

HIRING OUR HEROES

U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION

MILITARY SPOUSE CAREER JOURNEYS

EXAMINING ENTREPRENEURSHIP, REMOTE WORK, AND UPSKILLING
AS DRIVERS OF ECONOMIC SUCCESS FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

Grow with Google | [Google.org](https://www.google.org)

PROJECT PARTNERS



Hiring Our Heroes (HOH), a program of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, launched in March 2011 as a nationwide initiative to help veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses find meaningful employment opportunities. Working with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s vast network of state and local chambers and strategic partners from the public and private sectors, our goal is to connect America’s veteran and military spouse talent with businesses of all sizes across the country.



Burning Glass Technologies delivers job market analytics that empower employers, workers, and educators to make data-driven decisions. Our artificial intelligence technology analyzes hundreds of millions of job postings and real-life career transitions to provide insight into workforce demand patterns. This real-time strategic intelligence offers crucial insights, such as which jobs are most in demand, the specific skills employers need, and the career directions that offer the highest potential for workers. For more information, visit burning-glass.com.

AUTHORS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The project team, including Meredith Lozar, Elizabeth O’Brien, Bronagh Friel, Andrew Dunckelman, Michael St. Germain, Melissa Nitti, and Rory Brosius were invaluable in developing this work. We would like to extend gratitude to Ann Duffett and Steve Farkas for support throughout the research project.

Grow with Google

Grow with Google helps ensure that the opportunities created by technology are available to everyone. Through free tools and training, we help people get the right skills to find jobs they want, advance their careers, and grow their businesses. Since launching in 2017, we've trained more than four million Americans on digital skills.

We're proud to support the veteran and military family community with free tools and resources to help them build meaningful careers and businesses. Whether it's finding a job, building a portable career, or growing a small business, Grow with Google has tools and resources to help. Visit grow.google/militaryspouse to learn more.

Google.org

Google.org, Google's philanthropy, supports nonprofits that address humanitarian issues and apply scalable, data-driven innovation to solving the world's biggest challenges. We accelerate their progress by connecting them with a unique blend of support that includes funding, products, and technical expertise from Google volunteers. We engage with these believers-turned-doers who make a significant impact on the communities they represent, and whose work has the potential to produce meaningful change. We want a world that works for everyone—and we believe technology and innovation can move the needle in four key areas: education, economic opportunity, inclusion, and crisis response.

FOREWORD

Military spouses are resilient leaders with diverse skill sets and perspectives, making them a powerful, and often untapped talent pool. As Grow with Google and Google.org work to bring economic opportunities to all Americans, we've been intentional about ensuring that the military community is included in our efforts. Military spouses are highly educated, have an entrepreneurial spirit, and are motivated to pursue education for portable career opportunities.

In conversations with advocates from the nonprofit, government, and private sectors we learned that there just wasn't enough actionable information about entrepreneurship, upskilling, and remote work--all areas which intuitively felt like potential opportunities to increase economic opportunity for military spouses. With a grant from Google.org and the invaluable partnership of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes Initiative, we embarked on research we hoped would identify barriers but perhaps more importantly, identify where caring stakeholders could help. Our hope is to provide actionable findings that can inform future initiatives designed to empower spouses in their careers and entrepreneurial endeavors. Though this research was conducted before COVID-19 changed so much about our lives, many of the research findings hold true as many Americans will look to rebuild or reshape their career trajectories, and will help inform Google's work going forward.

On behalf of Google and Google.org, I'd like to thank Hiring our Heroes for their incredible partnership, Burning Glass Technologies for their research expertise, and all of the military spouses who participated in this research. We could not do this work without these key partners and their crucial input every step of the way. I'd also like to thank the military spouses of Google who bring spirit, grit, and talent to our company every day.



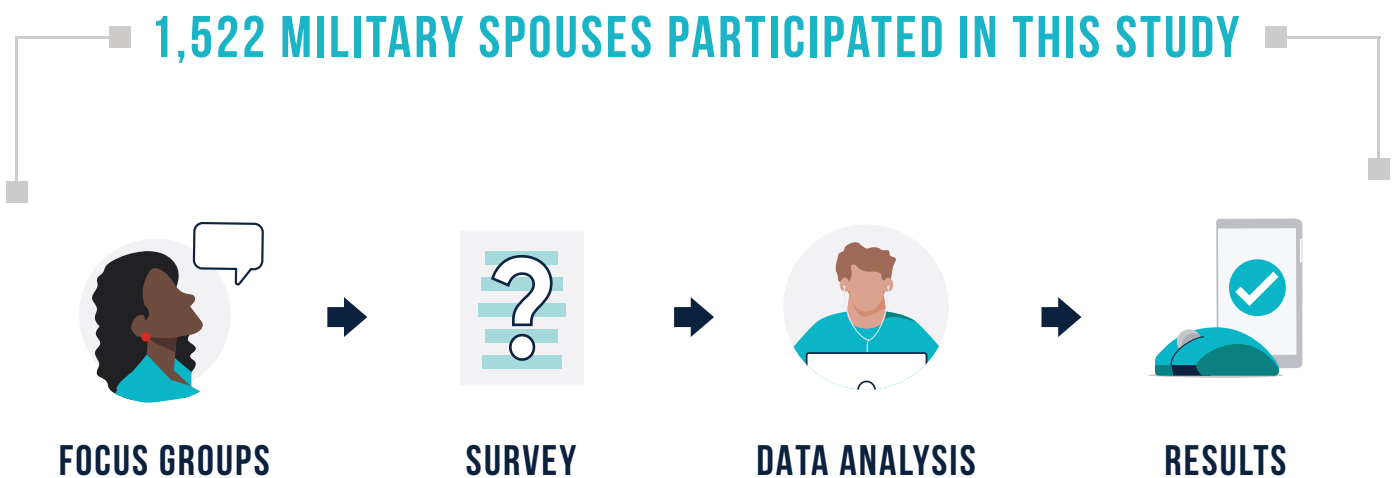
Lisa Gevelber

VP, Grow with Google, Google for Startups, and Americas Marketing, Google

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this project, Burning Glass and Hiring Our Heroes, with support from Grow with Google and Google.org, conducted a mixed methods study of barriers to and opportunities for full employment, entrepreneurship, and economic mobility for military spouses. The study consists of a survey of 1,522 military spouses, and also draws from qualitative focus groups and quantitative analysis of Burning Glass' job postings data to illuminate viable career options for spouses. This report identifies challenges military spouses face in launching and growing businesses, participating in remote work, and developing skill sets for in-demand occupations.

In addition to this report, and the policymaker recommendations included, this research effort aims to supply military spouses, employers, and other stakeholders with actionable solutions to address these challenges. Together, Hiring Our Heroes and Grow with Google will use these results and implications to create pathways that will pave the way for military spouses to experience increased success in their entrepreneurial, remote work, and upskilling endeavors. In addition, we are committed to working with partners and policymakers to implement changes that will positively impact military spouse career trajectories for years to come.





KEY FINDINGS

- **Military spouses face under- and unemployment challenges that contribute to a loss of talent in our all-volunteer force.** Spouses rarely have a work situation they would consider ideal, and choose to live apart from their service members for education or job opportunities. In some cases, service members choose to leave military service in support of spouse's work or career.
- **Navigating the resources to find employment opportunities can be a challenge for military spouses.** While military spouses rely on military-specific organizations as a general resource when seeking employment, they are much more likely to actually look for a job using online job boards or social media.
- **Entrepreneurship in the form of both business ownership and self-employment are viable options for military spouses.** Initial investments in their businesses were modest: Most were below \$1,000 and the overwhelming majority relied on personal savings to fund their businesses. The skills military spouses felt they needed to build the most were building a website or social media presence in order to build a client base. Most spouses who started their own business said it was primarily due to the need for flexibility; however, most spouses who no longer have their own business had to discontinue due to Permanent Change of Station (PCS) rather than a lack of profitability.
- **While there was evidence of skills mismatches between military spouses and employment opportunities, our findings show opportunities within in-demand career areas that match military spouses' skills.** Military spouses felt that at times they had avoided applying for a job because they didn't have the right skills, but had also experienced taking a job that was uninteresting, low-paying, or didn't use all the skills they did have. Only one quarter of military spouses expressed interest in STEM positions that are frequently remote. When looking at the career areas that military spouses did express an interest in and were qualified for, we found alignment with in-demand job opportunities in career areas such as Business Management and Operations, Human Resources, and Marketing and Public Relations.
- **Military spouses in our research were both highly educated and highly likely to pursue additional training or education.** Three out of every four respondents had at least a 4-year degree, and approximately 80% had already pursued additional training or education during their time as a military spouse. Despite this, a majority were still "very likely" to pursue further training or education to improve their jobs or careers in the future. Of those who are very or somewhat likely to pursue additional training or education, a plurality (41%) said that their most important consideration would be that they get skills they could use no matter where they live.



POLICY IMPLICATIONS



REMOTE & FLEXIBLE WORK

- **Increase opportunities for remote and flexible work** by using online platforms to target and prioritize occupations with remote work opportunities.
- **Provide employers with tools** to offer more remote work opportunities, and support local education and training programs that enable remote work and distance learning.



RESOURCES

- **Streamline employment resources available to military spouses** and provide opportunities for jobs across career fields and levels of experience.
- **Facilitate online coaching and mentoring** and encourage commanders and senior leaders to increase focus on military spouse employment.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- **Provide resources and training to encourage entrepreneurship**, and increase transparency in loan options to provide targeted support for military spouse business owners.
- **Showcase a range of military spouse entrepreneurs** to underscore different types of entrepreneurship.



TRAINING

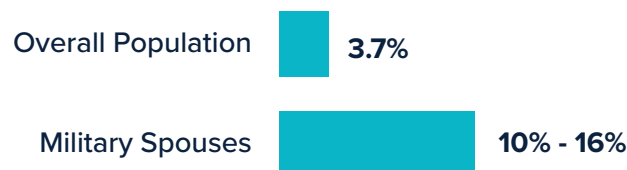
- **Target training and education** to help military spouses find sustainable employment.
- **Focus on training for in-demand job opportunities**, including STEM positions, and support online and accelerated training programs and stackable credentials.

INTRODUCTION & PROJECT OVERVIEW

Military spouses face a range of barriers to full employment and economic mobility. Despite a strong employment market overall, military spouses have higher than average unemployment, with some research estimating the unemployment rate for spouses to be between 10 and 16%* compared to the overall unemployment rate of 3.7%¹ as of 2019. This is due to a range of factors including frequent moves, increased family responsibilities associated with partners facing frequent deployment, and being placed in rural areas or other locations where job prospects may be fewer and more narrow and where military spouses' social and professional ties may be weaker. One report found that, on average, the net present value of an individual military spouse's losses relative to a civilian counterpart over a 20-year military career amounts to almost \$190,000 in lost income.²

This project, *Examining Entrepreneurship, Remote Work, and Upskilling as Drivers of Economic Success for Military Spouses*, is a mixed methods study of barriers to and opportunities for employment for military spouses conducted by Hiring Our Heroes, Burning Glass, and with support from Grow With Google and Google.org. This includes an examination of current challenges to full employment and entrepreneurship faced by military spouses, and opportunities for economic mobility based on qualitative and quantitative data. **The quantitative data included in this report are drawn from a survey of 1,522 military spouses** and analysis of Burning Glass' proprietary job postings data. Qualitative data is included from focus groups, individual interviews, and open-ended response fields included in the survey.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES



¹ "Military Spouses in the Labor Market," The Council of Economic Advisers, May 2018. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Military-Spouses-in-the-Labor-Market.pdf>

² "Military Spouses in the Labor Market," The Council of Economic Advisers, May 2018. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Military-Spouses-in-the-Labor-Market.pdf>

* The Bureau of Labor Statistics does not measure unemployment rates specifically for military spouses. Different researchers have estimated different rates which is why a range is reported.



THIS REPORT SEEKS TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING KEY QUESTIONS:

- What challenges and barriers do military spouses face in gaining meaningful employment?
- Are entrepreneurship, remote/flexible work, or upskilling/reskilling viable solutions for the unemployment and underemployment of military spouses?
- What are the perceived or actual barriers to business ownership according to the experiences of those military spouses who have considered, started, lost, and/or successfully maintained businesses?
- What occupations represent viable opportunities for the military spouse population in enabling them to enter and thrive in middle- and high-wage positions?

THIS REPORT TESTS THE FOLLOWING WORKING HYPOTHESES:

- Un/underemployment and inflexible work environments contribute to the loss of valuable military talent in our all-volunteer force.
- With the right technology and very small seed funding, military spouses are able to start, build, and thrive in remote and entrepreneurial endeavors.
- Military spouses can be an effective workforce solution for fields in which industries are struggling to fill jobs, and with small amounts of upskilling paired with employers committed to remote/flex environments, both the military community and employers/industry can thrive.

METHODOLOGY

This section describes the data collection process and analysis methodology that underpin this report. The report uses a mixed methods approach, including in-depth interviews and focus groups, an online survey of military spouses, and a quantitative analysis of Burning Glass Technologies' proprietary database of job postings.



FOCUS GROUPS

The researchers conducted **three focus groups** with military spouses to gain insight into how military spouses experience employment, entrepreneurship and self-employment, and associated challenges. These efforts informed subsequent survey development. The first focus group was conducted in person at a professional focus group facility in San Diego, CA; the second and third were conducted virtually (via Zoom conference call) and included participants from across the country. The focus groups were preceded by a series of in-depth telephone interviews with military spouses. All qualitative research took place during the summer of 2019.

Recruiting was done through social media and direct solicitation via e-mail using Hiring Our Heroes' nationwide networks. Facebook posts advertising the groups were created and posted for 2 weeks prior to both the in-person and virtual focus groups. The posts reached approximately 50,000 military spouses across 52 Hiring Our Heroes networks which include both remote and urban locations and capture active duty, reserve, and recently transitioned military spouses from all branches of service. Spouses were also invited to participate in the focus groups via e-mail through Hiring Our Heroes' relationships with entrepreneurship organizations that support military spouses and spouses who recently participated in the San Diego AMPLIFY professional development program.



