Blue Star Families' Social Impact Research 2021:

The Diverse Experiences of Military & Veteran Families of Color

In collaboration with

Syracuse University
Institute for Veterans & Military Families
JPMorgan Chase & Co., Founding Partner

Funding for this needs assessment is provided through the generosity of our presenting sponsor USAA and from supporting sponsors CSX, JPMorgan Chase & Co. Global Philanthropy, Macy's, Comcast, BAE Systems, CVS Health, Cerner Corporation, AARP, and Leidos, Inc.

BLUE STAR FAMILIES
Racial Equity & Inclusion

ABOUT

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Blue Star Families was founded in 2009 with the mission to strengthen military families by building robust communities of support. Through research and data, the organization identifies military families' greatest needs and creates programs and solutions that empower them to thrive, such as career development tools, local events, and caregiver support. To date, Blue Star Families has engaged tens of thousands of volunteers and served more than 1.5 million military-connected family members. No matter where they are on their journey, Blue Star Families members can feel welcome, find answers to their challenges, and cultivate a greater sense of belonging to the communities in which they live and serve. For more information, visit bluestarfam.org.

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY'S INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES (IVMF)

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

AUTHORS

From the Department of Applied Research at Blue Star Families, in collaboration with Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF).

BLUE STAR FAMILIES

Jennifer L. Akin, M.P.A.,
Co-Director of Applied Research
Cynthia C. Rivera, M.S.W,
Senior Manager of Equity and Social Impact Research
Carrie E. Carter, M.Ed.,
Applied Research Generalist Consultant
Jessica D. Strong, Ph.D.,
Co-Director of Applied Research
Ingrid Herrera-Yee, Ph.D.,
Senior Applied Research Analyst Consultant
Charo K. Bates, M.B.A., M.A., M.S.,
Policy & Social Impact DEPLOY Fellow
Kelley M. Klor,
Food Insecurity DEPLOY Fellow
Ashley B. Scott,
Policy & Outreach Fellow
Hallie M. Atengco, M.C.,
Data Visualization Consultant

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY'S INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES (IVMF)

Rosalinda V. Maury, M.S.,
Director of Applied Research and Analytics
Mariah Brennan Nanni, M.P.A.,
Doctoral Research Fellow
Rachel K. Linsner, M.S.,
Research Associate
Jeanette Yih Harvie, Ph.D.,
Research Associate

Recommended citation:
Blue Star Families. (2022). *Blue Star Families' social impact research 2021: The diverse experiences of military & veteran families of color*. Blue Star Families' Department of Applied Research.

Introduction i
Preface & Acknowledgements iii
Executive Summary vi
Historical Context x
Chapter 1: Community and Social Context 1
Finding 1: Military Life Decision-Making 3
Finding 2: Service Member Career Progression 11
Finding 3: Transitioning & Veterans 19
Chapter 2: Neighborhood and Built Environment 24
Finding 4: Safety & Law Enforcement 26
Finding 5: Resources & Satisfaction 30
Chapter 3: Economic Stability 39
Finding 6: Finances 41
Finding 7: Military Spouse Employment 48
Finding 8: Veteran Employment 55
Chapter 4: Health Care Access 60
Finding 9: Military & Veteran Health Care 62
Chapter 5: Education Access and Quality 70
Finding 10: Military Children 72
Finding 11: Postsecondary Education & Officer Accessions 79
Chapter 6: Identity and Culture 83
Finding 12: Identity 85
Finding 13: Current Cultural Environment 90
Chapter 7: Looking Forward 96
Recommendations 98
Methodology 119
Endnotes & References 129

Introduction

A Note from the Racial Equity and Inclusion Committee Co-Chairs

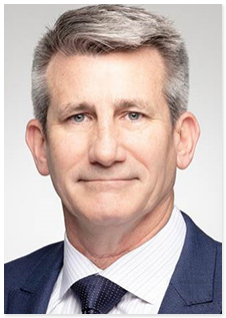
During the summer of 2020, the death of George Floyd became a flashpoint that sparked widespread outrage and spurred activism and protests, shining a spotlight on racial disparities around the nation. Blue Star Families recognized the importance of this moment and its relevance to our mission, and gathered a number of its stakeholders to better understand the experiences of diverse groups within the military and Veteran community. After this important gathering, Blue Star Families pledged its commitment to help bring attention to the disparities experienced by families of color during their time in service. This call to action established Blue Star Families Racial Equity and Inclusion Initiative (REI) and its five impact areas – Research and Advocacy, Training, Leadership Collaboration and Community Impact.

As part of its commitment to Research and Advocacy, Blue Star Families is proud to share this groundbreaking research report. This report was created to help address gaps in knowledge, and to provide unique insights and empirically driven recommendations that will help raise the nation's awareness of the challenges military and Veteran families of color face. This report will shed light on some of the impacts of inequities experienced by our military service members, Veterans and their families of color. This is just the beginning of the work ahead. It is our hope that findings from this report will serve as a framework for policy and program recommendations that will help improve the service experiences of military families of color, strengthening our military overall.

Lieutenant General Gwen Bingham, U.S. Army (Ret.), Co-Chair

Staff Sergeant Charles Eggleston, U.S. Army (Ret.), Co-Chair

Ingrid Herrera-Yee, Ph.D., Co-Chair



General John "Mick" Nicholson, U.S. Army (Ret.), Co-Chair

Kathy Roth-Douquet, CEO **Blue Star Families**

To root the REI in **strong leadership**, Blue Star Families enlisted the support of an extraordinary group of leaders and trusted advisors—men and women who have experienced life in a military family and who have important perspectives to share.

The following committee—composed of **established, high-ranking military leaders from all branches, wounded warriors, caregivers, and military spouses**—informs strategies, programs, and outcomes of the Racial Equity and Inclusion Initiative. Additionally, it provides thought leadership on racial equity and inclusion to the entire military and Veteran family support sector.

RACIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE (REIC) MEMBERS

- **Sheila Casey**, Chair, Blue Star Families Board of Directors | Chief Operating Officer, The Hill
- **Kathy Roth-Douquet**, CEO and Board President, Blue Star Families
- **Carlandra "CT" Moss**, Director, Racial Equity and Inclusion Initiative
- **Lieutenant General Gwen Bingham**, **U.S. Army (Ret.), Co-Chair,** Former Army Staff Principal for Installation Management
- **Staff Sergeant Charles Eggleston, U.S. Army (Ret.), Co-Chair,** President & CEO, Three Seven Consulting, The Military Order of the Purple Heart
- **Ingrid Herrera-Yee, Ph.D., Co-Chair,** Military Spouse and Suicide Prevention Expert
- **General John "Mick" Nicholson, U.S. Army (Ret.)**, Co-Chair, Former Commander, NATO Allied Land Command
- **Major General Juan G. Ayala, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.),** Director, Office of Military and Veteran Affairs, City of San Antonio
- **Lieutenant General Thomas P. Bostick, U.S. Army (Ret.),** 53rd Chief of Engineers of the U.S. Army, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- **Michelle Brito, Financial Specialist**, Military Family Program Advisor, Army Spouse
- **Harriet Dominique**, former Chief, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and CR Officer at USAA
- **Brigadier General Carol Eggert (Ret).**, Comcast NBCUniversal, Senior VP Military and Veterans Affairs
- **Colonel Robert Gordon, U.S. Army (Ret.)**, Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy
- **Rear Admiral Sinclair Harris, U.S. Navy (Ret.),** Former Vice Director for Operations to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
- **Vice Admiral Mary J. Jackson, U.S. Navy (Ret.),** 6th Commander, Navy Installations Command
- **Koby Langley**, Senior Vice President, American Red Cross
- **Reta Jo Lewis Esq.**, Senior Fellow and Director of Congressional Affairs, The German Marshall Fund of the United States
- **Val Nicholas**, Senior Vice President Creative Director, SummitMediaCorp
- **Patricia Ochan**, Senior Consultant for Cyber Policy and Military Spouse
- **Sergeant Major James K. Sims, U.S. Army (Ret.),** Former Army Materiel Command, Command Sergeant Major
- **Staff Sergeant Fernando Snowden-Lorence, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.),** Vice President and Regional Director, Corporate Responsibility at JP Morgan Chase
- **General Larry Spencer, U.S. Air Force (Ret.),** Former Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force
- **Major General Antonio Taguba, U.S. Army (Ret.),** President, TDLS Consulting, LLC
- **Major General Suzanne P. Vares-Lum, U.S. Army (Ret.),** President, East-West Center
- **Master Sergeant Rob Wilkins, U.S. Air Force (Ret.),** Military Evangelist/Community Outreach at Military Times
- **Karla Ballard Williams,** CEO & Co-Founder, YING, Inc.
- **Anthony Woods,** Iraq War Veteran, Army Reservist
- **Brigadier General Irene M. Zoppi (Rodríguez), Ph.D., U.S. Army Reserve (Ret.),** Former U.S. Army South, Deputy Commanding General & Director, U.S. Army Reserve Engagement Cell for Mobilization

PREFACE

By Jennifer Akin (Co-Director of Applied Research, Blue Star Families) and Rosalinda Maury (Director of Applied Research and Analytics, The Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University)

When we began planning this project in October 2020, it became immediately apparent that–despite the large body of research to understand the experiences of service members and Veterans of color–almost no literature existed regarding outcomes and experiences of military or Veteran ***family members*** of color. In fact, reliable racial/ethnic demographic information about military dependents is virtually nonexistent in the public domain and is even more sparse regarding spouses and children of Veterans, or the prevalence of multiracial/ethnic families. This reality, combined with the growing demand for data and research about a variety of topics from a variety of stakeholders, informed this study's breadth and methodology.

This study is approved by the Institutional Review Board at Syracuse University, and it utilized a mixed-methods approach, which is further detailed in the Methodology section of this report. The study had four phases:

Phase I, Exploratory Analysis: In addition to a comprehensive literature review, the team explored a variety of existing data sets through a racial/ethnic equity lens (including Blue Star Families' 2016-2020 Military Family Lifestyle Survey data, 2019 American Community Survey data, and publicly-available descriptive statistics provided by the Department of Defense, the Center for Naval Analysis, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Office of People Analytics). Results from these analyses are utilized to supplement findings throughout the report and detailed analysis notes are included in accompanying endnotes.

Phase II, Focus Groups: To inform survey instrument design, the research team hosted five focus groups (and several interviews), including one in Spanish. Insights from focus group participants are also interwoven throughout the report.

Phase III, Survey: The survey instrument was designed specifically for military and Veteran families of color, to include multiracial/ethnic families. Participant recruitment communications about the survey were therefore designed for these audiences. Nevertheless, the survey did allow white, non-Hispanic respondents who did not report being a member of a multiracial/ethnic family to participate in several perception and policy-oriented sections. See the Methodology section for more information on sampling methodology.

Phase IV, Study Analysis & Recommendation Development: This report represents the culmination of the study and encompasses results from the literature review, exploratory analysis of previously-collected datasets, and statistics from this new survey. The research team interviewed or met with over 100 stakeholders from nonprofit, community, and governmental organizations to learn more about existing programs that might address challenges the study uncovered and to identify potential solutions and best practices for inclusion in this report.

Definitions & Limitations

Our survey utilized a select-all, combination race/ethnicity question as recommended by the U.S. Census Bureau[1]. For this reason, "respondent of color" refers to anyone who selected any race/ethnicity other than only white. Similarly, respondents from a particular racial/ethnic group may have selected multiple racial/ethnic identities, and their responses may therefore be reflected in multiple comparison groups when racial and ethnic groups are analyzed separately (e.g., respondents identifying both as "Black" and "Asian" are counted in both analyses, but only once when aggregated "respondents of color" are reported).

Military affiliation was also a select-all question, and this report analyzes data from service members/Veterans and spouses both as independent groups and as aggregated "family" units. For example, "active-duty family respondent" statistics provide data on respondents identifying as either an active-duty service member OR a spouse of an active-duty service member. In the event that a respondent holds both spouse and service member identities, they are only reported once within the active-duty family group.

Detailed information on the sample is included in the Methodology section; however, when reading this report, it is important to understand that: 68% (622) of active-duty family respondents of color identify as an active-duty spouse, 74% (663) identify as a woman, 45% (413) identify as Black, and 31% (285) identify as Hispanic/Latino/a/x. By contrast, 52% (306) of all Veteran family respondents of color identify as a Veteran, 59% (341) identify as a woman, 52% (302) identify as Black, and 31% (179) identify as Hispanic/Latino/a/x. These demographics may influence the overall statistics and findings from this report.

More detailed limitations of this study are also available in the Methodology section; however, interpretations of these findings should consider that analysis was often constrained by sample size, and this survey did not include a white, non-Hispanic comparison group. All comparisons to white, non-Hispanic active-duty or Veteran subgroups and/or civilians are drawn from separate data sources. For consistency, clarity, and legibility, detailed information about each statistic in this report is included in the relevant Finding's endnotes (e.g., frequencies/question response rate). For additional information not answered in the endnotes or Methodology section, please contact survey@bluestarfam.org.

[1]Marks, R. & Jones, N. (2020, February). Collecting and tabulating ethnicity and race responses in the 2020 census. [Training materials]. Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau.
https://www2.census.gov/about/training-workshops/2020/2020-02-19-pop-presentation.pdf

Acknowledgments

The research team is profoundly grateful to the military and Veteran family members who took part in this research by dedicating their time and energy to participate in focus groups and interviews and answering survey questions. Their trust made this work possible, and it has been our task to honor their stories by elevating them in this report. **If you participated in this research, thank you for your willingness to share your story.**

The entire Blue Star Families team–including the Racial Equity and Inclusion Committee, tremendous volunteer survey ambassadors, and research partners at Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families–made this study possible. **Thank you for your time, your vulnerability, and your willingness to lean in to solve big problems.**

Improving life for military- and Veteran-connected families of color will only be achieved by activating a cross-sector network of nonprofit organizations, community leaders, private sector partners, and governmental stakeholders. To that end, more than 100 stakeholders from nonprofit, community, private, and governmental organizations took the time to share their insights and expertise with Blue Star Families' team. **Thank you for your thought leadership, time, and commitment to advancing this work moving forward.**

Funding for this comprehensive needs assessment is provided through the generosity of our presenting sponsor USAA and from supporting sponsors CSX, JPMorgan Chase & Co. Global Philanthropy, Macy's, Comcast, BAE Systems, CVS Health, Cerner Corporation, AARP, and Leidos, Inc. With this pivotal support, Blue Star Families has been able to identify and quantify unique challenges never explored before, and provide recommendations to solve them. **Thank you for your belief in this work and in Blue Star Families' team to lead this conversation.**

Finally, Blue Star Families is grateful for the assistance of dozens of partner organizations and members of the White Oak Collaborative who provided outreach support throughout the project. We know you face competing demands for social media shares and email sends. **Thank you for valuing the importance of this work to the entire military and Veteran service organizational space.**

Blue Star Families' Social Impact Research 2021:

The Diverse Experiences of Military & Veteran Families of Color

Executive Summary

Addressing disparities affecting military families of color is a matter of national security and necessary to ensure long-term military readiness.

