



Research and Policy Snapshot 2025

# Crucial issues jeopardizing the All-Volunteer Force



## Likelihood to recommend military service is declining.

32% of active-duty family respondents were likely to recommend service in 2024 — a drop from 55% in 2016.



## Spouse Employment & Child Care

Military spouse employment is a top issue of concern for active-duty families

23%

of active-duty spouses are unemployed.

77%

of active-duty spouses say that two incomes are vital for their family's well-being.

64%

of active-duty spouses who are not working, who want or need to work, AND need child care in order to work, say that child care is too expensive.

### Recommendations for Congress

- ★ Adopt the Military Spouse Hiring Act that provides tax incentives to hire military spouses.
- ★ Reauthorize the pilot program for fee assistance to in-home providers of child care in the FY26 NDAA.
- ★ Support the development and advancement of child care initiatives aimed at improving access and affordability for military and veteran families.

# Mental, Physical & Socioemotional Health

**10%**

of veterans said they had seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.

**11%**

of veterans reported they are not receiving mental health care, but would like to.

**24%**

of veteran spouses say that they had an adult friend or family member who has expressed suicidal thoughts, had a suicide attempt or died by suicide within the last year.<sup>1</sup>

**7%**

of active-duty service members say they have seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.

**19%**

of active-duty spouses say they had an adult friend or family member who expressed suicidal thoughts, had a suicide attempt or died by suicide within the last year.<sup>2</sup>

## Recommendations for Congress

- ★ Maintain and expand Defense Health Agency funding to promote health and readiness of military families through outdoor activities on public lands and waterways.
- ★ Allow for permanent funding for community suicide prevention programming initially authorized under the Staff Sergeant Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program.
- ★ Fund community-suicide prevention efforts for service members and their families like *Blue Star Support Circles* | *Upstream Solutions to Crisis*.

# Housing, Relocation & Food Security

**85%**

of active-duty families report paying in excess of \$200 out of pocket each month.<sup>3</sup>

**19%**

of active-duty families report someone in their family had visited a food pantry or a military food distribution center within the last year.

## Recommendations for Congress

- ★ Restore the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) to 100% of housing costs.
- ★ Exclude BAH from income calculations for eligibility for federal nutrition assistance.
- ★ Ensure military families are aware of the Basic Needs Allowance (BNA) program.

# Veteran Transition

**53%**

of veterans say the overall transition from military to civilian life was difficult.

## Recommendation for Congress

- ★ Improve the TAP program to allow for family involvement in the process such as *Blue Star Support Circles* | *Transition Together* program.

To work with BSF on these recommendations or others contact us at [policy@bluestarfam.org](mailto:policy@bluestarfam.org).



[bluestarfam.org](http://bluestarfam.org)

<sup>1</sup> Blue Star Families. 2023. "2022 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Comprehensive Report." [Unpublished data].

<sup>2</sup> Blue Star Families. 2023. "2022 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Comprehensive Report." [https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/BSF\\_MFLS\\_Spring23\\_Full\\_Report\\_Digital.pdf](https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/BSF_MFLS_Spring23_Full_Report_Digital.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.