SmartSuite

Framework / Cybersecurity / NIST Special Publications

NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 5 – Low / Moderate / High

NIST Control Baselines provide standardized security and privacy controls to help organizations manage cybersecurity risk and meet compliance.

What it is

NIST Control Baselines (Revision 5) is a catalog of standardized security and privacy control sets that helps organizations select and tailor controls to manage cybersecurity risks and meet compliance objectives. The baselines provide foundational guidance for securing federal information systems and protecting sensitive data.

Developed and published by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), these control baselines are widely adopted by U.S. federal agencies, contractors, and organizations subject to government regulations. The baselines cover key areas such as access control, incident response, risk assessment, and data protection, serving as a critical component within the NIST SP 800-53 framework and the NIST Risk Management Framework (RMF).

At a glance

PUBLISHER National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)	TYPE Control Framework	VERSION Rev. 5
EFFECTIVE September 2020	DOMAIN Cybersecurity	FAMILY NIST Special Publications
REGION United States	INDUSTRY Government & Public Sector	ADOPTION MODEL Regulatory Compliance
IMPLEMENTATION COMPLEXITY Very High		

Source: https://csrc.nist.gov/pubs/sp/800/53/b/upd1/final

Why it matters

- **Strengthen cybersecurity governance** Establish consistent management and oversight of security controls across diverse IT environments and federal data assets.
- **Improve regulatory compliance** Help organizations meet federal mandates and demonstrate alignment with government security and privacy requirements.
- **Enhance risk management** Enable ongoing risk assessments and informed decision-making through tailored controls mapped to specific organizational needs.
- **Increase audit readiness** Support documentation and evidence collection, making it easier to prepare for and respond to internal and external audits.

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How SmartSuite supports NIST 800-53 Rev.5 Baselines

Rev. 5 Control Baseline Library

Organize Low, Moderate, and High control baselines with ownership, applicability, and system scope.

System Security Plan Integration

Link baseline controls to system security plans, authorization boundaries, and mission objectives.

Risk and Control Traceability

Connect risks, mitigation plans, and controls to maintain traceable security governance.

Evidence and Assessment Readiness

Capture assessment artifacts and control testing results supporting ATO and ongoing authorization activities.

Continuous Monitoring and Remediation

Track vulnerabilities, findings, and corrective actions required for ongoing compliance.

Control Coverage and Authorization Readiness Reporting

Provide dashboards showing control coverage, system risk posture, and authorization readiness.

Common framework mappings

CIS Controls v8.1 | FedRAMP Rev. 5 | HIPAA | ISO 27001:2022 | ISO 27002:2022 | NIST CSF 2.0 | NIST 800-53 Rev.5 | PCI DSS 4.0.1 | SOC 2

Official resources

NIST SP 800-53 Control Baselines

Defines standardized security and privacy control sets for federal information systems.

csrc.nist.gov/pubs/sp/800/53/b/upd1/final

NIST Special Publication 800-53 Revision 5

Provides guidelines for selecting and implementing security controls in federal information systems.

csrc.nist.gov/publications/detail/sp/800-53/rev-5/final

NIST Risk Management Framework (RMF) Overview

Describes the integration of NIST SP 800-53 controls within the Risk Management Framework.

csrc.nist.gov/projects/risk-management

Frequently asked questions

What is NIST Control Baselines (Revision 5) used for?

NIST Control Baselines (Revision 5) provides standardized sets of security and privacy controls to help organizations identify, implement, and manage safeguards based on risk levels. The framework supports compliance with federal requirements and is foundational for protecting sensitive data and strengthening internal controls.

Is NIST Control Baselines (Revision 5) mandatory or certifiable?

NIST Control Baselines themselves are not certifiable; however, they are mandated for U.S. federal agencies and often required for federal contractors. Private organizations may adopt them voluntarily to align with federal standards or as a basis for broader regulatory compliance.

What is the scope of NIST Control Baselines (Revision 5)?

The baselines apply to federal information systems and organizations handling federal data, covering a wide range of technical, operational, and management controls. Organizations select and tailor the controls based on their system's impact level (low, moderate, or high).

What are the key concepts and artifacts of NIST Control Baselines (Revision 5)?

Key concepts include control families, baseline profiles, overlays, and system-specific tailoring. Artifacts typically include control implementation statements, assessment documentation, and continuous monitoring plans.

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How are NIST Control Baselines (Revision 5) implemented in practice?

Organizations implement NIST Control Baselines by selecting appropriate baseline profiles, tailoring controls for specific environments, documenting justifications for any deviations, and embedding controls into operational processes. Ongoing risk assessments and control effectiveness evaluations are integral to this approach.

How does NIST Control Baselines (Revision 5) relate to other frameworks like NIST SP 800-53 and RMF?

NIST Control Baselines are derived from and integrate directly with the NIST SP 800-53 control catalog and operationalize the NIST Risk Management Framework (RMF). They provide a structured method for organizing controls and aligning risk management with federal governance.

What are the ongoing compliance requirements for NIST Control Baselines (Revision 5)?

Maintaining compliance requires continuous monitoring, periodic security assessments, vulnerability management, and regular updates to control implementations. Organizations must also maintain documentation and evidence of control effectiveness to support audits and reauthorization activities.

How would SmartSuite support NIST Control Baselines (Revision 5)?

SmartSuite enables organizations to operationalize NIST Control Baselines (Revision 5) by providing control libraries, supporting risk tracking, and automating evidence collection. It offers tools for compliance tracking, remediation management, centralized reporting, and audit readiness, ensuring ongoing oversight and streamlined executive reporting.

License included / downloadable: Yes NIST Control Baselines (Rev. 5) are publicly available on NIST's website. License included with platform

Full framework page and mappings: smartsuite.com/frameworks/nist-800-53-rev-5-control-baselines

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