



# Strengthening Prior Service— Civil Life Gains and Continuum of Service Accessions into the Army's Reserve Component

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This report combines quantitative and qualitative methods to understand service member decisions upon exiting the Regular Army, particularly the decisions of whether, when, and how to affiliate with the Reserve Component.



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the characteristics of prior service personnel who join the reserve component?
- What factors affect the timing of prior service personnel's decisions to join the reserve component?
- How do prior service personnel choose which part of the RC to affiliate with?
- How do geography and the civilian labor market conditions influence affiliation decisions?



## KEY FINDINGS

Personal Characteristics, Experiences in the Regular Army, Availability of Positions in the Reserve Component, and Economic Conditions All Correlated with the Decision to Join the Reserve Component, the U.S. Army Reserve, or the Army National Guard

- Service members generally appear to choose a geographic location without explicitly considering availability of jobs in the Reserve Component.
- Service members who leave the Regular Army when civilian unemployment is high are less likely than others to join the Reserve Component.
- Service members seem to form an impression of overall Reserve Component job availability based on the Reserve Component jobs available near their last Active Component installation.

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- Service members who leave the U.S. Army in areas with fewer Reserve Component jobs are less likely to join the Reserve Component.
- Those who join the U.S. Army Reserve after a break in service spend for fewer months serving in the RC than other prior-service recruits.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Focusing Reserve Component recruitment efforts on soldiers who are leaving the Regular Army is likely to provide the most effective use of recruiting resources.
- Within the personnel leaving the Regular Army, focusing on those who have served three to six years and have obtained the expected pay grade is likely to yield the best return, both in terms of quantity and quality of personnel.
- It may make sense to reexamine the placement of some Reserve Component units, particularly United States Army Reserve units, to create more job openings in the areas in which recent veterans wish to live.
- Examining the return on investment to recruiting prior service personnel who join the Reserve Component after a break in service (referred to as Prior Service–Civil Life Gains recruits) may help the U.S. Army to determine the best use of recruiting resources.

