionnaire. Among the 31,110 Panel 2 participants, 17,152 (55%) submitted a first follow-up survey, 15,149 (49%) submitted a second follow-up survey, 14,793 (48%) submitted a third follow-up survey, 10,122 (33%) submitted a fourth follow-up survey, and 10,437 (34%) submitted a fifth follow-up survey. A total of 24,688 (85.4%) of Panel 2 participants have submitted at least one follow-up survey.

Panel 3 of the MCS targeted 200,000 service members of whom 153,649 were determined to have valid addresses allowing for study contact attempt. Of those, 43,439 (28%) submitted a Panel 3 baseline questionnaire. Among the 43,439 Panel 3 participants 22,071 (51%) submitted a first follow-up survey, 19,991 (46%) submitted a second follow-up survey, 13,402 (31%) submitted a third follow-up survey, and 13,836 (32%) submitted a fourth follow-up survey. A total of 31,942 (78.4%) of Panel 3 participants have submitted at least one follow-up survey.

Panel 4 of the MCS targeted 250,000 service members of whom 246,230 were determined to have valid addresses allowing for study contact attempt. Of those, 50,052 (20%) submitted a Panel 4 baseline questionnaire. Among the 50,052 Panel 4 participants, 27,233 (54%) submitted a first follow-up survey, 17,119 (34%) submitted a second follow-up survey, and 17,737 (36%) submitted a third follow-up survey. A total of 33,213 (70.2%) Panel 4 participants have submitted at least one follow-up survey.

Panel 5 of the MCS targeted 533,125 service members of whom 443,951 were determined to have valid addresses allowing for study contact attempt. Of those, 58,509 (13%) submitted a Panel 5 baseline questionnaire.

Panel 1 of the FCS targeted 22,417 spouses of Panel 4 service members who submitted a baseline MCS questionnaire. Of those, 9,871 (44%) submitted an FCS Panel 1 baseline questionnaire. Among the 9,871 Panel 1 participants 6,618 (67%) submitted a first follow-up survey and 3,966 (40%) submitted a second follow-up survey. A total 7,178 (73%) of FCS Panel 1 participants have submitted at least one follow-up survey.

Panel 2 of the FCS targeted 194,000 spouses of service members invited to MCS Panel 5. Of those, 18,223 (9%) submitted an FCS Panel 2 baseline questionnaire.

To date, a total of 3,553 deaths have occurred within the MCS Panel 1 responder group, 568 deaths have occurred within the MCS Panel 2 responder group, 679 deaths have occurred within the MCS Panel 3 responder group, 612 deaths within the MCS Panel 4 responder group and 70 deaths within the Panel 5 responder group. To date a total of 97 deaths have occurred within the FCS Panel 1 responder group, and 2 deaths have occurred within the FCS Panel 2 responder group.

We estimate that approximately 214,168 of the participants from Panels 1-5 who respond to the 2023-2024 MCS survey will no longer be military service members. Of the spouses who are enrolled in the FCS, it is estimated that 18,089 will complete an FCS follow-up survey between 2023 and 2024 and will be members of the public. Therefore, for

both the MCS and the FCS it is estimated that a total of 232,257 participants who complete a survey between 2023 and 2024 will be members of the public.

As of our first OMB approval in September 2003 and throughout the course of the study, proportions of military versus public participants will shift in favor of members of the public as service members separate from the military.

2. Procedures for the Collection of Information

The MCS consists of service members randomly selected from a large, representative military sample obtained from the Defense Manpower Database Center. A probability-based random sampling process is employed with oversampling for certain sub-groups to ensure enough statistical power to address small subgroups of the population reasonably well in a population-based setting.

In Panel 1, military personnel who had served in Southwest Asia, Bosnia, and Kosovo after 1997 were over-sampled. Additionally, Reserve, National Guard, and female service personnel were over-sampled to assure sufficient statistical power to investigate hypotheses in these smaller subgroups of the military population. In Panels 2 and 3, Marines and female service members were oversampled to assure sufficient statistical power to investigate hypotheses in these smaller subgroups. In Panels 4 and 5, women and married service members were oversampled to support the enrollment of the concurrent FCS.

