



# 2014 Military Family Lifestyle Survey: Analysis and Findings

The 2014 Military Family Lifestyle Survey was  
writing and analyzed  
IN COLLABORATION WITH



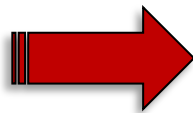
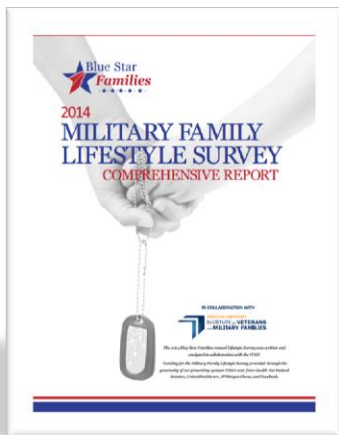
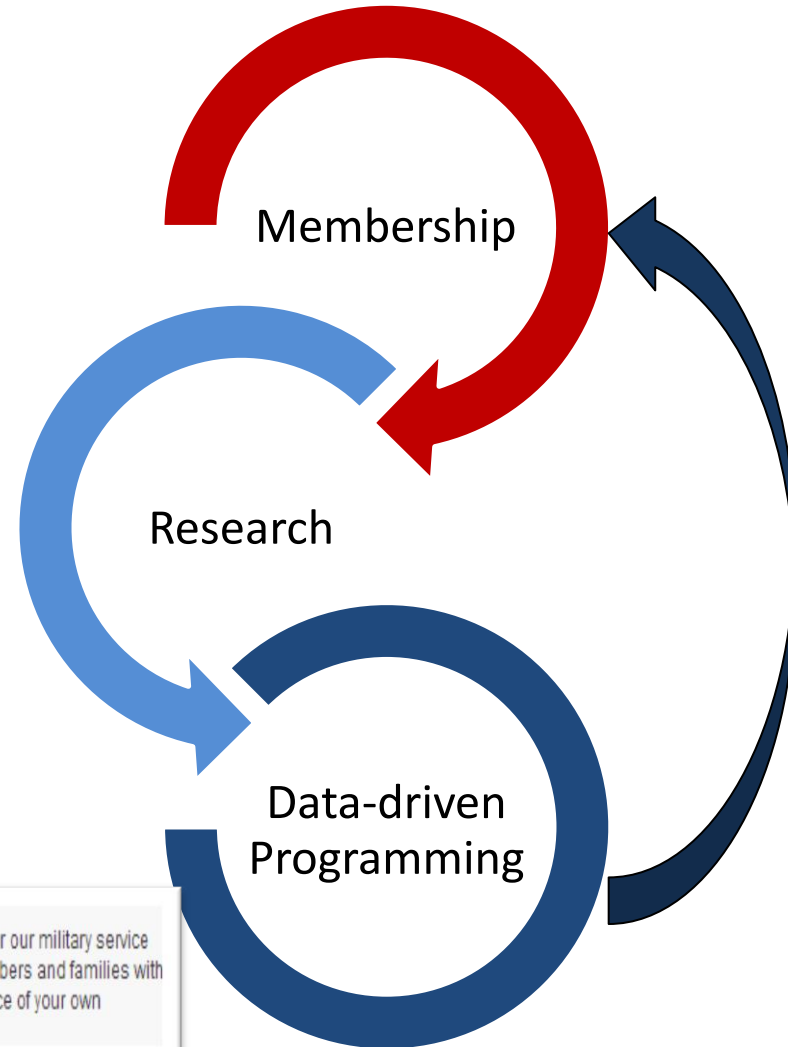
*Funding for the Military Family Lifestyle Survey and event was  
provided by our **presenting sponsor** **USAA** and through the  
generosity of Health Net Federal Services, UnitedHealthcare,  
JPMorgan Chase and Facebook*

# Blue Star Families: Chapter-Based and Data-Driven

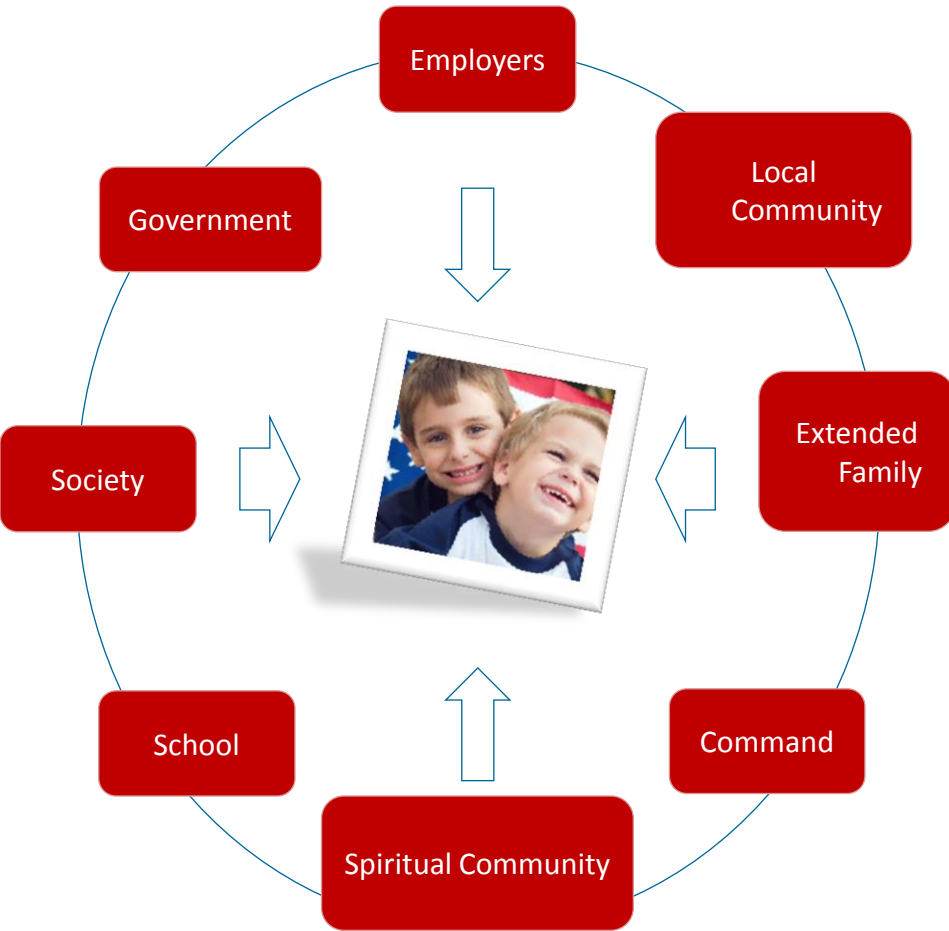


Established in 2009, Blue Star Families has a nationwide membership of over **100,000** and over **50 active chapters** in the United States and overseas

