



OPM HR SOLUTIONS *by government, for government*

U. S. Department of Homeland Security  
U. S. Coast Guard  
Analysis of the 2017  
Organizational Assessment Survey Data



presented by

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017, the United States Coast Guard partnered with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's HR Solutions (OPM) to administer the Organizational Assessment Survey (OAS) to all Coast Guard members and employees. This was the Coast Guard's eighth OAS administration since 2002. The survey was administered over the Internet between February 1, 2017 and May 5, 2017. Participation was voluntary and confidential. 16,626 Coast Guard members took the survey, for a response rate of 30% and an overall margin of error of 0.63%.

Eight broad research questions about the 2017 Coast Guard results were asked and answered in this report.

1) Is the 2017 survey sample sufficiently representative of the Coast Guard that we may safely draw conclusions about the entire population from the collected data? If it is, what are the overall results and how do they compare to previous years?

- The sample was determined to be representative.
- The Coast Guard 2017 results declare 15 out of 19 work environment critical areas to be strengths, and no areas to be challenges. The fifteen strong areas are *Diversity, Employee Involvement, Work Environment, Leadership and Quality, Teamwork, Communication, Supervision, Performance Measures, Job Satisfaction, Satisfaction with Coast Guard, Use of Resources, Training and Career Development, Fairness and Treatment of Others, Customer Orientation, and Strategic Planning*. The four areas that came closest to being challenges are *Rewards and Recognition, Innovation, Work and Family/Personal Life, and Readiness to Reshape Workforce*, which focuses on job security and retraining.
- The changes in the critical area scores from 2014 to 2017 have been considerable. Since 2014, the Coast Guard has seen an improvement of two or more percentage points in all of the 19 critical areas (*Diversity, Employee Involvement, Work Environment, Leadership and Quality, Teamwork, Communication, Supervision, Performance Measures, Job Satisfaction, Use of Resources, Training and Career Development, Fairness and Treatment of Others, Customer Orientation, Strategic Planning, Rewards and Recognition, Innovation, Work and Family/Personal Life, Readiness to Reshape Workforce, and Satisfaction with Coast Guard*). Since 2010, the Coast Guard has seen an improvement of two or more percentage points in 18 out of 19 critical areas of the work environment. Since 2002, all of the 19 areas have improved by between eight and twenty-one percentage points.

2) To what extent do members of different demographic groups view the Coast Guard's critical work environment areas differently in 2017? Do these results continue the patterns found in the 2002-2014 data?

- A respondent's affiliation with the Coast Guard, military rank, supervisory level, race/ethnicity, and gender affect how some (not all) aspects of the Coast Guard work environment are

perceived. The effects are generally small but persistent; they have been seen in nearly every survey since 2002.

- Active duty and SELRES members tend to rate most aspects of the 19 work environment critical areas more positively than civilians. Supporting findings from previous Coast Guard OAS research, civilians with military experience rated most critical areas more positively than civilians with no previous military experience.
- Rank for active duty members and supervisory level for civilians are powerful predictors of how the Coast Guard work environment is perceived. Officers perceive it more positively than enlisted personnel. Civilian managers/executives perceive it more positively than first-line supervisors, who perceive it more positively than non-supervisory staff. These findings in 2017 mirror those of prior surveys.
- Among Coast Guard members, men rate the Coast Guard work environment more favorably than women do in eleven critical areas (*Leadership and Quality, Training/Career Development, Innovation, Fairness and Treatment of Others, Communication, Employee Involvement, Teamwork, Strategic Planning, Diversity, Supervision, and Job Satisfaction*). The gender difference has changed very little since the 2002 survey. While scores for both groups are rising over time in these critical areas, the two groups are rising about the same each year, so a gender gap remains.
- Analyses of the results by gender and affiliation show that for both Active Duty and Civilian members, females tended to rate items less favorably than males with civilian female members tending to have the lowest ratings of all Coast Guard members surveyed. Male and Female SELRES members did not have statistically different scores on any of the critical areas, suggesting that this group had fewer differences in experiences affected by gender than the Active Duty and Civilian populations.
- From 2002 through 2008, White and non-Hispanic Coast Guard members generally rated the critical areas of *Fairness and Treatment of Others* and *Diversity* more positively than non-White members. In 2010, ratings from the non-White group reached statistical parity with the White group's ratings. From 2012 through 2014, scores in those areas from the non-White group dropped a little, while scores from the White group rose a little. This same trend was seen in 2017 where the gaps in these two critical areas continue to exist between the White and non-White groups. Additionally, the White group rated the following four critical areas (*Leadership and Quality, Employee Involvement, Job Satisfaction, and Satisfaction with Coast Guard*) more favorably than the non-White group.
- Analyses of the results by race/ethnicity and affiliation demonstrate that there are numerous meaningful differences in ratings across groups. Three groups were found to consistently reach both meaningful and statistically significant differences on nearly every critical area. Other Active Duty and Other Civilian groups have a generally poorer perception of the Coast Guard

