



# THE FORCE BEHIND THE FORCE

A Business Case for Leveraging Military Spouse Talent

Deborah A. Bradbard, Ph.D.

Rosalinda Maury, M.S.

Nicholas J. Armstrong, Ph.D.

**DIVERSE**

Resilient

Resourceful

Entrepreneurial

Adaptable

**EDUCATED**

Team-Oriented

**MULTI-TASKERS**

**CIVICALLY ENGAGED**

Socially Aware



## About the Employing Military Spouses Series

The Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF), as part of its broader employment research efforts, and with the generous financial support and collaboration of Prudential Financial, Inc., is exploring the topic of military spouse employment. This paper marks the first in a series of hands-on products geared to human resource professionals, hiring managers, C-Suite executives, philanthropists, and nonprofit leaders interested in hiring military spouses. This three-part suite of research products will include:

- **Business Case:** an overview of military spouse demographics and the business case to hire them;
- **Profiles:** case studies of military spouses that demonstrate some of the common employment difficulties they encounter, and (anticipated release date, November, 2016)
- **Training Materials:** for human resource professionals who wish to learn more about recruiting and hiring military spouses (anticipated release date, December, 2016)

## About the Authors

### DEBORAH BRADBARD, PH.D.

Deborah Bradbard is a Senior Research Associate at IVMF at Syracuse University focused on veteran and military spouse employment and military financial readiness and transition. She served as the Director of Research and Policy at Blue Star Families and one of the primary authors of the 2013 and 2014 Blue Star Families Annual Lifestyle Survey. Her work on military families and military financial literacy have been cited by the White House, members of Congress, CNN, the Center for Deployment Psychology, and the Defense Center of Excellence (DCoE). Dr. Bradbard previously worked as a consultant at Booz Allen Hamilton developing products focused on military mental health issues including PTSD, suicide, substance abuse, and traumatic brain injury. Dr. Bradbard received her Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from Auburn University.

### ROSALINDA MAURY, M.S.

Rosalinda Maury is the Director of Applied Research and Analytics at IVMF at Syracuse University. She has worked on numerous projects, including the effects of personal financial mismanagement behaviors, training needs assessment, workload assessment, job and occupational analysis, equal pay for equal work, job compatibility assessment, and factors effecting military spouse and veteran employment. She has extensive experience in survey development and worldwide data collection, and has been responsible for developing, implementing and managing surveys for data collection on the large and small scale, for organizations and government sectors. Her work has been featured in numerous publications and she has presented at various professional conferences. Maury received her Master of Science in Psychology from the University of Texas at San Antonio.

### NICHOLAS J. ARMSTRONG, PH.D.

Nick Armstrong is the Senior Director for Research and Policy at IVMF at Syracuse University where he leads IVMF's growing portfolio of applied research, policy analysis, and program measurement and evaluation efforts. Armstrong is also an affiliated public management faculty member in the Department of Public Administration and International Affairs at Syracuse University's Maxwell School. Before joining the IVMF, Armstrong served for six years as a research fellow at Syracuse University's Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism (INSCT) where he led government and privately sponsored projects on various security topics including security sector reform, wartime contracting, post conflict reconstruction, and community resilience. Armstrong is also an eight-year veteran of the U.S. Army, and served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Bosnia. Armstrong is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point (B.S.) and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University (Ph.D., M.P.A.)

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**Just as our troops embody the courage and character that make America's military the finest in the world, their family members embody the resilience and generosity that make our communities strong. They serve with heroism in their homes and neighborhoods while they are without the comfort of having loved ones nearby. Day after day, week after week, spouses resolutely accomplish the work of two parents, sons and daughters diligently keep up with homework and activities, and parents and grandparents patiently wait for news of their child and grandchild's safe return. To these families, and to those whose service members never come home, we bear a debt that can never be fully repaid.”<sup>1</sup>**

**-Barack Obama, 2011**





# THE FORCE BEHIND THE FORCE

## A Business Case for Leveraging Military Spouse Talent

In the U.S. there are

More Than

**1 MILLION**

Active, Guard, and Reserve Military Spouses



More Than

**15 MILLION**

Military Veterans' Spouses

An Estimated

**5.8 MILLION**

Surviving Spouses of Veterans

Military spouses are largely overlooked as a part of a talent pipeline—even despite the fact that they are well-educated and there is a compelling business case to hire them. There is limited research and data available about military spouses, and a business case for hiring military spouses has never fully been articulated. Below, we outline ten abilities, attributes and characteristics of military spouses in an effort to outline a potential business case for hiring them.

### Who Are Military Spouses?



**93%**

FEMALE

#### GENDER

Active duty military spouses are predominantly female.

AVERAGE AGE

**33**

YEARS-OLD

#### AGE

Active duty military spouses are significantly younger compared to their civilian and veteran counterparts. Active duty military spouses are, on average 33 years of age compared to 47 years of age for civilian spouses and 60 years of age for veteran spouses.

#### CHILDCARE

**74%**

HAVE CHILDREN  
18 AND UNDER  
AT HOME



Active duty military spouses are more likely to have children (18 and under) at home compared to their civilian counterparts (74 percent versus 59 percent). Having young children, especially when a service member is deployed, necessitates the need for childcare, is associated with decreased earnings, and a higher likelihood of unemployment.

#### FREQUENT RELOCATIONS

MOVE  
**10x**  
MORE FREQUENTLY  
THAN THEIR  
CIVILIAN  
COUNTERPARTS

Active duty military personnel move on average once every two to three years, 2.4 times as often as civilian families. Military spouses move across state lines 10 times more frequently than their civilian counterparts and sometimes overseas. Frequent relocation can create gaps in employment, inability to start or complete education, unemployment, or underemployment (working in a position inconsistent with work experience or education).



### What is the Employment Landscape for Military Spouses?

#### UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT

Military spouses have higher unemployment rates, estimated as much as **3 times higher** than their civilian peers; military spouses are also underemployed; **33%** report they are **underemployed** based on their educational background.