Recruited participants completed a short screening survey assessing their availability and background characteristics. The researchers selected participants from the available screener respondents and engaged military spouses of different backgrounds, education levels, parental status, military branch, and station proximity to a large labor market (urban, suburban, rural).

Each focus group was approximately two hours long. The focus groups followed a moderators' guide. The in-person group covered a broad range of topics and focused mainly on barriers and challenges. The guide was amended for the virtual focus groups to bring greater focus to the three research hypotheses and covered the following three areas: 1) how to support military spouses' employment; 2) military spouses' awareness of favorable employment opportunities; and 3) military spouses' perspectives on entrepreneurship and self-employment, flexible and remote work, and training opportunities. Emphasis on topics shifted from session to session based on gaps in information from previous focus groups and on participant demographics and employment information.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This report is primarily based on responses to an online survey of 1,522 military spouses conducted between October 10 and November 4, 2019. For the purpose of the survey, a military spouse is defined as a person who currently is not an active duty service member and is currently married to an active duty service member, reservist, National Guard member, or a retired or transitioned service member. Spouses who are active duty service members themselves are excluded since the professional goals and challenges such spouses face differ greatly from those of other military spouses.

The survey instrument was pre-tested separately with five military spouses to ensure that the question wording and language were accessible and appropriate. Questions in the survey were randomized and answer categories rotated in an effort to minimize non-sampling sources of error. In total, the survey included 72 items: 54 were substantive items and 18 were demographic. Completion took 12 minutes on average. The survey was programmed and the data were collected using Survey Monkey. To ensure anonymity, respondents were not required to answer questions that were demographic in nature.

Survey recruiting was done through social media and direct solicitation via e-mail using Hiring Our Heroes' nationwide networks. Targeted advertisements on Facebook and Instagram were used throughout the fielding period to target military spouses across age ranges. Two social media posts per week on each platform were posted during each of the three weeks of fielding. A total of 2,200 spouses were e-mailed directly based on the attendees of the 2018 and 2019 Hiring Our Heroes Summits, hiring fairs, and other events. The survey reached approximately 50,000 military spouses across 52 Hiring Our Heroes networks.

Final sample dispositions are as follows:

Attempted survey	1,883
Screened out (currently serving on active duty)	104
Screened out (not currently a military spouse)	56
Incomplete	201
Complete	1,522

Three features of the study’s design limit how its results should be interpreted. First, the survey outreach methodology means this is primarily a survey of military spouses who are at least somewhat familiar with Hiring Our Heroes, not a survey of the universe of military spouses. Also, the survey was conducted exclusively online, which means that those who don’t have access to the Internet may be under-represented in the data. Finally, it is conceivable that some who came across the request to participate in the survey may have had no interest in the topic of employment, so they reflexively moved on before ever viewing the first survey question. For these reasons, the survey results may not represent the wider population of military spouses, or the average military spouse’s experience.

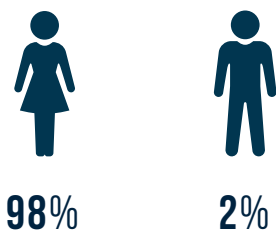
MILITARY SPOUSE POPULATION

The demographics of the sample of 1,522 military spouses are listed in **Table 1.0**. Substantive differences between sub-groups were relatively few; where appropriate, they are reported in the research findings.

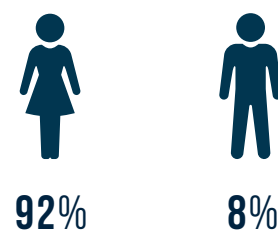
Virtually all of the military spouses sampled — 98% — are women. This is slightly higher than the military spouse population as a whole, which is 92% female.³ The vast majority are between 25 and 54 years old, with 36% between 25-34 years, 42% between 35-44 years, and 15% between 45-54 years. Just over 3 in 4 are college-educated: 37% have a four-year degree and 40% have a graduate or professional degree. This is substantially higher than the general military spouse population (40% have a college degree), and the working age military spouse population (of which approximately 34% have a college degree).⁴ Seventy-three percent of respondents describe themselves as Caucasian or White, 13% as Hispanic or Latino, 10% as African American or Black, and 6% as Asian. Two in three respondents (67%) are parents of children 18 or under, and of those who live in the U.S., 60% currently live in a suburban area.

POPULATION BREAKDOWN

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS



MILITARY SPOUSE POPULATION



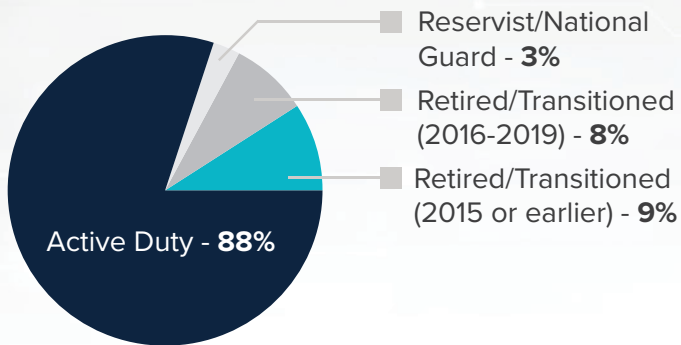
³ “Military Spouses in the Labor Market,” The Council of Economic Advisers, May 2018. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Military-Spouses-in-the-Labor-Market.pdf>

⁴ “Military Spouses in the Labor Market,” The Council of Economic Advisers, May 2018. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Military-Spouses-in-the-Labor-Market.pdf>

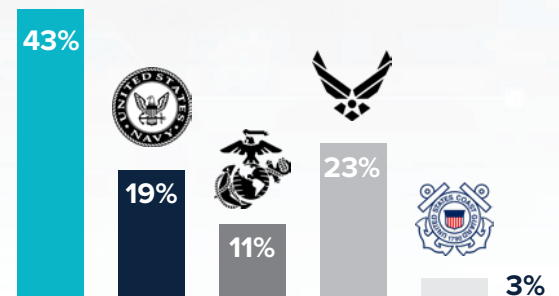
DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE SAMPLE

The survey asked several questions that illustrate how the 1,522 military spouses surveyed are affiliated with the military. The vast majority (80%) are married to active duty service members, with 3% married to reservists or National Guard members, and 17% married to retired or transitioned service members. There were no substantive differences between military spouses married to active duty service members as compared to military spouses married to retired or transitioned service members in terms of responses. A plurality is affiliated with the Army (43%), followed by 23% Air Force, 19% Navy, 11% Marine Corps, and 3% Coast Guard. More than half are married to enlisted personnel (56%) and 40% to an officer (4% to a Warrant Officer). Service members of the spouses we surveyed have served in the military for 15 years on average, and about 9 in 10 currently live in the U.S., with about 21% of those currently living on a military installation.

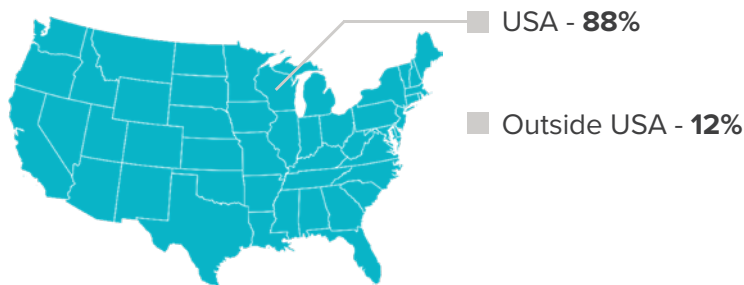
STATUS OF SERVICE MEMBER



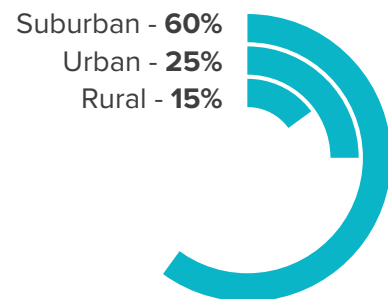
BRANCH



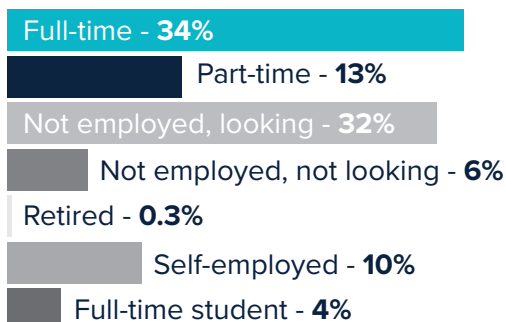
COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE



GEOGRAPHY

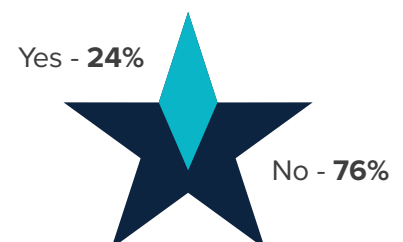


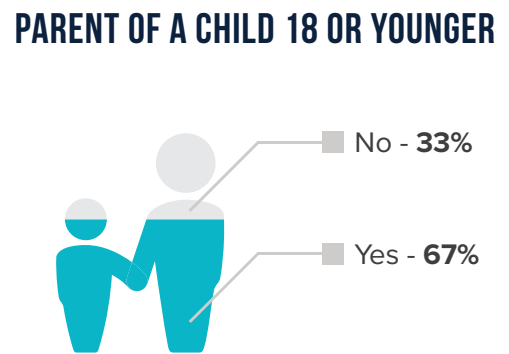
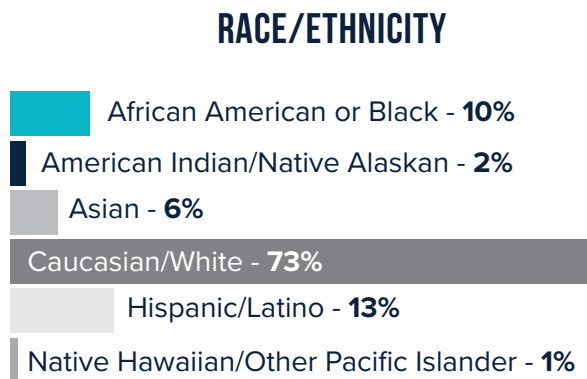
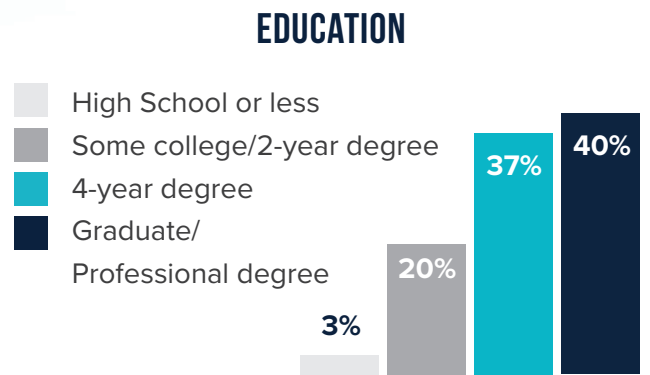
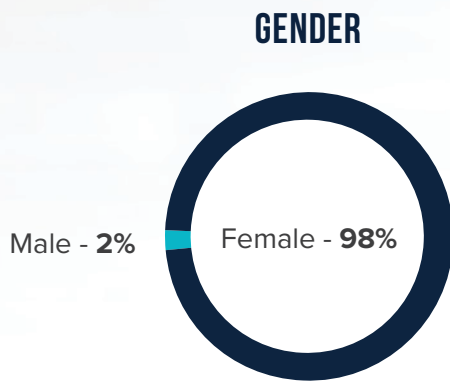
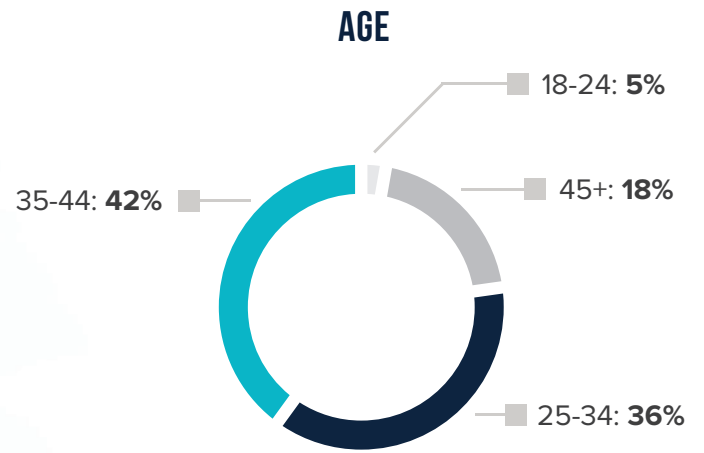
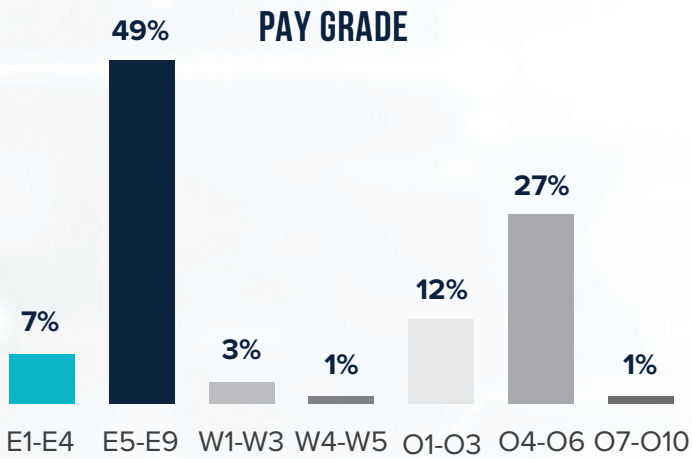
EMPLOYMENT STATUS



LIVE ON INSTALLATION

(includes both in USA & outside of USA)





CAREER PATHWAYS METHODOLOGY

In addition to the survey data described above, this report also uses job postings data to help understand the opportunities available in career areas of interest for military spouses. Burning Glass Technologies has a proprietary dataset of more than 150 million unique online job postings in the U.S. To build and maintain this database of job postings, Burning Glass collects job postings from close to 40,000 online job boards, newspapers, and employer sites on a daily basis and deduplicates postings for the same job, whether it is posted multiple times on the same site or across multiple sites. Burning Glass uses its proprietary taxonomy to label each job posting with relevant fields, such as occupation, industry, location, and employer. This data is used to evaluate opportunities available for military spouses and to assess which occupations are in-demand and command living wage salaries, as well as those that enable remote work.