Blue Star Families conducted this study in consonance with our mission to help military families thrive in order to strengthen the All Volunteer Force. Three in ten service members identify as a racial/ethnic minority and this number is expected to grow in the coming years: by 2027 most recruitable U.S. adults will be people of color. Their experiences within the military and the communities where they might serve affect the resilience, readiness, retention and recruiting of our All Volunteer Force. When considering the decrease in those eligible for military service among the U.S. population, the military must take significant steps to recruit service members of color and retain them and their families.

The findings from this groundbreaking study offer insights into how to improve experiences for family members of color and offer new ideas to increase the retention of service members of color.

Active-duty family respondents of color make decisions about military life based on perceptions of racism and fear for their family's safety in communities. Nearly half of active-duty (46%) family respondents of color report they have considered racial/ethnic discrimination in their installation ranking decisions and 42% consider concerns about safety due to their (or their family's) racial/ethnic identity. One in three active-duty (33%) and Veteran (34%) family respondents of color report they consider(ed) racial/ethnic discrimination in family conversations regarding whether or not to remain in service.

Active-duty family respondents of color report experiencing harassment and police profiling across all U.S. regions, both on and off installation, since January 2020. One in three active-duty family respondents of color report experiencing at least one incident of being threatened or harassed in their local civilian (33%) or military (29%) community since January 2020. Active-duty family respondents report higher levels of trust in military law enforcement than civilian law enforcement, despite similar levels of reported police profiling across all racial/ethnic groups. More than half of active-duty family respondents residing in the Midwest, West, and South report fearing for their safety in their civilian community, due to their race or ethnicity at least once since January 2020, and more than four in 10 (43%) living in the Northeast say the same. One in three Black active-duty family respondents report being profiled by military or civilian law enforcement at least once since January 2020.

Military service provides many benefits to active-duty and Veteran families of color compared to civilians of color, however they often fall short of the benefits their white, non-Hispanic colleagues experience. Half (51%) of active-duty family respondents of color report that, in general, their family's financial stability is better than friends and family of the same racial/ethnic background who

are not serving in the military. Similarly, 41% of Veteran respondents of color indicate they are better able to find a job, compared to their non-white family/friends who are not connected to the military–a sentiment that is supported by national unemployment and earnings data. Racial/ethnic minority Veterans have lower unemployment rates and higher earnings than their non-Veteran peers, however they lag behind their white, non-Hispanic Veteran counterparts. Active-duty and Veteran family respondents of color also perceive better health care quality and overall health than their civilian counterparts, but encounter difficulty obtaining culturally competent health and mental health care providers. With access to education benefits, more than twice as many Black and Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty service members and Veteran respondents earn four-year degrees than their civilian counterparts.

Military spouses of color report a greater need for two household incomes than their white, non-Hispanic peers, and they experience substantially higher unemployment rates and lower earnings than their civilian counterparts. Exploratory analysis of preexisting datasets as part of this study find that active-duty military spouses of color are three times more likely to be unemployed, compared to civilian counterparts; they are unemployed at higher rates than white, non-Hispanic military spouses; they earn about 37% less than the total population; and female active-duty military spouses of color experience even worse employment outcomes (with median earnings 54-66% lower than the total population). Female, Hispanic/Latina military spouses experience the worst employment outcomes, earning $21,200 less than the median earnings of the broader adult U.S. population.

The long-term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic are yet to be known, however this study suggests that many active-duty and Veteran respondents benefited from the health care available to them. When respondents were asked about the perception of their overall health since COVID-19 started, about four in 10 respondents of color from all military- and Veteran-connected subgroups (active-duty spouse, active-duty service member, Veteran, and spouse of a Veteran) report their overall health as being better than their non-military peers (36-41%). About the same proportion of all groups report the quality of their health care since the pandemic as better than their non-military affiliated peers (38-42%). On both measures, a greater proportion of Veteran respondents* indicate this to be the case.

Active-duty families of color report generally favorable attitudes and outcomes regarding their children's child care and education; however, some challenges remain. Active-duty family respondents of color report that a diverse staff is an important consideration when selecting child care providers and schools, but safety, staff quality, curriculum, and distance from home are more frequently cited as top attributes. Furthermore, while the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children of color remain inconclusive, analysis of previously unpublished 2020 Military Family Lifestyle Survey data suggests few racial/ethnic disparities in children's education and child care situations among active-duty family respondents of color. Despite many positive indicators, open-ended responses reflect frustration and perceptions of discrimination within schools and child care settings for some parents of color. When asked to describe "policies or practices that are not culturally appropriate/do not feel culturally appropriate for [their] family," in their child care provider or school, the top three themes relate to disagreements with curriculum, perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, and lack of cultural awareness or acknowledgment of cultural differences.

A greater proportion of Veteran family respondents of color report needing resources than their active-duty counterparts; variation exists by race/ethnicity, and uncertainty about eligibility and access are top barriers. Among those with a need since January 2020, at least one in three active-duty and Veteran family respondents of color report not accessing food and nutrition assistance resources, employment and career development services, caregiving resources, and housing services or assistance despite needing them. The most salient needs (over half of respondents of color who needed them did not receive them) are food and nutrition assistance for Veteran family respondents of color, caregiving resources for Veteran family respondents of color, housing services or assistance for Veteran family respondents of color, and caregiving resources for Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty family respondents. Furthermore, a greater proportion of active-duty family respondents identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native report needing nearly every resource or service inquired about, compared to respondents from the other racial/ethnic groups analyzed, which aligns with external research describing a historical general lack of availability of resources for these groups in the civilian population.

Military culture may exacerbate efforts to combat racial/ethnic discrimination in the workplace. Off-color jokes, racial slurs, and discriminatory comments that are (erroneously) used to build a sense of camaraderie negatively affect active-duty service members, spouses, and Veteran respondents of color. One in five active-duty service member, 14% of Veteran, and 10% of active-duty spouse respondents of color report having been subject to slurs or jokes at least five times since January 2020 in their military or Veteran community. Historically, to combat race-related issues that undermine unit cohesion, the military has embraced the concept that it is "colorblind" (e.g., "we all bleed blue"). However, most respondents of color view the military's "colorblind" mentality as inaccurate and potentially corrosive and recognize racial equity work is both necessary and divisive.

Limitations: 2,731 respondents weighed in on this survey. For full demographic tables, please see the Methodology section of the full report. Interpretations of these findings should consider that analysis was often constrained by sample size, and this survey did not include a white, non-Hispanic comparison group. All comparisons to white, non-Hispanic active-duty or Veteran subgroups and/or civilians are drawn from separate data sources. For consistency, clarity, and legibility, detailed information about each statistic in this report is included in the relevant Finding's endnotes within the main report (e.g., frequencies, question response rate, etc.). For additional information not answered in the endnotes or Methodology section, please contact survey@bluestarfam.org.

The military alone cannot solve the challenges this study reveals.

The challenges revealed by the study are reflective of challenges in American society, and in fact there are a number of areas in which the military out-performs society at-large in terms of positive outcomes for service members and families of color. Every organization, community, and individual which desires to support military and Veteran families will be less effective if they fail to consider the unique experiences of military and Veteran families of color in their efforts. To that end, the Blue Star Families team interviewed over 100 government, non-profit, and community stakeholders to identify and prioritize viable recommendations and best practices to begin moving forward. These are intended to help leaders prioritize action and start new conversations about how to create sustainable change.

Recommendations

Build Stronger Relationships and More Inclusive Military and Veteran Communities

1. **Be an Ally:** Speak up against racism and racist comments.
2. **Actively pursue** inclusive mentorship opportunities and integrate them into existing job requirements and programs to support all military- and Veteran-connected groups, including spouses and military children.
3. **Provide** military and Veteran service members and families opportunities to engage in difficult but productive conversations about race, ethnicity, and more.

Empower Civilian Communities to Support Military and Veteran Families of Color & Encourage Military Installations to Continually Engage Their Local Communities

1. **Allocate** additional resources to strengthen civil-military relationships at the local level and bolster support systems on installations.
2. **Collaborate** at the local level and proactively include military- and Veteran-connected families of color in local community conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).
3. **Infuse** local civilian organizations with diverse talent and knowledge about military and Veteran communities by hiring more military spouses, Veterans, and spouses of Veterans of color.

Strengthen and Diversify the All-Volunteer Force

1. **Update** diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) plans to address challenges military dependents of color face and identify best practices for working with local civilian communities to solve them.
2. **Apply** best practices from other industries and sectors to support service members of color throughout their time in service.
3. **Assess** existing military entry paths and remove barriers to entry for prospective service members of color.
4. **Continue to diversify** ROTC scholarship recipients through broader recruitment, and assess program completion and commissioning rates among those enrolled in the program.

Improve Data Collection and Understanding

1. **Improve** existing data collection to identify and address disparities for service members, Veterans, and family members of color in a more reliable and timely fashion.
2. **Explore** how to use existing data to improve experiences for military and Veteran families of color.
3. **Deepen understanding** of issues identified in this report and others.

Best Practices

White Oak Collaborative Subcommittee on Racial Equity and Inclusion: Recommended Practices for Military and Veteran Serving Organizations

Detailed in depth at
bluestarfam.org/racial-equity-initiative/collaboration

1. **Be intentional**
2. **Gather data**
3. **Implement** equitable and inclusive policies and practices
4. **Train** managers and staff
5. **Engage more and better:** Diversity brings diversity
6. **Review** progress and develop new goals

How the Private Sector & Philanthropic Foundations Can Support Military and Veteran Families of Color

1. **Highlight the importance** of serving military and Veteran families of color among existing grantees.
2. **Invest in organizations** that support and have a strong staff and board representation from military and/or Veteran families of color.
3. **Consider supplier diversity.**
4. **Break down walls** between existing initiatives within your company. Initiatives that support military or Veteran families, and initiatives that support DEI work should not be mutually exclusive or operate in silos.

Funding for this needs assessment is provided through the generosity of our presenting sponsor USAA and from supporting sponsors CSX, JPMorgan Chase & Co. Global Philanthropy, Macy's, Comcast, BAE Systems, CVS Health, Cerner Corporation, AARP, and Leidos, Inc.

Historical Context:

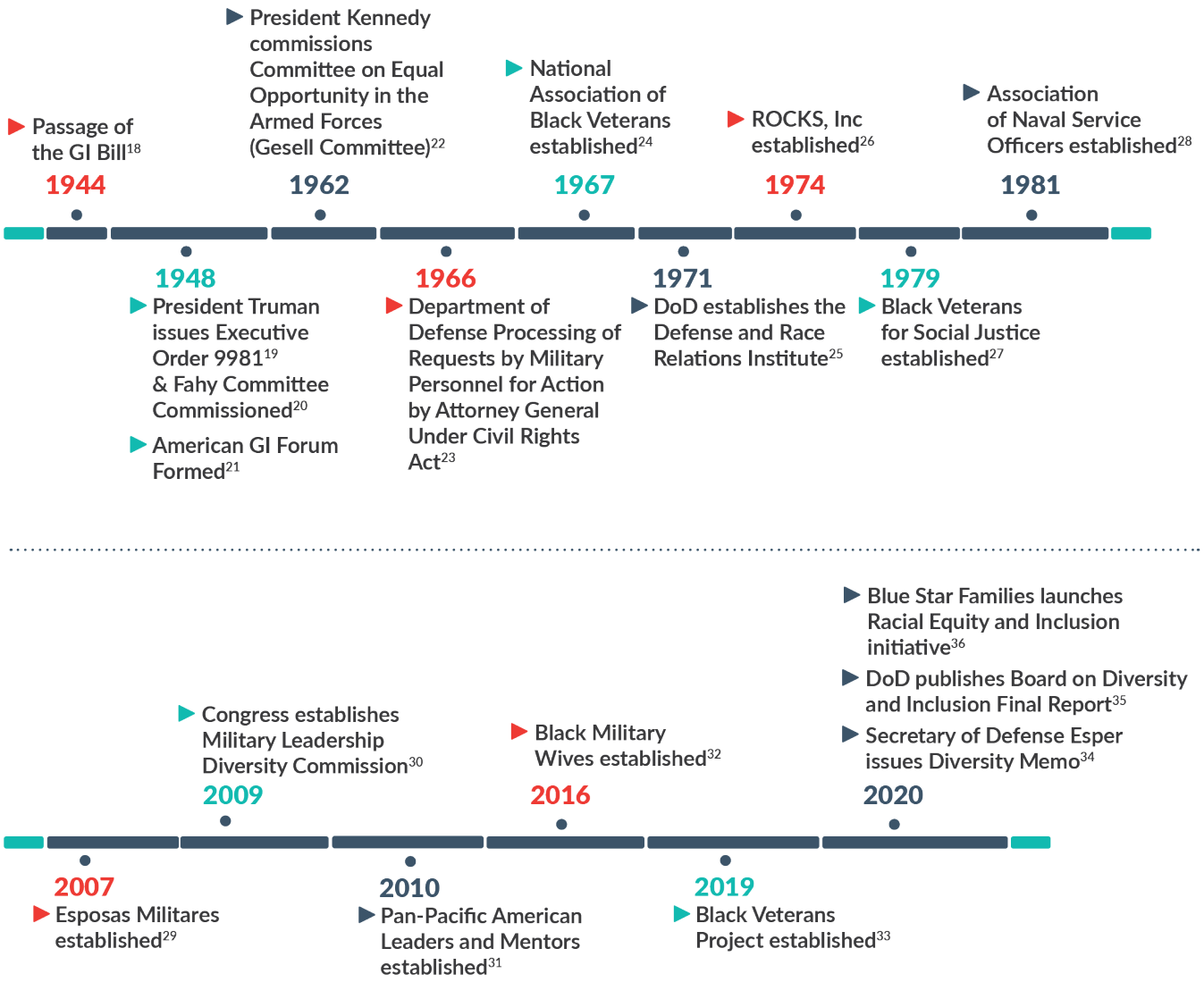
A Brief History of Support for Service Members, Veterans, and Families of Color Since 1944

In 1948, President Truman issued Executive Order 9981 calling for "the equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services."[1] Since that time, efforts to address issues of racial/ethnic equality, equity, and inclusion within the armed forces have ebbed and flowed, with varying levels of success.[2] Furthermore, stakeholders as diverse as Congress, universities, lenders, employers, schools, communities, and philanthropic organizations all played a role in the degree to which well-intentioned policies and programs were (or were not) implemented in order to bolster outcomes for service members and Veterans of color. **Military spouses and children of color rarely, if ever, were considered as part of these efforts.**

The implementation of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill) provides a case study in how incongruences between national, state, and community level policies prevented service members and Veterans of color from receiving their service benefits, and how this in-turn set the stage for advocacy and community organizing before the Civil Rights era. The GI Bill granted World War II Veterans three main benefits: **(1)** money for education and training, **(2)** a mortgage loan guarantee, and **(3)** unemployment insurance.[3] The GI Bill was a groundbreaking piece of legislation that launched an entire generation into the middle class,[4] with one critical caveat: non-white Veterans were almost entirely excluded from using their benefits.[5] Barriers, such as "white only" university enrollment and/or neighborhood covenants, meant Veterans of color faced extreme challenges in using the benefits they earned.[6] In response, organizations such as the American GI Forum formed,[7] and civilian civil rights groups (such as the NAACP and the League of United Latin American Citizens) advocated to ensure the promises of the GI Bill would be realized for all Veterans. **Their work continues today.**[8]

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Figure 1: Racial/Ethnic Inclusion Initiatives and the Emergence of Military/Veteran Non-Profit Support (Selected Events: 1944-2020)



As the needs of servicemembers and Veterans of color evolved, more organizations --such as The ROCKS, Inc.[9]; National Association for Black Veterans[10]; the Association for Naval Service Officers[11]; Black Veterans Project[12], Pan-Pacific American Leaders and Mentors[13], and Black Veterans for Social Justice[14], --formed throughout the 1970s and '80s. Offering membership, mentoring, and advocacy opportunities, these organizations have served military members and Veterans for decades. More recently, a handful of online communities (e.g., Black Military Wives[15]) and organizations (e.g., Esposas Militares[16]) have formed to better support military spouses and families of color, however few of these family-orientated groups exist.