#### EARNINGS

Active duty military spouses **earn roughly 38% less** than their civilian counterparts. The higher the education level, the larger the income gap between active duty spouses and their civilian counterparts.



#### LICENSURE TRANSFERABILITY ISSUES

**35% of spouses work in a field that requires licensure**, and of the 78% of spouses who reported they had experienced a military move during their husband or wife's active duty career, **only 11%** acquired a new professional license or credential after their last move.

#### ACCESS AND COST OF CHILDCARE

**67%** say lack of childcare has impacted their ability to pursue employment or education.

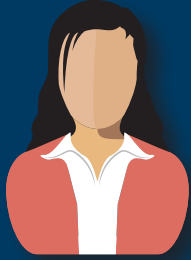
#### PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Military spouses are often de facto single parents due to spouse deployments, geographic separations, or unpredictable service member work schedules sometimes limiting employment choices.





# WHY HIRE MILITARY SPOUSES?



## The Business Case



**Resilient** Military spouses face challenges including family separations, frequent relocation, separation from friends and family, and difficulty finding employment or finishing their education. Yet, despite juggling multiple responsibilities, they report better coping than the average civilian.

## DIVERSE

The active duty military spouse community has a larger proportion of ethnic and racial minorities as compared to the broader civilian population.

## Resourceful

Military spouses are often learning to use the resources they have available to them, and they create unique and innovative solutions to problems despite obstacles or challenges.

## Adaptable

Military families live with consistent uncertainty. Spousal deployments often occur without warning; families may be asked to move without notice; benefits and allowances frequently change unexpectedly. Despite these challenges, 68% of active duty spouses say they are satisfied with the military way of life.

**Team-Oriented** Military support infrastructure largely depends on at-home spouses relying on one another through social activities, help with childcare, and overall social support.

**Entrepreneurial** 28% of military spouse respondents have either been self-employed or operated their own business, and 34% indicated they had an interest in online or work-from-home opportunities.

## EDUCATED

**84%** have some college education or higher

**25%** have a bachelor's degree

**10%** have an advanced degree

## MULTI-TASKERS

In a study of over 6,200 military spouses, despite juggling multiple responsibilities, 75% reported feeling confident in their ability to handle problems.

## CIVICALLY ENGAGED

Blue Star Families, in their 2014 survey of military families, found that 68% of their respondents reported that they had either formally or informally volunteered in the past year—significantly higher than the 21.8% of the general public who formally volunteered with an organization in 2015 as reported by the Department of Labor.

**Socially Aware** Military spouses often interact with a variety of people of different cultures, backgrounds, ages, and ethnicities. The military exposes spouses to a variety of cross-cultural and social experiences, and interactions with VIP's and the press. Military spouses also are asked to maintain sensitive information for security reasons and understand norms around operational security and safety.

## INTRODUCTION

There are more than one million active duty, guard, and reserve military spouses, more than 15 million veterans' spouses, and an estimated 5.8 million surviving spouses of veterans in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> Despite these numbers and the fact that 33 percent of spouses who are not working say they want to work, military spouses are largely overlooked as part of a talent pipeline.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this brief is to outline some of the positive and potentially business enhancing characteristics of military spouses related to employment, the unique assets they bring to the workplace, and to describe the compelling business case to recruit and ultimately hire them. This paper is the first of a three-part suite of research products that include:

- 1 **BUSINESS CASE:** An overview of military spouse demographics and the business case to hire them;
- 2 **PROFILES:** Case studies of military spouses that demonstrate some of the common employment difficulties they encounter, and
- 3 **TRAINING MATERIALS:** Training materials for hiring managers, C-suite executives, and human resource professionals who wish to learn more about recruiting and hiring military spouses.

## OVERVIEW

In 2011, the White House began their Joining Forces initiative to enlist the collective support of public, private and nonprofit partners on behalf of the military. This inspired a proactive and coordinated approach to recruit, hire, and retain transitioning service members and veterans in meaningful civilian employment. These efforts have proved successful. Veteran unemployment peaked at the height of the recession, but through an improved economy and sustained and coordinated efforts, employment prospects for veterans have improved dramatically.<sup>4</sup>

One reason for this success is that these collaborative efforts have engaged and empowered “coalitions of the willing” to share best-practices, develop specific business cases and individualized hiring strategies, and enhance their corporate culture with an improved understanding of the military and the unique and differentiating human resource qualities that are developed as a direct result of hiring talent with military service. While a number of innovative collaborative efforts have also focused on military spouse hiring, they have not been nearly as widespread (e.g., U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s Hiring Our Heroes, the Department of Defense’s Military Spouse Employment Partnership) as those focused on service members and veterans.

That said, there is a growing recognition that providing employment opportunities for military spouses, in addition to service members and veterans, is a vital component to military retention, family financial readiness as well as a successful military transition.<sup>5</sup> Two incomes are often necessary for both civilian as well as military families, and there are intrinsic emotional, and financial benefits to consistent employment. Finally, during transition and after military service, military spouses who are employed can enable a veteran to attend school, complete industry recognized certifications, exercise choices when examining job offers to find the right job fit, or sustain a period of unemployment if necessary. For these reasons, military spouse hiring efforts, though not as widespread or institutionalized as those focused on transitioning service member and veteran hiring, are also gaining traction.<sup>6</sup>