CHALLENGES TO EMPLOYMENT & LOOKING FOR WORK

Virtually all the military spouses who participated in the survey have either been employed or have looked for work during their time as a military spouse: 86% have done both; 7% have been employed only; and 6% have looked for work only.

The focus groups conducted prior to the online survey uncovered a multitude of employment concerns that are unique to military spouses, and the survey drew on these insights to ask respondents about the perceived prevalence of each of these concerns. One challenge faced by all working families is that of childcare; a 2019 report estimated that \$57 billion is lost annually in earnings, revenue, and productivity across the American workforce due to childcare issues.⁵ This research acknowledged childcare as a persistent challenge but leaves this issue to others to more deeply explore. Based on the focus groups, the survey asked spouses about challenges they may have faced related to employment and their careers.

Large majorities of the military spouses surveyed – between 63% and 78% – think that each of the actions on the following page are “common among military spouses.” The most common action that military spouses felt that both they and their peers had experienced was “Put your career on the backburner because of the challenges of being in a military family.” Agreement with this was higher for those currently pursuing part-time work, for spouses of officers as compared to enlisted service members, and highest for those in the middle of their working age, at ages 35-44, as compared to those either younger or older.

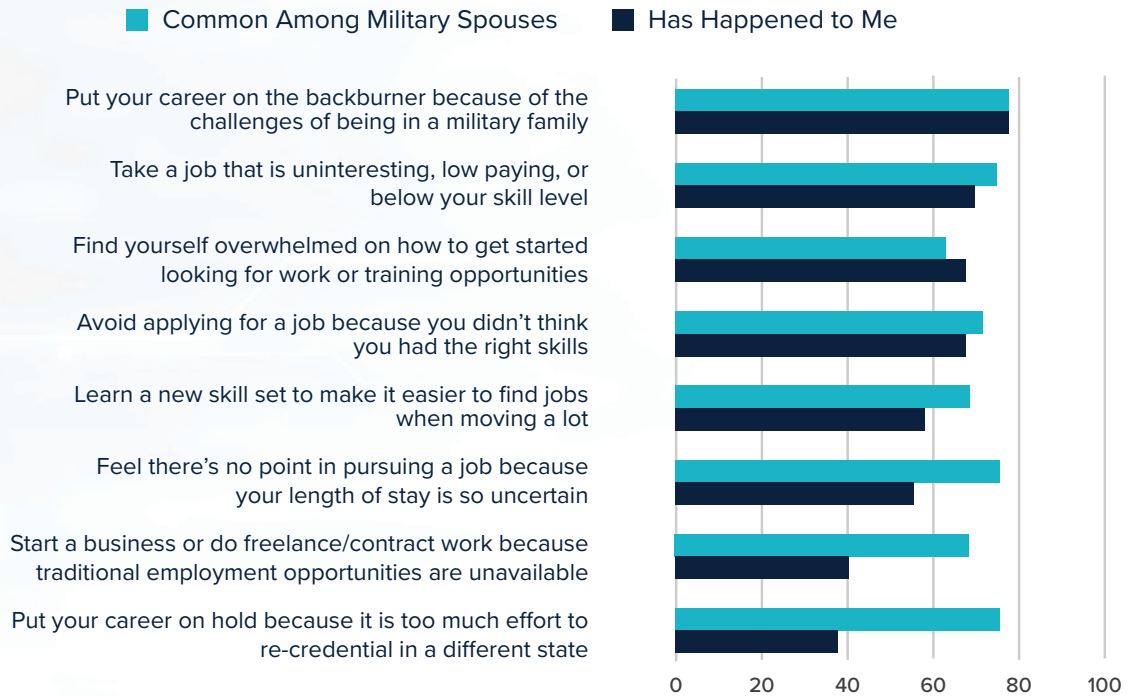
Matching skill sets to appropriate skill-level jobs was also a common problem. Approximately 70% of military spouses felt they had taken a job that was uninteresting, low paying, or below their skill level. An almost equal number of spouses had avoided applying for a job because they didn't think they had the right skills. Over half of military spouses also had learned a new skill set to make it easier to find jobs.

Reticence to apply for a job because of concern about skills was more common among those currently looking for a job, those with less than a four-year degree, and African American or Black and Asian spouses as compared to others. Taking an uninteresting or low-paying job was more common for those currently pursuing part-time work, underscoring that military spouses pursuing part-time work may do so not because

⁵ “Want to Grow the Economy? Fix the Child Care Crisis,” Bishop-Josef, Sandra, Chris Beakey, Sara Watson, and Tom Garrett, Council for A Strong America, January 2019. <https://strongnation.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/602/83bb2275-ce07-4d74-bcee-ff6178daf6bd.pdf?1547054862&inline;filename=“Want to Grow the Economy? Fix the Child Care Crisis.pdf”>

Common Employment Challenges Military Spouses Face

Figure 2.0



Q: For each action, indicate if you think it describes something that is common among military spouses, and whether it has happened to you.

the job helps further their interests or career, but because it is the only option available. Spouses also mentioned that the resources available to them seemed aimed at obtaining low-paying jobs or degrees. As one spouse wrote into an open-response survey field, “As a spouse that earned two Master’s Degrees, I had a very difficult time finding a job at a Professional level. The recruiters at the military job fairs were only interested in talking to me about hourly employment (\$10/hr). The assumption seemed to be that a military spouse could not possibly have the necessary skill to step into a salaried position. It was extremely frustrating, infuriating.[sic] and disheartening.”

While substantial energy has been focused on re-licensing issues when discussing military spouse under- and unemployment, frequent moves were more likely to make military spouses feel like there was no point in pursuing a job because the length of stay was so uncertain. Those who reported being unemployed at the time of the survey were much more likely to feel this way (70%), whereas those with full-time work at the time of the survey were less likely to feel this (45%). This was more common for officer’s spouses (64%) as compared to enlisted service members’ spouses (48%), which may point to the difference in necessity for each to hold a job at a given time as families of enlisted personnel are more likely to »

rely on two incomes. **After relocating, military spouses frequently found themselves overwhelmed on how to get started looking for work or training opportunities. A 2020 report by the Center for New American Security (CNAS), supported by Grow with Google, found that veterans face similar resource fatigue, and that “finding, evaluating, and accessing these tools and resources can be a significant challenge in itself.”**⁶ As one spouse put it, “After years of career start-overs, I made the goal to work remotely at the beginning of the year. There was a wealth of information on military spouse employment but almost too much that I didn’t know where to start.”

In focus groups and in the survey responses, spouses also expressed that uncertainty around length of stay in a location and resume gaps caused by frequent moves caused a disconnect between employers and spouses that affects spouses of both active duty and retired service members. According to one spouse on an open-ended survey response, “When my husband retired, it took a long time to find another job because many employers...did not understand the gaps in my resume, and did not understand the volunteer work I did with the Navy as an Ombudsman [family readiness and resource volunteer].” Other spouses mentioned that employers wanted them to commit to minimum lengths of stay, and that in some cases they concealed being a military spouse in order to seem more appealing to employers and get a job.

Perhaps unsurprisingly due to the prevalence of these challenges, the survey revealed that there are substantial gaps between military spouses’ ideal work situations and the ones they have held in recent years. Seven out of 10 military spouses have held a job with set hours and a physical workplace (what some may consider a “typical” 9-to-5 job) in recent years, but less than 10% would consider this ideal. Military spouses indicated a strong preference for remote work and flexible work situations. **Figure 2.1** contrasts military spouses’ self-proclaimed ideal work situations with those that they have held in recent years. When asked to pick their ideal work situation, a plurality of 41% choose “a job that can be done remotely;” in second place is “a job that permits working from home some days a week” (22%). These contrast sharply with the actual work situations that military spouses say they have had in recent years: While 69% say their recent work situation includes a job with set hours and a physical place to go, just 8% say this is their ideal. One spouse mentioned in the survey that their success at building a career was through remote work: “I am a success story of a military spouse who has figured out how to mold their career each time they move. Of my 10 years of experience, I have been working remote 7 of them.” Another spouse echoed these sentiments: “Honestly, looking for employment has been hard for me and i[s] the reason why I am now starting a business that is remote and will allow me to not have to quit a job. There should be more remote opportunities for spouse[s] [s]o that we can keep some type of continuity in our respective fields.”

⁶ “Veteran Pathways to Employment: Hurdles and Opportunities,” Dempsey, Jason, and Amy Schafer, Center for a New American Security, n.d., 23

Ideal Work Situations
Figure 2.1



**Q: Which of these work situations have you had in recent years?
If you had to pick one of these, which would your ideal work situation?**

The prevalence of remote work has increased in the general working population in the last two decades, up to 5.2% of workers in 2017 as compared to 3.3% of workers in 2000.⁷ The preference for remote work among the general population is also high: in a 2019 survey about remote work, researchers found that 51% of onsite workers wanted to work remotely in the future. The research found that the reasons for preferring remote work among the general population were not all specific to similar challenges that military spouses face: 91% wanted better work-life balance and 79% felt it increased their productivity or focus. However, they also found that 43% of people who work remotely do so because they moved away from their work location, an event all-too-familiar to military families.⁸

In our survey, officers’ spouses were more likely to report having had flexible work situations, as well as those with higher levels of educational attainment; however, “a job that can be done remotely” was selected as the most ideal work situation for all levels of education. **Furthermore, while pluralities chose remote work, African American or Black respondents were more likely than others to select “owning a business or being self-employed” as their ideal work situation.**

⁷ “Slowly but Surely, Working at Home Is Becoming More Common,” Kopf, Dan, Quartz at Work, accessed January 19, 2020. <https://qz.com/work/1392302/more-than-5-of-americans-now-work-from-home-new-statistics-show/>

⁸ “2019 State of Remote Work Report,” accessed December 16, 2019. <https://www.owllabs.com/state-of-remote-work/2019>

RETENTION

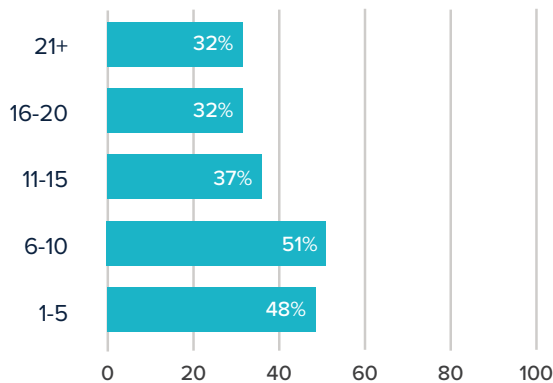
These survey findings suggest that there is a notable number of military spouses and their families struggling to navigate the balance between meaningful work and military family life, and that these challenges can result in military families choosing to either live apart from their service member spouse or to consider leaving military service in order to support the military spouse's work or career.

The survey asked military spouses about choosing to live apart from their spouse, often called geographic bacheloring or “geo-baching.” Approximately 1 in 3 (33%) military spouses said they have chosen to live apart from their military service member specifically to accommodate their work or education. In contrast, based on 2017 Census data, only 1.5% of married people live apart, including for reasons unrelated to one spouse's work or education.⁹

In the survey, this proportion was higher on average for officers (39%) as compared to enlisted (30%), and higher for those with a graduate or professional degree (41%) as compared to those with a four-year degree or below (28%). The prevalence of this was also higher for those currently pursuing full-time work (43%). The higher prevalence of geo-baching among those with higher educational attainment and those looking for full-time work is likely because of the higher opportunity cost of not pursuing work for these groups. In other words, it may make sense to live apart from your spouse if the job opportunity you are pursuing is “worth it”: if you can command a good salary because of your educational attainment, and if it is full-time rather than part-time.

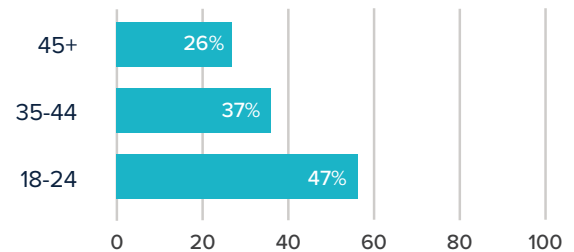
Considered Leaving the Military (By Years of Service)

Figure 2.2



Considered Leaving the Military (By Age)

Figure 2.3



⁹ “America’s Families and Living Arrangements: 2017,” The United States Census Bureau, accessed January 19, 2020. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2017/demo/families/cps-2017.html>

We also asked military spouses about whether they had considered the possibility of their family leaving military service, specifically to support their work or career. Thirty-nine percent of military spouses have seriously discussed this possibility with their service members, and of those whose spouses had already retired or transitioned, 32% reported that supporting their own work or career was a major consideration in the decision of their service member to retire or transition. As one spouse in our focus groups put it: “I want a career too... I’ve been sacrificing too long.”

The likelihood of seriously discussing this possibility was higher again for those with a graduate or professional degree (48%) as compared to those with a four-year degree or below (33%), and higher on average for those currently pursuing full-time work; similarly to geo-batching, this is likely to be because of the more highly paid opportunities available to military spouses with higher educational attainment. The possibility of leaving military service was higher in earlier years of service, with the highest prevalence between 6 and 10 years of service, likely due to the increase in benefits (e.g. retirement) of staying in the military as service members progress through their careers. It was also concentrated in the 18-24 age group relative to older age groups.

