

SUPPORTING STATEMENT - PART A

Reserve Component Spouse Survey – OMB Control Number 0704-0653

Summary of Changes from Previously Approved Collection

- Burden increased due to the inclusion of Coast Guard spouses which increased the sample size and associated costs. Removed food security section and replaced with food access/nutrition/commissaries
- Expanded or added sections on activation/deployment, child care, and spouse employment.
- Updated questions on race and ethnicity in compliance with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive No. 15: Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity

1. Need for the Information Collection

The *DoD Reserve Component Spouse Survey (RCSS)* is the primary source for reliable and generalizable survey data on the effects of military life on Reserve and National Guard military spouses and their families and the effectiveness of current 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). The survey is designed to enhance understanding of how spouse and family resilience impact force readiness and retention and inform the effectiveness of programs and policies under the purview of DoD's Office of Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP). The RCSS provides unique, ongoing, reliable data to equip policymakers with the information they need to make strategic, data-driven decisions on a vital component of the total force – Reserve component military spouses and families.

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).

Past spouse survey results can be viewed on Military OneSource at <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/data-research-and-statistics/survey-findings/>), which is publicly accessible, and/or on <https://www.opa.mil/>, which is accessible via CAC/DS logon.

2. Use of the Information

This survey provides an opportunity for DoD Reserve and National Guard spouses and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Coast Guard spouses to directly expand

policymakers' knowledge by sharing their experiences with military life and opinions on issues that directly affect them. Gaps in programs and policies are identified through this survey. The survey results help to ensure decisions reflect current and statistically reliable data. The population of interest for the 2026 RCSS will consist of spouses of Reserve component members from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard who are below flag rank. Eligible spouses must be currently married to a Reserve component member. The population is approximately 351,083 Reserve component spouses.

In 2026, the base number of survey questions spouses may be asked on the RCSS is 67. Spouses may be asked additional questions on topics such as employment or children when applicable. The total number of questions on the survey is 88. Most spouses will receive far fewer questions. The survey is similar to past RCSS. Analysis, including weighting and structuring the dataset, providing statistical demographic comparisons and statistical time series trends takes between four and nine months. Briefings are tailored and delivered in the months following, using this data. Spouses will only answer questions that apply to them, therefore spouses who do not have children will not be asked questions about their children's education, for example. The *2023 RCSS Tabulation of Responses* (OPA Report No. 2023-290) is provided as supplementary documentation with this information collection request.

Core survey questions from previous survey administrations were retained in key areas (retention, employment) to allow trend comparisons to be made which are of interest to DoD leaders and used to respond to congressional inquiries. For 2025, additional or expanded topics on the impact of Reserve Service on families include child care, nutrition, and program use.

OPA will administer the RCSS in multiple modes, including a web-based survey with a paper survey option in order to maximize response rates. Respondents may access the survey via the web on a device they select or return the paper survey via USPS postage paid return envelope. Reserve spouses may receive up to 5 letters and 3 emails, with the possibility of 4 additional emails based on response to the survey. Only nonrespondents will receive an email or letter about the survey, so only a segment of the sample will receive all communications.

- Physical Mail: OPA utilizes paper mailing to respondents because of the low percentage of spouses with an email address on file—12% of reserve spouses have an email on file. OPA will send 5 letters (including one postcard notification, invitation, one letter with a paper copy of the survey enclosed, and 2 reminder letters) to sampled Reserve component spouses. Letters sent to respondents will include a Quick Response (QR) code linking respondents to the survey. The postcard notification is not sent in an envelope to secure respondent privacy and will not include a QR code. Respondents to the survey will not receive additional notifications once their response is received via the web or on paper.
- Email: OPA will send up to 7 emails to nonrespondent spouses with a valid email address in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). These include 1 Email Announcement, and 2 Email Reminders, with four additional emails,

as authorized, based on the response rate in the final weeks of the survey field period.

Respondents who indicate by phone, 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 RCSS. 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 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.

For the web version of the survey, 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.” Paper copies of the survey include the following language under the Privacy Advisory: “Returning this survey indicates your agreement to participate in this research.”

To learn more about the *2023 RCSS methodology, the 2023 RCSS Statistical Methodology Report* is available on request: Office of People Analytics. (August 2020). 2019 Survey of Reserve component spouses: Statistical Methodology Report. (OPA Report No. 02023-292). Alexandria, VA.

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.

For the 2023 RCSS, the electronic submission rate was 76 percent; 24 percent responded to a paper survey. It can be assumed that a higher proportion may submit the survey electronically in 2026 given the increase in respondents using their mobile phone to complete the web survey, as seen on the *2024 Active Duty Spouse Survey (OMB Control Number)*. Seven in ten web-respondents completed the ADSS via mobile phone in 2024.