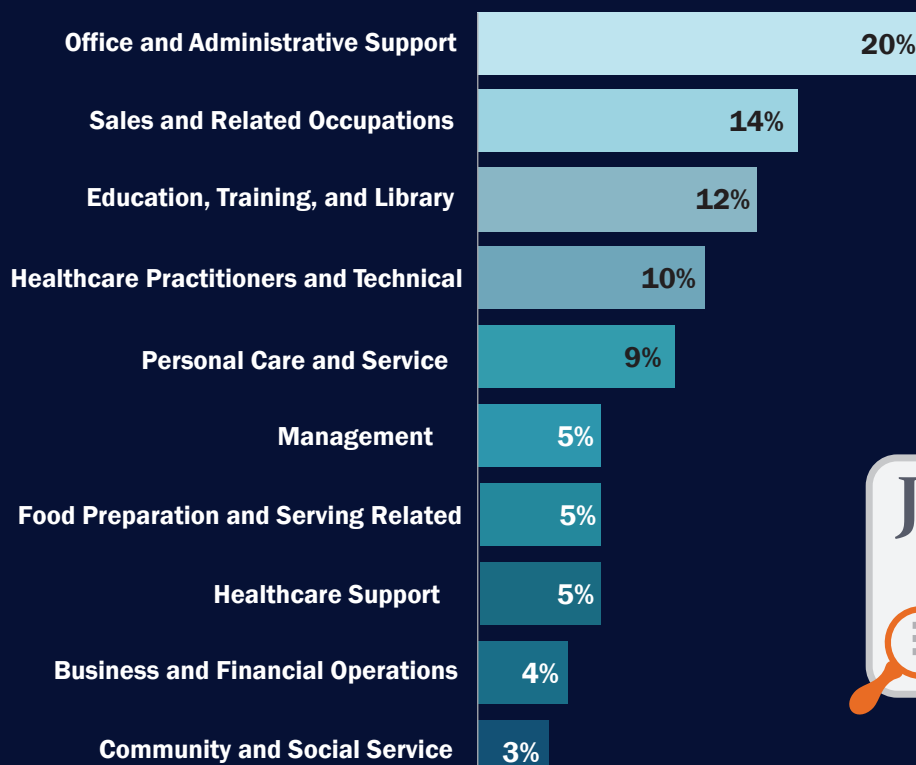
Still, companies interested in hiring transitioning service members and veterans may not intuitively understand the business case for hiring military family members—or even that the business case for hiring spouses is unique. Certainly, a spouse focused business case may share some similarities with that of a transitioning service member or veteran. But companies should not assume they are identical. Because there is limited research and data available about the employment of military spouses, a targeted business case has never been fully articulated.

**In this paper we review some of the available research and outline a business case for hiring military spouse employees.**





## MILITARY SPOUSE OCCUPATIONS



The figure above presents the occupations in which active military spouses work. The two largest occupations for active military female spouses are Office and Administrative Support (20%) and Sales and Related Occupations (14%).<sup>7</sup>

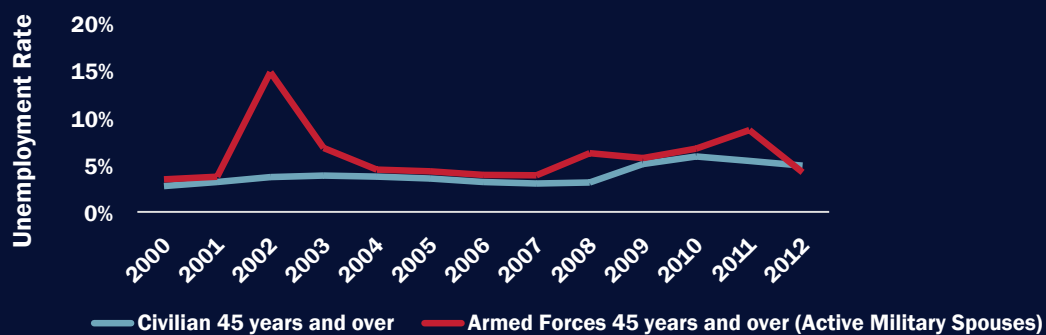
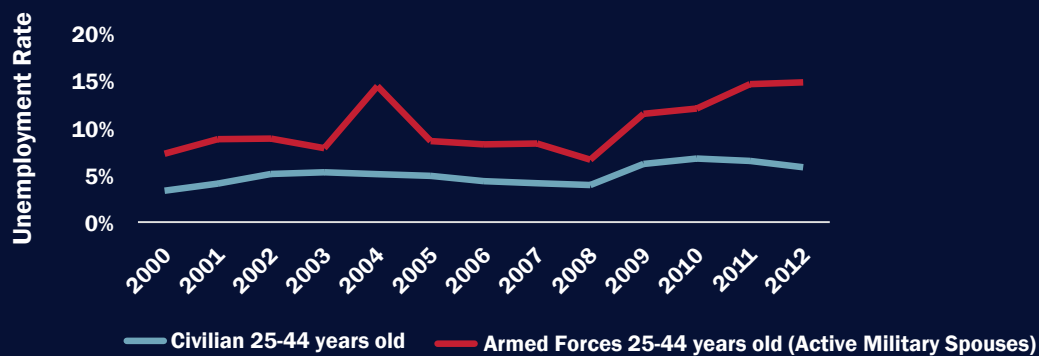
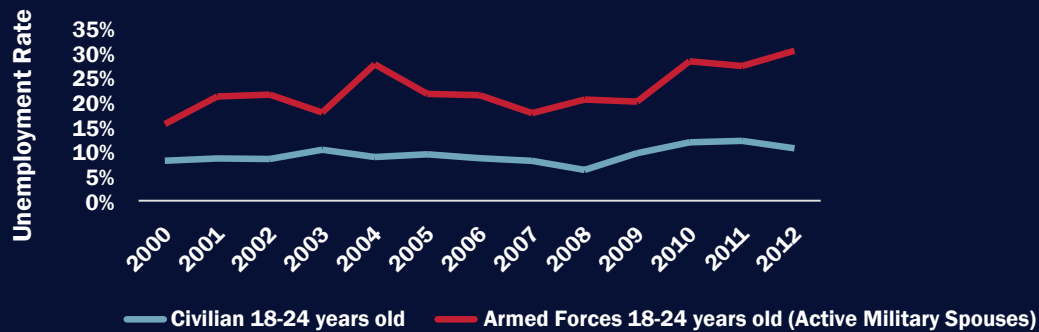




