



Family Health and Propensity to Recommend Military Service

Report Examines Diverging Experiences Across the Force, Impacts on Military Families

ARLINGTON, VA (June 26, 2024) – [Military Family Advisory Network](#), a leading national nonprofit for military and veteran families, released the findings of its [2023 Military Family Support Programming Survey](#) today.

Capturing the experiences of over 10,000 respondents, the results provide an in-depth look into the military community’s recurring and emerging support needs. Categorizing findings into four pillars of family well-being — Healthy Bodies, Healthy Families, Healthy Homes, and Healthy Futures — the report dives below the surface of critical issues like child care, employment, family relationships, financial readiness, food insecurity, health and well-being, housing, and transition out of the military.

“At MFAN, everything we do starts and ends with data. Our Military Family Support Programming Survey is designed not only to inform our work, but to provide actionable data for the whole community and a roadmap for change when, where, and for whom it is needed most,” said Shannon Razzadin, MFAN’s chief executive officer. “Our findings show that while many are thriving in service, the experiences are wide-ranging and consequential. Respondents’ insights illuminate areas of growth and opportunity for improvement, and ultimately reinforce that taking care of military families isn’t just the right thing to do, it’s a national security imperative.”

The fifth iteration of this biennial survey, presented by [Oracle Health](#), is designed for action; offering recommendations to strengthen the well-being of military families, promote military-civilian relations, and sustain the long-term viability of military service. Findings point to shifts in how respondents wish to receive support and the expectations of the newest generation of military families.

“It is important to hear and understand the needs of those who are defending our country and their families,” said Seema Verma, executive vice president and general manager, Oracle Health and Life Sciences. “Oracle Health’s work with MFAN is helping to ensure the voices and experiences of military families are captured, reported, and used to help drive policies and services that have a direct impact on the health, wellness, and readiness of our armed forces.”

The 2023 Military Family Support Programming Survey is MFAN's most rigorous, well-rounded survey yet, drawing respondents from all 50 states, four U.S. territories, and 19 countries — with 76.4% of respondents from the enlisted ranks. The 2023 methodology was approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) and MFAN continued to lean in on its mixed-method approach, enabling researchers to hear from respondents in their own words while integrating validated scales to allow for comparison across different populations.

“There is no greater honor than reading and analyzing these raw truths from our respondents. The trust they put in MFAN is something we take seriously, and we know that families will see themselves in this report,” said Dr. Gabby L’Esperance, MFAN’s director of insights. “To the families who made time to share your experiences, thank you. This report is the tip of the iceberg and we will continue to dissect these findings, glean insights, and report our learnings in the months ahead.”

Key Findings:

- **The rate of decline in the propensity to recommend service has slowed but remains a key concern.** In 2023, 57.6% of respondents would recommend military service to someone considering it, compared to 62.9% in 2021 and 74.5% in 2019.
- **Family health has declined since 2021, with poor family health nearly doubling.** In 2023, nearly a third (27.9%) of respondents indicated high levels of excellent, 45.6% moderate, and 26.5% poor family well-being. In 2021, only 14.0% of respondents indicated poor family health. Respondents with poor or moderate family health were significantly less likely to recommend military life than those with excellent family health.
- **Families who PCS’d in the last two years were more likely to report negative family well-being.** Most families reported between \$500 and \$1,000 in unreimbursed expenses. Families are also struggling to find suitable housing as one in five respondents (20.6%) reported spending between 31-60 nights in temporary lodging.
- **One in four respondents (24.9%) have less than \$500 in emergency savings.** The five most reported barriers to savings include the cost of living and inflation, income constraints and lack of financial resources, unexpected expenses, moving or PCS, and dependents and/or extended family.
- **Food insecurity continues to be a pressing issue.** One in five respondents experience food insecurity; increasing to one in four among active duty families.

- **Families are spending well beyond their Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), and many are housing cost burdened.** Nearly 80 percent (79.8%) of respondents carry the burden of paying more than they can comfortably afford for housing. Over half (53.0%) of actively serving family respondents reported paying \$251 or above their BAH for rent/mortgage or utilities.
- **Spouse employment is a significant contributor to family well-being and experiences are wide-ranging.** More than half (56.5%) of active duty spouses are employed (39.1% full-time and 17.4% part-time), 21.8% are unemployed and looking for work, and 16.5% indicated they were unemployed and not looking for work. Active duty spouses who report full-time employment are more likely to report gross household income above \$75,000 and are statistically more likely to report excellent family well-being.

The full results and data release video may be found [here](#).

On June 27, 2024, MFAN will convene business, government, and nonprofit leaders at the 2024 Solutions Summit, presented by CVS Health. During this event, participants will use the data collected from the survey to build frameworks for meaningful change in both civilian and military communities.

The 2023 Military Family Support Programming Survey was fielded from October 2 to December 10, 2023. Totaling 10,149 active duty military personnel, National Guard and Reserve, veteran, retiree, and their family member respondents, the study is the largest and most comprehensive of its kind.

The survey is presented by Oracle Health, with support from Amazon, Wells Fargo, Wounded Warrior Project, Deloitte, CVS Health, Association of Military Banks of America, and Magellan Federal.

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About Military Family Advisory Network

The Military Family Advisory Network (MFAN) envisions a world where all military-connected families are empowered to thrive. MFAN's mission is to understand and amplify the needs of military-connected families and inspire data-informed change. Visit mfan.org.