During the summer of 2020 myriad racially- and ethnically-charged events, (including the murder of George Floyd, the disappearance and murder of Army PFC Vanessa Guillen, and the use of military troops to quell nationwide civil unrest) sparked new conversations regarding racial/ethnic diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in the United States and within the military. In response, Blue Star Families launched a Racial Equity and Inclusion (REI) initiative aimed at creating a multi-dimensional, cross-sector, collective impact effort to improve the service experiences and sense of belonging of military-connected families of color.[17] The first of its kind, this undertaking seeks to improve the service experiences of military ***families*** of color to strengthen the Total Force. **Blue Star Families' REI vision is that every member of a military family feels embraced by, and connected to, the community in which they live and serve.**

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Chapter 1
Community and Social Context

We were scheduled to PCS earlier this month to California to a predominantly white area. When I asked my realtor if he felt it was safe for my husband (who runs 2-5 miles a day) to run in the area, his response was, 'Umm.'
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander Military Spouse

When we PCS, we don't look for the best schools and best neighborhoods, because those often are places we are discriminated against. ***We discuss where our family would fit in best and feel the safest, which may not be the highest ranked schools for our kids.*** *We want our kids to fit in and not be treated differently, so we'd rather send them to a lower ranked school that is more diverse.*
- White Veteran Spouse in a Multiracial Family

On the right bases, in the right units, I noticed that children of all ethnicities and backgrounds played together in our on-base neighborhoods; it brought us as parents together, we made friends of different backgrounds regularly - it was culturally utopian. *I found upon retirement that this isn't mirrored in the civilian world, which is quite sad. Am very glad my daughters spent their childhoods / adolescence with those of other backgrounds and ethnicities; they're stronger, kinder, more well-rounded Americans because of this..*
- White Veteran in a Multiracial Family

As an officer's wife and a veteran living on post meant not fitting in with that community. Not many looked like me and my family. I'll never forget the first time we elected to stay in post housing, after forcing my neighbor to engage in a conversation, I was told they thought we were a part of the cleaning team.
-Black Veteran and Military Spouse

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

I have heard Garrison commanders say racial inequality doesn't exist in the Army. *Changes need to come from changes to the very basis of the military culture.*
- Hispanic/Latino/a/x Military Spouse

The differences in my experience with PCS moves are very different from white spouses I have met. As POC, we research the safest areas for our family, areas we should and should not go to, etc. ***Racist comments are always said in active-duty units and in spouse areas (i.e., spouses club, PWOC, etc.). I have not witnessed anyone speaking out against it.***
- Hispanic/Latino/a/x Female Military Spouse

I don't want to be the diversity in my community or unit. *It's very isolating to be the only one.*
- Black Service Member

I wanted to join a spouses club to try to feel a better sense of belonging in our new assignment and quickly realized that I was the only person of color around. It made some social interactions very awkward. ***At some points, individuals in the club wanted to use me as a sort of tokenism for the organization to appear inclusive on the outside.***
- Black Military Spouse

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Finding 1

Military Life Decision-Making

Some active-duty family respondents make military life decisions based on their family's racial/ethnic composition that directly impact the retention of service members of color.

"Recruit the service member, retain the family" is a common and well-founded military aphorism[1]; however a review of literature and publicly-available military diversity, equity, and inclusion plans[2] did not reveal any specific efforts to integrate the unique experiences of military families of color into broader understandings of readiness. In line with civilian literature that finds race impacts decisions about where to reside and which jobs to pursue[3], this study reveals that many active-duty family respondents* and white respondents who are members of multiracial/ethnic families[ɣ] (henceforth "white multiracial/ethnic family respondents") often evaluate their military life decisions through a racial/ethnic lens. These decisions, made throughout a family's time in service (Figure 1) have direct implications for recruitment and retention (additional details in Finding 2).

> **We try to do family activities like farmers' markets or festivals. But we always feel unwanted. We even thought at first, 'maybe it's us,' so we would continue to try to have small talk or even a 'hi, how are you?' in passing, and still no one responds. It makes me feel as if I'm disgusting.**
>
> - Black Military Spouse

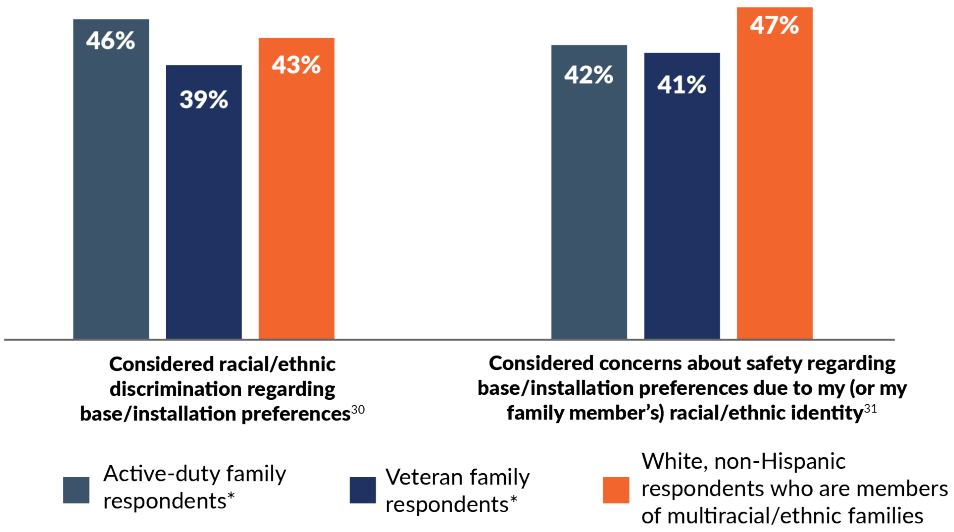
*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
[ɣ] Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicate being either an active-duty service member or the spouse of an active-duty service member, being white (with no other racial/ethnic identity), being a member of a member of a multiracial/ethnic family, and report that at least one member of their family has a racial/ethnic identity other than white.
The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Active-duty family respondents of color, particularly Black active-duty respondents, report their race/ethnicity has impacted their experience in civilian communities and influenced their base/installation preferences.

Nearly half (46%) of active-duty family and 40% of white multiracial/ethnic family respondents*ɣ report having experienced difficulty developing a sense of belonging to their local civilian community due to their family's race/ethnicity.[4] Furthermore, 16% of active-duty family respondents* report feeling "uncomfortable" or "very uncomfortable" in their local civilian community.[5] When asked about the source of their discomfort, "racism in the local community" was the most common write-in response.

These community-based challenges likely contribute to why, when asked about base/installation preferences, nearly half of active-duty (46%) and white multiracial/ethnic family respondents*ɣ (43%) report they have "considered racial/ethnic discrimination" in their ranking decisions.[6] Concerns extend beyond racial/ethnic discrimination: More than 4 in 10 active-duty (42%) and white multiracial/ethnic family respondents*ɣ (47%) reported they consider "concerns about safety due to [theirs] (or [their] family member's) racial/ethnic identity." (See "Spotlight on Belonging and Geography" for additional details).[7]

Figure 1: Influence of Race/Ethnicity When Ranking Base/Installation Preferences
% of respondents*



*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
ɣ Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicate being either an active-duty service member or the spouse of an active-duty service member, being white (with no other racial/ethnic identity), being a member of a member of a multiracial/ethnic family, and report that at least one member of their family has a racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Differences exist by race, with a notably greater proportion of Black (53%) and Asian (49%) active-duty family respondents reporting "difficulty developing a sense of belonging to my local civilian community due to [theirs] (or [their] family's) race/ethnicity."[8] A substantially higher proportion of Black active-duty family respondents, however, report incorporating this into their decision-making when submitting base/installation preferences (Figure 1).

Over half of Black active-duty respondents report having considered "racial/ethnic discrimination" (56%) and "concerns about safety regarding base/installation preferences due to my (or my family member's) racial/ethnic identity" (53%) in their decision-making process. This was the only racial/ethnic group analyzed in which the majority of respondents reported both discrimination and safety to be considerations[9], aligning with unpublished 2020 MFLS data[10]: "Issues relating to racial discrimination (e.g., avoiding areas that are known for racial discrimination)" was the most commonly-selected response for Black active-duty service member respondents when asked "which of the following factors are/were most important in submitting preferences."[11]

Difficulty feeling a sense of belonging...

46% of active-duty family respondents*

report difficulty developing a sense of belonging to "my local civilian community due to my (or my family's) race/ethnicity"[33]

Active-duty family respondents' perceptions of racism at a potential duty assignment are one of the top reasons for turning down military orders; these decisions can undermine service member career progression.

Fourteen of the 47 (30%) active-duty service member respondents* who answered the question report "never" being able to obtain preferred assignments.[12] This could help explain why some active-duty (30%), Veteran (28%), and white multiracial/ethnic (29%) family respondents* ˠ report having "made the decision not to accept an assignment (PCS orders or job) knowing that it may negatively impact the service member's career" at some point during their time in service.[13] When asked why their family made the decision, "perception of racism in the local community" was the third most commonly reported answer (34%) among active-duty family respondents*, following "to stabilize my family" (49%), and perception of "low quality of life in the local community." (37%)[14]

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
ˠ Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicate being either an active-duty service member or the spouse of an active-duty service member, being white (with no other racial/ethnic identity), being a member of a member of a multiracial/ethnic family, and report that at least one member of their family has a racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Four in ten active-duty service member respondents* (42%) report deciding not to accept an assignment (PCS orders or job) knowing that it may negatively impact their career opportunities.[15] Of those, 36% indicated they had anticipated negative impacts but didn't experience them, and 64% reported at least one negative impact.[16] Of those that indicated a negative consequence, 49% report receiving a less attractive assignment, 36% indicate the decision hindered their promotability, 32% believe they received a poorer evaluation, and 15% say the decision ended their career. (See Finding 2 for more details on service member career progression).

[A]fter living in some of the places we've lived, I know I don't want to go back to some of them. [...my service member] didn't understand for a while. [We argued] about it once because he was like, 'well, that takes some stuff off my career list, you know, and I might have to go back here if I want to keep moving forward [...].' [H]e comes from a different world a complete white person world where he never even thought about people of color or what people go through, so I've had to explain to him 'you know I was called this at the store' or 'I was made to feel this way' or 'someone said this to me when we lived in this town, and so now I say I don't want my son growing up around these people if we can help it.'

- Hispanic/Latino/a/x Military Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
ɣ Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicate being either an active-duty service member or the spouse of an active-duty service member, being white (with no other racial/ethnic identity), being a member of a member of a multiracial/ethnic family, and report that at least one member of their family has a racial/ethnic identity other than white.
The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Racial/ethnic discrimination is a contributing factor when deciding to leave service, particularly among Black active-duty family respondents.

About one in three active-duty (33%), Veteran (34%), and white multiracial/ethnic (34%) family respondents* ˠ report having "considered racial/ethnic discrimination in family conversations regarding whether or not to remain in service."[17] This is supported by Army exit survey data, which found that 17% of service members "reported mistreatment in the workplace was an 'Extremely Important' reason to LEAVE the Army."[18] When asked to elaborate on what the respondent meant by "mistreatment in the workplace," "race," "gender," and "color" were the top three sources of mistreatment identified.[19]

1 in 3 active-duty, Veteran, and family respondents*

have considered racial/ethnic discrimination in family conversations regarding whether or not to remain in service[32]

The 2020 MFLS found that 8% of Veteran respondents of color cited racial discrimination as one of the reasons they left the service, and more than twice as many Black Veteran respondents (18%) reported this to be the case.[20] Consistent with this research and other statistics discussed in this finding, a greater proportion of Black active-duty (39%) and Veteran (41%) family respondents to this survey also report having "considered racial/ethnic discrimination in family conversations regarding whether or not to remain in service."[21]

Not taking the career-enhancing assignment due to racial tensions at the location hurt my chances for promotion.

- Black Veteran

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
ˠ Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicate being either an active-duty service member or the spouse of an active-duty service member, being white (with no other racial/ethnic identity), being a member of a member of a multiracial/ethnic family, and report that at least one member of their family has a racial/ethnic identity other than white.

More research is needed to understand better the influence of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination on other military life decisions, such as neighborhood selection and whether or not to geo-bach.

The perception that on-installation housing is more diverse, and therefore more attractive to racially and ethnically diverse families was a common theme among focus group participants, however, additional research is needed to determine whether or not military families of color prefer military housing to a greater extent than their white, non-Hispanic peers. An exploratory analysis of available data suggests that a proportionally greater number of Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty families and a proportionally lower number of white, non-Hispanic families may live in military housing compared to other racial/ethnic groups analyzed, but this survey did not inquire about neighborhood choice preferences.[22]

Similarly, comparative data suggests that military families of color, generally, do not appear to geo-bach at notably higher levels than their white, non-Hispanic peers.[23] In this survey, 38% of active-duty family respondents* report they have geo-bached, but when asked in an open-ended question their reasons for doing so, issues related to disliking the community's environment was not among the most commonly-cited responses. Notably, a greater percentage of American Indian or Alaska Native respondents reported geo-baching (52%) compared to other racial/ethnic groups analyzed (35% - 37%).[24] Further research is warranted to understand if this holds true in other datasets and if so, to explore the reasons underlying these decisions.