than their peers and White Civilian members were found to have less favorable perceptions of the critical areas than White Active Duty members. Of note is that many minority groups had proportionately small sample sizes when split by affiliation group.

3) What survey information most strongly predicts actually leaving the Coast Guard, as opposed to saying one is considering leaving the Coast Guard? What are the top predictors of turnover by a Coast Guard member's affiliation, general military rank, specific military rank, unit type, gender, and race?

- Both Job Satisfaction and Satisfaction with the Coast Guard emerged as consistent predictors of turnover and turnover intention.
- When respondents of different demographic groups were examined separately, there were differences observed in the patterns of the predictors of turnover and turnover intent.
- Members who left the Coast Guard scored lower on every critical area than members who stayed with the Coast Guard.
- OAS item analyses showed that considerations of job security, pay satisfaction, and liking the work were consistently related to actual turnover. Lower scores on these items were related to increased possibility of turnover.
- For turnover intentions, OAS items covering personal feelings of Coast Guard importance, rating the Coast Guard as a place to work compared to other organizations, and satisfaction related to opportunities to get a better job in the organization were top predictors.

4) Do the work environment perceptions and demographic characteristics of active non-respondents in the 2017 OAS, as reflected in the 2014 OAS, differ significantly from the work environment perceptions and demographic characteristics of respondents in the 2014 OAS?

- Across all OAS participants, those who participated in the 2017 OAS had more favorable work environment perceptions on the 2014 OAS than those who chose not to participate in the 2017 OAS with three critical areas (*Work and Family/Personal Life, Strategic Planning, and Job Satisfaction*) showing large, meaningful differences between the two groups.
- Some demographic characteristics distinguish the responders and active non-responders.
- The distributions of responders and active non-responders by affiliation show there are moderately more active duty members among active non-responders than responders while there are slightly more civilian employees among responders than active non-responders.
- There are differences in the proportions between responders and active non-responders for the demographic of military rank with there being moderately more enlisted members in the active non-responders group while there are moderately more officers in the responders group.

5) Within different demographic groups (Affiliation, Military Rank, Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Disability Status, and Unit Type) what are the main drivers of job satisfaction, organizational satisfaction, and overall rating of the Coast Guard as a place to work compared to other organizations?

- For affiliation, liking the kind of work one does was a key predictor of the *Job Satisfaction* area for all but civilians with military experience (wherein feelings of personal accomplishment remained the key predictor) and SELRES members (wherein customer satisfaction with the products and services the Coast Guard provides remained the key predictor).
- For active duty members, the best predictor of *Satisfaction with Coast Guard* was a respondent's perception of Coast Guard's customers satisfaction with the products and services the Coast Guard provides. For civilians with military experience, it was pay satisfaction. Civilians without military experience emphasized needing to know how their work relates to the Coast Guard's goals and priorities while SELRES emphasized satisfaction with their benefits package.
- Across all affiliation groups, the top predictors of how members rate the Coast Guard as a place to work compared to other organizations all varied by each affiliation group. Active Duty members indicated the perceived importance of the Coast Guard as an organization to them as the key predictor. Civilians with military experience noted job security while civilians without military experience highlighted turnover intentions. SELRES members emphasized satisfaction with their pay.
- Officers, Warrant Officers, and Enlisted members had similar predictors of *Job Satisfaction*, as all three emphasized both liking the work and feeling a sense of personal accomplishment while perceived importance of the Coast Guard as an organization to them emerged as a central predictor of rating the Coast Guard as a place to work for Enlisted members and Officers.
- Males and females had nearly identical top predictors of Job Satisfaction, focusing on the two most common predictors of job satisfaction across survey respondents as a whole, liking the kind of work one does and feelings of personal accomplishment.
- There was some degree of variation across racial groups in predicting *Job Satisfaction*. Generally, liking the kind of work one does remained important predictors for Whites, Blacks, American Indians, Other, and two or more races. Asian employees tended to emphasize a different key predictor than other racial groups (feeling of personal accomplishment from work). Those who were Hispanic emphasized pay satisfaction while Native Hawaiians tended to emphasize physical conditions that allow for effective job performance.
- Many of the same predictors of *Satisfaction with the Coast Guard* emerged for disabled and non-disabled employees, such as perceptions of how satisfied the Coast Guard's customers are with the products and services the Coast Guard provides and pay satisfaction.
- Across all unit types, liking the kind of work one does and feelings of personal accomplishment ranked as the most important predictors of *Job Satisfaction*.