Blue Star Families is unique in that its programs are driven by its research **collecting data since 2009**, and producing a comprehensive report that guides internal and external programming and resources



# Knowledge about military family members: A few key findings



Families who are better prepared to cope with deployment are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with the military lifestyle

Repeated deployment and prolonged deployments have mental health impacts on families; public health consequences

Non deployed parent, mental health impacts child mental health

Service-members appear to have more difficulty reintegrating with spouses and children

[http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_briefs/2011/RAND\\_RB9568.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_briefs/2011/RAND_RB9568.pdf)

[http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional\\_papers/2011/RAND\\_OP316.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2011/RAND_OP316.pdf)

<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/Returning-Home-from-Iraq-and-Afghanistan-Preliminary-Assessment.aspx>

# BSF Survey Meets a Critical Knowledge Gap



**Table 2.1**  
Comparing the Deployment Life Study and Other Studies of Military Families

| Study Name                                | Sample Size                | Population and Sampling Method   | Service  | Component                 | Number of Waves                                  | Interval Between Waves  | Constructs Assessed  |
|---|----------------------------|--|--|---------------------------|--|---|--|
| Deployment Life Study                     | 2,724                      | Stratified random sample of deployable married service members, spouses, and one child | Army, Navy, <sup>a</sup> Air Force, Marine Corps | Active, reserve           | 9 over 3 years                                   | 4 months  | Emotional, behavioral, and physical health of family members; marital and parental relationships; military career outcomes; child outcomes; financial well-being                                 |
| Military Family Life Project              | 28,552                     | Random sample of spouses of service members  | Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps              | Active                    | 4 over 2 years                                   | 6 months  | Health and well-being; financial well-being; military life; deployment history; child outcomes; reunion and reunification  |
| Millennium Cohort                         | 100,000                    | Random sample of service members, and a spouse cohort                                  | Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps              | Active, reserve           | 7 over 21 years                                  | 3 years   | Physical and functional status; psychosocial assessment; medical conditions; self-reported symptoms; PTSD; alcohol and tobacco use; alternative medicine use; life events; occupational exposure |
| Army STARRS                               | 1.6 million, archival data | Convenience sample of service members  | Army   | Active                    | 5-year data-collection period                    | Not applicable; there are several data-collection efforts within Army STARRS, so no waves | Stress; deployment experiences; exposure to trauma; personal history; coping; personality and temperament; social networks and support   |
| BSF 2012 Military Family Lifestyle Survey | 4,234                      | Convenience sample of service members, their spouses, and their parents                | Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps              | Active, reserve, veterans | 3 to date, but not longitudinal with same sample | 1 year  | Pay, benefits, and changes to retirement; family well-being; satisfaction with military; deployment and wellness; financial security; military/civilian connectedness                            |

<sup>a</sup> Because of the timeline required to secure the Navy sample, this enrollment started one year later than those for the other services. As a result, the Navy subsample will complete only seven total waves of data collection.

What We Know About Deployment and Military Families 11



# 2014 Blue Star Families Lifestyle Survey: Collaboration with the IVMF and Partner Organizations



*Blue Star Families partnered with many of the country's most respected military service organizations to distribute our survey online via partner websites, member newsletters, and through physical locations.*



# Research Objective and Methodology



**Objective:** Obtain a better understanding of military families' concerns and identify gaps in services, recommendations for policy change, and identify the priorities of military families as they change over time.

**Survey Design:**

- Online survey approximately 40-60 minutes in length; varies by "profile"
- Distributed via trusted partner organizations' websites, electronic newsletters, and local offices/centers

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**Sample:**

- N=6270 survey participants; 3,328 completed (53% completion rate)
- "n" varies per question per applicability to respondent
- Respondents:
  - Spouses 70%
  - Self 21%
  - Parent 5%
  - Child 3%
  - Sibling 1%
  - Other – including domestic partnership, civil union 1%
- Respondents represent all regions of the U.S. as well as overseas military installations

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**Timing:** Survey was accessible online from February 12, 2014-March 17, 2014

# Military Lifestyle

## Top 5 Military Family Issues

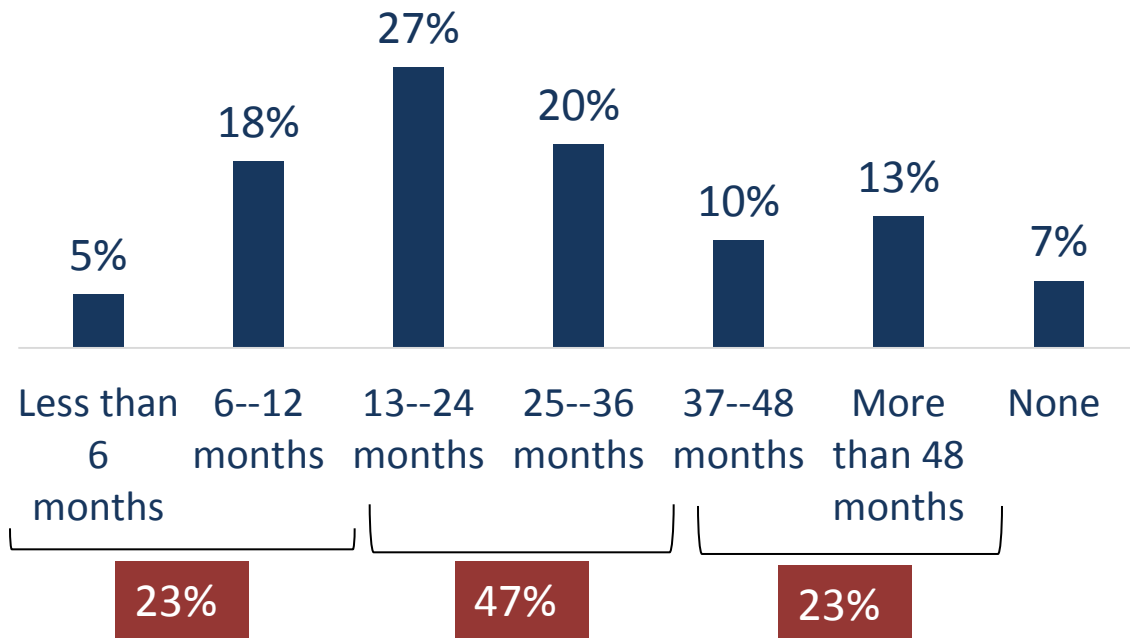


| Top Military Issues                          | Active Duty Spouses | Veteran | Active Duty Member |
|--|---------------------|---------|--------------------|
| Military pay/benefits                        | 73%                 | 64%     | 75%                |
| Change in retirement                         | 63%                 | 69%     | 75%                |
| Impact of deployment on children             | 43%                 | 22%     | 25%                |
| Military spouse employment                   | 42%                 | 17%     | 29%                |
| Military lifestyle uncertainty               | 32%                 | 20%     | 41%                |
| Op tempo/deployment/training time            | 27%                 | 28%     | 40%                |
| PTSD/Combat stress/TBI                       | 18%                 | 30%     | 15%                |
| Disconnection between military and civilians | 19%                 | 41%     | 24%                |
| Disability claim backlog                     | 7%                  | 42%     | 23%                |