“I want a career too... I’ve been sacrificing too long.”

- Military Spouse, Focus Group

These findings underscore the need for policymakers to take seriously the challenges that military spouses face in employment and looking for work. The high overall prevalence of military families seriously considering leaving the military due to spouses’ inability to pursue work or an education that fits their needs, as well as the fact that many spouses and service members are choosing to live apart, indicates the severity of this problem.

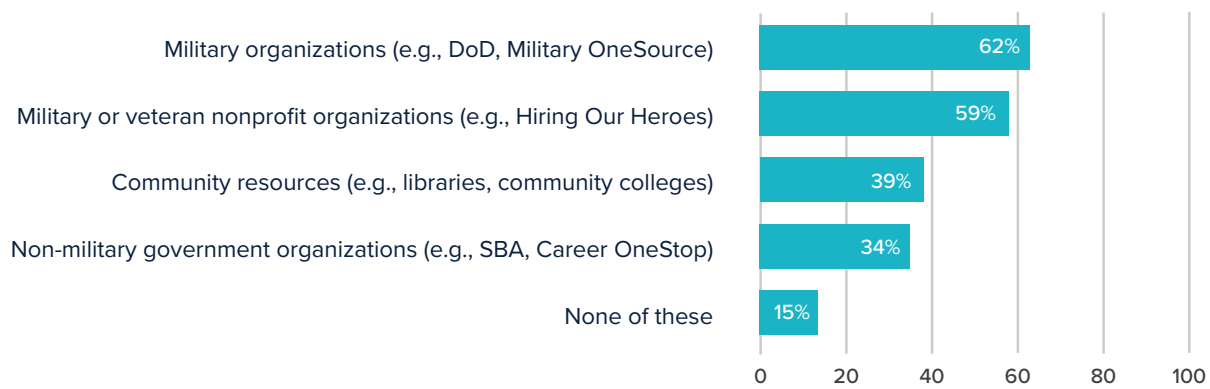


LOOKING FOR WORK

The survey explored resources that military spouses might use to find meaningful employment. The graph below shows military spouses' responses to a list of types of organizations that military spouses might use. Respondents relied most heavily on Department of Defense resources (Military OneSource, on-base family support centers) for general support when seeking employment. Higher levels of educational attainment as well as higher tenure in military service was correlated with more people relying on nonprofit organizations focused on serving service members, veterans, and their families. Those with experience in self-employment, entrepreneurship, or owning a business were more likely to have relied on non-military government organizations.

Organizations Military Spouses Rely on for General Support When Seeking Employment

Figure 2.4



Q: There are many kinds of organizations that provide employment information and support to military spouses. Which of these have you used in your time as a military spouse?

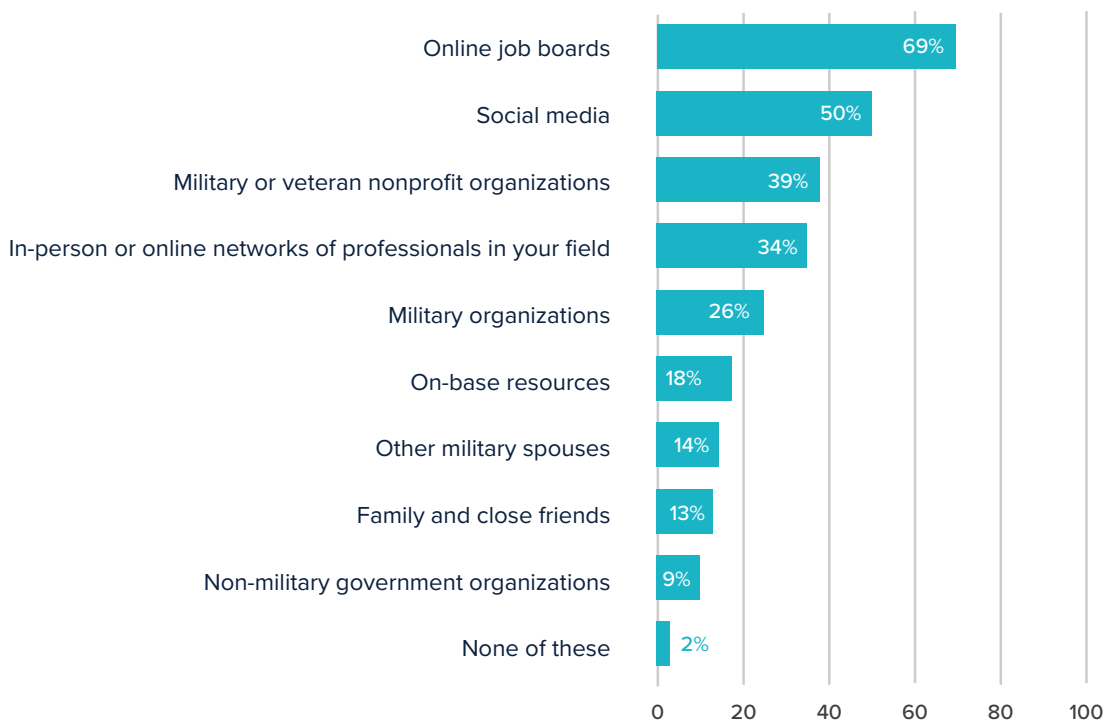
“There was a wealth of information on military spouse employment but almost too much that I didn’t know where to start.”

- Military Spouse, Survey

When specifically looking for a job, online resources were the most popular – 69% said they would be most likely to use online job boards, and 50% said social media. Those with higher levels of educational attainment were more likely to rely on professional networks, with 23% of those with less than a four-year degree relying on networks, 32% of those with a four-year degree, and 43% of those with a graduate or professional degree. Nonprofit organizations focused on supporting service members, veterans, and their families were also a popular resource used by military spouses to find employment.

Resources Spouses Use to Find Employment

Figure 2.5



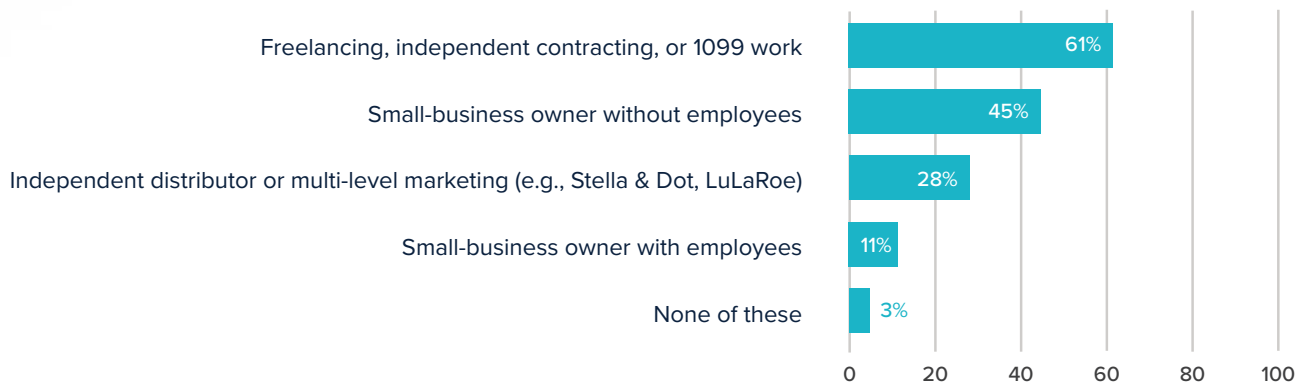
Q: If you were looking for work, which of these resources would you be most likely to use? (Choose up to 3.)

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & SELF-EMPLOYMENT

About 1 in 4 military spouses surveyed (24%) reported that they either currently or previously owned their own business or have been self-employed. This subset of the sample – 360 military spouses who currently or previously owned a business – were asked a series of questions about their experiences. Most have pursued freelancing or independent contracting (61%), another 45% have owned small businesses without employees, and 28% were independent distributors/multi-level marketers (e.g., Stella & Dot, LuLaRoe).¹⁰ About 1 in 10 (11%) had small businesses with employees. The prevalence of small-business ownership with employees as compared to without employees is not unique to military spouses, but is common among self-employed women in general.¹¹ According to data from the 2014 Current Population Survey, there are substantial gender gaps among the self-employed population, with men making up 65% of all self-employed workers and women making up just 35%. There are also gender gaps in the likelihood of employing employees: self-employed men were almost twice as likely as self-employed women to have at least one paid employee, 28% as compared to 16%.

Types of Entrepreneurship & Self Employment

Figure 3.0



Q: Which of the following kinds of business ownership or self-employment have you pursued? (Choose all that apply.)

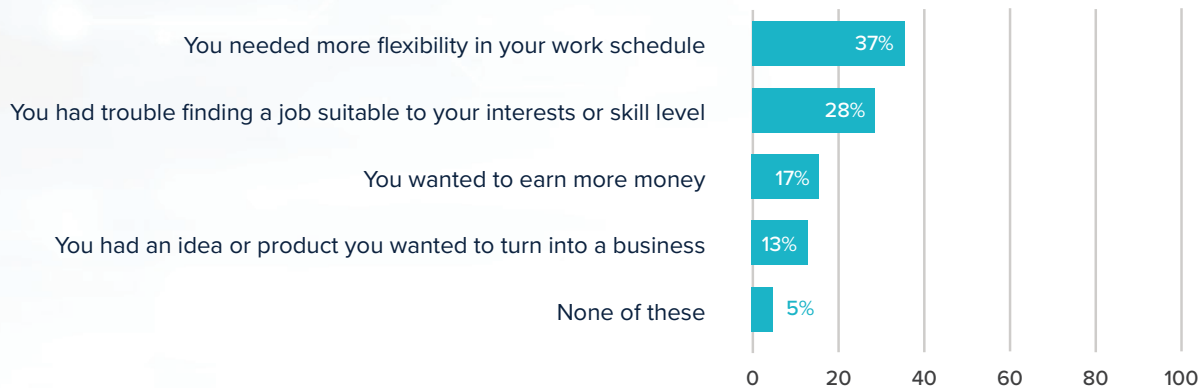
¹⁰ Multi-level marketers are non-salaried employees of a company who earn money based on a pyramid-shaped or binary commission scheme system. This often involves the individual purchasing merchandise wholesale and then selling it to others on commission. Examples include Avon, Mary Kay, Stella & Dot, and LuLaRoe.

¹¹ "The Gender Gap in Self-Employment and Hiring," *Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project* (blog), October 22, 2015. <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/10/22/the-gender-gap-in-self-employment-and-hiring/>.

Military spouses in our survey who start their own business or become self-employed do so primarily for either flexibility or because they felt unable to find a more traditional job that they felt was suitable. Asked to choose among four possible reasons for starting their business, a plurality pointed to the need for more flexibility in their work schedule (37%); followed by 28% who say they had trouble finding a job suitable to their interests or skills, 17% who wanted to earn more money, and 13% who had an idea or product that they wanted to turn into a business.

Reasons for Pursuing Entrepreneurship/Self-Employment

Figure 3.1



Q: If you had to pick one of these, which comes closest to the main reason you started your own business or became self-employed?

The desire for increased flexibility ranks highly as a reason to pursue self-employment or entrepreneurship for independent workers and entrepreneurs in research conducted outside of the military spouse population: it ranks as the second and third most important reason in research conducted on independent workers and female entrepreneurs, respectively. However, “trouble finding a job suitable to your interests or skill level” is more unique to military spouses. Furthermore, other populations rank pursuing a passion as a higher priority (top rank for female entrepreneurs, and second for small business owners), as well as being your own boss.

“In the last 5 years I have been hired by word of mouth from other spouses into 3 roles that have built my skillset to allow me to start my own business and now employ 12 people remotely.”

- Military Spouse, Survey

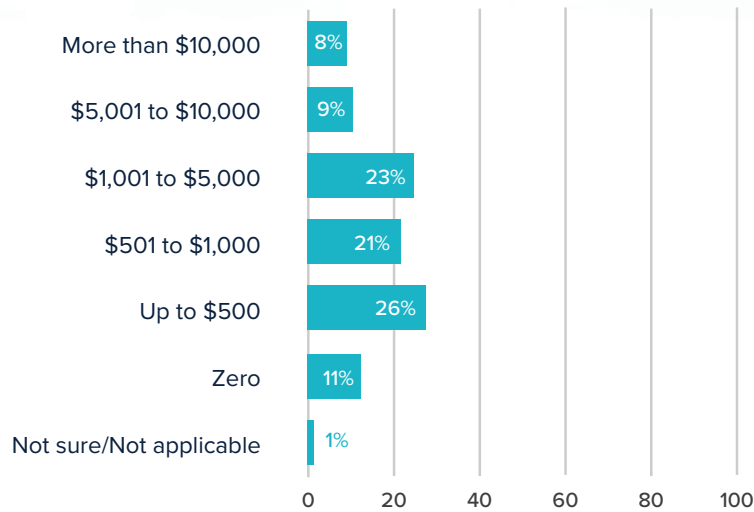
Table 3.2: Relative Ranks of Reasons for Pursuing Entrepreneurship or Self-Employment

Theme	Our Survey	State of Female Entrepreneurship ¹²	Small Business Trends ¹³	The State of Independence in America ¹⁴
Flexibility	1	3		2
Trouble finding a job suitable to interests/skill level	2			
Earn more money	3	4		
Pursue a passion/idea	4	1	2	
Financial independence		2		
Better work/family balance		4		
Create own environment/Be own boss		6	1	1
Opportunity presented itself			3	

Initial monetary investments in businesses were relatively modest: 11% invested no money at all, 26% up to \$500, 21% between \$501-\$1,000; 23% between \$1,001-\$5,000; 17% more than \$5,000. Those with higher initial investments (>\$1k) were slightly more likely to be small business owners (with or without employees).