6) A factor analysis of the Coast Guard Organizational Assessment items and critical areas will reveal whether any Organizational Assessment items should be dropped from future iterations of the Coast Guard Organizational Assessment Survey. Which items should be dropped or added to the scales that make up critical areas?

- Based on item analyses, OPM suggests that eight OAS items be removed from the Coast Guard OAS, two OAS items be moved from one critical area to another, and twenty-one items be moved from the Personal Experiences and Agency-Specific item pool into specific critical areas.

7) To what extent do members of different demographic groups within the Coast Guard (Coast Guard member's affiliation, gender, race/ethnicity, rating, and unit type) view the Coast Guard's environment as hostile differently? How does the demographic characteristic of Coast Guard member's affiliation interact with different demographic groups to influence hostile work environment perceptions?

- Demographic groups within the Coast Guard perceive the hostile work environment differently. Perceptions may vary depending on one's gender, race, affiliation, unit, and rating. Additionally, some of these demographic differences interact to influence hostile work environment perceptions (e.g., affiliation and race).
- Hostile work environment perceptions have been found to predict job satisfaction, satisfaction with the Coast Guard, perceptions of the Coast Guard compared to other organizations, career advancement satisfaction, and perceptions of job security. More specifically, lower ratings of a hostile work environment result in more positive ratings of these other work-related outcome variables.

8) How does race/ethnicity influence the work environment perceptions of those Coast Guard members who said they were considering leaving the Coast Guard versus those who are not considering leaving the Coast Guard? To what extent does control grade (Lieutenant Commanders, Commanders, and Captains) and gender interact with race/ethnicity and intent to leave the Coast Guard to influence work environment perceptions?

- Observing the control grade ratios across racial groups reveals that minority groups tended to have significantly lower proportions of Lieutenant Commanders, Commanders, and Captains than White members.
- Black Males and Males who identified their race as Other had lower favorability ratings than White Males regarding critical workplace factors including *Employee Involvement*, *Diversity*, and *Job Satisfaction* among others. Several subgroup comparisons for gender and racial minorities were unable to be analyzed due to small sample sizes.
- Within gender and racial subgroups, those who intend to Stay with the Coast Guard had higher Satisfaction ratings with the Coast Guard compared to those intending to leave the Coast Guard.

- In general, Lieutenant Commanders and Commanders in the Selected Reserve that intend to stay with the Coast Guard had more favorable ratings of the critical areas (e.g., Training/Career Development, Satisfaction with the Coast Guard) compared with those who intend to leave the Coast Guard.
- In general, both Selected Reserve and Active Duty employees that intend to stay with the Coast Guard had more favorable ratings of the critical areas (e.g., Training/Career Development, Satisfaction with the Coast Guard) compared with those who intend to leave the Coast Guard.
- For Active Duty employees, Captains who intend to stay with the Coast Guard generally had more favorable ratings of the critical areas compared to other subgroups, while both Lieutenant Commanders intending to leave the Coast Guard and Commanders intending to leave the Coast Guard generally had the lowest favorability ratings of the critical areas compared to the other subgroups in the analysis.