# Deployments and Separations: Time Deployed



*Since September 11, 2001 approximately how many total months have you or your family's service member been DEPLOYED?*



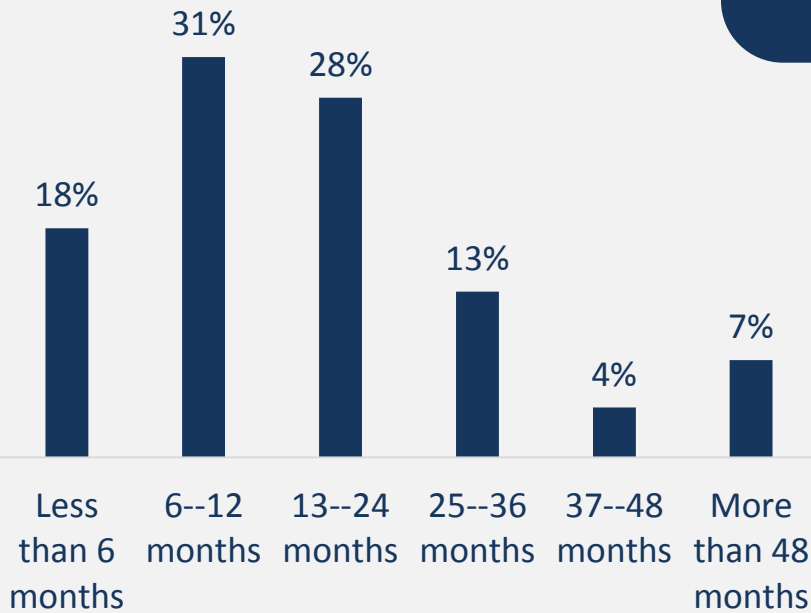
*“The general instability of having a deployed parent is hard. My children generally have more behavioral problems in and out of school when they can't talk to dad on a regular basis. My daughters grades suffered significantly and her ability to focus was non-existent.” – Navy spouse*



# Military Lifestyle: Separation not Due to Deployment



Since September 11, 2001, how many additional months have you or your family's service member been **separated** from the family members with whom he/she typically lives **due to training field time, schooling work ups, TDY assignments, etc.?**