People of color enlist in the U.S. military at high rates, but there is reason to believe that these trends may not continue long-term.[25]

Research has found that a "person's familiarity with the military," and not race or socioeconomic background, is the best predictor of joining the armed forces.[26] However, experiencing racial/ethnic discrimination while in uniform (prevalence discussed in Finding 2) may substantially decrease one's likelihood of recommending service to a young person.[27] Furthermore, the Fall 2020 Propensity Update suggests broader U.S. cultural flashpoints may also impede Black service member recruitment: Following the murder of George Floyd and conversations regarding the use of troops to quell civil unrest, Black youth propensity to serve reached its lowest since 9/11 (8%), dropping to below white youth propensity to serve for the first time since November 2004, and down from 20% just two years prior.[28] Similarly, in summer 2020, Hispanic propensity to serve reached its lowest rate (11%) since June 2009, following months of sustained discourse regarding the disappearance and murder of Vanessa Guillen (to include prominent Hispanic organizations cautioning Latinas against joining the military).[29] While it has since rebounded, the long-term effects of her murder on Hispanic/Latino/a/x enlistments remain to be seen. Monitoring year-over-year propensity to serve and accessions data through a racial/ethnic representation lens is therefore critical to ensuring the long-term viability of a racially and ethnically diverse force.

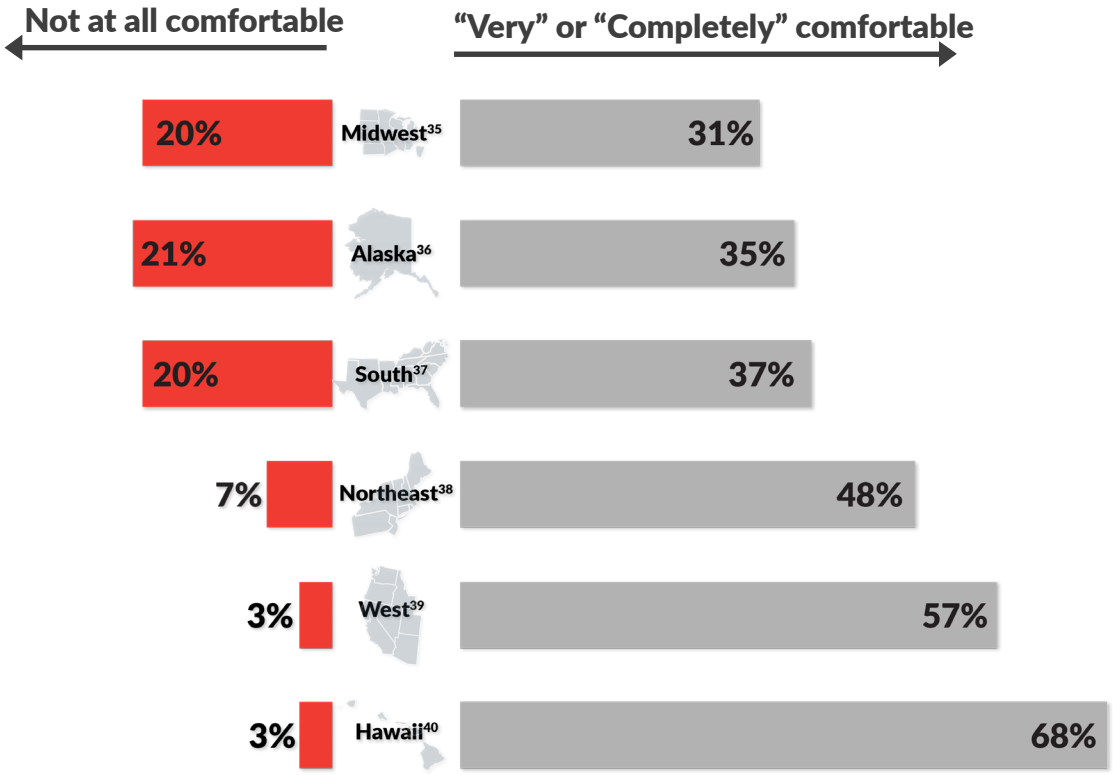
*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

ɣ Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicate being either an active-duty service member or the spouse of an active-duty service member, being white (with no other racial/ethnic identity), being a member of a member of a multiracial/ethnic family, and report that at least one member of their family has a racial/ethnic identity other than white.

SPOTLIGHT:

REGION MATTERS

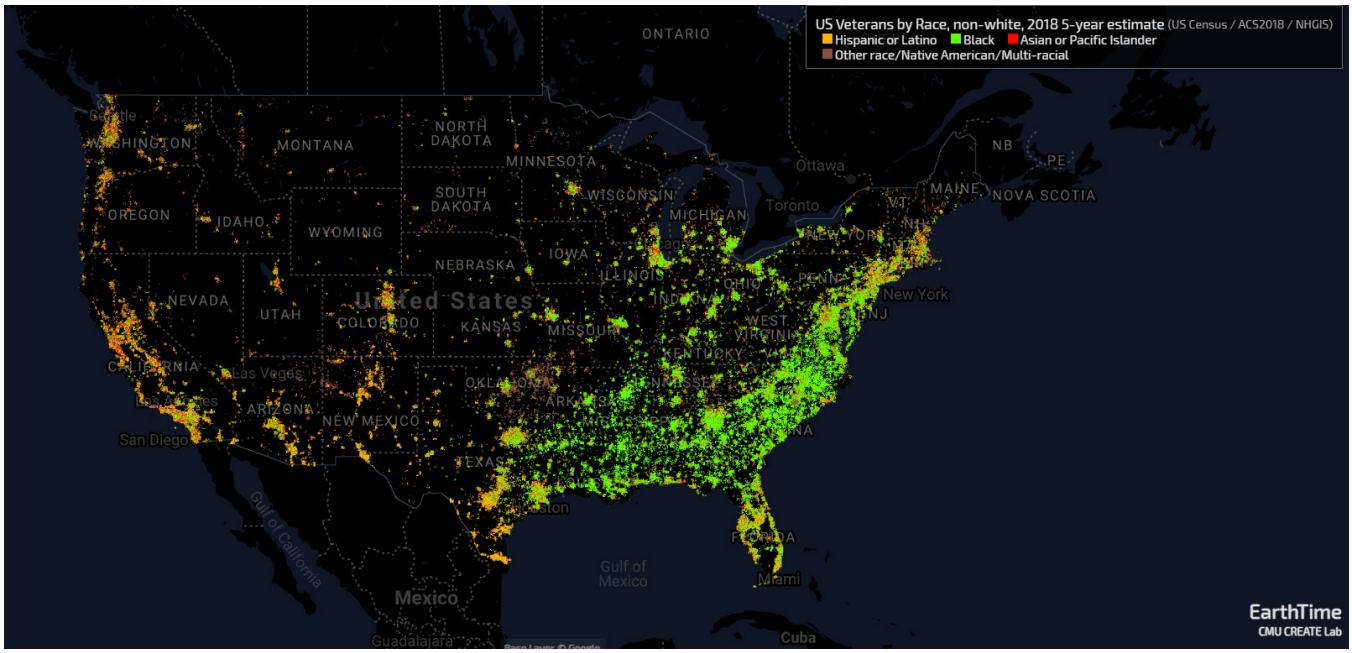
1 in 5 Active-duty family respondents* report being **"not at all comfortable"** being stationed **in the Midwest, Alaska, or South**[34]



> **We moved to [town in the south] because the area is beautiful and the commute is less than 15 minutes to the base. However, while living here [...] we have experienced racism first hand and deal with prejudice often. We are not welcomed here and the local community is sure to let us know."**
>
> - Black Military Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Residential data among Veterans of color mirror that of the broader U.S. population, with Black Veterans residing heavily in the south and Hispanic/Latino Veterans residing heavily in the west.[41]



Data Source: US Census, ACS 2018, NHGIS; Created by the EarthTime team, CREATE Lab, Carnegie Mellon University
https://earthtime.org/

UNCOMFORTABLE

More than

1 in 10 active-duty family respondents* report feeling uncomfortable in both their military and civilian communities

19% in my military/ civilian community

16% in local civilian community

Top reasons for discomfort:

1. Racial discrimination
2. Lack of diversity
3. Don't fit in
4. Lack of connection
5. Gender discrimination

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Finding 2
Service Member Career Progression

Active-duty service member respondents of color report challenges to their career progression and perceive racially/ethnically-based discrimination in evaluation and promotion.

The military has sought to address racial and ethnic inequities within the force over the past 60 years.[1] Despite some progress (see Historical Context), this needs assessment reveals that upward mobility remains a challenge for service members of color and female service members. Challenges present themselves in several ways: differences in racial/ethnic representation exist among service branches and in enlisted versus officer ranks (Figures 1 and 2); active-duty service member survey respondents* report their racial/ethnic background negatively impacts their career and impedes their professional experience; and focus group participants describe the impacts of perceived ethnic/racial discrimination on their own career and those of their peers. These real and perceived inequities in assignments, opportunities, and evaluations collectively work to undermine military efforts to recruit, retain, and promote service members of color, particularly within the officer corps.

While the racial/ethnic composition of the United States military as a whole is more diverse than the population of the United States, differences exist by race/ethnicity, service branch, and rank.

Although most racial/ethnic minority groups are underrepresented in the armed forces, active-duty Black service members are overrepresented (17%)[2] — a trend dating back to the Korean and Vietnam Wars[3] — as are Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders.[4] Racial/ethnic diversity varies amongst service branches. Black service members are overrepresented in the Army, Navy, and Air Force; however, they are underrepresented in the Marine Corps and Coast Guard.[5] Hispanic service members are overrepresented in the Marine Corps.[6] Additionally, racial/ethnic minorities are underrepresented in the Coast Guard.[7]

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Government data reveals the enlisted corps is more racially diverse than the officer corps[8] in every service branch, and it maintains more diversity at each pay grade.[9] In contrast, diversity in the officer corps is low and diminishes as rank increases.[10] Black and Hispanic service members are overrepresented in the enlisted corps and underrepresented in the officer corps[11] (Figures 1 & 2), with Hispanic service member retention decreasing with rank in both the officer and enlisted corps. These population representation statistics are foundational to interpreting other findings discussed throughout the report and suggest there is room for improvement in recruiting and retaining racially and ethnically diverse officers, and retaining Hispanic enlisted personnel.

Figure 1: Enlisted Racial/Ethnic Diversity by Service Branch

% of enlisted service members of color (2019)

Source: 2019 Population Representation in the Military Services report[29]

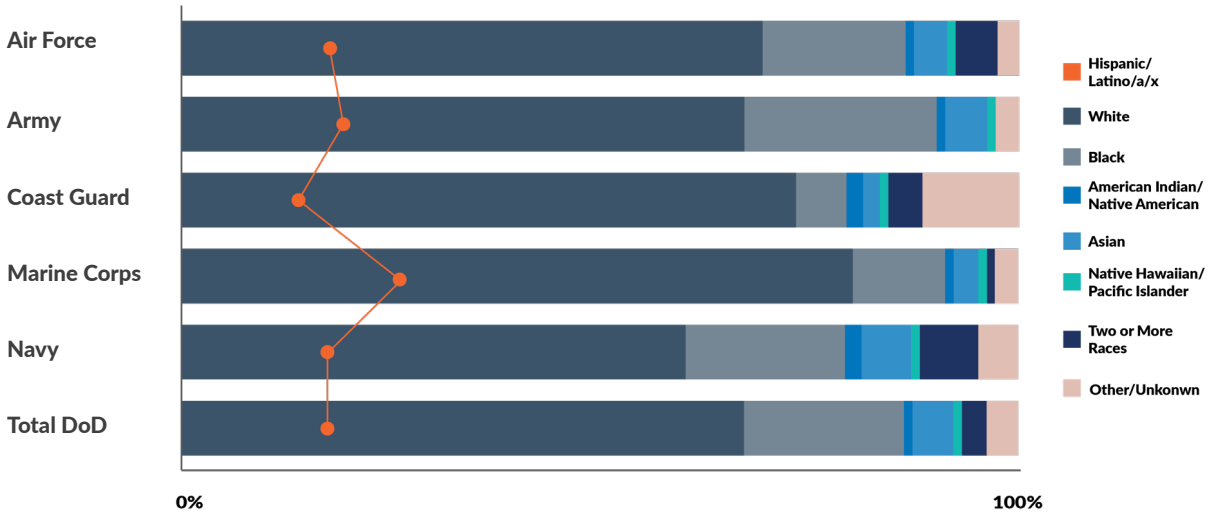
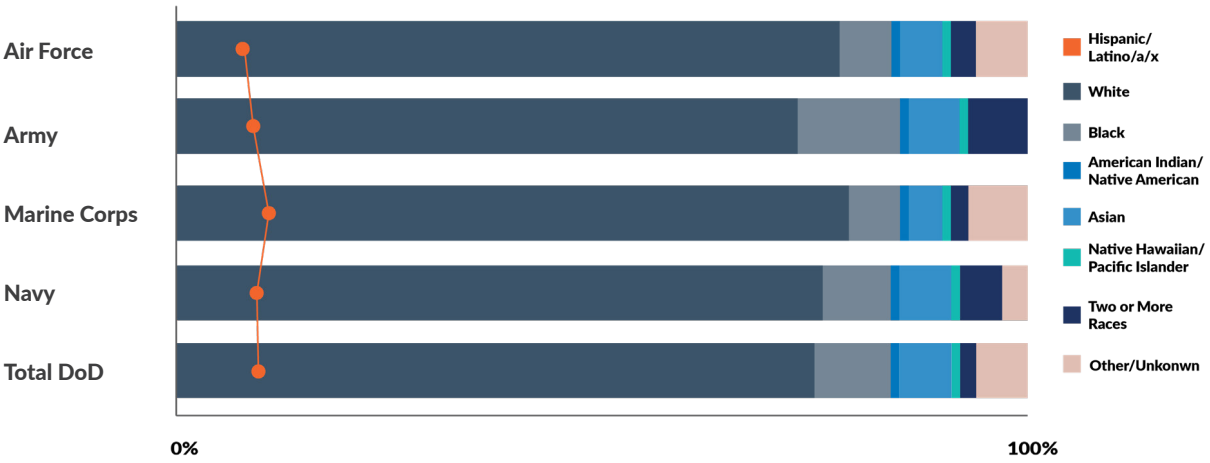


Figure 2: Officer Racial/Ethnic Diversity by Service Branch

% of officers of color (2019)

Source: 2019 Population Representation in the Military Services report[30]



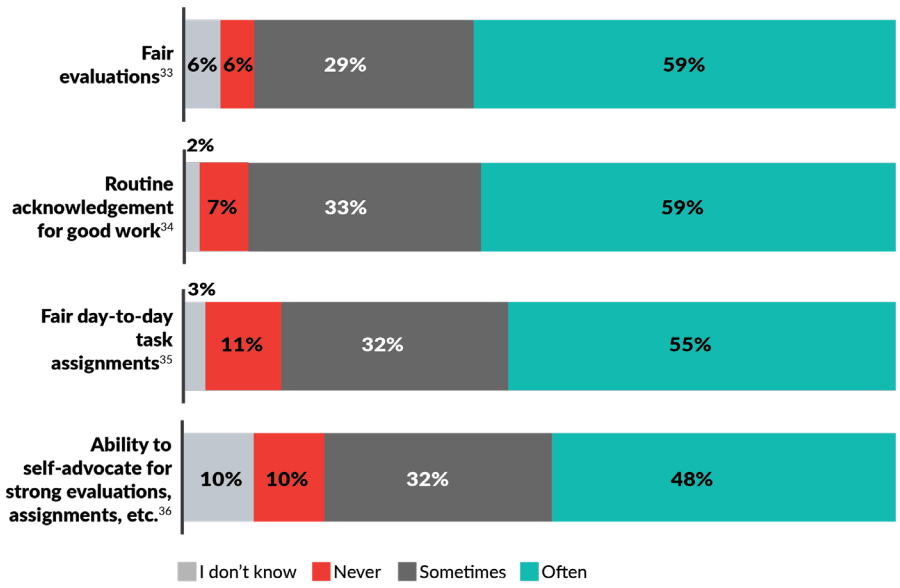
*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Active-duty service members of color, particularly Black service members, perceive their race or ethnicity impacts their ability to advance at work.