The MCS and FCS participants are asked to complete a questionnaire every 3 to 5 years allowing longitudinal information to be acquired without burdening participants with annual questionnaires.

3. Maximization of Response Rates, Non-response, and Reliability

Much effort is focused into retention of study participants and maximizing follow-up survey response. Response rates for both the MCS and FCS are maximized principally through employment of modified Dillman Mail and Electronic Survey Methods (Dillman, 1978). Recruitment and marketing materials are reviewed at each survey cycle and new strategies are implemented, as appropriate and necessary.

The MCS and FCS teams have undertaken numerous efforts to ensure maximum response rates to surveys. The teams consult with survey experts and new approaches are implemented and evaluated during each survey cycle. Each participant is sent paper questionnaires and/or directions to complete the questionnaire online in addition to email requests to participate depending on whether or not s/he has responded to the last questionnaire/email request sent. Each questionnaire mailing/email-request-to-participate is followed approximately two weeks later by a reminder postcard/reminder email. Our approach of contacting the participants over a longer period of time

(approximately 18 months) is conducted in case the participant is deployed or has recently moved to allow time for the current address to be updated.

If we receive notice that the address at which we attempt to reach a participant or newly invited individual is not valid and we do not receive updated address information before the end of the survey cycle, we classify these participants/individuals as non-responders. At the conclusion of the survey cycle if a participant or newly invited individual has not responded we infer that the questionnaire/email-request was received by the participant/individual and that they have chosen not to participate. They are then classified as non-responders. Any individuals being contacted for enrollment into a new panel that are classified as non-responders at the end of the survey cycle are removed from any future contact attempts.

New or “good” addresses are sought from the Internal Revenue Service through contract with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), as well as self-reported respondent updates. We also utilize the National Change of Address Service through the US Postal Service when a participant’s postal item is returned to the study team with a new or “good” address.

Response and retention rates are of utmost importance to MCS and FCS investigators. Much effort has been focused on investigation of the type and the use of incentives, wording of invitations, email contacts, and twice-yearly postcard and email contacts on Veteran’s Day and Memorial Day (MCS), or Month of the Military Child and National Military Family Month (FCS). Past incentives included specially designed t-shirts with study logos, and phone cards. For the 2011-2013 survey cycle effort, incentives included a \$5 gift card (Starbucks, Subway, Amazon.com, WalMart), or a MCS hat or coin. The FCS offered \$10 survey completion incentives from Starbucks, Subway, or Shutterfly. For the 2014-2016 cycle a combination of pre-incentives and completion post-incentives were used for both the MCS and FCS. During the 2014-2016 cycle, the MCS conducted an experiment to determine the most effective type of incentive to increase response rates among each panel. Findings from this experiment suggest that providing participants a monetary pre-incentive was an effective way to increase response rates and participant retention as well as re-engage participants who did not respond to a previous follow-up survey (Powell et al. 2023).

Invitations and email contacts are specifically designed based on service branch, separation status, and other demographic factors which are vetted thoroughly by the study team. Twice-yearly contacts using Veteran’s Day and Memorial Day (MCS), or Month of the Military Child and National Military Family Month (FCS) serve to keep study participants engaged as well as solicit updated contact information. Additionally, the 2007-2008 enrollment cycle employed a “Welcome to the Cohort” campaign that sent welcome cards to newly enrolled cohort members describing the scope and length of the study.

Telephone surveys of non-responders were first performed after the 2000 MCS Pilot Study and focused on survey content and reasons for non-response. In 2005 telephone surveys of non-responders were conducted for the corresponding 2004-2006 survey cycle.

The submitted report, “MilCohort Nonresponse Study Final Report”, describes the MCS Telephone Study of 3,000 non-responders conducted by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI). This sub-study consisted of telephone calls to Panel 1 participants who had not completed a 2004-2006 questionnaire. In addition to asking questions regarding reasons for non-response, the phone survey asked about incentives, participant contacts, and collected information on health status. For those with bad phone numbers (e.g., disconnected, wrong number), RTI completed a thorough investigation to obtain up-to-date phone numbers. This additional contact information was given to the MCS team after the completion of the RTI survey and report.