**As a military spouse getting Master's degree in a specialized field, one of my biggest concerns is the inability to stay in one location for more than three years. Even fields that are easily transferable, such as teachers, still have to start from the bottom up every move. I have seen so many spouses quit working due to sheer frustration with the job hunt every 6 months to three years. The reduced earning power is drastic. Even for spouses that choose to stay at home with children, their earning capacity prior to children is completely negated due to moves and high stress of the lifestyle. How much of a difference could 2-3 years of a second salary make when preparing financially for children, buying a car, buying a home. We have benefited from our military service, but we will not choose to pursue this lifestyle after his time is up."**

**-Navy spouse (Blue Star Families Annual Military Lifestyle Survey, 2014)**

# MILITARY SPOUSE UNEMPLOYMENT



The figures above present the annual unemployment rates for civilian and active military female spouses for the age groups 18 to 24 years, 25 to 44 years, and 45 years and older between 2000 and 2012 (from the American Community Survey (ACS)). For age groups 18 to 24 years and 25 to 44 years, the gap (difference) between the unemployment rate of active military female spouses and civilian female spouses has not declined. Some of the variation in unemployment rates can be explained by the overall economy, but the gap between active military female spouses and civilian female spouses is driven by other factors, such as number of Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves or spousal deployments<sup>8</sup>

## MILITARY SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES

The employment challenges faced by transitioning service members and veterans are well-documented, but many employers may be unaware of the employment obstacles military spouses face over the course of a military career. Several factors impact—if not impede—military spouse employment. A transient lifestyle with frequent relocations can make long-term employment difficult. Erratic and unpredictable military work and training schedules, the lack and cost of childcare, and the responsibilities of single-parenting, to name a few, are common.

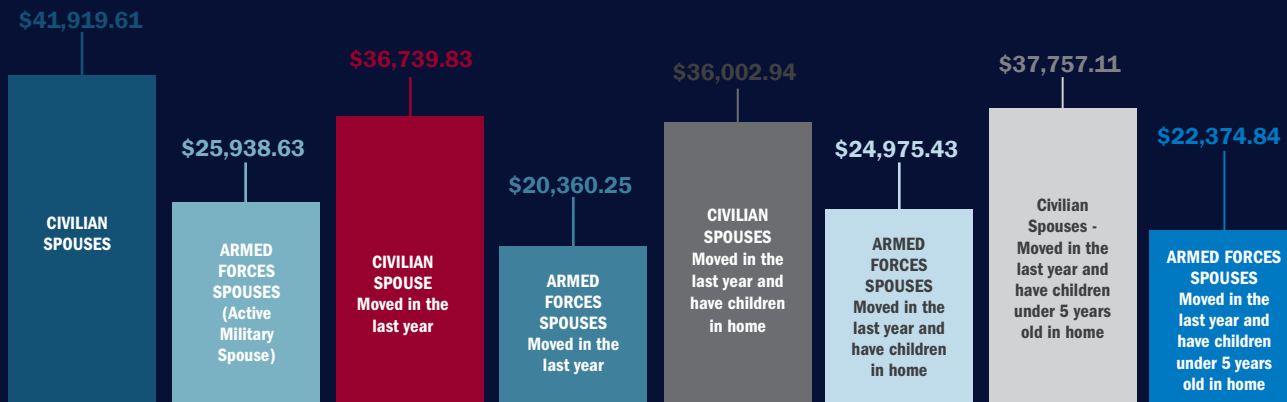
Financially, and much like their civilian counterparts, military families typically require two incomes to meet household expenses.<sup>9</sup> Beyond additional income, many military spouses also wish to work for personal fulfillment or to meet personal and professional goals. Yet, the unemployment rate for active duty military spouses varies by age, gender, and education as well as other demographic factors (estimates have been as low as 12% and as high as 32%), but is generally higher than the unemployment rate for civilian peers, despite the fact that military spouses are generally well educated.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, military spouses tend to earn 38 percent less than comparable civilians and move across state lines ten times more frequently.<sup>11</sup> These challenges also may result in underemployment (working less than needed or in a position inconsistent with one's educational background or level of experience). Finally, because the vast majority (nearly 93%) of military spouses are female there also is a gender disparity with female military spouses earning less than male military spouses as well as their female civilian counterparts.<sup>12</sup>

Geographic location also impacts employment opportunities. Military spouses relocating to rural, overseas, or otherwise isolated locations may have difficulty finding job opportunities that match their skills and abilities. For jobs that require licensure, spouses may find that they are not in a location long enough to warrant or justify the cost or effort to obtain a new license. And in other cases, they may not meet eligibility requirements. All of these factors impact military financial readiness by decreasing family earnings over time, diminishing opportunities for career advancement, decreasing their ability to save for emergencies, retirement, and their ability to amass long-term wealth.<sup>13</sup>



