Top Issues for active-duty family respondents

- Military spouse employment: 49%
- Amount of time away from family as a result of military service: 38%
- Military pay: 37%
- BAH/Off-base housing concerns: 36%
- Dependent child(ren)'s education: 33%

Military Families are Key to Recruitment & Retention
Likelihood to recommend military service is dropping

- 55% of active-duty family respondents were likely to recommend military service in 2016.
- 32% of active-duty family respondents were likely to recommend military service in 2023.

Quality-of-Life Issues
Impact Likelihood to Recommend Military Service

Belonging
Active-duty family respondents who feel a sense of belonging to their local civilian community:
- report greater well-being
- are more likely to recommend military service

Spouse Employment
A greater proportion of employed active-duty spouses recommend military service than their unemployed peers.

Housing Costs
As out-of-pocket housing costs increase, the likelihood of active-duty family respondents to recommend military service dips.

1. Provided a response of 7-10 on a scale of 0-10.
2. Question wording differed. In 2016, the question was worded “12. How likely are you to recommend a young person close to you to join the military?” In 2023, the question was worded “How likely are you to recommend that a young family member (child, niece, nephew, etc.) join the military? On a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 = “very unlikely” and 10 = “very likely?”
3. Active-duty family respondents who agree that they feel a sense of belonging to their local civilian community compared to those who disagree (4.8 versus 3.9, on a scale of 0-7).
4. Active-duty family respondents who agree that they feel a sense of belonging to their local civilian community compared to those who disagree (4.6 versus 5.3, on a scale of 0-10).
5. Active-duty family respondents who agree that they feel a sense of belonging to their local civilian community compared to those who disagree (4.3 versus 5.4, on a scale of 0-10).
6. Active-duty family respondents who agree that they feel a sense of belonging to their local civilian community compared to those who disagree (4.8 versus 4.2, on a scale of 0-10).
7. Active-duty family respondents with all housing costs covered compared to paying $200 or more out of pocket (5.0 versus 4.7, on a scale of 0-10).

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### Active-Duty Family Financial Well-Being

#### Top Contributors to Financial Stress
- **48%** Housing costs
- **34%** Relocation costs
- **30%** Unemployment or Underemployment

#### Housing and Relocation
- **36%** of active-duty family respondents who completed a recent PCS used temporary housing for 15+ days.

#### Child Care Remains Top Barrier to Spouse Employment
- **68%** report needing child care in order to work.
- **35%** cannot find child care that works for their employment needs.
- **20%** utilize the CDC for care.
- **11%** use fee assistance.

#### Food Insecurity
- **54%** of active-duty family respondents did not know what the BNA is.
- **3%** applied for the BNA.
- Food banks/charities are a major food source for 14% of active-duty family respondents experiencing food insecurity.

#### Health Care Access
- **40%** of active-duty family respondents reported their family member waited more than two months to see a specialist, more than the average specialist care appointment wait time for civilians.

#### Spouse Employment
- **Labor force participation rate**
  - Comparable national labor force participation rate during survey fielding timeframe: 73%
  - **70%**
- **Employed (in labor force)**
  - **78%**
- **Unemployed (in labor force)**
  - Comparable national unemployment rate during survey fielding timeframe: 4%
  - **22%**
  - **31%** of employed active-duty spouse respondents reported they were able to maintain their employment through their most recent PCS move.

#### Have filed a PACT Act claim:
- **8%** Active-duty service member respondents
- **18%** Veteran respondents

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Blue Star Families’ annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey provides a comprehensive understanding of what it means to serve as a military family. For that reason it is a blueprint for strengthening America and identifying how we can continue to enhance military family life.

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1. For active-duty families who indicated they have financial stress.
2. Civilian comparison group data come from statistics reported for women, age 18-44, in the Current Population Survey (CPS) 2021 Annual Average Employment Status (not seasonally adjusted).
3. Active-duty spouse respondents.