Initial Investments in Business

Figure 3.3



Among those who invested any amount of money to get started, the overwhelming majority relied on personal savings (83%), followed distantly by credit card debt (36%). None of the other options – loans, grants, gifts, investors – garnered more than 6%.

¹² “State of Female Entrepreneurship,” She’s Next, 2019. <https://usa.visa.com/content/dam/VCOM/regional/na/us/run-your-business/documents/visa-state-of-entrepreneurship-research-summary.pdf>

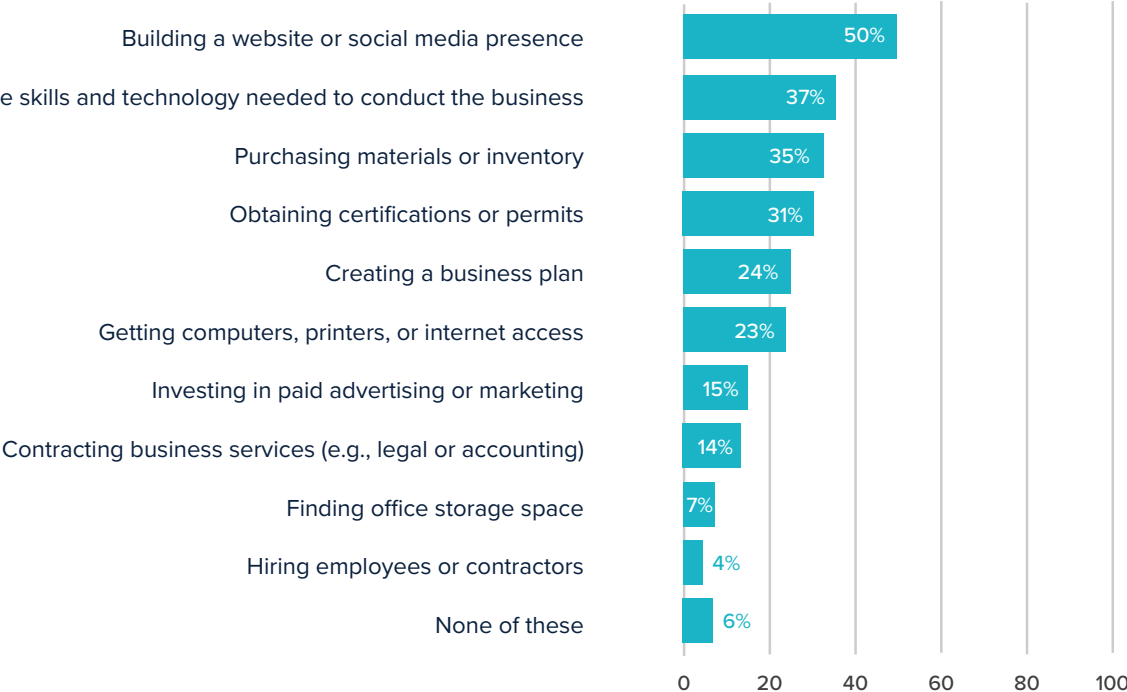
¹³ “2019 Small Business Trends [Infographic],” Guidant Financial, accessed December 16, 2019. <https://www.guidantfinancial.com/learning-center/infographics/2019-small-business-trends>

¹⁴ “The State of Independence in America: Rising Confidence Amid a Maturing Market,” MBO Partners State of Independence, MBO Partners, Inc., 2017.

Those who had been independent distributors or multi-level marketers relied slightly more heavily on credit card debt (43%) and slightly less on personal savings (77%) to fund their businesses. In comparison to small business owners more generally, a 2019 survey found that similarly, savings were the most popular method of financing (32%), with a line of credit being the funding stream for just 10% of respondents. The second most popular financing method was 401(k) business financing (12%), and the third was friends and family (12%), neither of which military spouses seem to rely on.¹⁵ For female entrepreneurs specifically, a 2018 survey found that 61% of respondents, similarly to the military spouses surveyed in this work, self-funded their businesses, while 10% took out a small business loan.¹⁶

The survey also asked about the “most essential tasks” that these small-business-owning military spouses felt they needed to accomplish when first trying to get their business off the ground. By a wide margin, “building a website or social media presence” topped the list, with 50% prioritizing this, as compared to 37% who selected the next most popular, “learning the skills and technology needed to conduct the business.” Marketing and advertising was also noted as a top challenge for small business owners in research conducted by Guidant Financial and LendingClub.¹⁷ The least important tasks for military spouses were “hiring employees or contractors,” which is in line with the types of businesses they own, as well as “finding office or storage space” and “contracting business services (e.g., legal or accounting).”

Most Essential Tasks When Starting a Business
Figure 3.4



Q: Which of these were the most essential tasks for you to accomplish when you were first trying to get your business started? (Choose up to 3.)

¹⁵ “2019 Small Business Trends [Infographic],” Guidant Financial, accessed December 16, 2019. <https://www.guidantfinancial.com/learning-center/infographics/2019-small-business-trends>
¹⁶ “State of Female Entrepreneurship,” She’s Next, 2019. <https://usa.visa.com/content/dam/VCOM/regional/na/us/run-your-business/documents/visa-state-of-entrepreneurship-research-summary.pdf>
¹⁷ “2019 Small Business Trends [Infographic],” Guidant Financial, accessed December 16, 2019. <https://www.guidantfinancial.com/learning-center/infographics/2019-small-business-trends>

Thus, it is not surprising that “marketing and social media tools” was the most common answer (and “website design” in second place, although by a wide margin) when asked which of these five things “was most important for you to learn” when getting started.

Most Important to Learn When Starting a Business

Figure 3.5



This finding is also in line with civilian female entrepreneurs. According to a 2019 survey conducted by Logica Research and Visa, women entrepreneurs solicited advice on topics including how to face challenges (67%), what other entrepreneurs would have done differently (49%), developing an online presence (38%), raising capital/funding (35%), building a support team (34%), and types of payment accepted (32%).¹⁸

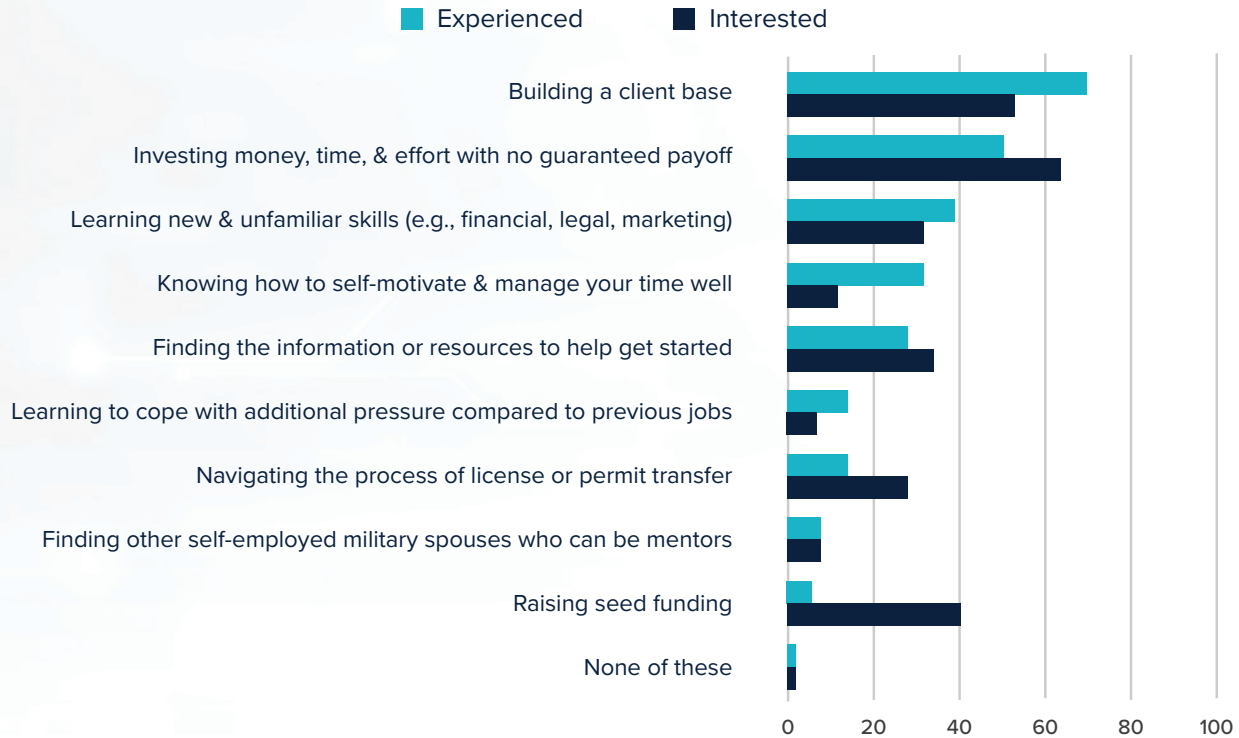
Survey respondents were also asked to pick from a list of areas they needed “to develop most” during the early stages. Again, the item that topped the list did so by a wide margin: 70% of military spouses with experience in starting a business pointed to “building a client base,” as did over 50% of those without experience. Military spouses with this experience identified different development needs than those without that experience.

The largest difference was in concerns about capital: almost 40% of respondents interested in starting their own business selected “Raising seed funding” as an area to develop most, whereas less than 10% of respondents who had started a business selected this. Military spouses without experience were also more concerned about navigating the process of license or permit transfer, finding the information or resources to help get started, and investing money, time, and effort with no guaranteed payoff.

¹⁸ “State of Female Entrepreneurship,” She’s Next, 2019. <https://usa.visa.com/content/dam/VCOM/regional/na/us/run-your-business/documents/visa-state-of-entrepreneurship-research-summary.pdf>

Areas Needed to Develop Most When Starting a Business

Figure 3.6

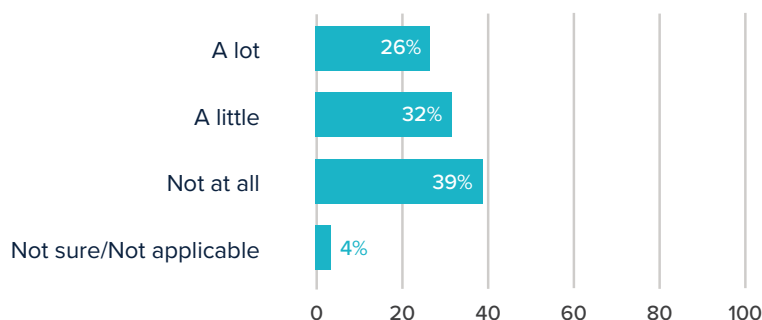


Q: Which of these areas did you need to develop most when you started your own business? (Choose up to 3.) If you are interested in starting your own business, which of these do you think would be the biggest challenge for you? (Choose up to 3.)

Being aware of other military spouses who had successfully started a business had an influence on a portion of military spouses when they were deciding about a business of their own. Twenty-six percent say it had “a lot” of influence on them and 32% say it had “a little.” Thirty-nine percent said it had no influence at all. While majorities of each self-employment status (experienced, interested, and not interested) are aware of other military spouses who had successfully started a business, those who have experience themselves in starting a business were more likely to know another successful military spouse (68%) and those who were only interested have a smaller majority (54%). Spouses of enlisted service members were less likely to have seen successful military spouse business owners (52% as compared to 68% of officers), and those with higher levels of educational attainment were more likely to have this awareness. Caucasian or white military spouses were more likely than others to indicate that seeing successful military spouses influenced them.

Influence of Seeing Other Successful Military Spouse Business Owners

Figure 3.7

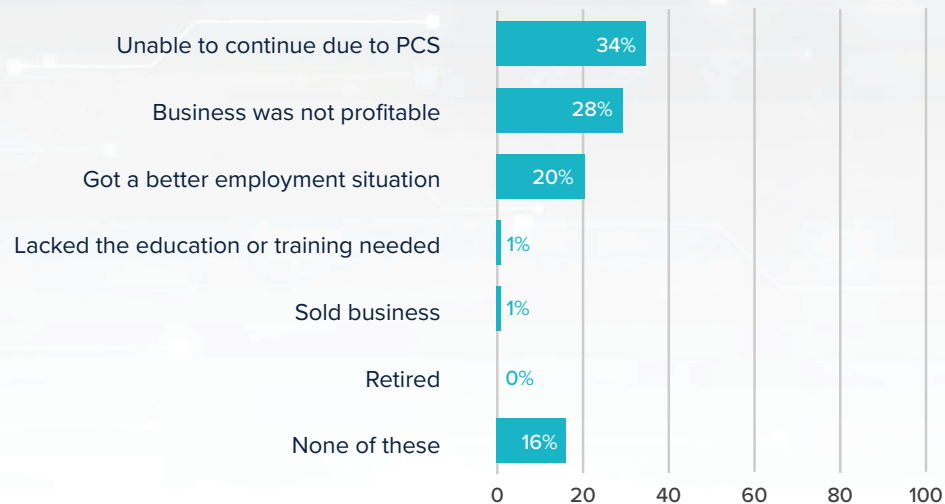


Those who identified as having *previously* owned a business or being self-employed, 147 survey respondents, were asked to pick from a list of six reasons why they no longer have their own business.

“Unable to continue due to PCS” (Permanent Change of Station) was the most common answer (34%), and was higher than “Business was not profitable” (28%). In spite of the additional challenges that military spouses might face, their businesses are no less profitable: Research outside of the military spouse population found that 78% of small business owners had profitable businesses.

