

COVID-19

MILITARY SUPPORT INITIATIVE

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Pain Points Poll Qualitative Report: IMPACT OF STOP MOVEMENT ORDER ON PCS MOVES

TELL US MORE ABOUT HOW YOUR PCS HAS BEEN IMPACTED BY THE STOP MOVEMENT ORDER, INCLUDING ANY SUCCESSES / DIFFICULTIES YOU HAVE HAD OBTAINING INFORMATION OR REIMBURSEMENTS.

Question fielded April 15 - May 5, 2020 || All respondents who indicated they were themselves a currently-serving service member or were married to one received this question; however, 93% of those who responded were military spouses.

Over one-third of respondents expressed uncertainty about how their future PCS would be affected by the stop movement order; nearly one-fourth of respondents indicated their PCS was on hold. The most commonly reported challenge for PCSing families was living in separate households (11%), often due to the service member's extended deployment or inability to travel to the new OCONUS installation. Other reported difficulties included delayed or missing HHG (9%) and an inability to obtain new housing at the receiving installation (8%). Respondents moving forward with their originally scheduled PCS expressed challenges with out-processing and the logistical components of the move (8%), such as scheduling required medical appointments, obtaining passports, and booking moving vehicles and hotels.

“My family has been impacted; we sold our home. We wanted to pull out when we realized we were in a pandemic, however, we could not cancel our contract with the realty company. Our house sold in eight hours. [We had] to purchase a travel trailer because there [were] no apartments available in our area and now we are living with three kids and two dogs in a travel trailer.” - Air Force Spouse

“My husband deployed in January 2018. The children and I moved back home to have help and because my husband planned to leave the Army. But, life happened and he stayed in. He decided to become a recruiter and got assigned to the area I am in. He was supposed to finally join us in June after two years of being apart. But now he’s stuck. My family is suffering. My children are always upset, my husband is missing his family and it has been two long years since I’ve been able to sleep.” - Army Spouse

“I had already turned in my keys to my rental when the stop movement order was put in place. I have none of my belongings. The movers had already picked them up and put [them] into shipping crates. I am unable to find an apartment because of COVID-19 and was forced to travel 12 hours by car to family because of homelessness.” - Air Force Spouse

“I am a geobachelor in the Navy. I moved with the ship’s home port change order to [a] new duty station at San Diego, CA. Yet my spouse stayed at [our] old duty station, Norfolk, VA [because I have orders to] PCS in three months once the ship completes the home port change. My new order is to Pearl Harbor, HI, and we purchase[d] a new property there prior to this crisis. Now, I am going to pay two mortgages in two weeks and I am also paying rent at San Diego, CA because staying on the ship is not safe and practical. Very stressed and facing a big financial difficulty if not able to move soon.”

- Navy Service Member

TOP CODES		
PERCENT	COUNT	CODE
34%	85	Uncertain about future PCS
23%	57	PCS on hold
11%	27	Family separated between two homes
9%	23	Missing HHG
8%	20	Unable to look for/move into new housing
8%	19	Unable to out-process/complete logistical tasks
	Total: 248	

TELL US MORE ABOUT HOW YOUR FINANCES HAVE BEEN IMPACTED DUE TO YOUR PCS POSTPONEMENT AND/OR UNCERTAINTY, INCLUDING ANY SUCCESSES / DIFFICULTIES YOU HAVE HAD OBTAINING INFORMATION OR REIMBURSEMENTS

Question fielded May 6 -26, 2020 || All respondents who indicated they had current PCS orders received this question; however, 86% of those who responded were military spouses.