Chapter 3 of RTI's “MilCohort Nonresponse Study Final Report” discussed telephone questionnaire results and presented recommendations for improving response rates. Overall, recommendations covered six main areas: study materials, panel maintenance, tracking sample members, incentives, telephone prompting, and future non-response studies. Many of these suggestions continue to be incorporated in the ongoing survey efforts. For example, study materials encourage online participation but do mention the option to complete surveys via paper, contacts are tailored to be service branch specific and based on current military status (i.e., separated/retired or still serving). Furthermore, the continued use of bi-annual postcards and the utilization of the National Change of Address Service through the US Postal Service enhanced panel maintenance and the tracking of study participants.

Additionally, during the 2014-2016 survey cycle, the FCS developed a telephone-based outreach method to retain participants. A maximum of three phone calls were made to non-responders who provided a phone number on the baseline survey. If the participant was not reached by the third call, a voicemail message was left. The main objectives of the phone calls were to remind the participants about the follow-up survey and gather updated contact information. Of the 746 FCS participants called, 167 (22%) completed their follow-up survey, and an additional 41 (5%) initiated their follow-up survey.

Near the end of the 2024-2025 survey cycle, the MCS will conduct a participant feedback survey among Panel 1-5 responders and non-responders that was designed to assess a variety of factors including those that have motivated and/or discouraged MCS participants to stay connected with the study. This data will be utilized in the design of the future surveys and survey operations to maximize retention and increase participation from previous non-responders. The surveys were developed based on preliminary 2019-2021 MCS survey response data and the Hispanic Community Health Study Participant Feedback survey (OMB#: 0925-0584). The survey has been submitted as a part of this review.

The previous terms of clearance required that the Millennium Cohort Program (the MCS and the FCS collectively make up the Millennium Cohort Program) “continually examine potential non-response and attrition bias in each wave of this study, particularly for key health-related variables and outcomes. DoD will continue this research and will provide updated results from these ongoing bias analyses to OMB with future submissions”.

Longitudinal studies, such as the MCS and FCS, provide the capability to prospectively analyze relationships between exposures and outcomes. A cohort study of military service members and Veterans over an extended period of time provides the unique opportunity to examine the temporal relationships between service-related experiences, including deployment, with subsequent health and behavioral outcomes, which is not possible using time-series or cross-sectional samples. However, in longitudinal studies, non-response and non-random attrition is a potential source of bias. Analysis based on multi-wave panel studies can be heavily compromised by non-random sample attrition. While MCS and FCS participants are given the opportunity to complete follow-up questionnaires regardless of whether they completed the previous follow-up questionnaire, the number of responders who do not participate in each subsequent wave of data collection (wave non-response) will most likely accumulate over time, which may undermine the precision of any research undertaken using such samples. Unless non-response is random, attrition may lead to bias, as there are important factors that influence response propensity. Attrition is often correlated with observable characteristics such as age, education, health, and economic well-being, as well as other unknown or unobserved factors. This non-random attrition can result in samples that include only a selected group of individuals over time, which can bias estimates since the non-response can often be associated with the variables of interest. However, non-random attrition does not necessarily lead to attrition bias. Attrition bias is model-specific and, as previous studies have shown, biases might be absent even if attrition rates are high.

