SmartSuite

Framework / Cybersecurity / NIST Special Publications

NIST SP 800-53 Rev.4 – Moderate

NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 4 provides security and privacy controls to protect federal information systems categorized as moderate impact.

What it is

NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 4 (Moderate Impact Baseline) is a cybersecurity and privacy control framework that assists organizations in protecting federal information systems categorized at a moderate impact level. The framework establishes comprehensive requirements for securing sensitive data, maintaining system integrity, and mitigating information security risks.

Developed and published by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), NIST SP 800-53 is utilized by federal agencies, their contractors, and organizations that must comply with U.S. government cybersecurity standards. It covers a broad range of areas including risk management, access control, system auditing, incident response, and privacy safeguards, supporting compliance with laws such as FISMA.

At a glance

PUBLISHER National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)	TYPE Control Framework	VERSION Rev. 4
EFFECTIVE April 2013	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/publications/detail/sp/800-53/rev-4/final

Why it matters

- **Strengthen cybersecurity governance** Provide a structured framework for defining, implementing, and managing consistent security controls across diverse organizational environments.
- **Enhance regulatory alignment** Support compliance with government mandates such as FISMA and facilitate alignment with additional standards like FedRAMP and ISO 27001.
- **Increase audit readiness** Enable systematic documentation and assessment of controls, making regulatory audits more predictable and less resource-intensive.
- **Improve threat detection and response** Mandate capabilities for continuous monitoring and incident handling, allowing organizations to rapidly identify and address security events.

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How SmartSuite supports NIST 800-53 Rev.4 Moderate

Moderate Baseline Control Library

Organize NIST 800-53 Moderate baseline control families with assigned owners, scope, and implementation guidance.

Control Implementation and Ownership Tracking

Track control deployment tasks, responsible teams, and implementation progress across systems and environments.

System Security Plan and Risk Integration

Link baseline controls to system security plans, risk registers, and authorization boundary documentation.

Evidence Collection and Security Assessments

Centralize evidence artifacts and assessment results demonstrating operational control effectiveness.

Continuous Monitoring and Vulnerability Remediation

Track ongoing monitoring activities, vulnerability findings, and remediation workflows tied to baseline controls.

Authorization and Compliance Reporting

Provide dashboards showing compliance status, open findings, and readiness for federal authorization processes.

Common framework mappings

CIS Controls v8.1 | COBIT 2019 | FedRAMP Rev. 5 | HIPAA | ISO 27001:2022 | NIST CSF 2.0 | PCI DSS 4.0.1 | SOC 2

Official resources

NIST SP 800-53 Revision 4

Provides comprehensive security and privacy controls for federal information systems at a moderate impact level.

csrc.nist.gov/publications/detail/sp/800-53/rev-4/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

SP 800-53 Controls Catalog

Outlines detailed control families and requirements mandated by NIST SP 800-53.

csrc.nist.gov/publications/sp800

NIST SP 800-53 Implementation Guide

Offers guidance on implementing and tailoring controls specific to organizational needs.

csrc.nist.gov/publications/detail/sp/800-53A/rev-4/final

Frequently asked questions

What is NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 4 (Moderate Impact Baseline) used for?

NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 4 (Moderate Impact Baseline) is used to define and implement security and privacy controls for federal information systems classified at a moderate impact level. It helps organizations manage cybersecurity risks, protect sensitive information, and ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of federal data.

Is NIST SP 800-53 compliance required or certifiable?

NIST SP 800-53 compliance is mandatory for U.S. federal agencies and their contractors handling federal information systems under FISMA. While there is no formal certification process for NIST 800-53 itself, demonstrated compliance is often validated through internal and external audits or assessments.

What systems are in scope for the Moderate Impact Baseline?

The Moderate Impact Baseline applies to information systems that, if compromised, would have a serious adverse effect on organizational operations, assets, or individuals. It is most relevant for federal and government-affiliated organizations, as well as contractors managing moderate-impact federal data.

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What are the key artifacts required for NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 4 compliance?

Key artifacts include a documented System Security Plan (SSP), a completed risk assessment, control implementation details, a plan of action and milestones (POA&M), and evidence of ongoing monitoring. These documents are essential for demonstrating control implementation and supporting audit activities.

How are controls implemented under NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 4 (Moderate Impact Baseline)?

Organizations map baseline controls to system assets, tailor controls based on specific risks, and implement both technical and procedural safeguards. Control effectiveness is validated through security testing, vulnerability assessments, and documentation of operational security practices.

How does NIST SP 800-53 relate to other frameworks like FedRAMP or ISO 27001?

NIST SP 800-53 serves as the foundational control set for programs like FedRAMP and aligns with international frameworks like ISO 27001. Its controls can be mapped to other standards, facilitating integrated compliance efforts for organizations with multiple regulatory obligations.

What are the ongoing compliance requirements for NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 4 (Moderate Impact Baseline)?

Ongoing compliance requires continuous monitoring, regular risk and vulnerability assessments, periodic updates to the System Security Plan, and timely remediation of identified issues. Documentation and evidence collection must be maintained to support audits and ongoing oversight.

How would SmartSuite support NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 4 (Moderate Impact Baseline)?

SmartSuite streamlines the management of NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 4 by enabling organizations to import control libraries, track compliance status, and map controls to assets and policies. It supports risk tracking, evidence collection, remediation workflows, and prepares teams for audits with reporting and dashboard capabilities to monitor and demonstrate compliance.

License included / downloadable: Yes NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 4 is publicly available for free from NIST's website. License included with platform

Full framework page and mappings: smartsuite.com/frameworks/nist-sp-800-53-rev-4-moderate-baseline

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