Although relatively few respondents provided an answer to this question (n=35), results support findings from the quantitative data and illustrate the range of financial difficulties associated with the stop movement order. Housing expenses represented the top financial difficulty for PCSing respondents. Forty percent (n=14) of respondents expressed concern about their ability to pay their mortgage due to loss of income and unexpected out-of-pocket expenses. On top of paying for housing where they resided, 40% of write-in respondents also reported making an additional housing payment due to late rent or the inability to occupy a newly purchased home (about one in five said the same in quantitative

data collected during the same period). Twenty-three percent of respondents explained they were unable to look for new housing at the receiving installation, which had financial implications. Other financial impacts included travel expenses (14%), hotel expenses (11%), and unreimbursed costs associated with PCS postponement (14%). Eleven percent of respondents reported a lack of clear communication about PCS orders made it challenging to adapt their financial plans accordingly.

“There are sooo many impacts here... My husband is supposed to PCS and was originally supposed to report to his new duty station on July 8th. He was told that he would be an exception to policy and would probably have a report date of June 18th a couple weeks ago, but we haven't heard anything since then. We are purchasing a new home at our new duty station and have a closing date of June 4th, which would give us two weeks to get settled before his supposed early report date. However, we are still waiting on orders and this mythical exception to policy. Our lender needs a copy of the orders, and we still don't even have an RFO. Without an RFO, we can't notify housing at our current location that we will be out in 30 days, because we don't know if we would get paid to move if we move before he has orders. Every single day that we wait costs us an extra \$141 because we will have to pay for housing at our current location and will have a mortgage starting on June 4th. It would be great if we could get an exception to the 30-day notice in base housing once we get orders... - Army Spouse

TOP CODES		
PERCENT	COUNT	CODE
40%	14	Concerns about ability to pay mortgage
40%	14	Making two house payments
23%	8	Unable to look for/move into new housing
14%	5	Travel expenses
14%	5	Unreimbursed costs
11%	4	Lack of clear communication
11%	4	Hotel expenses
	Total: 35	

RESPONSES TO THE “OTHER” WRITE-IN RESPONSES WHEN ASKED ABOUT ISSUES RELATED TO THEIR UNITS PERSONNEL AND READINESS

“With the pandemic, trying to manage money with decreased incomes is hard being in separate countries. The uncertainty of shelter-in-place orders, lockdowns, etc makes it hard to be prepared in both places adequately. Finances are stretched thin. The uncertainty of managing two separate budgets, for stuff in two different countries is impossible with incomes and regulations shifting so quickly.”

- Air Force Spouse

“We are having to plan a full DITY move from NC to WA. The Army rescheduled my husband’s PCC so now he will miss our oldest daughter’s [high school] graduation and we will have to travel across the country without him and move without his help. I feel like this puts our family at unnecessary risk. Not sure how I feel about my teen driver driving from NC to WA. [...] We will do what we have to do but I don’t see why they can’t delay his change of command a couple months so he can safely PCS our family to WA, attend PCC and then take command. He still does not have orders thanks to EFMP delaying the process for our daughter who [has] ADHD and does NOT receive any special services besides an IEP. We are coming out-of-pocket for moving supplies and paying for a mortgage in WA since our tenants are now gone and our house is vacant plus paying rent in NC. We knew in advance we would have to do this for a couple months and we’re fine with it because we knew we would be in WA by June. Now we don’t know. Our lease in NC ends in June. We will make it all happen because we do what we have to but these are pain points for us. We are grateful we do not have any health problems, our kids are teens and can be helpful, and my hubby is still getting paid. There are many American families struggling in a big way financially and health wise so we are counting our blessings.” - Army Spouse

Question fielded March 18 - April 14, 2020 || All respondents received this question, regardless of their military affiliation; however, those who indicated the question did not apply to them were excluded from the analysis.

This question was not coded due to the large number of respondents who indicated “n/a” as their response. Included below is a selection of quotes that are representative of the remaining responses.

“My family’s upcoming PCS has been affected because selection boards have been postponed indefinitely. This leaves our family in limbo and unsure of what billets we will receive and [whether] the delay will also make us live here longer than expected (which impacts our budget and family planning).”

- Navy Spouse

This report was prepared by Carrie Carter (Applied Research Generalist - Consultant, Blue Star Families) with support from Jennifer Akin, MPA (Co-Director of Applied Research, Blue Star Families).