Blue Star Families: 2014 Military Family Lifestyle Survey

The lifestyle survey involved 6,200 respondents including military spouses, service members, and 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.

The following is a series of bar graphs related to the top 5 issues ranked as most concerned by respondents in the study. Military pay and retirement benefit changes are the top two concerned for all respondents. Spouse employment, military life uncertainty, and disability backlog were key issues that varied by the subgroup.

The first bar graph reports the top five issues reported by military spouses specifically. 73% cited military pay/benefits, 63% cited change in retirement, 43% cited military spouse employment, 42% cited deployment impact on children, and 32% cited military lifestyle uncertainty as their concerns.

The second bar graph reports the top five issues reported by service members specifically. 75% cited military pay/benefits, 75% cited change in retirement, 41% cited military lifestyle uncertainty, 40% cited op tempo/deployment/training, and 29% cited military spouse employment as their concerns.

The third bar graph reports the top five issues reported by veterans specifically. 69% cited change in retirement, 64% cited military pay/benefits, 42% cited disability claim backlog, 41% cited disconnect in military and civilians, and 30% cited PTSD/combat stress/TBI as their concerns.

The following column is a series of statistics detailing the top stressors associated with the military. 69% cited deployments, and 51% cited isolation from family and friends. 67% reported that a lack of child care has impacted their ability to pursue employment or education. 43% reported having a full or part time job. 58% of respondent who are not working would like to be employed outside the home. 80% reported being “extremely happy,” “very happy,” or “happy” with their relationship.

The following column is a series of statistics outlining the service member’s reasons for joining the military. 95% reported that they joined to serve their country. 74% also joined the military to receive educational benefits. 63% joined the military to learn skills for civilian jobs. 66% said that they would be transferring post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to their spouse or child. 61% said they attended their transition GPS class in the 6 months before their separation date.

The following column is a series of statistics regarding the transition process of veterans. Transition choices were influence by family, employment, health care and education. 60% said they used their VA benefits during transition. 53% described their transition out of active duty as “difficult.” 38% of individuals who are transitioning in the next two years have used or are currently using Transition GPS programming. 29% felt unprepared for their transition from service.

The next page of statistics is entitled “Snapshot of the Military Lifestyle.” 91% believe in the importance of serving in the military or other national service.

The following is a series of statistics relayed to deployments. 88% report between 1 and 5 deployments since 9/11. 47% have been deployed 13-36 months since 9/11. 41% have been separated between 13-36 months due to training, temporary, duty, and reasons other than deployment.

The following is a series of statistics related to moving. 69% have moved between 1 and 6 times in the continental U.S. 42% have moved outside of the U.S.

The following is a series of statistics related to civic health. 23% would be “very likely” to recommend military service to a young person who is close to them. 62% have “no” or “hardly any” confidence in the federal government. 68% have volunteered in the past year.

The following column is a series of statistics outlining the stressors involved in the military lifestyle. The top stressors related to the military lifestyle include deployment or separation, financial, employment or work, and isolation from friends or family. 39% of military spouses feel stress most of, or all of, the time. 30% of service members feel stressed most of, or all of, the time. The top stressors during deployment are household responsibilities, isolation or lack of social support, emotional or mental health issues, and parenting and child issues.

The following column is a series of statistics regarding financial readiness. The top 3 obstacles to financial security, and the percent of respondents who reported them, are: 40% cited spouse employment, 38% cited uncertainty in military lifestyle, and 34% cited uncertainty in potential changes in benefits. 60% feel that their current financial condition causes “some stress” or a “great deal of stress.” 36% owe greater than $5,001 on their credit cards. 36% agree that the cost of rent is higher than their BAH allowance.

The following column is a series of statistics regarding military children. The top 5 impacts of deployment on children, both positive and negative, are reported. Of the positive impacts, 60% reported adaptability, 54% reported increased independence, 53% reported personal growth, 53% reported increased resilience, and 46% reported increased pride. 11% have children who have joined the military, compared to the 1% who serve in the general population.

The following column is a series of statistics related to mental health and wellness. 1/3 of respondents have received mental health counseling in the past year. 36% of veterans with PTSD say they didn’t seek treatment because they didn’t think it would help. 35% of service members with PTSD didn’t seek treatment because they didn’t think it would help. The next object is a bar graph that reported the percentage of respondents who had thought that they “would be better off dead or hurting themselves in some way.” 13% of veterans reported they had, 9% of active members reported they had, and 8% of spouses reported that they had had these thoughts.

A set of statistics related to caregivers. 32% have provided care for someone in the past twelve months. 15% spend 40 or more hours per week providing care, equivalent to a full-time job.