The MCS team has previously examined potential bias from initial enrollment and attrition. Demographic data on all invited personnel have been examined to determine differences in distributions among responders and non-responders. While overall the investigations have demonstrated the responders to be demographically representative of the invited sample (Ryan et al. 2007), some factors have been found to be associated with greater likelihood of enrollment, including some demographic and military characteristics. While some of these differences are significant, most of them are quite small and are similar to patterns found in other surveys of military and non-military populations such as MIDUS and NHANES. These investigations have informed our statistical weighting techniques. Similar to other national studies using probability sampling and weighting to the Current Population Survey, the MCS weights the study to the entire US military population using DMDC records. In addition to creating sampling weights, principled missing data techniques will be used to mitigate bias that may have emerged from attrition. Details on these imputation procedures are described below in sections A and B. Further examination found few health differences between MCS responders and non-responders when comparing healthcare utilization preceding study invitation (Wells et al. 2008; Horton et al. 2013). In addition, non-response to the follow-up questionnaires has not resulted in any appreciable biases as reflected by comparing measures of association for selected outcomes, including PTSD, depression, and eating disorders, using complete case and inverse probability weighted methods (Littman et al. 2010). Also, a recent MCS publication examined the efficiency and feasibility of multiple imputation (MI) to recover data from a question completely missing at a MCS follow-up survey (which occurs as items are added or removed over time) and found similar associations between imputed and self-

reported predictors with related constructs. This confirms that MI allows for the inclusion of an otherwise missing item as a covariate in statistical models (Kolaja et al. 2021). Please see the tables 5 – 7 below for summaries of these investigations.

Table 5: Selected Demographic Characteristics from Ryan, et al 2007; Millennium Cohort: Enrollment Begins at 21-year Contribution to Understanding the Impact of Military Service

Characteristics	Responders* (n = 77,047)	Invited Cohort* (N = 256,400)
	N (%)	%
Sex		
Male	56,415 (73.2)	76.0
Female	20,632 (26.8)	24.0
Age (years)		
17-24	14,559 (18.9)	30.8
25-34	27,083 (35.2)	35.4
35-44	25,400 (33.0)	25.1
>44	9,975 (13.0)	8.6
Service Branch		
Army	36,481 (47.4)	44.0
Navy & Coast Guard	14,268 (18.5)	20.8
Marine Corps	3,941 (5.1)	7.2
Air Force	22,357 (29.0)	28.1
Education		
Less than HS	4,722 (6.1)	7.6
HS diploma or less	32,957 (42.8)	50.4
Some college	19,655 (25.5)	23.6
Bachelor's degree	12,722 (16.5)	11.6
Graduate school	6,986 (9.1)	5.4
Paygrade		
Enlisted	59,318 (77.0)	84.6
Officer	17,729 (23.0)	15.4

Table 6: Selected Demographic Characteristics from Wells, et al 2008; Prior Health Care Utilization as a Potential Determinant of Enrollment in a 21-year Prospective Study

Characteristics	Responders* (n = 21,067)	Non-responders* (N = 47,036)
	N (%)	N (%)
Sex		
Male	15,143 (71.9)	35,304 (75.1)
Female	5,924 (28.1)	11,732 (24.9)
Age (years)		
17-24	3,534 (16.8)	15,520 (33.0)
25-34	4,721 (22.4)	12,988 (27.6)
35-44	7,034 (33.4)	11,067 (23.5)
≥45	5,778 (27.4)	7,461 (15.9)
Service Branch		
Army	7,794 (37.0)	15,115 (32.1)
Navy & Coast Guard	5,230 (24.8)	12,770 (27.2)
Marine Corps	1,620 (7.7)	5,091 (10.8)
Air Force	6,423 (30.5)	14,060 (29.9)
Education		
HS diploma or less	10,974 (52.1)	29,459 (62.6)
Some college	5,842 (27.7)	12,745 (27.1)
Bachelor's degree	2,134 (10.1)	2,842 (6.0)
Graduate school	2,117 (10.1)	1,990 (4.2)
Paygrade		
Enlisted	17,500 (83.1)	43,328 (92.1)
Officer	3,567 (16.9)	3,708 (7.9)

Table 7: Selected Demographic Characteristics from Horton, et al 2013; The Impact of deployment experience and prior healthcare utilization on enrollment in a large military cohort study