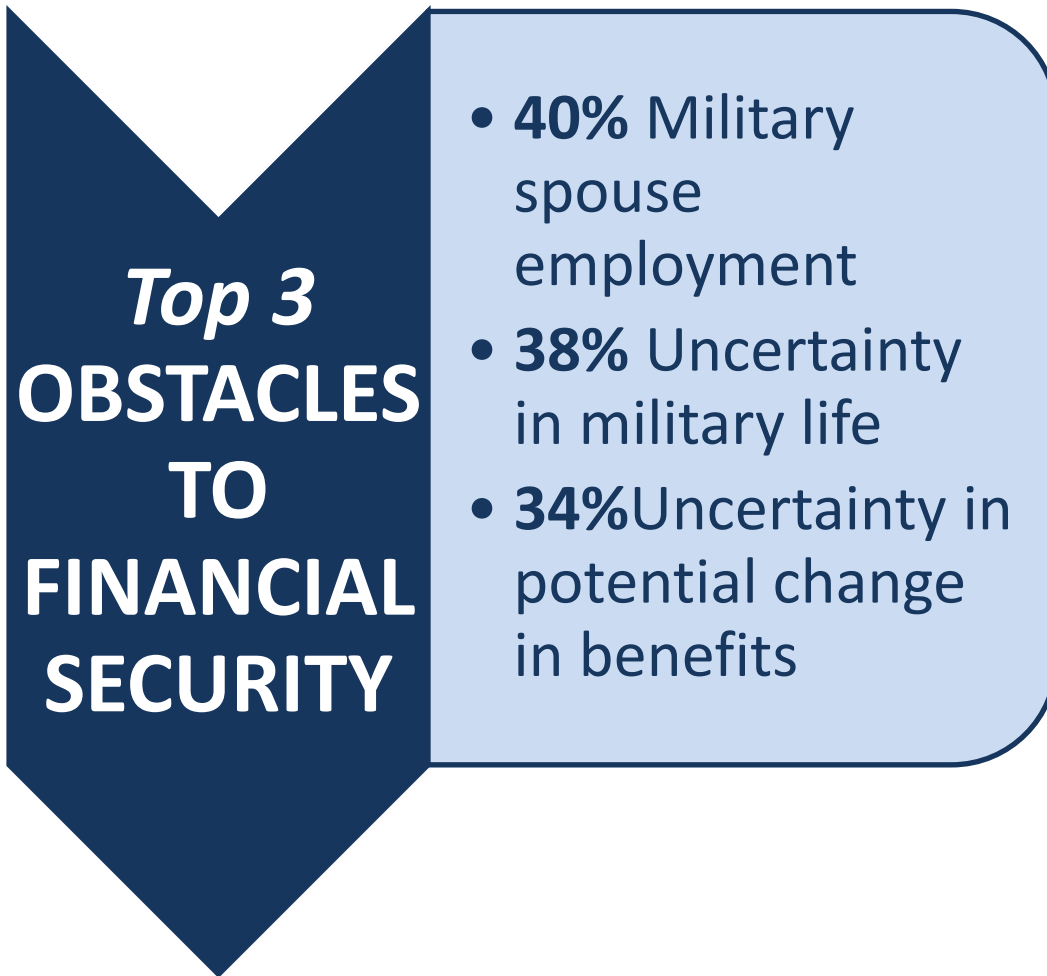
49%

41%

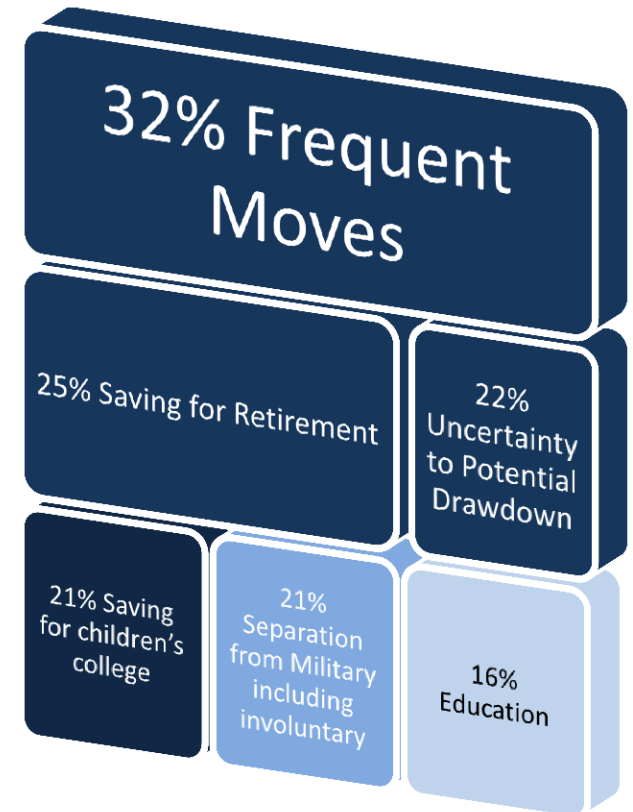
11%

*".....between TDYs and the deployment, my son has already gone nearly half his life without his father, so each time my husband comes home, it's like they have to reestablish who the man of the house is. My son can get very aggressive and clingy each time Daddy leaves or comes home. I feel like I am constantly stuck in the middle." – Air Force spouse*

*"Watching other kids have their dads to coach their basketball, baseball or football teams is especially hard when their dad is deployed. Even when he is not deployed his work schedule is 12 hours long and he has to be late for the practices or games. Then he is also sent for month long training that can also greatly interfere with a sporting schedule." – Army spouse*



## Other Obstacles

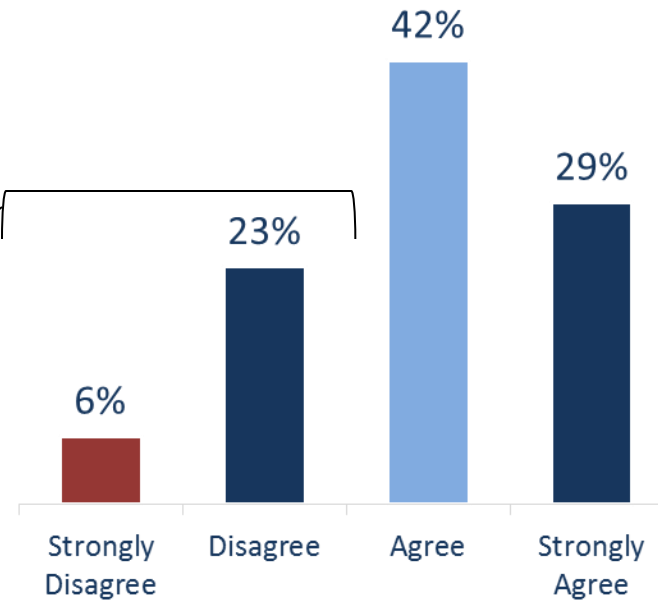


# Transitioning: Veterans and their Families



In planning for transition - family and employment strongly influence the choices made by veterans with regard to planning for the transition from military to civilian life followed by healthcare and education.

*I would describe myself and my family as well-prepared to successfully navigate the transition from military to civilian life.*



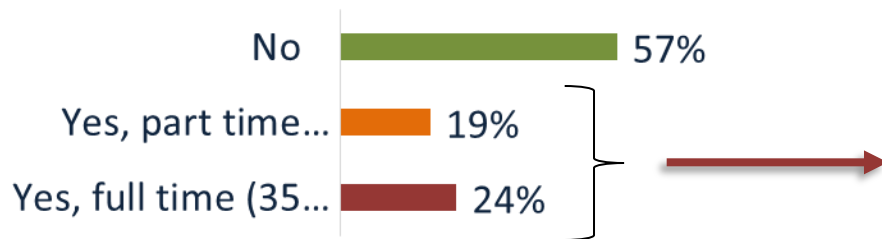
29% felt unprepared for transition

71% felt well-prepared

# Spouse Employment: Demographics



Are you currently employed outside the home, including work from home, online or contract work?



43% of active duty military spouses reported they were working **full or part time**



54% Private Sector



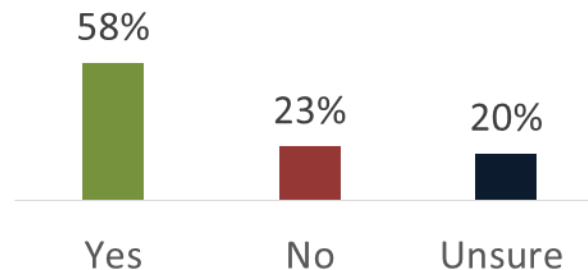
28% Public Sector (government)



17% Nonprofit

Of the 57% who were not working, 58% reported they would like to be employed outside the home

Would you like to be employed outside the home?