Reasons to No Longer Have a Business

Figure 3.8

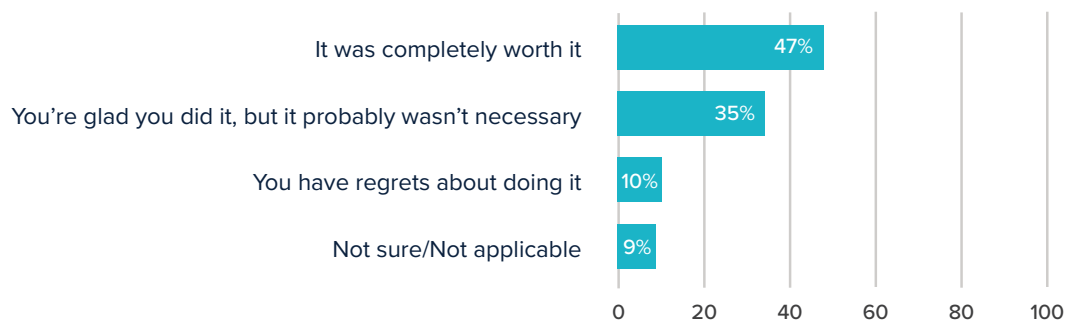


TRAINING & EDUCATION: THE PURSUIT OF BETTER OPPORTUNITIES

These survey findings strongly suggest that pursuing education to improve their work situation is a high priority for military spouses. **Eight in 10 say that during the time they have been military spouses, they have already pursued additional training or education to improve their job or career.** Almost half describe the additional training or education as “completely worth it” (47%), but 35% say “it probably wasn’t necessary.” Only 10% indicate that they have regrets about doing so.

Feelings About Training/Education Pursued

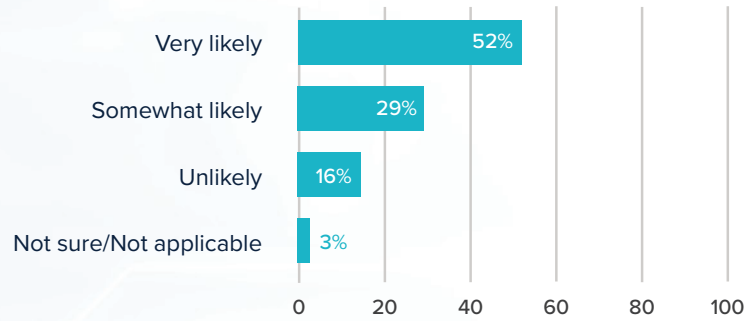
Figure 3.9



¹⁹ “[2019 Small Business Trends Infographic],” Guidant Financial, accessed December 16, 2019. <https://www.guidantfinancial.com/learning-center/infographics/2019-small-business-trends>

Likelihood of Pursuing Further Education/Training

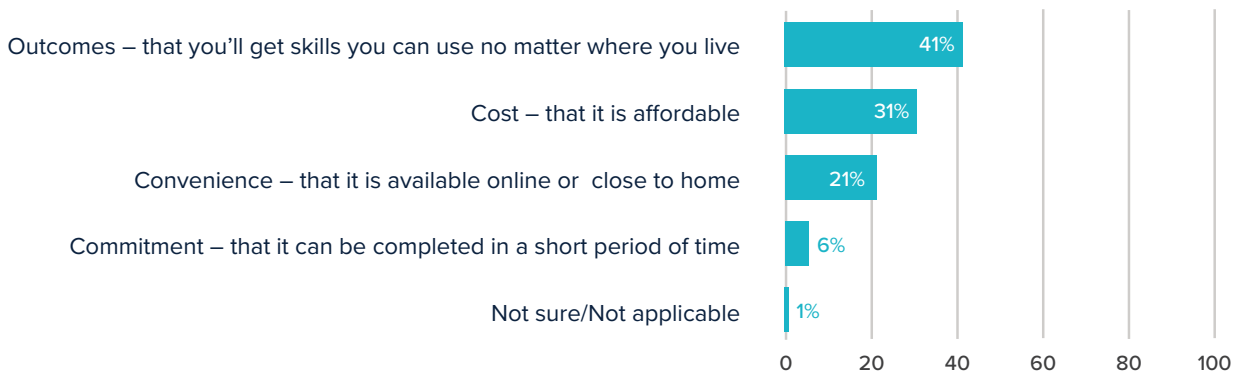
Figure 3.10



Despite the fact that eight in 10 respondents have already pursued training or education, and that three in four military spouses surveyed already have at least a four-year degree, fully 52% said they are “very likely” to pursue more education or training in the future, and another 29% that they are “somewhat likely” to do so; just 16% said “unlikely.” Spouses of enlisted service members were more likely to say they are “very likely” to pursue further education (56% as compared to 44% of spouses of officers), and perhaps counter-intuitively, selecting the response “very likely” was more common among those with higher levels of educational attainment currently (66% of those with a graduate/professional degree, 53% of those with a four-year degree, and 44% of those with some college or a two-year degree).

Most Important Considerations when Pursuing Additional Training/Education

Figure 3.11



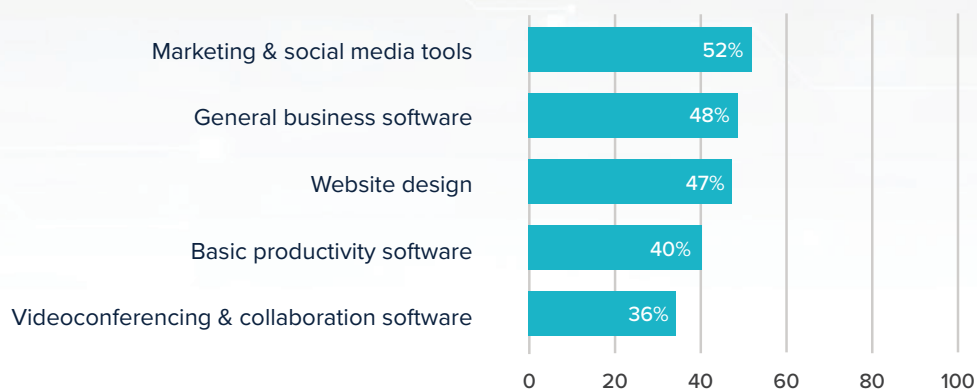
Of those who are very or somewhat likely to pursue additional training or education to improve their jobs or careers, a plurality said their most important consideration would be that they get skills they could use no matter where they live (41%); followed by 31% who say cost; 21% who say convenience; and 6% who say the most important consideration is that it can be completed in a short period of time. These responses are likely to be more unique to military spouses because of the geographic challenges they face; getting skills you can use “no matter where you live” is less important for populations who have more ability to dictate their location.

Military spouses in our sample were equally interested in pursuing a degree (52%), a vocational or technical certificate (52%), or to brush up or gain new skills even if no degree or certificate (55%). Those who are currently not employed are more interested in seeking a degree, as well as also being less likely to already have a graduate or professional degree, while those who are currently self-employed are more interested in brushing up on new skills and are also more likely to already have a graduate or professional degree.

The survey asked military spouses how interested they would be in pursuing training on a variety of Internet-related tools and software – all-purpose skills that would be beneficial to have in the modern workplace. About half say they would be “very interested” in additional training on marketing tools, general business software, and website design. Sizeable numbers also expressed interest in additional training in basic productivity software and videoconferencing.

Very Interested in Additional Training

Figure 3.12



Those interested in starting their own business were more likely to be “very interested” on all measures, and those who were looking for work at the time of the survey were more likely to be “very interested” or “would seriously consider” for virtually all skills. **Interest in training on basic productivity software (e.g., Word, Excel, Google Docs, Google Sheets) was more prevalent for older military spouses. Military spouses of color were more likely than their Caucasian or white counterparts to be “very interested” in training on all five of the skills above (15 to 25 percentage points depending on the skill).**

“There are plenty of opportunities for training and education for military spouses however what this community is craving is remote full-time employment opportunities. As an active duty spouse, I move A LOT and need a career that “moves with me.” Spouses cannot afford to job hunt the first 6 months of every move.”

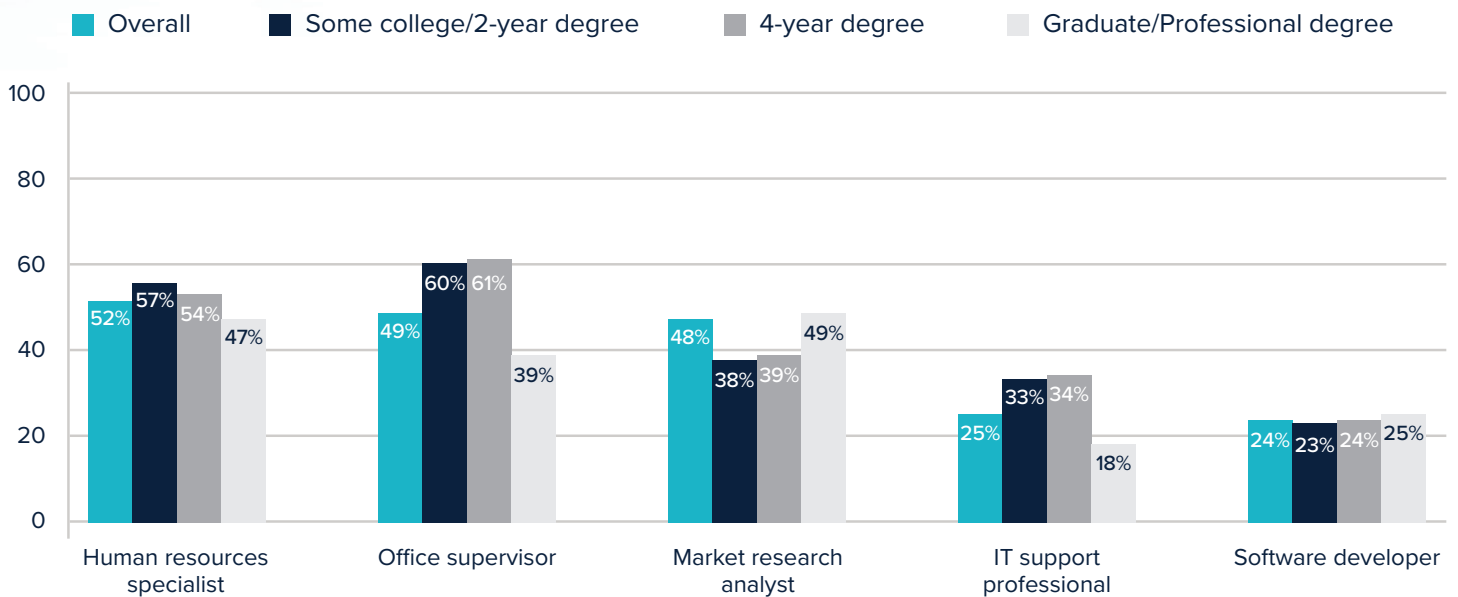
- Military Spouse, Survey

In order to better understand the career goals of military spouses and their training and education interests, the survey described five sample occupations that could be appealing to military spouses because they are often located close to military installations or because they offer flexibility. About half of the military spouses surveyed say they would “seriously consider” human resources specialist, office supervisor, and market research analyst positions. About 1 in 4 say the same about IT support professional and software developer.

These patterns are similar to those seen in current employment: Of human resources workers, 71% are women; of office and administrative support occupations, 72% are women; and of market research analysts and marketing specialists, 60% are women. In comparison, just 21% of computer programmers are women, and just over a quarter of all employees in computer and information systems managers are women. Interest in these positions varies based on level of education, with those with some college or a two-year degree most interested in human resource specialist, office supervisor, and IT support professional positions, and those with a four-year degree most interested in IT support professional positions.

Interest in Specific Career Opportunities by Educational Attainment

Figure 3.13



Q: Here are 5 occupations that are often near military installations or that offer work flexibility. If you were looking for a job, is this an occupation that you would seriously consider, or would you have little or no interest?

²⁰ “Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity,” Accessed January 23, 2020. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

This section uses job postings data to explore potential career options based on military spouses' interests and experiences. For each potential career area, we draw on responses from military spouses to gauge the level of interest in the field. We also use the survey response data to help understand the current landscape of military spouse experience in the field. In order to ensure these opportunities are of interest and suitable to military spouses, we focused on career areas that respondents either expressed an interest in or in which they had some experience, whether through education or previous or current work.

Job postings data is used in this section to understand the landscape of career opportunity in each career area as relevant to military spouses. Burning Glass maintains a proprietary dataset of more than 150 million unique online job postings in the U.S., which is built using spidering technology that extracts information from close to 40,000 sources, including online job boards, newspapers, and employer sites. Job postings are deduplicated to ensure postings for the same job, whether it is posted multiple times on the same site or across multiple sites, are only represented one time. For each job posting, Burning Glass can see valuable information such as the occupation, industry, experience and education requirements, advertised salary, opportunities for remote work, and skills requested. This allows for us to capture the employer demand signal for these career areas, ensuring policymakers, service providers, military spouses, and military leaders have insight into the opportunities available.

For the purposes of this analysis, the job postings data was limited to jobs posted in 2019 in the United States. Salary data reported is based on Burning Glass's modeled market salary, which uses a machine-learning model to predict the salary for each job posting based on education, experience, and skill requirements, as well as on advertised salary information where possible. Occupations to highlight within each career area were selected based on the demand for each occupation as well as the opportunity for remote work relative to all jobs. Jobs with at least 25% more remote work opportunities relative to all jobs were considered "Above Average" in terms of remote work opportunities.