Characteristics	Panel 2 (2004-2006)		Panel 3 (2007-2008)	
	Responders (n = 31,110)	Non-responders (N = 118,393)	Responders (n = 43,440)	Non-responders (N = 156,231)
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Sex				
Male	19,167 (61.6)	92,614 (78.2)	152,029 (76.1)	27,941 (64.3)
Female	11,943 (38.4)	25,779 (21.8)	47,642 (23.9)	15,499 (35.7)
Age (years)				
17-20	9,317 (30.0)	40,055 (33.8)	6,005 (13.8)	29,762 (19.0)
21-22	6,693 (21.5)	28,973 (24.5)	13,916 (32.0)	60,243 (38.6)
23-24	5,248 (16.9)	19,688 (16.6)	9,108 (21.0)	32,441 (20.8)
>24	9,852 (31.7)	29,677 (25.1)	14,411 (33.2)	33,785 (21.6)
Service Branch				
Army	14,995 (48.2)	46,447 (39.2)	15,798 (36.4)	65,269 (41.8)
Navy & Coast Guard	5,263 (16.9)	22,847 (19.3)	7,922 (18.2)	27,971 (17.9)
Marine Corps	2,576 (8.3)	27,363 (23.1)	6,802 (15.7)	43,140 (27.6)
Air Force	8,276 (26.6)	21,736 (18.4)	12,918 (29.7)	19,851 (12.7)
Education				
Some college or less	25,752 (82.8)	106,183 (89.7)	36,287 (83.5)	143,632 (91.9)
Bachelor's or higher	4,291 (13.8)	7,056 (6.0)	5,856 (13.5)	8,488 (5.4)
Unknown	1,067 (3.4)	5,154 (4.4)	1,297 (3.0)	4,111 (2.6)
Paygrade				
Enlisted	27,482 (88.3)	112,366 (94.9)	38,455 (88.5)	149,509 (95.7)
Officer	3,628 (11.7)	6,027 (5.1)	4,985 (11.5)	6,722 (4.3)

However, although previous work has indicated minimal bias has been introduced into the MCS due to initial and follow-up non-response, continued investigation of factors leading to non-random attrition is key for adjusting for non-response and producing unbiased estimates. Given the evolving complexity of the MCS methodology, we consulted with methodologists experienced in modern techniques for handling missing data. Based on their recommendations, cutting-edge principled missing data statistical solutions have been introduced to minimize non-response bias in descriptive analyses and the creation of population estimates. In particular, principal component auxiliary (PCAUX) variables (Howard, Rhemtulla, & Little, 2015), a recent advance in principled missing data treatments, are being employed. Our handling of non-response bias will employ a combination of weighting schemes as well as principled missing data treatments such as multiple imputation (MI) and full-information maximum likelihood (FIML).

Principled missing data techniques offer several advantages over panel weighting schemes. They are able to address item-non-response as well as wave-non-response. Panel

weights can be created to adjust for attrition (or respondents who otherwise miss an entire wave). In contrast, techniques such as multiple imputation can also address item-non-response by respondents present in a wave but failing to answer some items. Weighting in multivariable analyses is also debatable because only a few variables, usually demographic, must be selected to create the weights, and it is plausible that the ideal variables to create weights would vary across outcomes. For example, in longitudinal analyses, information on an outcome such as illness in a prior wave is plausibly much more informative than demographic variables from the baseline. Principled missing data treatments avoid this limitation.

PCAUX methodology solves issues of model complexity and computational limitations that have previously limited the use of principled missing data treatments in large/longitudinal datasets. The ideal missing data model is inclusive of all variables in the dataset that might be informative about missing data patterns. Variables included in the missing data model that are not of interest to the analytic model are called auxiliary variables and can greatly reduce bias and increase power (Collins, Schafer, & Kam, 2001; Graham, 2009). However, there is a tension between fully inclusive missing data models and practical limitations on computation. By extracting a limited number of principal components (typically 10 to 13) to employ as auxiliary variables, inclusive information is provided with a parsimonious number of auxiliary variables. In addition to serving as informative auxiliary variables in FIML analyses, PCAUX variables can also be used as the predictor variables when generating multiple imputations.