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

Without this survey, DoD would not have current data to guide limited resources to the appropriate programs, policies, and services related to Reserve military spouses, their families and ultimately Service members. Less frequent collection of data would not provide information on military families and their spouses, would decrease the responsiveness of policy makers based on the results, and may not capture significant trends early enough to impact outcomes, for example the impact of activation and deployment on spouse employment, child care needs and other socioeconomic factors that impact both family and member resilience. A lack of probability based survey data on the military spouse population 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 spouse 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 for the collection was published on Monday, June 9, 2025. The 60-Day FRN citation is 90 FR 24271.

One comment was received during the 60-Day Comment Period, endorsing the survey. The full comment is included in the package and does not require us to make any changes to the collection.

A 30-Day Federal Register Notice for the collection published on Wednesday, September 3, 2025. The 30-Day FRN citation is 90 FRN 42573.

Part B: CONSULTATION

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

9. Gifts or Payment

No payments or gifts are being offered to respondents as an incentive to participate in the collection.

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.

Both the web and paper versions of the RCSS include 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 paper survey includes the instruction ““Returning this survey indicates your agreement to participate in this research.”

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

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 is 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

Military spouse surveys primarily address personnel-related issues. The 2026 RCSS, as in previous years, does contain a request for voluntary provision of race, ethnicity, and may include additional requests for age, sex (male/female) and other demographics where administrative record data is not available. These demographic items allow for the results to be segmented by these key demographic groups. Because the survey is designed to inform policymakers on the experiences and needs of military spouses and families, it is necessary to survey Reserve component spouses on perceptions and opinions of issues such as marriage, employment, financial readiness, food security, and health/well-being. While some of these may be considered sensitive, all questions are asked to ensure adequate programs are in place to address these issues. The Informed Consent information will inform sample members that the survey is voluntary, that they may decline or skip questions they do not wish to answer and identify any potential risks and benefits of participation.

12. Respondent Burden and its Labor Costs

Part A: ESTIMATION OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

1) Collection Instrument(s)

2026 Survey of Reserve Component Spouses

- a) Number of Respondents: 17,800
 - b) Number of Responses Per Respondent: 1
 - c) Number of Total Annual Responses: 17,800
 - d) Response Time: .5 hour
 - e) Respondent Burden Hours: 8900
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- 2) Total Submission Burden
 - a) Total Number of Respondents: 17,800
 - b) Total Number of Annual Responses: 17,800
 - c) Total Respondent Burden Hours: 8900 hours

Part B: LABOR COST OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

1) Collection Instrument(s)

[2026 Survey of Reserve Component Spouses]

- a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 17,800
 - b) Response Time: .5 hour
 - c) Respondent Hourly Wage: \$36.44
 - d) Labor Burden per Response: \$18.22
 - e) Total Labor Burden: \$324,316
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- 2) Overall Labor Burden
 - a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 17,800
 - b) Total Labor Burden: \$324,316

Source for average national wage:
<https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cesesummary.htm>

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) Contractor

[2026 Survey of Reserve Component Spouses]

- a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 17,800
- b) Processing Time per Response: .54 hour
- c) Hourly Wage of Worker(s) Processing Responses: \$75.50
- d) Cost to Process Each Response: \$40.77
- e) Total Cost to Process Responses: \$725,706

1) Collection Instrument(s) Government

[2026 Survey of Reserve Component Spouses]

- a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 17,800
- b) Processing Time per Response: .112 hour
- c) Hourly Wage of Worker(s) Processing Responses: \$69.16
- d) Cost to Process Each Response: \$7.75
- e) Total Cost to Process Responses: \$137,877

2) Overall Labor Burden to the Federal Government

- a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 17,800
- b) Total Labor Burden: \$863,583

Part B: OPERATIONAL AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

1) Cost Categories

- a) Equipment: \$0
- b) Printing: \$ (See f)
- c) Postage: \$435,000
- d) Software Purchases: \$0
- e) Licensing Costs: \$ (See f)
- f) Other: \$108,036 (Printing, paper, and miscellaneous costs)

2) Total Operational and Maintenance Cost: \$543,036

Part C: TOTAL COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

1) Total Labor Cost to the Federal Government: \$863,583

2) Total Operational and Maintenance Costs: \$543,036

3) Total Cost to the Federal Government: \$1,406,619

15. Reasons for Change in Burden

This is the first time that Coast Guard spouses will be included, which increased the sample size and associated costs. In addition, postage costs have increased from the last administration.

16. Publication of Results

The results of this survey are presented to senior DoD policymakers and subsequently published on a secure, internal, restricted, CAC-required DoD server which allows access to DoD personnel to view tabulated data to support and inform policymakers servicing military spouses and their families. Infographics and publicly released briefings and short reports on the results are typically posted to Military OneSource once the analysis and internal briefing cycles are complete. Past spouse survey results can be viewed on Military OneSource <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/data-research-and-statistics/survey-findings/> (publicly accessible) and/or on <https://www.opa.mil/> (accessible via CAC/DS logon).

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.