Among respondents to the 2020 Military Family Lifestyle Survey,[12] 26% of active-duty service member respondents of color* reported experiencing racial/ethnic discrimination in their unit or command compared to 4% of their white, non-Hispanic colleagues; 21% reported experiencing it in promotion or career advancement opportunities compared to 6% of their white, non-Hispanic colleagues.[13] This is consistent with findings from this survey: 39% of active-duty service member respondents* report their race/ethnicity "significantly" or "slightly" hurt their ability to get ahead at work.[14] Among the racial/ethnic groups analyzed, a notably higher proportion of Black active-duty service member respondents (48%) indicate this to be the case.[15] More than twice as many Hispanic active-duty service member respondents (11%) report not knowing whether or not their race/ethnicity had influenced their ability to get ahead at work, compared to other racial/ethnic groups.[16] As discussed in Finding 12, this uncertainty can cause additional stress.

While the majority of service member respondents* report they "often" received fair evaluations, fair day-to-day task assignments, and routine acknowledgment for good work, some report that they "never" or only "sometimes" believed this to be the case (Figure 3). More than one in 10 active-duty service member respondents* report that, considering their current immediate supervisor (or whomever administers each of the following), they "never" obtain preferred assignments (13%). Nearly the same proportion say the same of their ability to self-advocate for strong evaluations, assignments, etc. (10%).[17] This dynamic is often described by focus group participants and in open-ended responses as feeling they do not have equal access to a network granting them the same opportunities that others receive without exerting extra effort, compared to their white, non-Hispanic (and often male) colleagues.[18]

Figure 3: Frequency of Career-Enhancing Opportunities Under Current Supervisor
% of active-duty service member respondents*



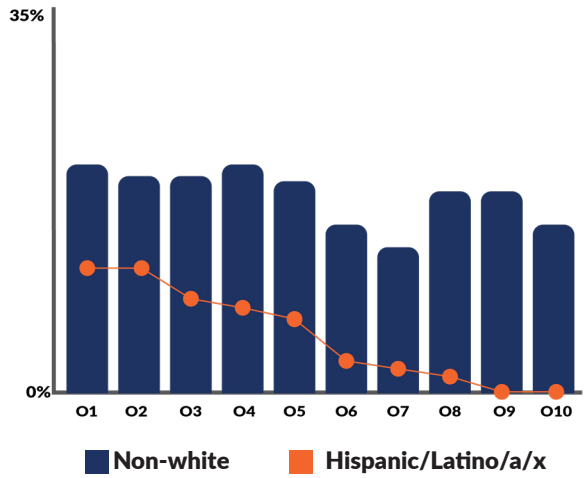
*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Retaining service members of color is paramount to diversifying military leadership, especially within the officer corps (Figure 4). This study did not reveal perceptions of blatant racial/ethnic discrimination in promotion. However, the literature review revealed one study that found among Army officers, "a correlation exists between racial bias and negative impacts on Black U.S. Army officers' performance evaluations, promotions, and their careers."[19] While promotion is only one component of retaining racially/ethnically-diverse service members, addressing promotion disparities has been the focus of recent reform efforts within the Department of Defense.[20] The long-term efficacy of practices such as removing photos from promotion board packets[21] designed to promote diversity remains unclear,[22] and efforts to improve retention for service members of color continue.

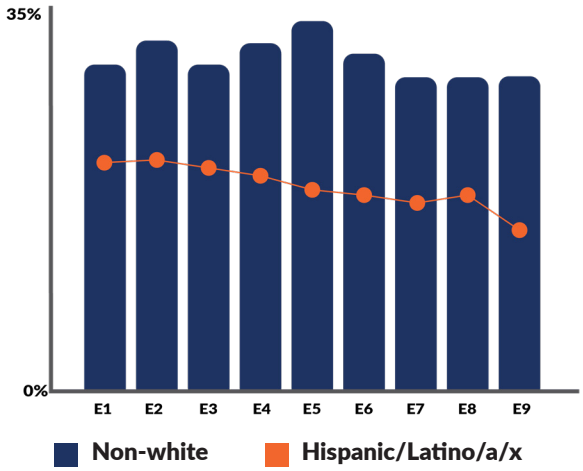
Figure 4: Retention is stronger among enlisted than the officer corps

Source: 2019 Population Representation in the Military Services report

% of DOD officer corps (2019)[31]



% of DOD enlisted corps (2019)[32]



Retention of racially and ethnically diverse officers generally **decreases with rank.**

Racial diversity is relatively stable across ranks in the enlisted corps, but **Hispanic/Latino/a/x retention decreases with rank.**

> **I had to fight to stay in or get opportunities that often the good old boys got.**
>
> -Hispanic/Latino/a/x Veteran

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Active-duty service member respondents desire mentorship that includes, but is not limited to, professional development

DoD diversity plans reveal varying levels of "mentorship" as a strategy the service branches intend to use to improve diversity throughout the force.[23] Mentorship opportunities currently exist, and the large majority (77%) of active-duty survey respondents* report they have had a formal or informal mentor that supported their career progression.[24] However, survey results highlight areas where they can be improved and institutionalized to better meet the needs of this population. Most (64%) active-duty service member respondents* report desiring some form of mentorship,[25] including but not limited to professional development.

Among those active-duty service member respondents* who desire a mentor, the majority (58%) state they would like a mentor in the area of "employment, career exploration, professional development, or leadership development," followed by "family, life/social skills" (48%)[26]. Furthermore, 60% would find having one with the same professional interest valuable, 49% seek a person of the same racial/ethnic identity, and 38% would like a mentor of the same gender.[27] Substantial differences exist among active-duty family respondents[28] based on racial/ethnic identity, providing additional insight into mentorship program implementation priorities.

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

SPOTLIGHT ON:

MILITARY CULTURE

Active-duty service member respondents of color report having a strong sense of belonging to the military and other positive career experiences

8 in 10 Active-duty service member respondents*

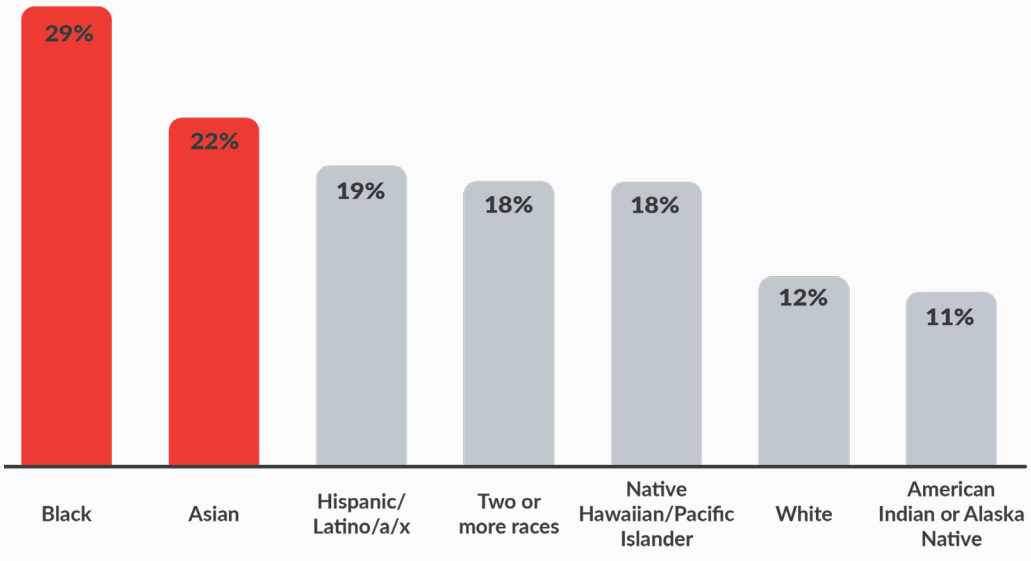
Say being in the military has had a positive influence on their professional growth[37]

7 in 10	7 in 10	7 in 10	6 in 10
I am treated with respect by colleagues[38]	I feel a sense of belonging[39]	I am a valued member[40]	I am able to perform to my full potential[41]

Despite positive experiences of service, Veterans and active-duty service members of color also experience high levels of discrimination

Black and Asian service members report discrimination most frequently[43]

Source: 2017 DOD Workplace and Equal Opportunity Survey of Active-Duty Members



Half of Veteran respondents* and **41%** of active-duty service member respondents* experienced **racially/ethnically-based discrimination or harassment by peers during their military service.**[42]

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Off-color jokes, racial slurs, and discriminatory comments that are (erroneously) used to build a sense of camaraderie negatively affect active-duty service members of color.

Experienced in military/Veteran community 5+ times since January 2020

I have been threatened or harrassed	I have been subject to slurs or jokes*	People have criticized my accent or the way I speak*
21% Active-duty service member respondents[44]	**20%** Active-duty service member respondents[47]	**26%** Active-duty service member respondents[50]
14% Veteran respondents[45]	**14%** Veteran respondents[48]	**15%** Veteran respondents[51]
8% Active-duty spouse respondents[46]	**10%** Active-duty spouse respondents[49]	**12%** Active-duty spouse respondents[52]

> **At first [being called derogatory nicknames] was funny you know, but then when it just drags on and on and on and the jokes keep coming and it just gets really, really old and after a while you start to really question.**
>
> -Hispanic/Latino/a/x Veteran[53]

Active-duty service members of color experience racial/ethnic discrimination at work, sometimes perceiving it to affect their career.

Source: 2020 MFLS

26% of active-duty service member respondents* reported experiencing racial/ethnic discrimination **in their unit or command**

compared to

4% of their white, non-Hispanic colleagues[54]

> **It's uncomfortable to be in a leadership position and be a person of color in white spaces. The microaggressions and ignorance can be too much and if I can avoid attending functions then I will.**
>
> -Hispanic/Latino/a/x Veteran

21% of active-duty service member respondents* reported experiencing racial/ethnic discrimination **in promotion or career advancement opportunities**

compared to

6% of their white, non-Hispanic colleagues[55]

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Active-duty service member and Veteran respondents* report negative outcomes from reporting and/or speaking out

Retaliation is common for respondents* who do speak up

30% of active-duty service member respondents*

43% Veteran respondents*

Report they were **retaliated against for standing up for something.**[56]

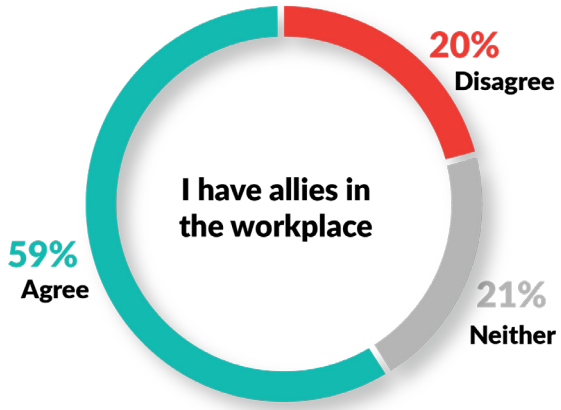
Top three reported consequences of "standing up for something":[57]

1. Reassigned or relocated
2. Unfair treatment or discrimination
3. Verbal harassment or punitive taskings

ALLIES in the workplace

While perceptions of allyship in the workplace are high among active-duty service member respondents*...

% of active-duty member respondents* who report having allies in the workplace[58]



SPEAK UP

...the majority would like to see more of their white, non-Hispanic colleagues, friends, and acquaintances[59]

1. Call out inappropriate comments or behavior — **57%**
2. Get involved with diversity and inclusion efforts — **53%**
3. Advocate to fix issues caused by structural/systemic racism — **49%**

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

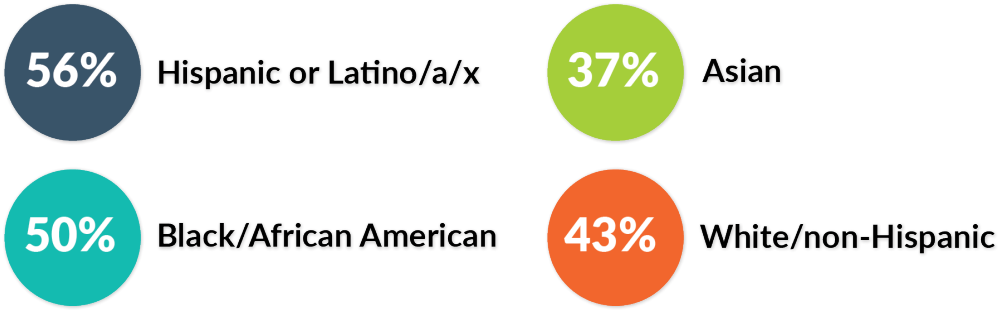
Finding 3
Transitioning & Veterans

Black and Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty families transitioning out of service face greater challenges than their white, non-Hispanic peers and report accessing available benefits, resources, and services at greater rates.

For many Veterans and their families, military transition experiences can be marked by stress and a substantial amount of change in a short period of time;[1] exploration of previously unpublished MFLS data (2016-2018) reveals that challenges also vary by race/ethnicity (Figure 1) and gender. At least half of Hispanic or Latino/a (56%) and Black (50%), Veteran respondents characterized their overall transition as "difficult" or "very difficult" (compared to 43% of white/non-Hispanic Veteran respondents). Although a smaller proportion of Veteran respondents identifying as Asian indicated this to be the case (37%), this group did report a greater level of difficulty in some areas of transition. Because of documented long-term impacts of transition experiences,[2] it is important to understand how these experiences and challenges vary across racial and ethnic groups.

