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## Canadian Armed Forces Reserve Force Recruitment Study: Phase 2 Executive Summary

Prepared for the Department of National Defence

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For more information on this report, please contact DND at:  
[POR-ROP@forces.gc.ca](mailto:POR-ROP@forces.gc.ca)

*Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.*

# Canadian Armed Forces Reserve Force Recruitment Study: Phase 2 Final Report

Prepared for the Department of National Defence

Supplier name: Earncliffe Strategy Group

August 2020

This public opinion research report presents the results of the online survey conducted by Earncliffe Strategy Group on behalf of Department of National Defence. The research was conducted in July 2020.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Enquête de 2020 sur le recrutement par la Force de réserve des Forces armées canadiennes : 2<sup>e</sup> étape

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Department of National Defence  
1745 Alta Vista Drive,  
Ottawa Ontario K1A 0K6

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe) is pleased to present this executive summary of the report to the Department of National Defence (DND) summarizing the results of the second phase of research to support the Reserve Force’s recruitment efforts.

The recruitment of Reserve Force members is identified as a priority in Canada’s defence policy, entitled: Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE). Specifically, the aim is to increase the size of the Primary Reserve Force by 1,500 to reach 30,000. Increasing the size of the Reserve Force is important to ensuring it can provide full-time capability through part-time service. Related to the goal of increasing the size of the Reserve Force, SSE also emphasizes the need of recruiting for diversity to make the CAF more reflective of the Canadian population.

This research is the second of two phases of the Reserve Force recruitment study. The research design was informed by the feedback from the qualitative research conducted in Phase 1, which focused on the following key areas: general selection process for reservists; environment-specific recruitment process; current and planned advertising, recruiting events, and initiatives; recruitment challenges; and recruiters’ personal experiences recruiting reservists and talking to potential reservists. The aim of this research was to investigate young Canadians’ awareness and perceptions of the Reserve Force.

The total contract value for this research was \$70,638.56 including HST.

Earnscliffe used a quantitative approach to meet DND’s objectives. We conducted an online survey of 2,258 Canadians. The survey was conducted with respondents aged 16 to 34, half self-identified as members of a visible minority group or Indigenous and the other half self-identified as neither visible minority nor Indigenous. The research was conducted using our data collection partner, Léger’s, proprietary online panel. The surveys were conducted online from July 14 to 28, 2020 and averaged 10 minutes. The data was weighted to reflect the demographic composition of the Canadian population aged 16 to 34 based on age, gender, province and visible minority status.

Respondents for the online survey were selected from among those who have volunteered to participate/registered to participate in online surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the demographic composition of the Canadian population aged 16 to 34. Because the sample is based on those who initially self-selected for participation in the panel, no estimates of sampling error can be calculated. The treatment here of the non-probability sample is aligned with the Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research for online surveys.

The key findings from the research are presented below.

- Few count themselves as very familiar with the CAF or the Reserve Force. However, well over three-quarters (86%) have some level of familiarity with the CAF, compared to under two-thirds (59%) who have any familiarity with the Reserve Force.
  - Among those who offer an opinion, the majority view both the CAF and the Reserve Force favourably. However, a third (34%) do not offer an impression of the Reserve Force, a probable consequence of the lack of familiarity noted above.

- Almost a third (31%) do not offer an impression of the CAF as an employer, but among those who do, impressions are mostly positive.
- Three quarters (75%) of respondents say they are not very or not at all knowledgeable of opportunities with the Reserve Force, just slightly more than the proportion who are not very or not at all knowledgeable of opportunities within the CAF (69%).
- Very few (7%) clearly recall hearing something about the Reserve Force, while another 24% vaguely recall hearing something. Most often, respondents have heard about recruitment (10%) or job openings (9%), as well as having seen general advertising (10%) or ads on TV (9%).
- Just over one-in-five (22%) are likely to consider a career in the CAF and 17% are likely to consider joining the Reserve Force. Of note, almost half (45%) of respondents rule out joining the Reserve Force altogether.
  - Indigenous respondents (25% likely) and respondents from visible minority groups (21% likely) are more enthusiastic about joining, compared to neither visible minority nor Indigenous respondents (15%).
- When it comes to interest in, rather than likelihood of, joining the Reserve Force, 20% express that they would be very (4%) or somewhat interested (16%). After being shown an explanation of the role of the Reserve Force, significantly more (40%) express interest.
  - Indigenous respondents (29% interested) and respondents from visible minority communities (24%) are more interested in joining at the outset than neither visible minority nor Indigenous respondents (18%).
  - While respondents tend to be slightly more familiar with the Army Reserves than other environments, the plurality (40%) would choose the Health Services Reserve over the other environments if they were to join.
- Parents are by far the most influential figures when it comes to whose opinion about joining the Reserve Force would matter (61%), followed by a spouse or significant other (48%), friends (34%) and siblings (30%).
- The most common things respondents want out of a career are good pay (55%), work-life balance (38%), job security (25%), health benefits (23%) and a positive work environment (23%). Respondents view some of these aspects of a career as more compatible with joining the Reserve Force than others.
  - Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents who value health benefits believe they would be likely to have them in the Reserve Force. Those who value job security are similarly reassured that it could be achieved if they joined the Reserve Force (67%).
  - Respondents are less certain about whether joining the Reserve Force would entail good pay (58%) or offer a positive work environment (41%).
  - In contrast, the majority of respondents who seek work-life balance think it is not very or not at all likely that joining the Reserve Force would help them achieve it (55%).
- The findings of this research suggest that respondents lack knowledge of some of the very basic elements of the Reserve Force.

- For example, over half (59%) think it is definitely or probably true that reservists have a fixed term of service, while 22% do not offer a response. A plurality (42%) think reservists definitely or probably have little to no choice over which city they must live in, and another 22% do not provide an answer. More believe that reservists do not get to choose which missions they wish to participate in (42%) than believe they likely do have a choice (31%).
- Even when the majority of respondents correctly assess the accuracy of a statement about the Reserve Force, in most cases at least one-in-five are unable to offer an answer. For example, two thirds (67%) think it is definitely or probably true that reservists can have full-time jobs or attend school while serving, but 21% do not offer an answer.
- When it comes to attitudes about life as a reservist, a majority of respondents agree that there are a wide variety of professions in the Reserve Force (67%) and that it could open doors to success outside the CAF (63%).
- Just over half (52%) agree that the workplace environment in the Reserve Force is respectful of everyone regardless of cultural heritage. Slightly fewer agree it is respectful of women (44%).
- Respondents seem to anticipate some challenges associated with work in the Reserve Force. For example, they are divided over whether being in the Reserve Force could cause problems with other employers – 34% think it could, while 41% think it likely would not. Half (50%) agree that being in the Reserve Force makes it difficult to raise a family.
- The most compelling reasons to join the Reserve Force include salary and benefits (34%), adventure and travel (20%), helping others (20%) and staying fit/having an active lifestyle (19%).
  - The most compelling disincentives to joining the Reserve Force may reflect the lack of familiarity with what a role in the Reserve Force entails. In fact, 20% say that not knowing enough about it is a deterrent. Fear of being hurt or killed is a top deterrent selected (23%), along with a worry about not being fit enough (20%), and the Reserve Force not fitting in with family life (22%). One-in-five (21%) say it is just not for them.

Research Firm:

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I hereby certify as a Representative of Earnscliffe Strategy Group that the final deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed: 

Date: August 28, 2020

Doug Anderson  
Principal, Earnscliffe