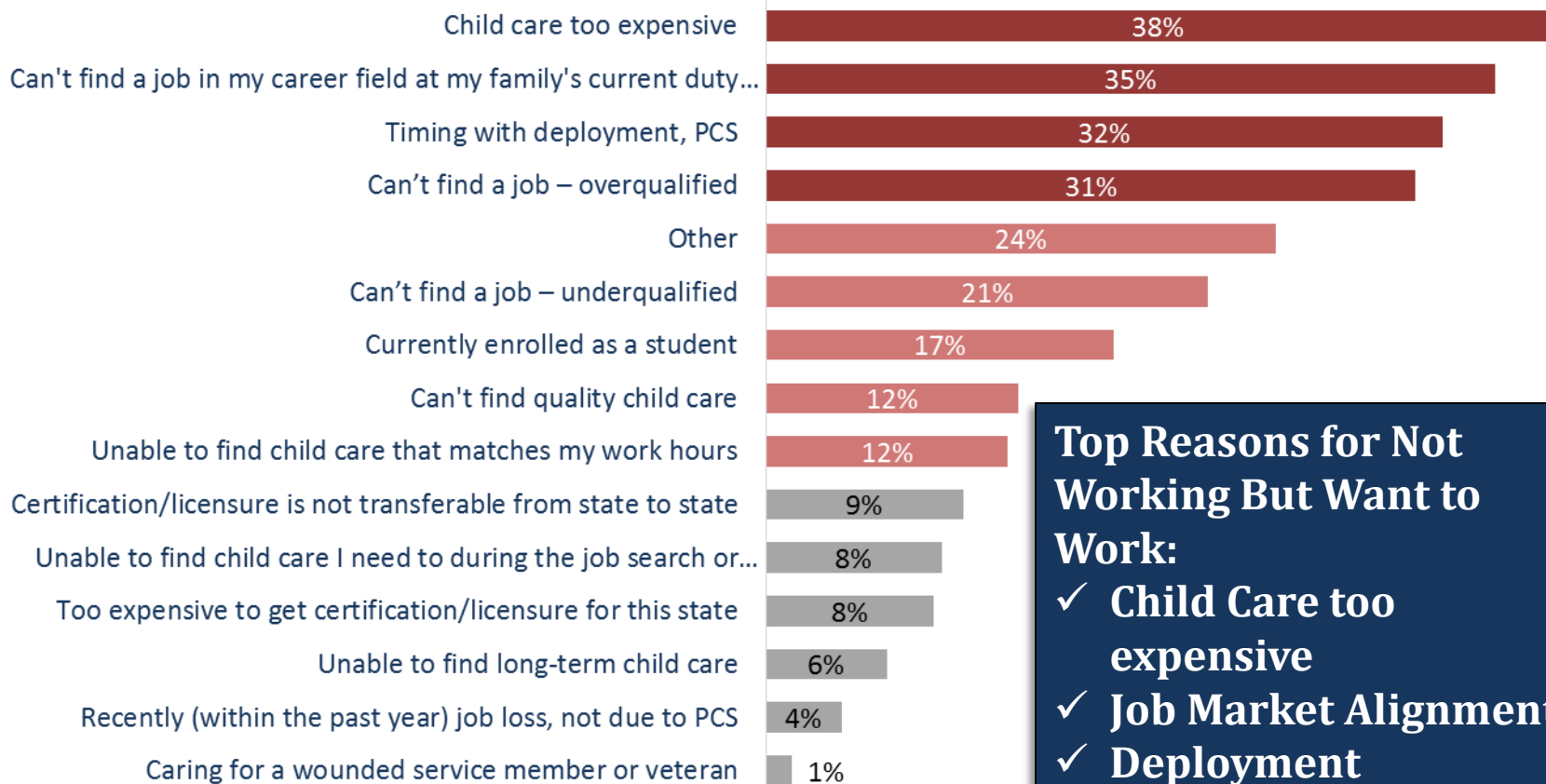


Of those spouses who reported they were not working and not seeking employment, the top reason reported by 74% of respondents was that "I prefer to stay home with my children."

# Spouse Employment: Reasons for Not Working



*Why are you not working currently?*  
(For those not working but want to work)



■ Active Duty Spouse (n=793)

## Top Reasons for Not Working But Want to Work:

- ✓ Child Care too expensive
- ✓ Job Market Alignment
- ✓ Deployment



# Spouse Employment: Consequences of Employment Challenges



**The top obstacle to financial security was military spouse employment, identified by 40% of all respondents.**

*"I was specifically asked in a phone interview if I am a military spouse. When I answered honestly, phone interview was abruptly ended."  
-Military Spouse*

Military spouses reporting greatest levels of financial stress are not working, but want to be.

Working military spouses report they are unable to find childcare that works for their current situation, thus decreasing their ability to remain in the workforce.

20% of spouses working full-time and 34% of spouses working part time report they could not find adequate childcare.

32% of military spouse respondents who were working full or part time reported combined annual household incomes of less than \$50k a year

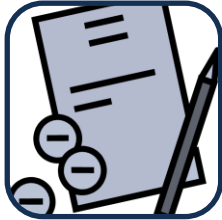
# Mental Health and Wellness: Provider Preference



1/3 report having received mental health counseling in the past year



Spouses and service members report seeking out seeing civilian providers over military providers for mental health care

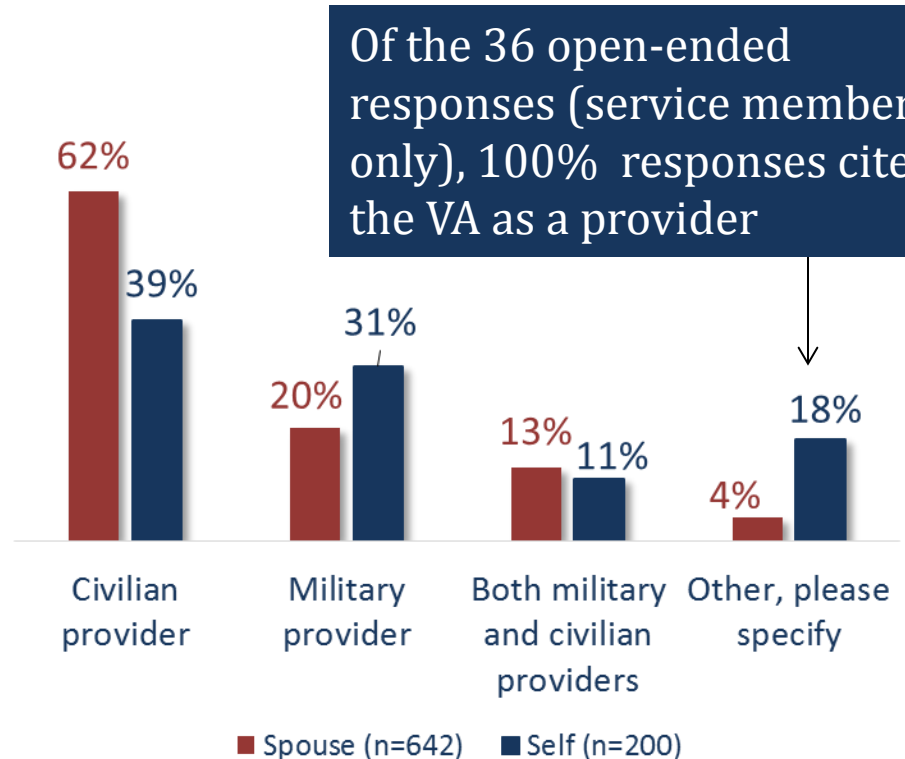


Service members appeared more likely to see a military provider than spouses, but still showed a preference for civilian providers