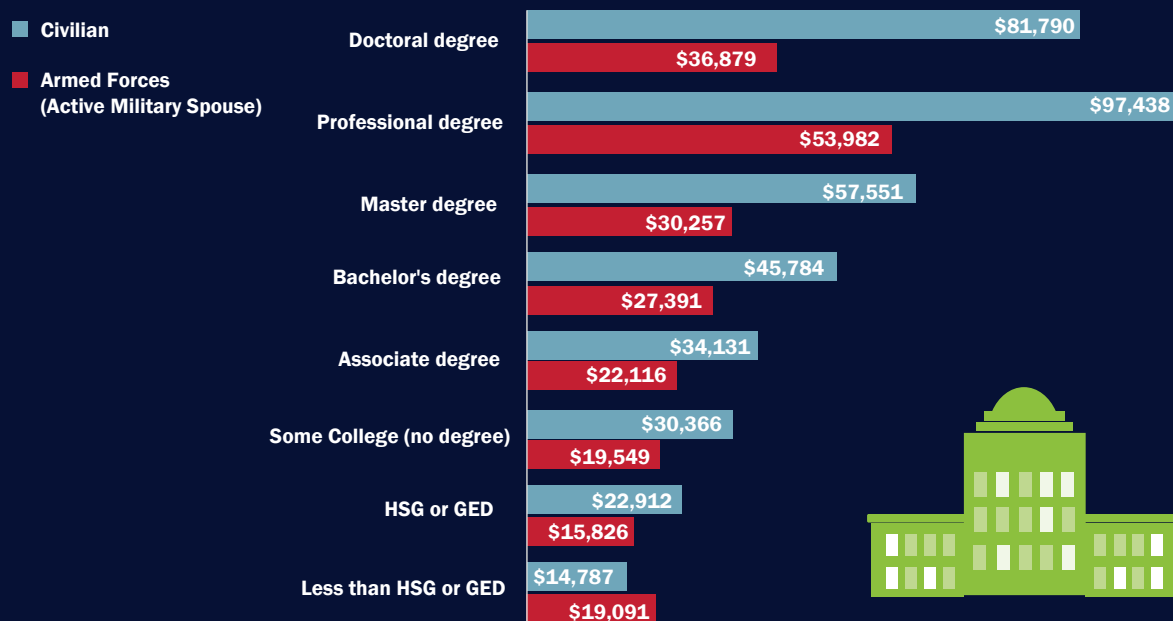


## MILITARY SPOUSE EARNINGS



In 2012, active military female spouses had an average total personal income that was over 38 percent less than that of their civilian counterparts. For those who have moved in the last year, their total income was 44 percent less than their civilian counterparts. Adding children (especially under the age of five) to the analysis increases the difference in average total personal income between active military and civilian female spouses to over 40 percent. Moving in the last year and having children in the home definitely reduce the earning potential for active military female spouses compared to their civilian counterparts.<sup>14</sup>

## MILITARY SPOUSE EARNINGS BY EDUCATION



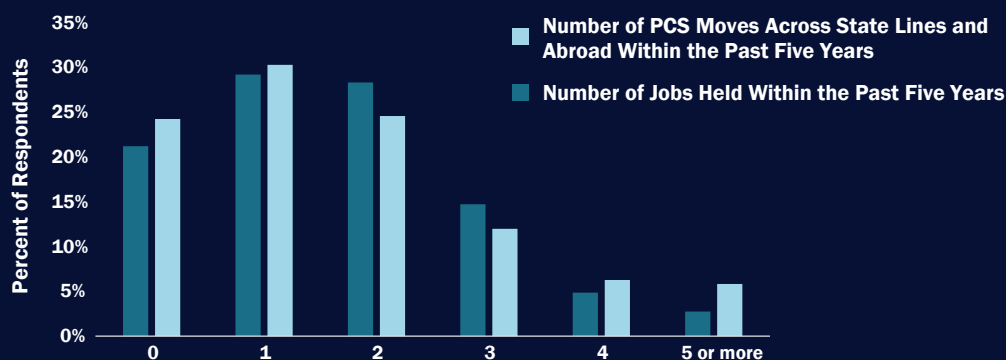
The figure above presents the average total personal income by educational attainment for female spouses both active military and civilian using the 2012 ACS. The average total personal income for civilian female spouses is statistically higher than the average total personal income for active military female spouses across educational attainment levels, with the exception of those with "Less than a High School Diploma or GED" (the active military female spouses that have a less than a high school diploma/GED is a very small sample). The difference between active military and civilian female spouses' incomes increases as the level of educational attainment increases. Thus, the gap between active military and civilian female spouses incomes increase with higher levels of educational attainment. No doubt, the cause of this income gap may be the result of career interruptions caused by PCS moves and deployments.<sup>15</sup>



I left my dream job to follow my husband to Germany, and while it was a tough decision, it was the right one for us; since then, I have maintained a career and made small steps forward, but it is tough to pursue ‘just finding a good job’ as opposed to pursuing my true career ambitions.”

-Army spouse (MOAA and IVMF Military Spouse Employment Survey, 2013)

## MILITARY SPOUSE PCS MOVES AND NUMBER OF JOBS



The figure above presents the number of PCS moves, across state lines or abroad, within the past five years and the number of jobs held in the past five years by female respondents with active duty spouses in the same figure. The trend between the two data series is obvious and expected — the more often respondents move, the more frequently they will change jobs. This is a part of the military lifestyle that, through (assignment and human resource management training) can be lessened (fewer moves, and, thus, fewer job changes) but not completely eliminated. Of course, these PCS moves can adversely affect total personal income and career advancement, if not gainful employment.<sup>16</sup>