Figure 1: Most Black and Hispanic or Latino/a/x Veterans characterize their overall transition as "difficult" or "very difficult"

% of Veteran respondents to annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey (2016-2018)[23]



Note: Demographic references are drawn from original source

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Greater challenges with employment and finances during transition may contribute to why employment and career-related support are a salient need for respondents of color who are either Veterans or spouses of Veterans.

Despite substantial improvements to the transition process and expansion of services and resources in recent years,[3] accessing resources during the early transition period continues to be a barrier for Veteran respondents*. Of those Veteran respondents* who reported needing employment and career development resources since January 2020, 43% did not get them[4]; among those with an unmet need lack of knowledge (27%) and stigma (16%) were cited as the top reasons for not using employment and career development services.[5]

4 in 10 Veteran respondents*

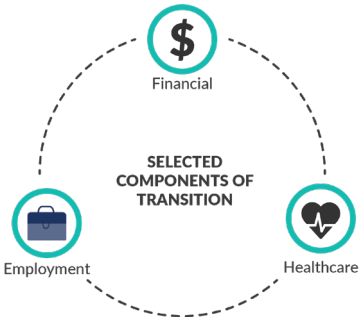
who report needing employment and career development services did not receive them

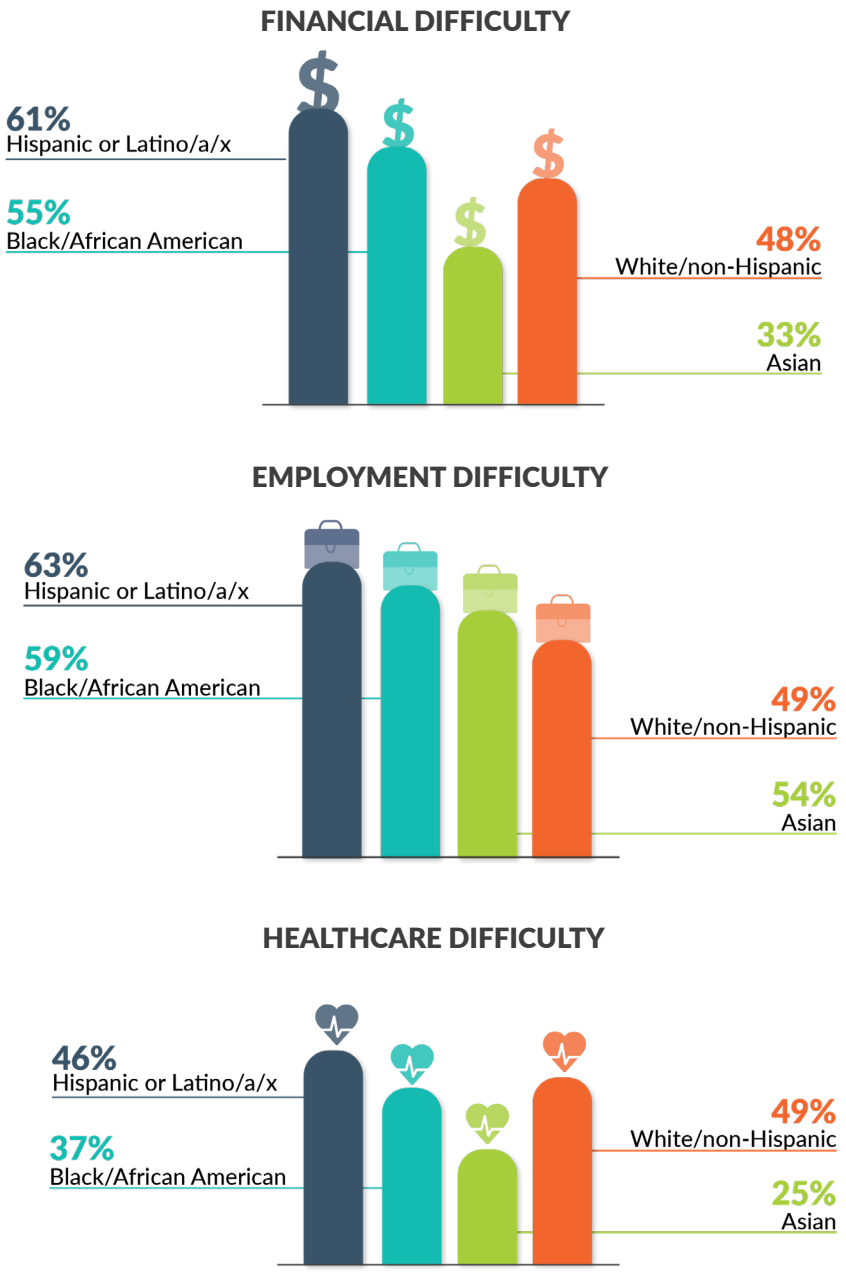
Similarly, spouses of Veterans must also navigate their own changing employment needs during transition.[6] As discussed in Finding 7, female active-duty spouses of color (especially Hispanic/Latino/a/x and Black spouses) experience far worse employment outcomes, including higher unemployment rates and lower median incomes; therefore, military spouses of color transitioning out of active-duty service have more salient employment and career development support needs. This is supported by responses to this survey: When asked about service or resource utilization, "employment and career development" was the top service needed and not received among respondents* who are spouses of Veterans (25%).[7] Like their Veteran counterparts, "not knowing how to access these services" was the top reason for not doing so, with nearly half of Veteran spouse respondents* reporting this is the case (48%).[8] These findings underscore the importance of ensuring that Veterans and their spouses are aware of available resources and understand their eligibility for various benefits and programs.

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Figure 2: Aspects of Transition Difficulty by Race/Ethnicity

% of Veteran respondents* to annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey (2016-2018)[23] characterizing each aspect of their transition as "difficult" or "very difficult"





Note: Demographic references are drawn from original source

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Post-military career trajectories, transition experiences, and decisions regarding where to reside all influence Veteran families' post-service experiences. More research is needed to fully understand the role of race/ethnicity in these experiences.

Many Veteran respondents to this survey identify barriers and challenges to resource utilization and employment (see Findings 8 and 5), and Veterans of color utilize some benefits, services, and resources at higher rates than their white, non-Hispanic counterparts. Findings from The Veterans Metrics Initiative (TVMI)[9] reveal that:

- Non-Hispanic Black and Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander Veterans are more likely to use Veterans Affairs benefits compared to white, non-Hispanic Veterans.[10]
- Hispanic and Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander Veterans are more likely to utilize counseling services compared to white, non-Hispanic Veterans.[11]
- Veterans of color are more likely to utilize employment programs compared to white, non-Hispanic Veterans.[12]

Recently-transitioned Hispanic and non-Hispanic multiracial Veterans were twice as likely to utilize legal aid programs compared to white, non-Hispanic Veterans.[13] Furthermore, resource utilization among minority Veterans steadily increased from 35% to 44% from 2005-2014, with minority Veterans enrolling in and/or utilizing a variety of services at higher rates than their non-minority counterparts, including both health care and educational benefits.[14]

> **With the VA we haven't had any issues at all. [We have] the main hospital and then we have a lot of satellites, you know throughout, and I even have one like five minutes from the house, it's amazing.**
>
> -Hispanic/Latino/a/x Veteran

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Deciding where to relocate after service emerged as an important consideration for Veteran focus group participants, consistent with survey results among active-duty family respondents. As highlighted in Finding 1, the residential demographics of Veterans of color (who have control over where they live) mirror those of the broader U.S. population: the majority of Black Veterans live predominantly in the South and along the Eastern Seaboard, while most Hispanic/Latino/a and Asian Veterans reside throughout the West.[15] Nevertheless, one in five Veteran family respondents* (19%) report feeling uncomfortable in their local civilian community.[16]

Focus group participants provided additional insight into the rationale behind these decisions. As one participant shared, "diversity" in their new neighborhood "was one of the main reasons" they chose to move where they did. Another Veteran participant added that they chose to relocate to an area where they believed they would have better VA care. This participant went on to explain that they believe the timely VA care they receive is partly owed to the fact that they live in a predominantly white community. Available evidence to support this individual's belief (that VA facilities prioritize care or administer financial resources based on a community's racial composition) is mixed,[17] however racial health disparities do exist among Veterans.[18]

Further research is needed to fully understand intersectional differences resulting from gender,[19] rank,[20] race/ethnicity,[21] and/or geography, and how they shape the diverse needs of transitioning Veterans.

Most of these demographic variables have been studied in isolation and raise as many questions as they do answers regarding resource access, utilization, and quality available to Veterans with multiple historically-disadvantaged demographic identities.[22] Future studies should explore the relationships between these intersectional identities in tandem with desired direct (e.g., good health) and indirect outcomes (knowledge and utilization of other available resources).

> **I think the military does a good job supporting families of color while in service. They need to do a better job at the transition part.**
>
> - Middle Eastern Veteran

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Chapter 2
Neighborhood and Built Environment

Not seeing people who look like me in VSO leadership *positions that advocate for the military-connected community and tout supporting diverse populations [makes me uncomfortable]. Representation does not reflect the words these organizations espouse.*

- Black Veteran Spouse

I remember when we did move to Oklahoma and this was before 2016 [...] after what happened with Trayvon Martin. My son liked to wear hoodies. I made sure that all of my neighbors knew that I had an older son who was actually in college and he comes home, because I just had that concern, which was a valid concern, that ***I wanted to make sure that my son would be safe when he came home.***

- Black Veteran Spouse

Some of the experiences that I felt like we didn't belong in our community are ***not having any stores that carry Hispanic produce or [...] ethnic restaurants.***

- Hispanic/Latino/a/x Military Spouse

Too often, military families have to seek resources and services. *The military members are on [the] front line of the information circuit. If that line is not functioning, that spouse or significant other is out there. These programs need to find them and follow up, show we really care about them.*

- Black Military Spouse

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

First act like we exist. ***Ask us what we want and need and do it.*** *When moving to a new area there needs to be a list of hair stylists and barbers for Black hair for Black people. When having events, have entertainment that appeals to Black culture. Have events that have Black celebrities or role models so the children can interact with individuals that look like them.*

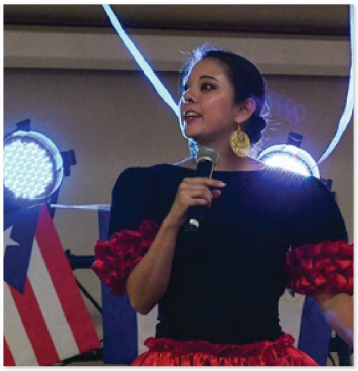
-Black Respondent

I would like for the military to ***fund initiatives to bring awareness and ease of access (i.e., translation, technology equipment, IT assistance, short wait times) of resources for people of color.*** *Additionally, outreach efforts should also recruit people of color who need work experience to work for VA or military organizations regardless of active duty/Veteran status. Calls, emails and mail flyers would be helpful.*

- Hispanic/Latino/a/x Military Spouse

In places like Germany, Panama, and even our first base in the U.S., ***I didn't even think twice about [my children's] safety on the base in the beginning, but now [...] I would be concerned on the base****, but there was always a concern off the base.*

- Black Military Spouse and Retiree



The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Finding 4

Public Safety & Law Enforcement

Active-duty family respondents of color report experiencing harassment and police profiling across all U.S. regions, both on and off installation, and reports are most prevalent among Black respondents.

As discussed at length in Finding 13, a series of racially/ethnically-charged events coalesced in 2020, leading to nationwide increases in racial/ethnic tension and racially/ethnically-motivated threats and harassment.[1] Results from this study suggest that experiences of these national trends are only slightly less prevalent within military communities than civilian communities. While active-duty family respondents* generally report better outcomes with regard to their military community, an alarming percentage report feeling unsafe in their *military* community and lack trust in *military* law enforcement. Moreover, reported experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination and police profiling since January 2020 are high in all regions of the United States and among all racial/ethnic minority groups analyzed.

> **One former neighbor, a dual officer household, had a giant Confederate flag hanging on the wall of their garage. Another neighbor, an officer household, had a QAnon flag all through 2020 until the ban on flags was enacted. Further, a majority of residents on base come from non-diverse, ideologically conservative places and are closed off to others who look or think differently from them.**
>
> - Asian Military Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Fewer active-duty family respondents* report feeling unsafe in their military community than their civilian community; however, four in 10 report fearing for their personal safety in their military community at least once since January 2020 due to their race/ethnicity.

About one in three active-duty family respondents* report experiencing at least one incident of being threatened or harassed in their local civilian (33%)[2] or military (29%)[3] community due to their race/ethnicity since January 2020, echoing reports from focus group participants. In addition, fewer active-duty family respondents report fearing for their personal safety at least once in their military community due to their race/ethnicity since January 2020, compared to their civilian community (41%[4] vs. 54%[5]). However, the fact that four in 10 active-duty family respondents report this to be the case with regard to their *military* community is alarming. When asked to describe what these incidents looked like in an open-ended format, respondents describe general feelings of racism and discrimination, sometimes accompanied by overt symbolic displays (e.g., the Confederate flag) and discussion of politics in ways they viewed to be coded racism.

> **In communities that are not diverse, some locals are very verbal about their support of political figures that have been polarizing in issues concerning race. We opted to not get as connected to the community after being warned by others on base that African Americans are only 'tolerated' in certain areas of town, so we should be careful. As a result, we lived on base and enjoyed the diversity of the active-duty community.**
>
> - Black Military Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

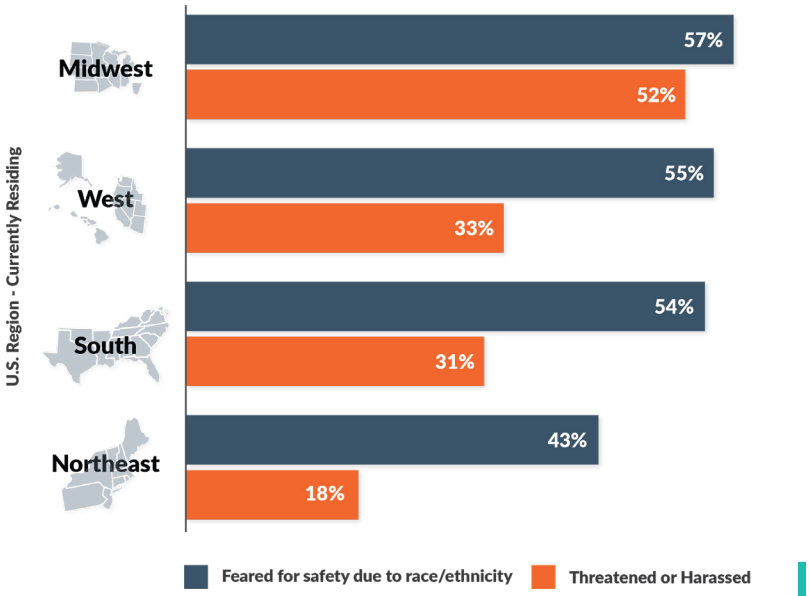
Racially/ethnically-motivated fear and experiences of threats and harassment since January 2020 are common for active-duty family respondents* residing in all regions of the United States.