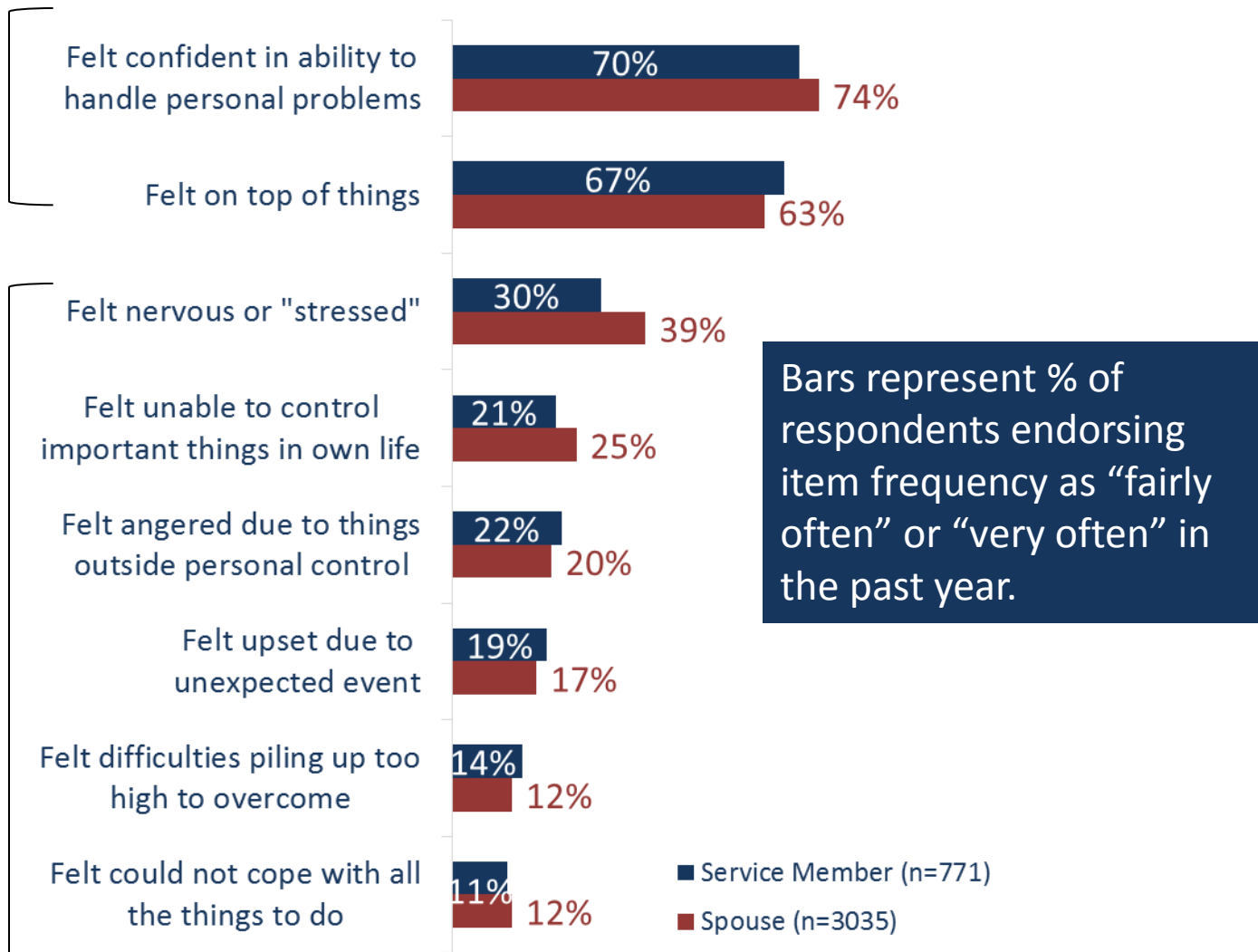


Regardless of where mental health services were received respondents reported it was helpful

When you received individual counseling what type of provider did you use?