# BARRIERS TO MILITARY SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT

- ✓ **FREQUENT RELOCATIONS:** Active duty families move on average once every two to three years—2.4 times as often as civilian families. Military spouses have moved across state lines ten times more frequently than their civilian counterparts, and sometimes overseas.<sup>17</sup> The frequency of relocations increases the number of job changes a military spouse will face, the number of gaps in employment, and chances for repeated periods of unemployment over time; relocations decrease personal and household income, and may limit opportunities for long-term career advancement or chances to accrue seniority or benefits.<sup>17</sup>
- ✓ **EDUCATION:** Military spouses experience unique challenges with starting or completing their education and transferring accrued educational credits. Surveys indicate that about 24 percent had educational debt over \$51,000. The inability to secure consistent employment negatively impacts family finances if there is not enough income to offset the cost.<sup>18</sup>
- ✓ **UNDEREMPLOYMENT:** Due to the labor market (e.g., remote locations or overseas), licensure requirements, the need to take over parenting responsibilities while a spouse is deployed, or because of unpredictable military schedules, military spouses frequently find themselves working in positions for which they are overqualified by virtue of their educational background or work experience. A survey found that 33 percent of respondents reported they were overqualified for their current or most recent position based on their educational background.<sup>19</sup>
- ✓ **LICENSURE TRANSFERABILITY:** As many as 35 percent of spouses work in a field that requires licensure.<sup>20</sup> According to a 2012 survey of active duty spouses, of the 78 percent of spouses who reported they had experienced a military move during their husband or wife's active duty career, only 11 percent acquired a new professional license or credential after their last move.<sup>21</sup>
- ✓ **CHILDCARE ACCESS AND COST:** More than two-thirds (67 percent) say lack of childcare has impacted their ability to pursue employment or education.<sup>22</sup>
- ✓ **UNPREDICTABLE LIFESTYLE:** Military spouses often wrestle with challenges around single parenting due to spouse deployments, separations, or long, unpredictable work schedules. This can create gaps in employment, periods of unemployment, underemployment, or a decision to leave the labor market altogether. When spouses do seek employment their resumes may appear inconsistent due to working in multiple unrelated positions, they may have multiple or lengthy gaps in employment, or they may have worked in jobs that are unrelated to their education or prior work experience.
- ✓ **GENDER BARRIERS:** Active military spouses are predominantly female (93 percent).<sup>23</sup> Gender barriers to employment for both military spouses and civilians is related to industry, pay, propensity to promote in a given field, type of employment (e.g., full or part time), and limited access to benefits such as health and retirement due to the type of employment status (e.g., part-time workers generally do not receive health or retirement benefits). These factors are further compounded for military spouses when combined with frequent relocations, gaps in employment and education, and geographic barriers that impact the labor market and the availability of jobs in the locations where military spouses live.
- ✓ **PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES :** Active military spouses are more likely to have children (18 and under) at home compared to their civilian counterparts (74 percent versus 59 percent).<sup>24</sup> Having young children necessitates the need for childcare, impacting the ability to work, particularly when a spouse is deployed or unable to assist with child care responsibilities.
- ✓ **AGE BARRIERS:** Active military spouses are significantly younger compared to their civilian and veteran counterparts; active duty military spouses are, on average, 33 years of age compared to 47 years of age for civilian spouses and 60 years of age for veteran spouses. Their youth impacts employment because they are more likely to have young children at home, require childcare, have just completed school, or have either no or limited employment experiences prior to becoming a military spouse. For those who remain in the military for the duration of their career, having a younger spouse potentially extends the amount of time a military family might operate with one income.<sup>25</sup>



## OUTLINING A BUSINESS CASE TO HIRE MILITARY SPOUSES

In 2011, the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) outlined ten empirically supported propositions that build a business case for hiring veterans. A specific business case for hiring military spouses, separate from veterans, has yet to be developed partially because there is limited research that identifies their heterogeneous needs, challenges, and capabilities. While military spouses face a number of barriers that impact their employment prospects, they also demonstrate a variety of notable characteristics that differentiate them as assets to employers.

Although there may be some similarities between veterans and military spouses, they are not directly comparable even though military hiring initiatives may target both groups simultaneously. Likewise, there also is a recognition that military life presents unique employment and educational challenges for military spouses. For example, a military spouse may be looking to build or maintain a career within the context of their service members career, whereas transitioning service members and veterans may be seeking a new career or transitioning into employment that leverages their skills acquired during military service. In any case, we argue that military spouses have unique characteristics that employers can leverage to their benefit.

Below, we outline ten abilities, attributes and characteristics of military spouses in an effort to outline a potential business case for hiring them. This list is a combination of (1) attributes identified by military spouses survey respondents, and (2) attributes that were identified through a review of existing literature about military spouses. From these sources we identified ten attributes that were both salient and relevant to the business environment. These attributes complement performance in any competitive business environment.

✓ **RESILIENT:** Military spouses face challenges including family separations, frequent relocations, separation from friends and family, single parenting, and difficulty finding employment or finishing their education. Yet, despite juggling multiple responsibilities they report better coping than the average civilian.<sup>26</sup>

✓ **ADAPTABLE:** Military families live with consistent uncertainty. Spousal deployments can occur without warning; families may be asked to move unexpectedly; benefits and allowances frequently change unexpectedly. Health care, education, spouse employment, childcare, housing all are impacted when military families relocate or when circumstances unexpectedly change. Military spouses adapt to their ever changing circumstances and help their family members adjust as well. Some spouses reinvent their careers by necessity multiple times over the course of a military career.

Often military spouses find themselves in work roles inconsistent with their degree or level of education. Often they are underemployed or may work in volunteer roles instead of paid positions either as a means to keep their resume fresh, to contribute to the community, or to gain work experience. While some work roles may fall outside of the initial field of interest or education such roles may provide them with a range of diverse work experiences, responsibilities, and a broad range of skillsets unlikely in other job candidates. Alternatively, they face unemployment or underemployment. In their 2012 survey of active duty spouses, the DoD found that only 57 percent of employed spouses reported working in the area matching their education or training.<sup>27</sup>

✓ **EDUCATED:** The average military spouse is college educated:

- 84% have some college education or higher
- 25% have a bachelor's degree
- 10% have an advanced degree<sup>28</sup>

According to a survey of active duty spouses, 25 percent of spouses reported they were either enrolled in some type of training or education and an additional 43 percent reported that they would like to be.<sup>29</sup>

✓ **RESOURCEFUL:** Military spouses learn to use the resources they have available to them. Often they create unique and innovative solutions to problems despite obstacles or challenges.

✓ **TEAM-ORIENTED:** Military spouses often live in remote locations, overseas, or otherwise separated from friends, family, or familiar resources. When service members are deployed or away, at-home spouses must rely on each other for assistance and support. Military support infrastructure largely depends on military spouses relying on one another through social activities, help with childcare, and overall social support.

