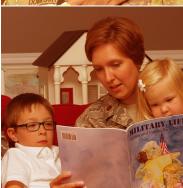
RESEARCH BRIEF | APRIL 2021

THE IMPACTS & OPPORTUNITIES OF MILITARY LIFE FOR MILITARY CHILDREN







Total Force Families¹

OVER 1.6 MILLION military children in the U.S.

AGE OF MILITARY CHILDREN

38% 0-5 vrs.

32% 6-11 yrs. ■ 24% 12-18 yrs.

■ 6% 19-22 vrs.

11 YRS. OR **YOUNGER**

ACTIVE DUTY

977,191 active duty military children

36.5% ACTIVE DUTY HAVE CHILDREN

MILITARY CHILD POPULATION

Single, with children (4.0%) Married to a civilian, with children (30.1%) Dual-military, with children (2.4%)



674,223 selected reserve children

40.9% SELECTED RESERVE HAVE CHILDREN

Single, with children (9.1%) Married to a civilian, with children (30.2%) Dual-military, with children (1.6%)

Veterans Families²

A 2014 STUDY ESTIMATED 2.1 MILLION post-9/11 veteran children

LIMITED on children

UNKNOWN

what proportion of veterans have children.

RESEARCH of veterans



EXPERIENCES OF MILITARY CHILDREN³

Can vary widely, but there are some commonalities.



- ▶ Military service (e.g., rank, branch, deployments)
- ▶ Military status (e.g., active duty, veteran)
- ► Family structure (e.g., dual-military, caregiving families)
- ▶ Child characteristics (e.g., age, gender)
- ► Child needs (e.g., special educational, age-related)
- ▶ Parent needs (e.g., mental health care, employment)
- ▶ Family characteristics (e.g., race, religion)

COMMON ELEMENTS

Transitions

(Such as relocations, family reintegration, military to civilian transition)

▶ RELOCATIONS

School & community transitions

active duty family respondents reported their oldest child is thriving at school 5

IT IS ESTIMATED
THE AVERAGE
MILITARY CHILD
WILL MOVE SIX
TO NINE TIMES
DURING THEIR
K-12 EDUCATION.⁴

► FAMILY REINTEGRATION

Military to civilian transition

41%

post-9/11 veteran respondents reported reintegration to family during military to civilian transition was difficult or very difficult ⁶

Separations

(Can be due to training, schooling, deployment, etc.)

32% of active duty family respondents who had recently geobached reported doing so for their children's education ⁷



44% of active duty spouse respondents cited isolation from family and friends as a stressor ⁸

IMPACTS OF SERVICE ON MILITARY CHILDREN⁹

TOP 5 IMPACTS OF DEPLOYMENT 10

Increased independence (33%)
Adaptability (29%)

Resilience (29%)

Personal growth (20%)

Increased pride (19%)

Worry (50%)
Separation anxiety (50%)
Difficulty sleeping/nightmares (39%)
Irritability (33%)
Aggression (20%)

SPOTLIGHT ON STRENGTHS 11

Parents report adaptability, openness, and kindness



"Our daughter is adaptable to new situations. She is able to transition into new routines and surroundings with ease."

"My children respect and value cultures and regions that are new to them."

"They have learned kindness since they know how it feels to be the new kid."

Greater sense of civic responsibility in parents linked to more positive impacts in children



IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH 12



IDENTIFICATION & EDUCATION WITHIN COMMUNITIES

 Providers, educators, neighbors must first be aware of military-connected children within their community.

Identification of military children can result in the following:

- Improved connections to available resources and access to care
- Encouraging community members to provide extra assistance to children and families during times of transition
- Need for increased civilian understanding of military culture and military child experiences to strengthen social support and sense of community belonging

The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine recommends that DoD play a role in encouraging civilian understanding and focus on addressing stereotypes and misinformation.

To address gaps,

RESEARCHERS, POLICYMAKERS, AND PROVIDERS SHOULD FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING:

- Children of veterans
- Long-term impacts of military service on children
- Children of Selected Reserve
- Children in caregiving families, blended families, dual-military families
- Military children with special needs
- ► LGBTQ+ military children
- Military children in racially/ethnically diverse families



Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) is the first national institute in higher education singularly focused on advancing the lives of the nation's military, veterans and their families. Through its professional staff and experts, the IVMF delivers leading programs in career and entrepreneurship education and training, while also conducting actionable research, policy analysis, and program evaluations. The IVMF also supports veterans and their families, once they transition back into civilian life, as they navigate the maze of social services in their communities, enhancing access to this care working side-by-side with local providers across the country. The Institute is committed to advancing the postservice lives of those who have served in America's armed forces and their families. For more information, visit ivmf.syracuse.edu.

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SUGGESTED CITATION

Linsner, R.K., Maury, R.V., (2021, April). Research Brief: The Impacts and Opportunities of Military Life for Military Children. Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

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- ⁴ It is possible the average number of moves is lower since some families may leave service or geobach to provide or ensure stability in their children's education.
 - Stat from DoDEA: https://www.dodea.edu/partnership/about.cfm#:~:text=As%20military%20families%20 transition%20from,times%20during%20a%20school%20career.5
 - 49% of active duty family respondents reported their oldest child has experienced at least 3 school transitions due to a PCS move. Analyses conducted with unpublished data from 2019 Blue Star Families' annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey.
- Stat from Blue Star Families (2021). 2020 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Comprehensive Report. Blue Star Families. For more information, please see https://bluestarfam.org/survey
- ⁶ Stat from Blue Star Families (2017). 2016 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Comprehensive Report. Blue Star Families. For more information, please see https://bluestarfam.org/survey
- 7 "Geo-baching" is defined here as living apart from service member voluntarily, not including times of deployment. Recently geo-bached refers to the five years prior to survey fielding. Stat from Blue Star Families (2020). 2019 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Comprehensive Report. Blue Star Families. For more information, please see https://bluestarfam.org/survey
- 8 Stat from Blue Star Families (2020). 2019 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Comprehensive Report. Blue Star Families. For more information, please see https://bluestarfam.org/survey
- 9 Impacts of Service: There are both positive and negative impacts of the military lifestyle on children. While it is important to take a strengths-based approach, there are challenges for military children and their families. The impacts of individual and cumulative stressors, short- and long-term stressors, adverse experiences (e.g., exposure to trauma), etc. vary widely.
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- ¹⁰ Impacts of Deployment: Blue Star Families (2016). 2015 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Comprehensive Report. Blue Star Families. For more information, please see https://bluestarfam.org/survey
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