# Military Family Behavioral Health: Spouse and Service Member Stress and Coping

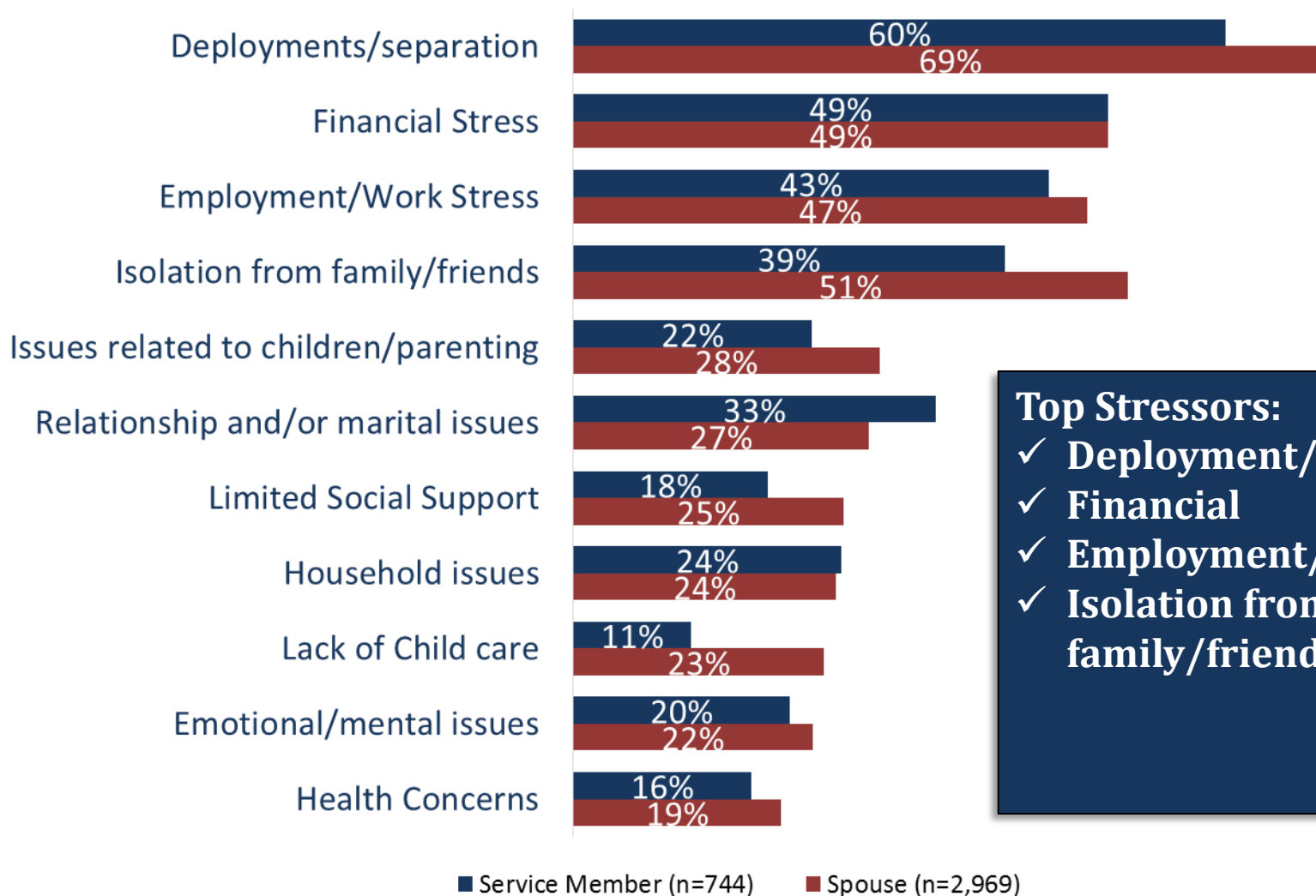


# Mental Health and Wellness:

## Stressors Related to Time in Military, Primary and Secondary Combined



### Stressors Related to Time in Military



**Top Stressors:**

- ✓ Deployment/Separation
- ✓ Financial
- ✓ Employment/Work
- ✓ Isolation from family/friends



# 2014 Military Lifestyle Survey: Infographic



**6,200**  
RESPONDENTS

INCLUDING  
MILITARY SPOUSES  
SERVICE MEMBERS  
& VETERANS

THE NATION'S SECURITY REMAINS DEPENDENT ON AN ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE. AFTER NEARLY 13 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS WAR, THE MILITARY IS REDUCING ITS LONG-STANDING PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN AND SIMULTANEOUSLY DOWNSIZING. YET, CONFLICT IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN CONTINUES, NEW CONFLICTS EMERGE, AND SERVICE MEMBERS REMAIN DEPLOYED ACROSS THE GLOBE.



IN COLLABORATION WITH:  
VETERANS TRANSITION INSTITUTE - VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES

The 2014 Blue Star Families Annual Lifestyle Survey was written and analyzed in collaboration with the VTI. Funding for the Military Family Lifestyle Survey provided through the generosity of our **PRESENTING SPONSOR USAA**, and through Health Net Federal Services, UnitedHealthcare, Sun Chase, and Facebook.



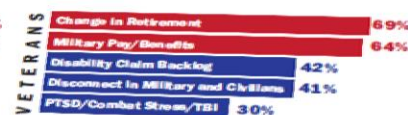
## 2014 MILITARY FAMILY LIFESTYLE SURVEY

### TOP 5 ISSUES



### RANKED AS MOST CONCERNING

> MILITARY PAY AND RETIREMENT BENEFIT CHANGES ARE THE TOP TWO CONCERNS FOR ALL RESPONDENTS  
> SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT, MILITARY LIFE UNCERTAINTY, AND DISABILITY BACKLOG WERE KEY ISSUES THAT VARIED BY SUBGROUP



### MILITARY SPOUSES TOP STRESSORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE MILITARY

69% DEPLOYMENTS  
51% ISOLATION FROM FAMILY & FRIENDS

LACK OF CHILD CARE HAS IMPACTED MY ABILITY TO PURSUE EMPLOYMENT OR EDUCATION



43% I HAVE A FULL OR PART TIME JOB

58% OF US WHO ARE NOT WORKING, WE WOULD LIKE TO BE EMPLOYED OUTSIDE THE HOME

80% OF US ARE "EXTREMELY HAPPY," "VERY HAPPY," OR "HAPPY" WITH OUR RELATIONSHIP

### SERVICE MEMBERS WHY I JOINED... TO SERVE MY COUNTRY

95%

74% I ALSO JOINED THE MILITARY TO RECEIVE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS



63% I JOINED THE MILITARY TO LEARN SKILLS FOR CIVILIAN JOBS

66% OF US SAID THAT WE WOULD BE TRANSFERRING POST-9/11 GI BILL BENEFITS TO OUR SPOUSE OR CHILD

61% I ATTENDED MY TRANSITION GPS CLASS IN THE SIX MONTHS BEFORE MY SEPARATION DATE

### VETERANS

### MY TRANSITION CHOICES WERE INFLUENCED BY:

FAMILY, EMPLOYMENT, HEALTH CARE & EDUCATION

60% OF US USED OUR VA BENEFITS DURING TRANSITION

53% IF I HAD TO DESCRIBE MY TRANSITION OUT OF ACTIVE DUTY, I WOULD SAY IT WAS...

**DIFFICULT**



38% of us who are transitioning in the next two years have used or are currently using Transition GPS programming

29% I FELT UNPREPARED FOR MY TRANSITION FROM SERVICE



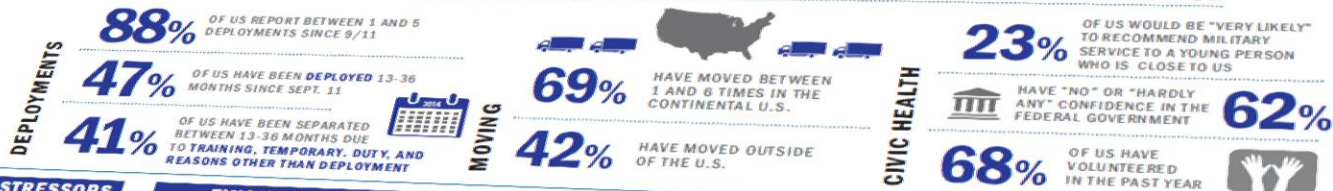
# 2014 Military Lifestyle Survey: Infographic



2014 MILITARY FAMILY LIFESTYLE SURVEY

## SNAPSHOT OF THE MILITARY LIFESTYLE

91% BELIEVE IN THE IMPORTANCE OF SERVING IN THE MILITARY OR OTHER NATIONAL SERVICE



### MILITARY LIFESTYLE STRESSORS

#### TOP STRESSORS RELATED TO MILITARY LIFESTYLE

DEPLOYMENT OR SEPARATION  
FINANCIAL  
EMPLOYMENT OR WORK  
ISOLATION FROM FRIENDS OR FAMILY

**39%** OF MILITARY SPOUSES FEEL STRESSED MOST OR ALL OF THE TIME

**30%** OF SERVICE MEMBERS FEEL STRESSED MOST OR ALL OF THE TIME

#### TOP STRESSORS DURING DEPLOYMENT

HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES  
ISOLATION OR LACK OF SOCIAL SUPPORT  
EMOTIONAL OR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES  
PARENTING AND CHILDREN ISSUES