✓ **ENTREPRENEURIAL:** Blue Star Families, in their 2014 Military Family Lifestyle Survey, found that 28 percent of military spouse respondents have either been self-employed or operated their own business. Additionally, 34 percent indicated they had an interest in online or work-from-home opportunities.<sup>30</sup>

✓ **MULTI-TASKERS:** Military spouses—often without warning and frequently out of necessity—find themselves playing multiple roles: part-time single parents, movers, event and social planners, employees, financial managers, and support group leaders. In fact, in a study of military family members, despite juggling multiple responsibilities 75 percent reported feeling confident in their ability to handle problems.<sup>31</sup>



**DIVERSE:** Because the active military spouse community has a larger proportion of ethnic and racial minorities as compared to the broader civilian population, inclusion of military spouses may enhance a corporate diversity strategy. In addition to racial and ethnic diversity, many military spouse have experiences living or working overseas, may speak foreign languages, and may have experiences working in a variety of cultures.<sup>32</sup>



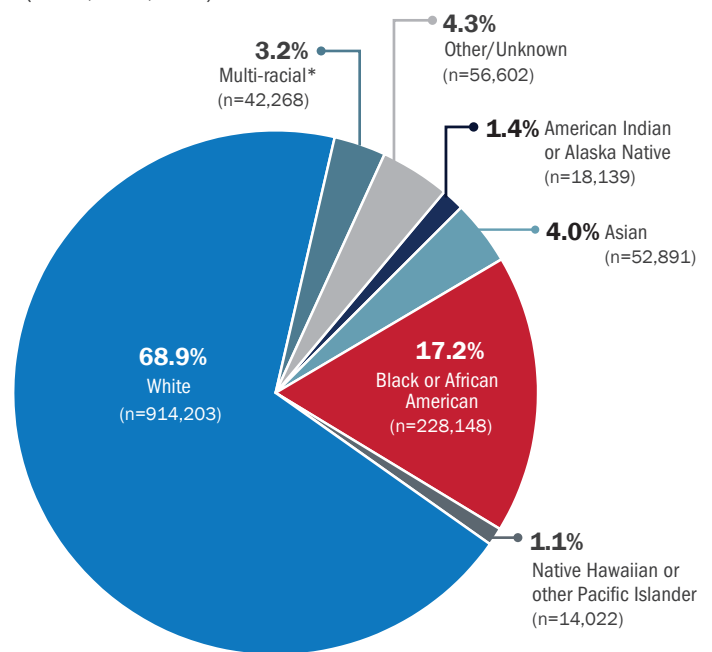
**CIVICALLY ENGAGED:** Military spouses are active community members both within the military broader community. Blue Star Families in their 2014 survey of military families, found that 68 percent of their respondents reported that they had either formally or informally volunteered in the past year. This is significantly higher than the 21.8 percent of the general public who formally volunteered with an organization in 2015 as reported by the Department of Labor.<sup>33</sup>



**SOCIALLY AWARE:** As we've mentioned the military is diverse culturally, ethnically, and geographically. Military spouses often interact with a variety of people of different cultures, backgrounds, ages, ethnicities. The military also has a rank structure that exposes spouses to a variety of social situations including interaction with VIP and various multi-cultural and social experiences. Military spouses are often asked to maintain sensitive information for security reasons and therefore learn norms around operations security and operational safety.

## RACE OF ACTIVE DUTY MEMBERS

(N=1,326,273)



\* The Army does not report "Multi-racial."

Note: Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Source: <http://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2014-Demographics-Report.pdf><sup>34</sup>





**Military comes first and it makes it hard for people to hire when there is a servicemember and children involved. The spouse is usually the one that has to make sacrifices as far as employment”**

**-Army spouse (MOAA and IVMF Military Spouse Employment Survey, 2013)**



## CORPORATE HUMAN RESOURCE EFFORTS

A talent strategy to source, hire, recruit, and retain military spouses may be desirable for many companies, either for business, philanthropic, or patriotic reasons. Hiring military spouses can also complement or enhance an existing corporate diversity and inclusion strategy. There is some indication that stereotypes about military spouses may influence hiring decisions, suggesting that training for human resource professionals and managers may be an important component of a military spouse hiring strategy. For example, recruiters who observe resumes or job applications with numerous and repeated gaps in employment may jump to the conclusion that an applicant is not qualified or is otherwise an undesirable candidate rather than assume that gaps are the result of the military lifestyle.

Likewise, because many businesses view themselves as integral parts of their community; hiring military spouses can prove to be a useful strategy to secure brand loyalty from like-minded customers where customers are military affiliated and immediately see the intrinsic value of hiring veterans and military families. Finally, companies who focus on hiring military spouses find that they often share mutual values such as teamwork, flexibility, patriotism, civic-mindedness, and adaptability.

## HOW CAN CORPORATIONS HELP: TEN SUGGESTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS?

1. **INCLUDE MILITARY SPOUSES** as part of an overall diversity strategy for sourcing, hiring, recruitment, and retention.
2. **IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES** for telework, flex work, part-time, or positions that can move across locations or geographies where possible.
3. **TRAIN YOUR RECRUITERS, HIRING MANAGERS, AND HR PROFESSIONALS** on military cultural competence so they are familiar with the barriers that impact military spouse employment. These efforts should include efforts to reduce stigma with the goal of creating an environment where spouses feel safe to discuss impending moves.
4. **IDENTIFY TRAINING, MENTORSHIP, AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES** that can be leveraged to onboard military spouse hires so they can succeed, advance, and thrive in the workplace
5. **FORM MILITARY AFFINITY GROUPS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION** that enable military spouse employees to interact with and support one another, and provide and receive mentorship. Encourage military spouse employees to self-identify by proactively and visibly destigmatizing their military affiliation.
6. **ATTEND AND PARTICIPATE ON COALITIONS**, task-forces, and planning meetings related to military spouse employment in order to share best-practices, identify top military spouse talent, and develop effective methods of reducing barriers to employment; engage other like-minded businesses, small, medium, and large.
7. **PRIORITIZE HIRING MILITARY SPOUSES AS A UNIQUE GROUP** in addition to veterans and service members, and ensure that this priority is shared across the organization. Facilitate open communication about opportunities within the company if a spouses current or desired position is location flexible.
8. **HIGHLIGHT SUCCESSFULLY SPOUSE EMPLOYEES** using a variety of channels so that their success and yours can be recognized and duplicated.
9. **IDENTIFY EVENTS, EMPLOYEE BENEFITS, SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYEE SERVICES**, and individual people who can mentor, assist, or “adopt” a new military spouse employee on an individual basis
10. **LEVERAGE IN HOUSE OR EXTERNAL CHILD CARE** to minimize child care costs and ensure access to childcare; provide tax-benefits for child-care to mitigate child-care costs.