The MCS team has previously reported follow-up response rates, created sample and design weights, and run nonresponse bias analyses among the first panel at the first follow-up conducted in 2004. The study is currently investigating baseline enrollment representativeness among all five panels as well as exploring the impact of nonresponse bias to the 2019-2021 follow-up survey. Several ongoing projects are utilizing machine learning techniques for various methodological projects; these studies aim to: predict follow-up survey nonresponse, use natural language processing to summarize open-ended participant feedback and create a novel approach to identify survey noncompletion (e.g., stopping the survey part way through). Table 8 shows, among Panels 1-4, the response rate for all eligible waves (up to 5 for Panel 1) from a recent publication by Kolaja et al. Among the follow-up cycles examined, an average response rate of 60% was observed while 42% responded to all surveys.

Table 8: Millennium Cohort Study participant eligibility, response, and mode of response between 2001-2003 and 2014-2016 surveys, n=201,619

Panel	2001-2003	2004-2006	2007-2008	2011-2013	2014-2016	No. of surveys completed, by wave n (%)
1	Enrolled: 77,019 Web: 42,167 (55%) Paper: 34,852 (45%)	Eligible: 76,829 (99%) Nonresponder: 21,812 Responder: 55,017 (72%) Web 45,538 (83%) Paper: 9479 (17%) Excluded: 190*	Eligible: 76,044 (99%) Nonresponder: 21,260 Responder: 54,784 (72%) Web: 46,303 (85%) Paper: 8481 (15%) Excluded: 975*	Eligible: 75,419 (98%) Nonresponder: 23,745 Responder: 51,674 (69%) Web: 42,615 (82%) Paper: 9059 (18%) Excluded: 1600*	Eligible: 71,201 (93%) Nonresponder: 23,707 Responder: 47,494 (67%) Web: 39,335 (83%) Paper: 8159 (17%) Excluded: 5818*	1: 9336 (12.1) 2: 9154 (11.9) 3: 10,662 (13.8) 4: 12,978 (16.9) 5: 34,889 (45.3)
2		Enrolled: 31,110 Web: 27,250 (88%) Paper: 3860 (12%)	Eligible: 31,044 (99%) Nonresponder: 13,892 Responder: 17,152 (55%) Web: 14,357 (84%) Paper: 2795 (16%) Excluded: 66*	Eligible: 30,842 (99%) Nonresponder: 15,693 Responder: 15,149 (49%) Web: 12,106 (80%) Paper: 3043 (20%) Excluded: 268*	Eligible: 29,147 (94%) Nonresponder: 15,926 Responder: 13,221 (45%) Web: 10,968 (83%) Paper: 2253 (17%) Excluded: 1963*	1: 9217 (29.6) 2: 7172 (23.1) 3: 5814 (18.7) 4: 8907 (28.6)
3			Enrolled: 43,438 Web: 40,302 (93%) Paper: 3136 (7%)	Eligible: 43,324 (99%) Nonresponder: 21,256 Responder: 22,068 (51%) Web: 18,174 (82%) Paper: 3894 (18%) Excluded: 114*	Eligible: 41,023 (95%) Nonresponder: 23,211 Responder: 17,812 (43%) Web: 14,943 (84%) Paper: 2869 (16%) Excluded: 2415*	1: 18,061 (41.6) 2: 10,875 (25.0) 3: 14,502 (33.4)
4				Enrolled: 50,052 Web: 43,781 (87%) Paper: 6271 (13%)	Eligible: 47,636 (95%) Nonresponder: 22,925 Responder: 24,711 (52%) Web: 20,633 (83%) Paper: 4078 (17%) Excluded: 2416*	1: 25,341 (50.6) 2: 24,711 (49.4)

*Excluded counts include participants who withdrew from the Study, were deceased at the opening of each survey cycle, or completed the short paper survey at the 2014-2016 cycle.

Moving forward, the MCS team will continue to obtain PCAUX variables for each cohort, as well as multiple imputations of each cohort to insure unbiased estimates of population parameters. (These procedures will be reapplied systematically to each cohort after each additional wave of data collection is completed to use newly provided data to better inform previous waves' missingness and address item and survey non-response in the newly collected data.)