### FINANCIAL READINESS

#### TOP 3 OBSTACLES TO FINANCIAL SECURITY

40% SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT  
38% UNCERTAINTY IN MILITARY LIFE  
34% UNCERTAINTY IN POTENTIAL CHANGES IN BENEFITS

**\$\$\$ 60% \$\$\$**

OF US FEEL THAT OUR CURRENT FINANCIAL CONDITION CAUSES "SOME STRESS" OR A "GREAT DEAL OF STRESS"

36% OF US OWE GREATER THAN \$5,001 ON OUR CREDIT CARDS



**36%**

OF US AGREE THAT THE COST OF RENT IS HIGHER THAN OUR BAH ALLOWANCE

### MILITARY CHILDREN

#### TOP 5

IMPACTS OF DEPLOYMENT ON CHILDREN

**POSITIVE**

- 60% ADAPTABILITY
- 54% INCREASED INDEPENDENCE
- 54% PERSONAL GROWTH
- 53% INCREASED RESILIENCE
- 46% INCREASED PRIDE

**NEGATIVE**

- 56% SEPARATION ANXIETY
- 49% WORRY
- 36% IRRITABILITY
- 35% DIFFICULTY SLEEPING
- 30% DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING

**11%**

OF US HAVE CHILDREN WHO HAVE JOINED THE MILITARY COMPARED TO 1% WHO SERVE IN THE GENERAL POPULATION

### MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

**1/3** HAVE RECEIVED MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING IN THE PAST YEAR

**36%** OF VETERANS **35%** OF SERVICE MEMBERS  
**WITH PTS/PTSD**  
SAY THEY DIDN'T SEEK TREATMENT BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD HELP

IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, HAD THOUGHTS THAT WOULD BE BETTER OFF DEAD OR HURTING MYSELF IN SOME WAY:

|         |     |
|---------|-----|
| Veteran | 13% |
| Active  | 9%  |
| Spouse  | 8%  |

### CAREGIVERS

**32%** OF US HAVE PROVIDED CARE FOR SOMEONE IN THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS



**15%**

OF US SPEND 40 OR MORE HOURS PER WEEK PROVIDING CARE, EQUIVALENT TO A FULL TIME JOB

# Questions



To find the comprehensive report, executive summary, one-pager, or infographic

Please go to:  
[www.bluestarfam.org/resources/2014-military-family-lifestyle-survey](http://www.bluestarfam.org/resources/2014-military-family-lifestyle-survey)

For questions about the survey findings or results please contact [dbradbard@bluestarfam.org](mailto:dbradbard@bluestarfam.org).



**Blue Star Families**  
**2014 MILITARY FAMILY LIFESTYLE SURVEY**  
 A DETAILED COMPREHENSIVE REPORT IS AVAILABLE ON BLUE STAR FAMILIES' WEBSITE: [WWW.BLUESTARFAM.ORG](http://WWW.BLUESTARFAM.ORG)

| The Military Spouse  | Spouse with Transition | Spouse with Transition | Spouse with Transition |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Military pay/benefits  | 73%                    | 63%                    | 70%                    |
| Change in residence  | 62%                    | 46%                    | 70%                    |
| Impact of deployment on children   | 62%                    | 57%                    | 68%                    |
| Spouse's career/military pay and benefits, and changes to retirement benefits. These top five issues were consistently across spouses with other top issues related across active-duty spouses, veterans, and actively serving members. Spouse employment, for example, was a top issue for military spouses and active duty service | 52%                    | 47%                    | 58%                    |
| PTSD/Combat Injury/TS  | 34%                    | 30%                    | 34%                    |
| Dissemination between military and civilians   | 29%                    | 17%                    | 24%                    |
| Education/Childcare  | 2%                     | 1%                     | 2%                     |

**6,200 RESPONDENTS**  
 INCLUDING MILITARY SPOUSES, SERVICE MEMBERS & VETERANS

IN COLLABORATION WITH  
**INSTITUTE OF VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES**

The 2014 Blue Star Families Annual Change is Conducted for the Military Family through Strategic Alliances, and is funded by:

**Blue Star Families**  
**2014 MILITARY FAMILY LIFESTYLE SURVEY**

**TOP 5 ISSUES**

| Issue   | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Military Pay/Benefits   | 73%        |
| Change in Residence   | 62%        |
| Impact of Deployment on Children  | 62%        |
| Spouse's Career/Military Pay and Benefits, and Changes to Retirement Benefits | 52%        |
| PTSD/Combat Injury/TS   | 34%        |

**RANKED AS MOST CONCERNING**

MILITARY PAY AND RETIREMENT BENEFIT CHANGES ARE THE TOP TWO CONCERNS FOR ALL RESPONDENTS

► SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT, MILITARY LIFE UNCERTAINTY, AND DISABILITY BACKLOGS WERE KEY ISSUES THIS YEAR BY SUBGROUP

| Subgroup         | Issue                            | Percentage |
|------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| MILITARY SPOUSES | Military Pay/Benefits            | 77%        |
|                  | Change in Residence              | 63%        |
|                  | Impact of Deployment on Children | 60%        |
| SERVICE MEMBERS  | Military Pay/Benefits            | 78%        |
|                  | Change in Residence              | 61%        |
|                  | Impact of Deployment on Children | 49%        |
| VETERANS         | Change in Residence              | 64%        |
|                  | Military Pay/Benefits            | 61%        |
|                  | Impact of Deployment on Children | 45%        |

**MY TRANSITION CHALLENGES WERE INFLUENCED BY:**

| Challenge                                   | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Family, Employment, Health Care & Education | 60%        |
| Difficult                                   | 53%        |
| Unprepared for transition from service      | 38%        |

**WHY I JOINED... TO SERVE MY COUNTRY**

95% OF US JOINED THE MILITARY TO RECEIVE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

74% HAD JOINED THE MILITARY TO RECEIVE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

63% I JOINED THE MILITARY TO LEARN SKILLS FOR CIVILIAN JOBS

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80% OF US ARE "EXTREMELY HAPPY," "VERY HAPPY," OR "HAPPY" WITH OUR RELATIONSHIP

61% I INTENDED MY TRANSITION GOES SMOOTHLY BEFORE MY SEPARATION DATE

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