TOP CAREERS

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONS KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- Project Manager
- IT Project Manager
- Operations Manager/Supervisor
- Program Manager

HUMAN RESOURCES KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- Human Resources Manager
- Recruiter
- Human Resources/Labor Relations Specialist
- Training & Development Specialist

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS KEY OPPORTUNITIES

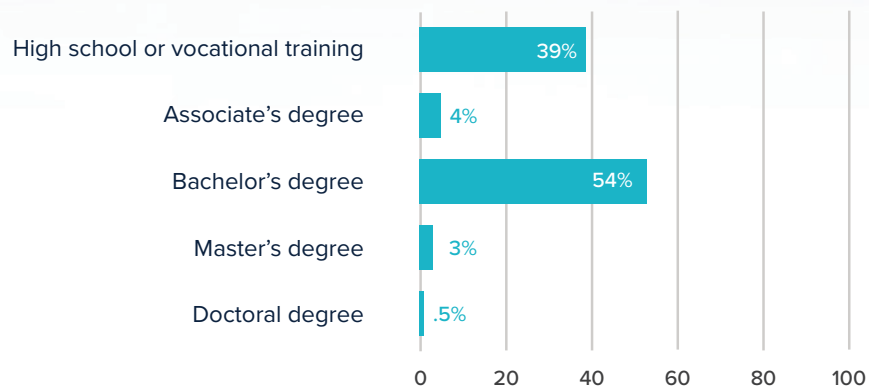
- Marketing Manager
- Marketing Specialist
- Product Manager
- Public Relations/Communications Specialist

CAREER AREA: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONS

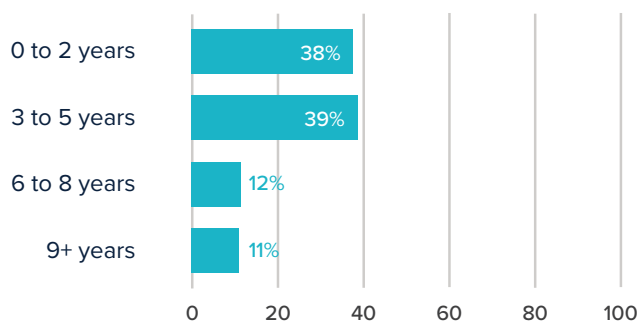
Business Management and Operations was the most popular career area among the military spouses surveyed. **Table 4.0** shows available occupations in the field Business Management and Operations. Just over half of respondents (50.3%) said they would be interested in pursuing additional training to pursue a job or career in this field. Furthermore, approximately one-third of respondents said their field of study for their most recent degree was relevant (in business, management, or human resources), and 11% said that this describes the kind of work they currently do or are looking to do.

In 2019, there were 2.5 million job postings in Business Management and Operations, making this career area the 5th largest out of the 24 present in the data and approximately 7% of the overall labor demand. The majority of these jobs (just over 54%) requested a Bachelor's degree, and just under 40% requested High school or vocational training, making this field a viable option for those with and without a four-year degree. Most jobs in this field required between 0 and 5 years of previous experience, enabling new entrants to the field to succeed despite their lack of substantial previous experience.

Minimum Education Qualifications, Business Management & Operations
Figure 4.1



Experience Requirements, Business Management & Operations
Figure 4.2



²⁰ "Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity," Accessed January 23, 2020. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>

Some of the key occupations that represent opportunities for military spouses in this career area are **Project Manager, IT Project Manager, Operations Manager/Supervisor, and Program Manager**. These occupations all command a median salary above \$60,000 and generally require a Bachelor’s degree, although they have some opportunities for those without a four-year degree as well. For both Project Manager and Program Manager, remote work opportunities are above average.

Table 4.0: Key Occupations, Business Management & Operations

Occupation	Description	Demand	Median Market Salary	Typical Education	Remote Work
Project Manager	Manages work on projects with a defined scope, start and completion point. Leads project teams, manages project budgets and schedules; manages contractors and communications with stakeholders. May manage projects in construction, information technology, or in other industries.	275,542	\$80,468	Bachelor’s degree (80%)	Above Average
IT Project Manager	Manages projects for a company in the information technology industry. Projects may include initiatives to create new products or improve or expand technology or systems. Identifies project requirements, develops and manages project budgets and schedules, leads project teams, and manages communications with project stakeholders, including company management and clients.	205,560	\$105,152	Bachelor’s degree (87%)	Above Average
Operations Manager/ Supervisor	Manages daily operations and activities for a company or organization. Supervises staff, oversees projects and daily work activities. May have responsibility for managing supplies and materials, budgets or customer relations; may serve as liaison to senior management.	174,168	\$61,888	Bachelor’s degree (63%)	Above Average
Program Manager	Manages ongoing program activity, or a group of related projects, for a company or organization. May work in production, administration, advertising/ marketing, human resources, technology, finance, and other technical areas such as engineering.	136,238	\$91,267	Bachelor’s degree (81%)	Above Average

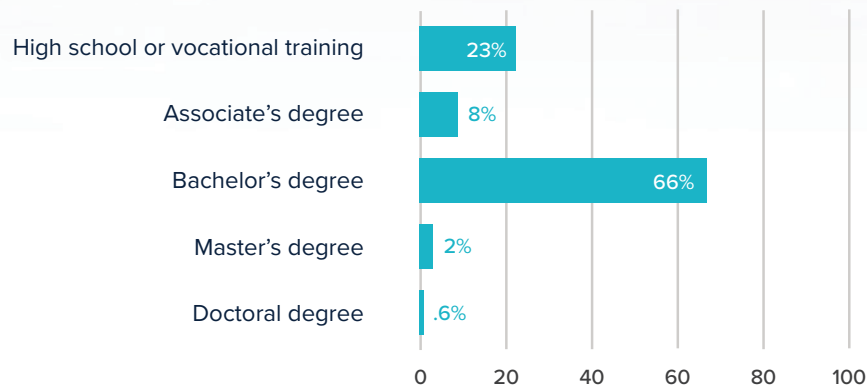
CAREER AREA: HUMAN RESOURCES

Human Resources was the second most popular career area choice for respondents to the survey, with just over 40% of military spouses indicating that they would be interested in pursuing additional training in order to get a job or career in this field. Table x shows available occupations in Human Resources. As is the case with Business Management and Operations, 31% of respondents said that business, management, or human resources was their most recent field of study, indicating that this is a good fit for many military spouses. Just under 10% of respondents indicated that this is the kind of work they currently do or are looking for.

There were 724,405 job postings in the Human Resources career area in 2019. A majority of these postings requested a Bachelor's degree (66%), with the remainder mostly requesting below a Bachelor's degree. Of the postings that specified a degree request, a plurality (40%) called for a program of study in Human Resources. Just over 80% of postings required 0 to 2 or 3 to 5 years of experience.

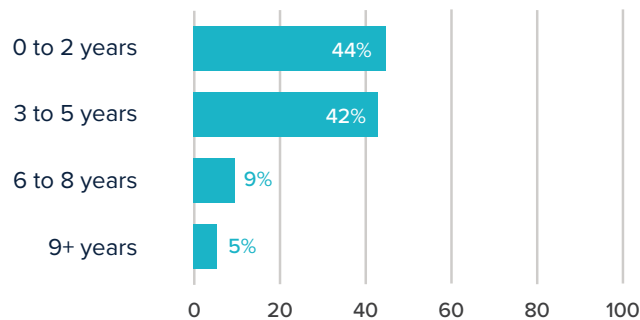
Minimum Education Qualifications, Human Resources

Figure 4.3



Experience Requirements, Human Resources

Figure 4.4



We identified four key occupations in the Human Resource career area that we consider good opportunities for military spouses: **Human Resources/Labor Relations Specialist, Recruiter, Human Resources Manager, and Training and Development Specialist.** Approximately 60% to 80% of these jobs require a Bachelor’s degree, and all command a salary above \$45,000. In terms of remote work opportunities, both Human Resources/Labor Relations Specialist and Recruiter positions have above average number of opportunities for remote workers. In particular, Recruiter positions are four times as likely to allow for remote work relative to all jobs.

Table 4.5: Key Occupations, Human Resources

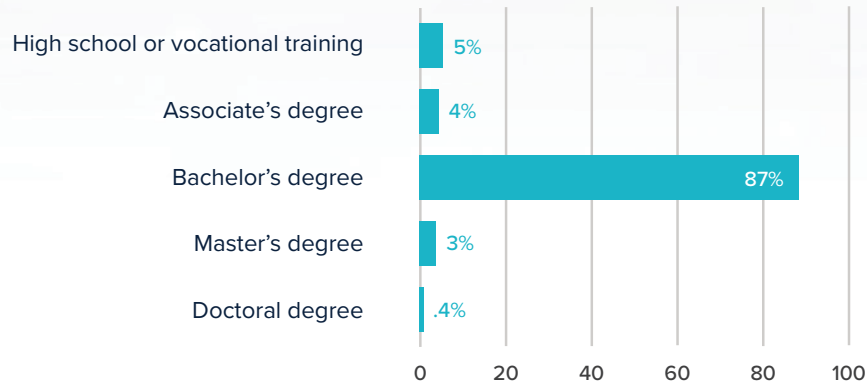
Occupation	Description	Demand	Median Market Salary	Typical Education	Remote Work
Human Resources/Labor Relations Specialist	Works for a human resources department to implement the provisions of a labor contract, including employee wages and benefits and other practices that are collectively bargained; may also handle an internal grievance process established under a labor contract.	215,083	\$50,049	Bachelor’s degree (64%)	Above Average
Recruiter	Works for a company or organization to recruit qualified candidates for open positions, or works with a recruiting agency to identify candidates and match jobseekers with job placements. May specialize in recruiting professionals in a particular industry, or specialize in recruiting at colleges.	164,173	\$47,456	Bachelor’s degree (68%)	Above Average
Human Resources Manager	Manages human resources functions for a company or organization, including the recruiting, hiring, and training of employees. Works with executive management to develop and implement staffing and compensation plans, and works to attract and retain qualified employees. Oversees training and development initiatives. Manages compensation and benefits structure and provides information to employees. Monitors compliance with employment-related regulations. Implements company policies and deals with staffing or disciplinary issues as needed.	77,557	\$71,195	Bachelor’s degree (81%)	Average
Training & Development Specialist	Directs education or staff training programs for a company, such as large firms or distributorships, or private post-secondary educational providers.	68,287	\$52,776	Bachelor’s degree (63%)	Average

CAREER AREA: MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

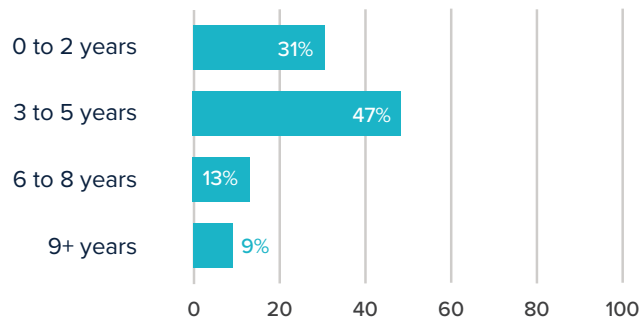
The third most popular career area among military spouses surveyed was **Marketing and Public Relations**. Table 4.8 shows available occupations in Marketing and Public Relations. Approximately 40% of spouses indicated they would be interested in pursuing additional training to pursue a job or career in this field, and 5% of spouses said this describes the kind of work they do or are currently looking for.

On the demand side, in 2019 there were 701,857 job postings in this career area. The large majority of these postings (87%) called for a Bachelor's degree, making Marketing and Public Relations the career area that requires the highest levels of educational attainment relative to the other two. Just over half of the jobs requiring a degree are looking for a program of study in Marketing or Marketing Management. A plurality of jobs (47%) required three to five years of experience, although still 31% of opportunities are available to potential employees with no experience in the field.

Minimum Education Qualifications, Marketing & Public Relations
Figure 4.6



Experience Requirements, Marketing & Public Relations
Figure 4.7



We identified four key occupations in Marketing and Public Relations for military spouses to consider: **Marketing Manager, Marketing Specialist, Product Manager, and Public Relations/Communications Specialist.** Of these, Marketing Manager and Product Manager command high salaries of \$79,000 and \$102,000, respectively. Three of the four occupations highlighted have above average opportunities for remote work, and, as is the case for the career area overall, most require a Bachelor’s degree.

Table 4.8: Key Occupations, Marketing & Public Relations

Occupation	Description	Demand	Median Market Salary	Typical Education	Remote Work
Marketing Manager	Manages and coordinates marketing activities for a company. Oversees marketing and advertising staff. Monitors demand for company products or services, business and industry competition, and prices. Identifies potential new customers; develops strategies for increasing sales or market share.	170,887	\$79,021	Bachelor’s degree (88%)	Above Average
Marketing Specialist	Develops marketing plans and strategies for businesses. Researches consumer demand and industry market data, provides specialized information on advertising and promotional resources.	113,649	\$46,822	Bachelor’s degree (91%)	Above Average
Product Manager	Manages and coordinates all the processes involved in creating a product. Oversees work involved with product design, production, distribution, marketing and sales.	104,500	\$102,376	Bachelor’s degree (93%)	Above Average
Public Relations/Communications Specialist	Coordinates internal and external communications for a company or organization. Provides information to employees on company activities, such as the launch of a new product or a community service initiative. Writes and edits public communications; develops media contacts and prepares material for press and media distribution; monitors media coverage. May assist with events planning.	63,691	\$45,434	Bachelor’s degree (87%)	Average

IMPLICATIONS

The 1,522 military spouse responses demonstrated that military spouses face substantial challenges with under- and unemployment, and have significant opportunities in entrepreneurship, remote work, and reskilling and upskilling to tackle these challenges. This section outlines the key takeaways of the research detailed in the report and describes the implications for policymakers.

Without consistent work available, geo-batching (military families choosing to live apart) is a common way for military spouses to pursue a career, putting additional stress on families; in fact, 33% of military spouses surveyed had at some point chosen to live apart from their spouse specifically to further their career or education. In order to address the lack of opportunities for military spouses, military families also consider leaving military service. Almost half of the military spouses surveyed with a graduate or professional degree have seriously discussed their service member leaving the military to support the military spouse's work or career, and approximately one-third of military spouses whose service member had already retired or transitioned indicated that supporting their work or career was a major factor in the decision to do so.

These key takeaways provide several avenues for policymakers to address these challenges. **First and foremost, it should be noted that viable opportunities for military spouse employment is not a “nice-to-have” but a “need-to-have,” given the potential impact on service member retention.**

“**I am a success story of a military spouse who has figured out how to mold their career each time they move. Of my 10 years of experience, I have been working remote 7 of them. Each time we move I fully throw myself into a job search and work to build a new network. I’ve learned to leverage technology to create a bigger professional network. I’ve also had the opportunity to work in some great companies that are aligned with my personal interests.**”

- *Military Spouse, Survey*



INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR REMOTE & FLEXIBLE WORK

There were substantial gaps between ideal work situations and current work situations. To address this, concerted effort should be made to help match military spouses with remote work opportunities in their fields.