Finding 1 highlights that, when considering their racial/ethnic identity, active-duty family respondents* report feeling substantially more comfortable being stationed in the Northeast and Hawaii than other regions of the United States. This finding prompted further exploration of the data within the sample regarding experiences of discrimination and harassment since January 2020.

While subsample sizes are small (especially in the Midwest and Northeast), responses suggest that many active-duty family respondents* have experienced "fear for [their] personal safety due to [their] race/ethnicity" and actual incidents of threats or harassment in their local civilian communities in all regions of the U.S.[6] (Figure 1). More than half of active-duty family respondents residing in the Midwest, West, and South report fearing for their safety due to their race or ethnicity in their civilian community at least once since January 2020, and more than four in 10 (43%) living in the Northeast say the same.

Figure 1: Experiences in Current Civilian Community Since January 2020[6]

% active-duty respondents* reporting at least one incident



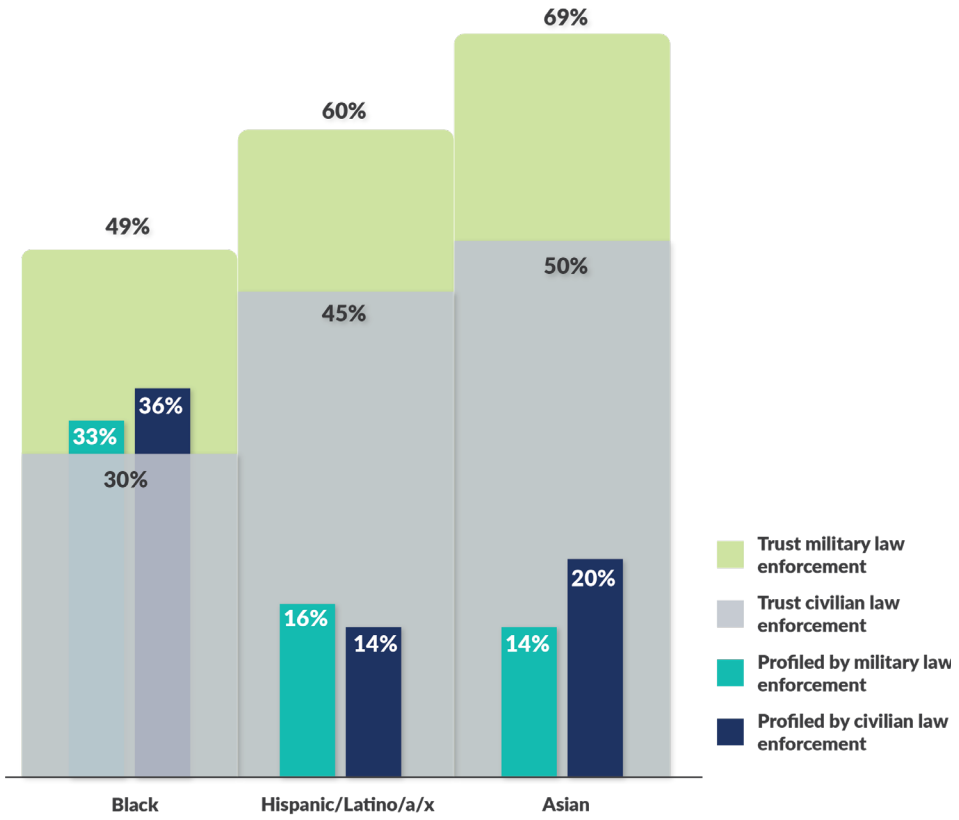
Although respondents report similar rates of police profiling on and off installation, they report higher levels of trust in *military* law enforcement than civilian law enforcement.

After overall confidence in law enforcement hit an all-time low in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd,[7] the public disclosure of the assault on uniformed and unarmed Lt. Caron Nazario[8]—a biracial (Black and Hispanic) Army officer—caused an additional uproar within military and Veteran-connected communities.[9] Focus group participants discussed the risks of "driving while black" in their civilian communities and described being pulled over by law enforcement for minor infractions (e.g., window tint, expired registration) they perceive their white, non-Hispanic counterparts would not be held accountable for.

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Notably, active-duty family respondents report remarkably higher levels of trust in military law enforcement than civilian law enforcement, despite similar levels of reported police profiling (Figure 2). Striking differences emerged by race/ethnicity, with Black active-duty family respondents reporting the highest levels of police profiling and lowest levels of trust (Figure 2), aligning with national polls.[10] Nearly one in three Black active-duty family respondents report being profiled by military (33%[11]) or civilian (36%)[12] law enforcement at least once since January 2020, and a greater proportion trust military law enforcement (49%)[13] than civilian law enforcement (30%),[14] though trust remains low in military law enforcement as well. Similar to the previous section (and with the same caveats regarding a small sample size), active-duty family respondents* residing in all regions of the U.S. report incidents of perceived profiling by civilian law enforcement, with incidents most commonly reported among those residing in the Midwest (33%)[15] and West (32%)[16] and least commonly among those in the Northeast (23%).[17]

Figure 2: Trust in military law enforcement higher than in civilian despite similar levels of perceived profiling since January 2020[18]
% of active-duty family respondents*



*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Finding 5

Resources & Satisfaction

A greater proportion of Veteran family respondents of color report needing resources than their active-duty counterparts; variation exists by race/ethnicity, and uncertainty about eligibility and access are top barriers.

Previous Blue Star Families research found that Black and Hispanic/Latino/a/x family respondents reporting more difficulty staying informed of events, activities and resources in their local civilian communities was one of the key factors driving Blue Star Families to conduct this study.[1] During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, "communication about resources/services available" was the second most commonly-cited "unmet local community need" reported by both Black and Hispanic/Latino/a/x respondents to the COVID-19 Military Support Initiative's (CMSI) Pain Points Poll. Both groups reported this at higher rates than white, non-Hispanic respondents.[2] This finding was replicated in CMSI's Resilience Under Stress Study (RUSS), which found that 42% of Black active-duty family respondents agreed they "could stay informed of events and activities" in their local civilian community, compared with 73% of their white, non-Hispanic peers.[3] Forty-six percent of Black active-duty family respondents to the RUSS noted they could find information for resources they want to use, compared to 67% of their white, non-Hispanic peers who said the same.[4] Focus group participants involved in this study discuss these barriers and others, including negative experiences such as perceived unfair treatment and difficulties navigating the service system, which research has shown to be common for people of color accessing services.[5]

> **And now you're asking for help and [...] they're looking at you like [...] you've done something wrong. That you can't take care of yourself. And [...] sometimes it's not worth it. We're like 'Forget it, you know we'll just find other ways'.**
>
> - Hispanic/Latino/a/x Military Spouse and Veteran

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Most active-duty and Veteran family respondents* do not require the resources or services inquired about in this study; however, many needing non-medical resources or services since January 2020 did not receive them.

In line with Finding 9, the majority of both active-duty and Veteran family respondents have required medical care or behavioral/mental health services since January 2020, and nearly all of those needing these services were able to access them (Figure 1). While fewer respondents have required other resources and services, such as food and nutritional assistance, employment services, legal services, etc., respondents who need them experience greater challenges in accessing them. With few exceptions, at least one in three respondents* from both active-duty and Veteran families report needing a non-medical resource or service but not getting it, and a greater proportion of Veteran family respondents* report this to be the case. These challenges appear to be especially acute for Veteran family respondents who have required food, caregiving, or housing assistance since January 2020: over half of those with a need report not receiving support (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Resource Needs and Utilization Since January 2020 by Military Affiliation
*% of active-duty and Veteran family respondents**

Icons depicting top barriers:

- Uncertain about eligibility
- Stigma
- Lack of child care
- Affordability
- Not available during hours needed
- Lack of knowledge about how to access
- Proximity
- Lack of time
- [–] Tie between top barriers

"Transportation" was offered as an answer choice and was not selected as a top three barrier

Green - at least 2 in 3 had their need met
Yellow - at least 1 in 3 did NOT have their need met
Red - at least half did NOT have their need met

		% who report they need the resource[6]	Of those who need, % who report need is unmet[7]	Top 3 barriers to access
Medical care *See Finding 9 for more details*	Active-duty family respondents*	85%[8]	10%[9]	Uncertain about eligibility; Affordability; Proximity[10]
	Veteran family respondents*	83%[11]	14%[12]	Uncertain about eligibility; Lack of knowledge about how to access; Affordability[13]

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

		% who report they need the resource[6]	Of those who need, % who report need is unmet[7]	Top 3 barriers to access
Behavioral and mental health *See Finding 9 for more details*	Active-duty family respondents*	**52%**[14]	**25%**[15]	
	Veteran family respondents*	**63%**[17]	**25%**[18]	
Food and nutrition from school *(e.g., meals from school, free lunch program) See Finding 6 for more details*	Active-duty family respondents*	**37%**[20]	**26%**[21]	
	Veteran family respondents*	**35%**[23]	**40%**[24]	
Food and nutrition *(e.g., food stamps) See Finding 6 for more details*	Active-duty family respondents*	**27%**[26]	**46%**[27]	
	Veteran family respondents*	**30%**[29]	**54%**[30]	
Employment and career development *(e.g., job training, job placement services, resume writing, starting a business) See Findings 3, 7, and 8 for more details*	Active-duty family respondents*	**48%**[32]	**40%**[33]	
	Veteran family respondents*	**49%**[35]	**43%**[36]	

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

		% who report they need the resource[6]	Of those who need, % who report need is unmet[7]	Top 3 barriers to access
Caregiving resources *(e.g., resources related to care-giving needs of day-to-day life in your community) See Finding 9 for more details*	Active-duty family respondents*	30%[38]	45%[39]	
	Veteran family respondents*	34%[41]	60%[42]	
Housing services or assistance *(e.g., locating affordable housing, housing subsidies or vouchers, transitional housing)*	Active-duty family respondents*	26%[44]	40%[45]	
	Veteran family respondents*	30%[47]	58%[48]	
Community services *(e.g., finding volunteer opportunities, social support)*	Active-duty family respondents*	52%[47]	27%[48]	
	Veteran family respondents*	56%[53]	34%[54]	
Legal services *(e.g., wills, power of attorney, VA benefits appeals, resolving landlord disputes, divorce, custody/child support)*	Active-duty family respondents*	39%[56]	29%[57]	
	Veteran family respondents*	44%[59]	42%[60]	

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

		% who report they need the resource[6]	Of those who need, % who report need is unmet[7]	Top 3 barriers to access
Benefits and claims assistance *(e.g., assistance with Veteran education, disability, health, and loan programs)*	Active-duty family respondents*	34%[63]	39%[63]	[64]
	Veteran family respondents*	64%[65]	25%[66]	[67]

Uncertainty regarding resource eligibility and lack of knowledge about how to access services are top barriers to utilization for active-duty and Veteran family respondents.*

Eligibility uncertainty and lack of knowledge are the most common barriers to accessing public benefits among military-connected families and the general public.[68] Respondents to this survey report the same: respondents were asked about 10 total resources/services (see Figures 1 and 2 for details), and those who report needing a resource or service and not receiving it were asked why they could not or did not use it. For both active-duty and Veteran family respondents,* the top barriers for most of the listed resources are eligibility ("I didn't think I was eligible for this service"), lack of knowledge ("I didn't know how to access this resource"), and stigma ("I was worried about what others would think of me"). For Veteran family respondents, proximity ("this service wasn't available close to where I live") is also a commonly selected obstacle.

> **Meet them where they are, not where one thinks they should be. An informative proactive program that represents diversity that reaches out using sensitivity to differences, acknowledging and utilizing what everyone brings to the table, by ensuring no one feels excluded, unseen, or less than anyone else.**
>
> - Black Military Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Variation exists by race/ethnicity for most resources and services, aligning with previous research.

This study is limited by a low response rate within subgroups (e.g., active-duty family respondents with a specific racial/ethnic identity reporting they need a specific resource/service). Therefore, the findings should serve as indicators to be further explored. Nevertheless, in an effort to elevate the experiences of the racial/ethnic minority respondents who took time to complete this survey, Figure 2 includes all active-duty family racial/ethnic groups with at least 50 respondents to the question.

Analyzing the data in this way highlights a handful of insights deserving of further research:

1. A greater proportion of active-duty family respondents identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native report needing nearly every resource or service inquired about, compared to respondents from the other racial/ethnic groups analyzed, which aligns with external research describing a historical general lack of availability of resources for these groups in the civilian population.[69]

2. Twice as many Asian active-duty family respondents as Black and Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty family respondents report "behavioral and mental health" as an unmet need, consistent with external research from the civilian population.[70]

3. More than one in three active-duty family respondents from all racial/ethnic groups analyzed with a need for "employment and career development" resources report that need to be unmet, aligning with Findings 2 and 7.

4. More than four in 10 Black active-duty family respondents with a need for "food and nutrition (e.g., food stamps)" report this need to be unmet, which aligns with external research about the civilian population[71] and Finding 6.