## CONCLUSION

The value of military spouses as employees has largely gone unrecognized. Unemployment and underemployment among military spouses remains high despite a number of important collaborative efforts on their behalf. The success of prior efforts directed at veterans and service members suggests that a coordinated and sustained effort can impact unemployment rates over time, and defining a business case for hiring service members and veterans has been one component of that success, and therefore we’ve attempted to define a similar business case for military spouses.

Outlining a business case that demonstrates military spouse strengths is a first step in helping corporations, businesses, hiring managers, and human resource professionals understand why hiring military spouses is an advantageous component of a talent diversity strategy. As a group military spouses are educated, motivated to work, and have attributes that employers value. Understanding the demographics of military spouses, their unique challenges and assets is essential to developing a persuasive and successful hiring strategy that both benefits spouses and meets the needs of business simultaneously. Businesses, small, medium, and large all can play a significant role in mitigating the challenges military spouses face with regard to employment. In the process they will increase the talent in their workforce while giving back to the families who have silently served this nation.



## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Office of the President of the United States. *Military Family Month, 2011*. By The President of the United States of America, A Proclamation. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/01/presidential-proclamation-military-family-month-2011>
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy), *2014 Profile of the Military Community*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <http://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2014-Demographics-Report.pdf>. For Veteran spouses estimations, see Veterans Administration's (VA) 2010 National Survey of Veterans.
- <sup>3</sup> Blue Star Families, Department of Research and Policy (September, 2014) *Military Family Lifestyle Survey, Findings and Analysis*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <http://vets.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/BSFReportComprehensiveReport.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> The Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF). The Annual Employment Situation of Veterans. (2012). Syracuse, NY. Retrieved from <http://vets.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Annual-Employment-Report2012.pdf>. Veterans who served since September 2001 saw annual unemployment rise as high as 12.1% in 2011, compared to the 8.7% rate for nonveterans.
- <sup>5</sup> Maury, R. & Stone, B. (2014). Military Spouse Employment Report. Institute for Veterans and Military Families and Military Officers Association of America. Syracuse, NY. Retrieved from [http://vets.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/MilitarySpouseEmploymentReport\\_2013.pdf](http://vets.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/MilitarySpouseEmploymentReport_2013.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> Office of the President of the United States. *Presidential Directive Number Nine. Strengthening our Military Families: Meeting America's Commitment*. (2011). Washington, D.C. Retrieved from [https://www.dol.gov/dol/milfamilies/strengthening\\_our\\_military\\_families.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/dol/milfamilies/strengthening_our_military_families.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> Maury, R. & Stone, B. (2014).
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid
- <sup>9</sup> Hosek, J. & Wadsworth, S. M. (2013). Economic conditions of military families. *The Future of Children*, 23(2), 41-46. Retrieved from [http://futureofchildren.org/publications/docs/23\\_02\\_FullJournal.pdf](http://futureofchildren.org/publications/docs/23_02_FullJournal.pdf)
- <sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center. *2012 Survey of Active Duty Spouses*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <http://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Surveys/ADSS1201-Briefing-Support-Deployment-Reintegration-PCS-WellBeing-Education-Employment.pdf>; Maury, R. & Stone, B. (2014).
- <sup>11</sup> Maury, R. & Stone, B. (2014).
- <sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy), *2014 Profile of the Military Community*.
- <sup>13</sup> Office of the President of the United States. *Presidential Directive Number Nine. Strengthening our Military Families: Meeting America's Commitment*. (2011).
- <sup>14</sup> Maury, R. & Stone, B. (2014).
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid
- <sup>17</sup> Clever, M. & Segal, D.R. (2013). *The Demographics of Military Children and Families. The Future of Children*, 23(2), 13-39. Retrieved from [http://futureofchildren.org/publications/docs/23\\_02\\_FullJournal.pdf](http://futureofchildren.org/publications/docs/23_02_FullJournal.pdf); U.S. Department of the Treasury and U.S. Department of Defense. 2012. Supporting our Military Families: Best Practices for Streamlining Occupational Licensing Across State Lines. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from [http://archive.defense.gov/home/pdf/Occupational\\_Licensing\\_and\\_Military\\_Spouses\\_Report\\_vFINAL.PDF](http://archive.defense.gov/home/pdf/Occupational_Licensing_and_Military_Spouses_Report_vFINAL.PDF)
- <sup>18</sup> Maury, R. & Stone, B. (2014).
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid
- <sup>20</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury and U.S. Department of Defense. 2012. Supporting our Military Families: Best Practices for Streamlining Occupational Licensing Across State Lines.
- <sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center. *2012 Survey of Active Duty Spouses*.
- <sup>22</sup> Blue Star Families, Department of Research and Policy (September, 2014).
- <sup>23</sup> U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy), *2014 Profile of the Military Community*.
- <sup>24</sup> Maury & Stone, B. (2014).
- <sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy), *2014 Profile of the Military Community*.
- <sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center. *2012 Survey of Active Duty Spouses*.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid
- <sup>28</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center. 2008 *Survey of Active Duty Spouses*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <http://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Surveys/ADSS1201-Briefing-Support-Deployment-Reintegration-PCS-WellBeing-Education-Employment.pdf>; Similar percentages have been found with federal data such as the American Community Survey: 78% obtained some college education or higher, 25% obtained a bachelor's degree, and 7% obtained a master's degree, see Maury, R. & Stone, B. (2014).
- <sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center. *2012 Survey of Active Duty Spouses*.
- <sup>30</sup> Blue Star Families, Department of Research and Policy (September, 2014).
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid
- <sup>32</sup> Clever, M. & Segal, D.R. (2013). At any given time, roughly 1% of the active duty military is living overseas; over the course of a military career the majority of military families will experience either an overseas move or a deployment.
- <sup>33</sup> Blue Star Families, Department of Research and Policy (September, 2014); U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2014, February). Volunteering in the United States 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm>
- <sup>34</sup> U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy), *2014 Profile of the Military Community*.

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