A. Procedures to Investigate Non-response for MCS Panels at Baseline:

- a. Response rates will be calculated using standard formulas using OMB Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys (2006). For example:
 - i. Unweighted unit response rates (RRU) as the proportion of those that were eligible for the survey at baseline that responded.
- b. Non-response (declined participation) bias will be estimated and described by comparing responders to non-responders based on variables available from electronic personnel files available on all service members via Defense Manpower Data Center. These variables will include factors such as demographic characteristics, deployment histories, and medical/healthcare data. For example, methods to do this will include, but will not be limited to, multivariable logistic regression to describe the propensity to respond or not respond.
- c. Baseline weights will be calculated using the propensity score for response, in order to minimize response bias. These combined sampling and non-participation weights will be used in future studies, where appropriate.

B. Procedures to Investigate Non-response and Attrition for MCS Panels at Follow-Up:

- a. Response rates will be calculated using standard formulas using OMB Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys (2006). For example:
 - i. Longitudinal response rates as the proportion of responders at wave 1 (baseline), who responded at a specific subsequent wave.
- b. Non-response and attrition bias will be examined and described by comparing responders to non-responders based on previous survey data. These variables will include factors obtained at the baseline survey and beyond, such as behavioral, mental, and physical health factors, as well as demographic characteristics, deployment histories, and medical/healthcare data, and in certain cases response to previous waves. For example, methods to do this will include, but will not be limited to, multivariable multinomial logistic regression to calculate the propensity for response, non-response, or death. We will separately model attrition due to death (or attrition by other causes, when appropriate) versus non-response since determinants will likely differ between these groups and may be differentially associated with outcomes of interest.
- c. PCAUX variables and multiple imputations will be obtained for each cohort after each wave of data collection. PCAUX variables can be used in FIML modeling whenever appropriate, and models may also include baseline-weights. As an alternative, analyses can be conducted across multiply imputed datasets.

The FCS Team partnered with Abt Associates to similarly create design and non-response weights for the FCS. The use of the weights is critical for generating representative and unbiased statistical estimates for the target population, especially since Panels 4 and 5 of the MCS were oversampled for married and female respondents, sample design weights were initially generated. As with the MCS, non-response adjustments to the FCS weights were performed to reduce non-response bias.

Propensity weighting - a straightforward extension of the propensity score theory of Rosenbaum and Rubin (1983) incorporated into survey non-response problems by David et al. (1983) was used to adjust for non-response to the FCS. The availability of military records and survey data for the spouse paired MCS Panel 4 service member provided a unique opportunity to examine potential bias associated with non-response in unusual detail. Given the large amount of information available on respondents and non-respondents from the spouse paired MCS Panel 4 service member that could be included in the FCS response propensity model, we applied an empirical process to guide variable selection (Rizzo, Kalton and Brick 1996, Smith et al. 2001).

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4. Tests of Procedures

Following preliminary focus group evaluations of the draft MCS questionnaire conducted in late 1999 with military enlisted and officer groups of less than 10 people, a pilot study was conducted with a 1% sample of military personnel in the spring of 2000 as a means of testing the utility of the instrument. Following this pilot study, corrections were made to produce the final MCS survey instrument.

Participant Feedback Survey: The purpose of the included participant feedback questionnaire is to understand more information around participant recruitment and study retention, such as reasons for non-response, correlates of non-response, motivations to participate, acceptability of study communication methods, and recommendations for improvement.

Beta Testing: The FCS conducted a beta test of some of the newly added items to the 2024-2025 follow-up survey. All beta testing procedures were reviewed and approved by the Naval Health Research Center Institutional Review Board. The study team analyzed the results from this small-group beta testing to determine the validity, utility, and usability of the newly suggested survey items. Results supported the retention of five items assessing preparedness during prior deployments, and four additional items assessing readiness for future deployments. Both constructs were sufficiently correlated with similar constructs, suggesting validity of the measures.

5. Statistical Consultation and Information Analysis

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

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