This page is a series of findings and statistics from the 2015 Military Family Lifestyle Survey conducted by Blue Star Families. The survey involved 6,291 respondents including military spouses, service members, and veterans. Military families are assets to national defense and local communities. They are central to the health and capability of the all-volunteer force and are good neighbors actively engaged in making their civilian communities great places to live. Blue Star Families annual military family lifestyle survey provides a comprehensive understanding of what it means to serve as a military family and is a blueprint for strengthening America by supporting military families.

The following bar graphs explore the top 5 issues ranked as most concerning by the respondents. Military pay and retirement benefit changes are the top two concerns for all respondents. Spouse employment, military suicide and veteran employment round out the top 5 issues overall from all survey respondents.

The first bar graph reports the top 5 concerns according to military spouses. 65% cited military pay/benefits, 51% cited change in retirement, 40% military spouse employment, 37% cited deployment impact on children, and 28% cited children’s educational opportunities as their top concerns.

The second bar graph reports the top 5 concerns according to service members. 65% cited military pay/benefits, 63% cited change in retirement, 37% cited veteran employment, 31% cited op tempo/deployment/training, and 31% cite military lifestyle uncertainty as their top concerns.

The third bar graph reports the top 5 concerns according to veterans. 58% cited change in retirement, 57% cited military pay/benefits, 38% cited service member and veteran suicide, 34% cited disability claim backlog, and 34% cited veteran employment as their top concerns.

The first column reports a series of statistics related to spouse employment. Of the top challenges to employment, 52% reported poor job market alignment, and 36% reported service member’s job/work obligations. 45% have a full-time or part-time job. 58% are not working but would like to be employed outside the home. 75% reported that being a military spouse had a negative impact on their ability to pursue a career.

The second column reports a series of statistics related to financial readiness. Of the top 3 obstacles to financial security, 42% reported uncertainty in military life, 40% reported spouse employment, and 39% reported benefits uncertainty/changes. 14% of active duty service members do not regularly contribute to a retirement account. 60% of post-9/11 service members feel financially secure. 78% are paying more than BAH for housing; 22% of those are paying $400 or more.

The third column reports a series of statistics related to the transition out of active duty. 28% described their overall transition from active duty to veteran as “difficult” or “very difficult.” 43% of veterans had some form of TAP and 57% agreed that it prepared them to successfully transition from active duty to civilian life. 87% feel the military has prepared me to be a leader in the civilian workplace and community. 97% feel pride from accomplishments during military service.

The second page is a series of findings and statistics providing a snapshot of the military lifestyle. 45% would recommend military service to their own child.

The first set of statistics is related to views of service. 90% feel the general public doesn’t truly understand the sacrifices made by service members and their families. 85% joined the military for financial security. 57% would recommend military service to a young person who is close to us.

The second set of statistics is related to deployments. 60% of respondents were deployed more than 12 months since 9/11. 52% of respondents were away from home more than 12 months due to training, temporary duty, and reasons other than deployment. 50% of respondents with children reported having a child who experienced moderate or greater worry as a result of a parent’s deployment. 21% of respondents experienced relationship challenges in the past year related to worry over future deployments.

The third set of statistics is related to moving. 73% incurred unexpected expenses as a result of the military lifestyle; of those, 86% resulted from moving/PCs. 60% have moved 3 or more times in the continental US. 52% have moved/lived outside of the US.

The top set of the middle column is a series of statistics related to benefits. 15% of those in the survey responded that removing the BAH support for dependents from the GI Bill benefit would impact the amount of time they or their service member planned to stay in the service. 40% would be less likely to serve a full, 20-year career if the retirement plan was changed to a defined contribution retirement plan. 45% were not at all, or not very confident, in receiving their healthcare benefits post-retirement. 76% have transferred or plan to transfer their post-9/11 GI Bill to spouse or child.

The bottom set of middle column is a series of statistics related to the civ-mil divide. 46% do not always have enough information to vote in local elections. 59% had “no” or “hardly any” confidence in the federal government. 65% volunteered last year; of those 70% volunteered in their civilian communities. 94% indicated that desire to serve country was a reason to join the military.

The top set of the third column is a series of statistics related to childcare. Finding childcare that meets needs increases both active duty and spouse satisfaction with the military lifestyle. 27% spent $500 or more per month on childcare. 35% are not able to find childcare that fits their current situation.

The middle set of the third column is a series of statistics related to caregivers. 32% of respondents identified themselves as caregivers. 11% are providing care to active duty spouse or child over 18. 37% are providing care to a parent or grandparent.

The bottom set of the third column is a series of statistics related to suicide. 7% of active duty spouses admit to suicidal thoughts during time in the military, 2% of which were in the past year. 7% of veterans admit to suicidal thoughts during time in the military, 4% of which were in the past year. 10% of active duty service members admit to suicidal thoughts during time in the military, 3% of which were in the past year. 14% of post-9/11 veterans admit to suicidal thoughts during time in the military, 7% of which were in the past year.