CHALLENGES

While 7 out of 10 military spouses had held a job with set hours and a physical place to go in recent years, less than 10% would consider this their ideal. Military spouses with higher educational attainment were more likely to have had remote work opportunities in recent years, and yet remote work was selected as the ideal work situation for all levels of education. Furthermore, the most common challenge selected that military spouses felt they had faced was “put your career on the backburner because of the challenges of living in a military family.”

OPPORTUNITIES

Target and prioritize occupations with remote work opportunities.

Occupations such as Recruiters, Marketing Managers and Specialists, Product Managers, and Project Managers all provide higher than average opportunities for remote work. Resources provided by the military to help spouses search for employment should prioritize and highlight remote work opportunities so that spouses can maintain consistent jobs through PCS transitions, and priority should be given to feature employers that can offer permanent remote work opportunities to military families.

Use online platforms to help match spouses with committed employers.

As military organizations and others recruit employers to prioritize hiring military spouses, an emphasis on remote work opportunities can be an area of focus. Stakeholders can create online platforms that enable committed employers to promote remote work opportunities directly to military spouses, and encourage employers to specify remote work opportunities in job postings. Aggregated nationwide, such a critical mass of both employers and military spouses seeking remote work opportunities can provide options at scale for both, increasing military spouses’ ability to secure a remote work position and increasing the pool of individuals from which employers can recruit. Virtual job search coaching, such as online coaches or mentors assigned to military spouses for job searches, virtual job fairs, and awareness campaigns around careers that offer remote opportunities can be a part of such platforms. »



Help employers offer more remote work opportunities.

Employers who may be able to offer remote work opportunities may fail to do so for lack of experience. Companies who hire military spouses at their locations may be amenable to expanding remote work opportunities in order to retain military spouses who face a change of station. Coaching and tools for employers considering shifting to allow more remote work can be beneficial for both employers and employees.

Support local education and training programs that enable remote work and distance learning

Colleges proximal to military installations often already serve military personnel and military spouses through various education and training programs. In addition to these education and training programs, local education and training providers can also support military spouses in the techniques, technologies, and practices that enable workers to operate remotely in job search, mobile work, and ongoing distance learning.



STREAMLINE EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO MILITARY SPOUSES

The findings suggest that while military spouses may be provided with resources, they are not always easy to navigate and do not necessarily meet the needs that spouses have when it comes to seeking employment.

CHALLENGES

Our survey results found that, while military spouses rely on military-specific organizations as a general resource when seeking employment, they are much more likely to actually look for a job using online job boards or social media. Approximately 70% of spouses reported that they had found themselves overwhelmed on how to get started looking for work or training opportunities. In focus groups, military spouses listed a wide range of resources that they knew of, but mentioned that they relied on other military spouses to help them navigate new bases and transitions rather than on official resources.

OPPORTUNITIES

Facilitate online coaching and mentoring.

As military spouses value models and guidance from other military spouses, an employment resource that provides or facilitates online coaching and mentoring and the creation of affinity groups can enable military spouses to enjoy a wider and more accessible set of coaching and mentoring relationships.

Streamline resources and provide opportunities for jobs across career fields and levels of experience.

Military-serving organizations, including the DoD, as well as others that provide employment support to military spouses, should make efforts to streamline resources available to spouses. They should also reconsider ways in which they provide access to information about job opportunities such that these resources are easily accessible and tailored to locations if they are not focused on remote work, and on professional as well as entry-level jobs. As one military spouse put it: “There seems to be a lot of focus on military spouse hiring initiatives for entry level jobs, but little to [no] support [for] those of us with more advanced degrees and experience. I’d love to see more companies encouraged to hire MilSpouses remotely and in higher positions!”

Encourage Commanders and senior leaders to increase focus on military spouse employment.

Installation Commanders have a great deal of influence on messaging and programming available to families. Encouraging Commanders and senior leaders at all levels to increase attention to military spouses’ employment challenges and associated resources can promote environments that are more supportive of military spouse economic opportunity, and will ultimately lead to stronger families and a healthier all-volunteer force.



PROVIDE RESOURCES AND TRAINING TO ENCOURAGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The findings point to a need for additional resources and transparency for military spouses regarding business funding opportunities and highlighting entrepreneurship among the military spouse community.

CHALLENGES

One out of every four military spouses surveyed currently or previously owned their own business or were self-employed. These spouses most frequently worked as freelancers or independent contractors (61%) or as small businesses without employees (45%). Initial investments in their businesses were modest: most were below \$1,000 and the overwhelming majority relied on personal savings to fund their businesses followed distantly by credit card debt. **Most spouses who chose to start their own business said it was primarily due to the need for flexibility; however, most spouses who no longer have their own business had to discontinue due to PCS rather than a lack of profitability.** The skills that military spouses felt they needed to build the most were building a website or social media presence in order to build a client base. While the influence of role models on business ownership was limited, military spouses were aware of others with successful businesses, and just over a quarter of business owners felt this had a lot of influence on them.

OPPORTUNITIES

Increase transparency in loan options and provide targeted support for military spouse business owners. Military spouses are clearly pursuing entrepreneurship and self-employment in order to help them navigate the employment challenges that come with being in a military family, and are often able to successfully make a profit, but are still forced to discontinue their businesses because of changing duty stations. **Fewer than 6% of military spouses say they relied on loans to start their businesses, even though they are eligible for Small Business Administration loans and other opportunities for funding a business that does not involve personal savings.** With greater transparency in loan options for businesses, resources that help military spouses continue their businesses as they move, and targeted support and skill training that helps military spouses market their entrepreneurial endeavors could be a more sustainable solution to help address military spouse unemployment and under-employment.

Showcase a range of military spouse entrepreneurs.

Highlighting additional role models, not just of successful entrepreneurs with large businesses and employees, but also successful military spouse freelancers and independent contractors who may not think of themselves as entrepreneurs, may also influence military spouses to pursue self-employment and business ownership.



TARGET TRAINING AND EDUCATION TO HELP MILITARY SPOUSES FIND SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT

The findings show that military spouses continue to show interest in and pursue additional training or education, but that skills mismatches between military spouses and available employment opportunities remain prevalent. Providing opportunities for greater awareness, training, and education that focuses on transferable skills can help military spouses prepare for careers that are portable across geographies.

■ CHALLENGES

Military spouses in our research were both highly educated and highly likely to pursue additional training or education. Three out of every four respondents had at least a four-year degree, and approximately 80% had already pursued additional training or education during their time as a military spouse. Despite this, a majority were still “very likely” to pursue further training or education in the future. Spouses were equally interested in pursuing a degree, a certificate, or brushing up on new skills; what mattered most was getting skills they could use no matter where they lived.

There was strong evidence of labor market frictions and skills mismatches between military spouses and employment opportunities. Military spouses felt that at times they had avoided applying for a job because they didn’t have the right skills, but had also experienced taking a job that was uninteresting, low-paying, or didn’t use all the skills they did have. **Only one quarter of military spouses expressed interest in STEM positions such as IT support professional and software developer roles that are frequently remote, comparable to the representation of women in these professions across the population.** However, when looking at the career areas that military spouses did express an interest in and were qualified for, we found alignment with in-demand job opportunities in career areas such as Business Management and Operations, Human Resources, and Marketing and Public Relations, with the potential for remote work occupations within these fields. Understanding the skill sets that military spouses can offer employers can also help reduce employer bias.



■ OPPORTUNITIES

Focus on training for in-demand job opportunities, including STEM positions.

This evidence has two main implications for policymakers. The first is that more work needs to be done to increase the real and perceived access that women, not just military spouses, have to in-demand STEM positions that offer flexibility and competitive wages. The second is that, given current experience and interest, there are fields that could benefit from military spouse employment and in which military spouses could successfully create sustainable careers. Providing opportunities for greater awareness, training, and education that focuses on transferable, business-enabling skills could help military spouses prepare for good careers that are not specific to one location or industry.

Support high-quality online and accelerated training programs and stackable credentials.

Online and accelerated education and training programs can be especially helpful to military spouses, whose education and training needs and lifestyles may not accommodate participation in traditional education models. Leveraging high-quality online and accelerated programs and marketing them to military spouses through military channels and traditional channels in communities where there are installations will be important to engaging military spouses in ongoing education and training. Again, encouraging Installation Commanders to advocate for and promote these programs can increase awareness and use among military spouses. For military spouses who would rather engage in traditional programs, shorter-term trainings and stackable credentials in the key disciplines mentioned earlier in the report can be acquired and put to use in shorter increments, increasing value for military spouses.

CONCLUSION & LOOKING FORWARD

Military spouses face unique challenges in the workforce. This report has shown that many military spouses experience work situations that are less than ideal, and take jobs they are uninterested in or that are below their skill level due to the constraints they face. These challenges have resulted in lost wages for military spouses, but also in some cases in a loss of talent in our all-volunteer force. However, this research has also demonstrated that there are viable solutions that can offer military spouses sustainable career paths.

Spouses who responded to the survey showed that, with small amounts of capital, military spouses are able to start and build entrepreneurial endeavors, including both self-employment opportunities and business ownership. Remote work opportunities, when provided by employers committed to flexible work, can help spouses transport their careers across geographies. Career areas with military spouse talent and interest can provide these remote work opportunities with minimal amounts of additional training required. An increase in the support of high-quality local and online training providers can help bridge any gaps in skills, and can continue to encourage spouses to pursue sustainable careers at minimal cost.

In addition to this report, and the policymaker recommendations included, this research effort aims to supply military spouses, employers, and other stakeholders with actionable solutions to address these challenges. Together, Hiring Our Heroes and Grow With Google are excited to use these results and implications to create pathways that will pave the way for military spouses to experience increased success in their entrepreneurial, remote work, and upskilling endeavors. In addition, Hiring Our Heroes and Grow With Google are committed to working with partners and policymakers to implement changes that will positively impact military spouse career trajectories for years to come.

AFTERWORD

When the research conducted for this report was completed in December of 2019, none of the partners, funders or authors of this report could have predicted the Covid-19 pandemic, its severity, or the resulting economic consequences. Since then, the U.S. labor market has undergone staggering upheaval, with job loss across our economy rivaling that of the Great Depression. Nearly every sector of the economy has been affected, and every corner of our workforce will be dealing with the implications for the foreseeable future – military spouses included. While no one can predict quite how we will recover or over what period of time, we can make some suppositions based on recent events, and consider how the findings of this report may be impacted.

Perhaps the most profound and far-reaching change brought about by the pandemic has been the rapid shift to remote work. Industries, employers, and workers who may have never truly imagined dissolution of the office environment and place-based work models are now working in a distributed manner, with staff logging in from kitchen tables, bedrooms, relatives' homes, and other environments heretofore not considered “work” spaces. While we have enjoyed patience and understanding from our colleagues and clients as children, pets, and domestic partners enter into the frame of video conferencing screens, many have been pleasantly surprised at the levels of productivity that the US workforce has maintained from these unusual workstations. Many employers have extended these remote work arrangements far into the future, or permanently. It is too early to say whether the end of the pandemic will also bring an end to these alternative arrangements, but precedent has been set. Should remote work become more ubiquitous, such a shift will certainly benefit military spouses who are even more reliant on alternative work arrangements than the average worker, and who already have experience working remotely, and balancing home and work responsibilities amid challenging external environments.

The overall health of the economy will impact certain sectors and roles differently. Regardless of the shape and pace of the recovery, we can be reasonably certain that some of the roles identified in this report will continue to experience strong demand. In the Business Management/Operations space, IT roles have traditionally been more recession-resistant than most. We expect that demand for IT Project Managers will remain strong. If anything, data infrastructure and data security needs will intensify and there will likely be increasing demand for cybersecurity professionals and others to support the remote economy.

One role that previously had modest levels of demand but is now critically important to managing through the pandemic is that of Contact Tracer. Military spouses looking for immediate employment that can often be done remotely may explore opportunities as remote Contact Tracers. Communication, public health knowledge/experience, documentation, and compliance are among the competencies critical to these roles, and can be applied as they move forward in their careers. Certainly, the threat of future pandemics may make this role one that experiences greater sustained demand than we would prefer.

Amid the pandemic, the US is experiencing new forms of racial awareness, and corporate leaders are among those considering new ways of recruiting, assessing and engaging employees that more fully represent the increasing diversity of the nation. Again, while we do not yet know the degree to which these shifting priorities will be permanently embedded in employer behavior, the current moment seems to be calling for new emphasis on hiring and promoting women and minorities, and recognizing alternative indicators of skill and ability beyond traditional degrees and long-term consistent employment.

Military spouses experience non-traditional pathways: they are more likely to have started and stopped careers and education endeavors as their spouses change duty stations. They take advantage of online learning. They may have had to change jobs multiple times and exhibit gaps in their resumes. As employers consider and hire people with these types of non-traditional experiences and become comfortable with people following these atypical pathways, military spouses' experiences may appear less unusual, and employers may become more tolerant of these anomalies. New tools and resources to reach, teach, and place these non-traditional learners and workers may also be a good fit for military spouses. If small business lending also follows this trend and uses new and alternative methods for assessing risk and supporting new and emerging enterprises, military spouse entrepreneurs may also benefit.

The Covid era-induced economic crisis will present challenges across the economy and will impact all Americans, including military spouses. But as the nation confronts challenges and unpredictability that military spouses have faced for generations, it is our hope that new efforts to reimagine work will take hold and recognition of military spouses' adaptability and resilience will be recognized as the assets that they are. Such shifts in recognition of military spouses' value and compassion for their sacrifices will not only benefit military spouses, but all US workers.

HIRING OUR HEROES

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