5. Over half of Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty family respondents with a need for "caregiving resources" report this need to be unmet, which aligns with external research about civilian Hispanic caregivers.[72]

Figure 2: Resource Needs and Utilization by Race/Ethnicity Since January 2020
% of active-duty family respondents

American Indian or Alaska Native		
Resource/Service	**% who report they need the resource[73]**	**Of those who need, % who report need is unmet[74]**
Medical Care	**90%[75]**	**24%[76]**

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

American Indian or Alaska Native, continued		
Resource/Service	**Have a need**	**Need is unmet**
Behavioral and mental health	**67%**[77]	-
Food and nutrition from school *(e.g., meals from school, free lunch program)*	**49%**[78]	-
Food and nutrition *(e.g., food stamps)*	**44%**[79]	-
Employment and career development *(e.g., job training, job placement services, resume writing, starting a business)*	**57%**[80]	-
Caregiving resources *(e.g., resources related to caregiving needs of day-to-day life in your community)*	**58%**[81]	-
Housing services or assistance *(e.g., locating affordable housing, housing subsidies or vouchers, transitional housing)*	**41%**[82]	-
Community services *(e.g., finding volunteer opportunities, social support)*	**65%**[83]	-
Legal services *(e.g., wills, power of attorney, VA benefits appeals, resolving landlord disputes, divorce, custody/child support)*	**63%**[84]	-
Benefits and claims assistance *(e.g., assistance with Veteran education, disability, health, and loan programs)*	**56%**[85]	-
Asian		
Resource/Service	**Have a need**	**Need is unmet**
Medical Care	**87%**[86]	**15%**[87]
Behavioral and mental health	**43%**[88]	**41%**[89]
Food and nutrition from school *(e.g., meals from school, free lunch program)*	**32%**[90]	-
Food and nutrition *(e.g., food stamps)*	**27%**[91]	-

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Asian, continued		
Resource/Service	**Have a need**	**Need is unmet**
Employment and career development *(e.g., job training, job placement services, resume writing, starting a business)*	48%[92]	49%[93]
Caregiving resources *(e.g., resources related to caregiving needs of day-to-day life in your community)*	30%[94]	-
Housing services or assistance *(e.g., locating affordable housing, housing subsidies or vouchers, transitional housing)*	25%[95]	-
Community services *(e.g., finding volunteer opportunities, social support)*	48%[96]	30%[97]
Legal services *(e.g., wills, power of attorney, VA benefits appeals, resolving landlord disputes, divorce, custody/child support)*	34%[98]	-
Benefits and claims assistance *(e.g., assistance with Veteran education, disability, health, and loan programs)*	34%[99]	-

Black		
Resource/Service	**Have a need**	**Need is unmet**
Medical Care	85%[100]	8%[101]
Behavioral and mental health	54%[102]	20%[103]
Food and nutrition from school *(e.g., meals from school, free lunch program)*	37%[104]	22%[105]
Food and nutrition *(e.g., food stamps)*	25%[106]	42%[107]
Employment and career development *(e.g., job training, job placement services, resume writing, starting a business)*	52%[108]	37%[109]
Caregiving resources *(e.g., resources related to caregiving needs of day-to-day life in your community)*	29%[110]	35%[111]
Housing services or assistance *(e.g., locating affordable housing, housing subsidies or vouchers, transitional housing)*	24%[112]	36%[113]

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Black, continued		
Resource/Service	**Have a need**	**Need is unmet**
Community services *(e.g., finding volunteer opportunities, social support)*	53%[114]	25%[115]
Legal services *(e.g., wills, power of attorney, VA benefits appeals, resolving landlord disputes, divorce, custody/child support)*	37%[116]	19%[117]
Benefits and claims assistance *(e.g., assistance with Veteran education, disability, health, and loan programs)*	34%[118]	36%[119]
Hispanic/Latino/a/x		
Resource/Service	**Have a need**	**Need is unmet**
Medical Care	78%[120]	5%[121]
Behavioral and mental health	45%[122]	20%[123]
Food and nutrition from school *(e.g., meals from school, free lunch program)*	33%[124]	24%[125]
Food and nutrition *(e.g., food stamps)*	17%[126]	-
Employment and career development *(e.g., job training, job placement services, resume writing, starting a business)*	40%[127]	39%[128]
Caregiving resources *(e.g., resources related to caregiving needs of day-to-day life in your community)*	25%[129]	53%[130]
Housing services or assistance *(e.g., locating affordable housing, housing subsidies or vouchers, transitional housing)*	20%[131]	-
Community services *(e.g., finding volunteer opportunities, social support)*	43%[132]	24%[133]
Legal services *(e.g., wills, power of attorney, VA benefits appeals, resolving landlord disputes, divorce, custody/child support)*	33%[134]	19%[135]
Benefits and claims assistance *(e.g., assistance with Veteran education, disability, health, and loan programs)*	29%[136]	31%[137]

Note: Questions with fewer than 50 respondents are excluded from this table.

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Chapter 3
Economic Stability

My wife was told they were never hiring after an interview was set for a Spanish-speaking receptionist; because she is Black, they didn't believe she speaks Spanish as a second language. 'Crazy if you think I'm going to stay working here if they hire a Black girl.' (My wife was a bank teller with 10 years of experience).
- Black Military Spouse and Veteran

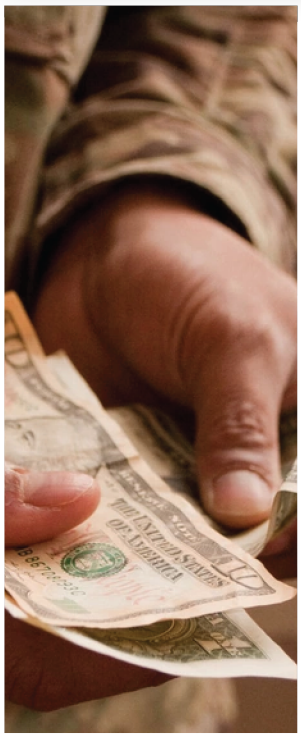
More activities for children, more food bank assistance, more programs for caregivers like peer groups, accessible gyms for exercises and sports, and more centers for daily activities, like charging electronics, showers, hot meals, etc. Why? Because sometimes our families go through rough days or run short on food, and also run short to meet end money-oriented responsibilities. And not everyone goes to bed with a hot meal or a relieved mental discharge with a simple table game or as simple as a nice shower. Those simple things can make a big change on a bad day.
- Hispanic/Latino/a/x National Guard Spouse

Offer classes on how to protect their career when unjustly targeted. Many don't speak up because many don't know the process and how to go about it.
- Black Military Spouse and Veteran

Other spouses, particularly white spouses, can be very judgemental about financial situations, and not feel like a safe place to seek help.
- American Indian Military Spouse

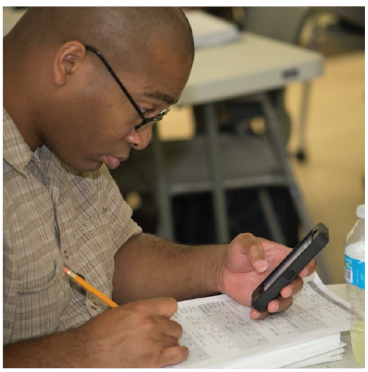
The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

It has been a struggle to find a job and build a career as a military spouse. Not only for our frequent move, my immigration status (Greencard holder, unable to get US citizenship) is also adding a hurdle. I wish the military would offer specific support for non-US citizen family members for their cultural adjustment and career development.
- Asian Military Spouse



While my spouse was stationed at [an Air Force base in the south], I attempted to gain employment as a teacher. I had education, experience, and references. ***At one of the interviews, the principal told me that even though I was highly qualified for the job, he was looking for a more 'hometown' teacher, one that looked liked the children in his school as opposed to me.*** *There were very few if any African American children at the school. I was not hired due to my race. Now, after I shared this with the school district's superintendent, I did receive a job at another school, but I will never forget that and the pain it caused me.*
- Black Military Spouse

Spouse's closest available employment was a 3 hour drive one way. Best work around was I resided near base with our children and spouse lived in an RV and came home for 2+ days off. We did this for 3 years.
- White Veteran in a Multiracial Family



The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Finding 6
Finances

Active-duty family respondents of color perceive their financial circumstances to be better than those of their civilian family and friends of similar racial/ethnic backgrounds, but many report low confidence in wealth-building and investment strategies.

The military has often been regarded as an example of an institution that embraces diversity and provides equality to its members,[1] potentially offering economic advantage to service members during and after their military service.[2] Pay and promotion structures are prescribed, and while there may be disparities in promotion (see Finding 2), military service members of the same rank receive equal base pay, regardless of race or ethnicity. However, recent data, including this report, paints a more complicated picture. While military service reduces the wealth gap that exists between families of color and their white, non-Hispanic peers in U.S. society, at least in homeownership and income,[3] it does not eliminate the gap entirely; military families of color continue to face greater financial challenges than their white, non-Hispanic active-duty peers.

> **We're very very well-off financially, compared to my siblings, I will say that.**
>
> - Hispanic/Latino/a/x Military Spouse

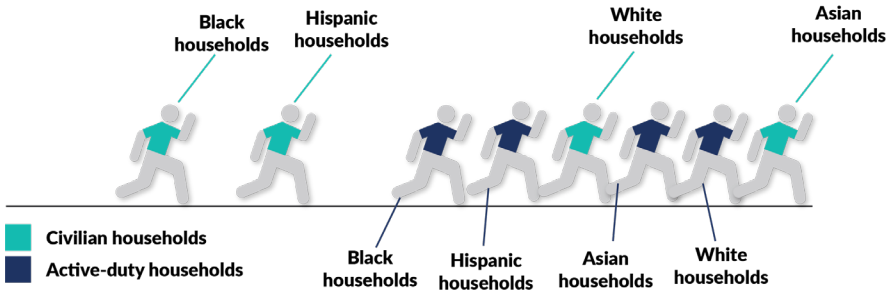
*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Active-duty military service provides greater financial benefits to military families of color, compared to their civilian counterparts.

Research shows that while white, non-Hispanic active-duty households have statistically similar incomes to white, non-Hispanic civilians, Asian, Hispanic, and Black active-duty households boast significantly higher incomes than non-military peers.[4] For Black households, military service offers a 40% boost in household income, compared to Black civilian households.[5] Findings from this survey are consistent with existing literature: half of active-duty respondents* characterize their family's overall financial situation growing up as challenging ("occasionally had difficulty making ends meet" - 25%, "tough to make ends meet" - 19%, and "unable to make ends meet" - 6%).[6] However, when describing their financial stability today, most (51%)[7] report that, in general, their family's financial stability is "somewhat better" or "much better" than their friends and family of the same racial/ethnic background who are not serving in the military, and an additional 35% report it is "the same."[8] The perspective that their family is "somewhat better" or "much better" off than their peers is slightly more common among Black (54%)[9] and Hispanic/Latino/a/x (54%)[10] active-duty family respondents.

Figure 1: While military service can boost household income for families of color, compared to their civilian peers, military families of color may still lag behind their white military peers.
Source: Urban Institute[40]



Among active-duty family respondents* who indicated their family's financial situation growing up was "tough to make ends meet" or "unable to make ends meet," 52%[11] report their family's financial stability was better than their friends and family of similar racial/ethnic backgrounds. Families from a socioeconomically disadvantaged background are not the only respondents to recognize the financial benefits of service. Active-duty family respondents* and focus group participants consistently recognize their financial situation as one of the primary differentiators between their family's well-being and that of their civilian friends and family from a similar racial/ethnic background. For example, a greater proportion of respondents* indicate their family's "financial stability"[12] is better than peers of the same racial/ethnic background than any other area, including "employment situation"[13] and "family's ability to access resources or services when needed[14]".

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

These financial benefits of military service may have buffered some impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

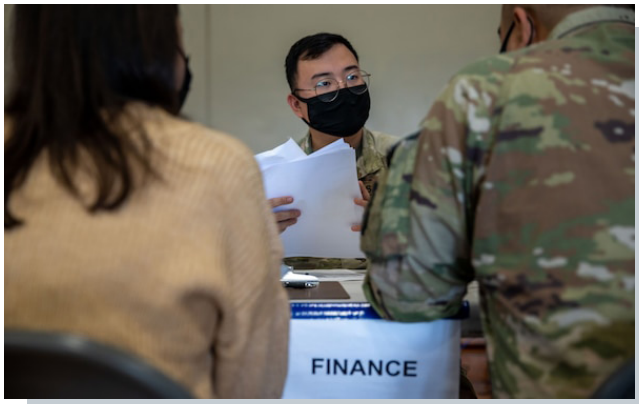
Similar percentages of respondents* report doing the same or better than their non-military peers both in general and specifically since the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly half of active-duty family respondents of color (49%)[15] report their family's financial stability is "somewhat" or "much" better than their friends and family from a similar racial/ethnic background; only 19%[16] feel it is "worse" or "much worse" than their peers. Active-duty family respondents* also generally report they are doing the same or better than their peers of a similar background in other areas — employment situation[17] and ability to access resources or services when needed[18] — even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nearly half (49%)[15]

of active-duty respondents*report their family's financial stability is "somewhat" or "much" better than their friends and family from a similar racial/ethnic background since the COVID-19 pandemic

Despite the economic benefits that military service provides active-duty families of color, disparities and inequities still exist.

Consistent with findings from this survey, data from several sources[19] suggest there are observable differences in financial conditions and financial challenges among military families of color and their white, non-Hispanic peers. The spotlight in this finding explores differential effects by race with regard to food security, and Findings 5, 7, and 8 explore the variation by race with regard to employment and resource access/ utilization; all of these challenges directly impact military and Veteran families' financial readiness.



*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

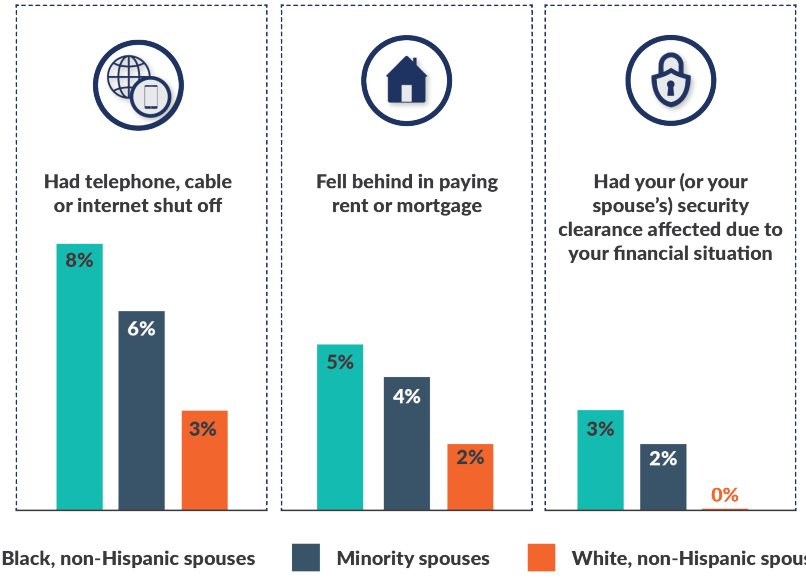
The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

According to the 2017 Active Duty Spouse Survey, 31% of white, non-Hispanic spouses reported their financial condition is "very comfortable and secure," compared to just 24% of their racial/ethnic minority peers, and just 19% of Black, non-Hispanic peers.[20] Furthermore, more racial/ethnic minority spouses are operating without a financial safety net, compared to their white, non-Hispanic peers: nearly twice as many racial/ethnic minority spouses have no emergency savings (19%), compared to their white, non-Hispanic peers (11%)[21] and for Black, non-Hispanic spouses, the discrepancy is even greater (23% have no emergency savings).[22] According to this same report, a greater proportion of racial/ethnic minority spouses (22%), especially Black, non-Hispanic spouses (31%), had experienced a negative financial event in the past 12 months, compared to their white, non-Hispanic peers (13%).[23] Furthermore, the proportion of Black, non-Hispanic spouses who indicated they had experienced a negative financial event was 2 to 3 times the proportion of white, non-Hispanic spouses indicating the same for the majority of the negative financial events inquired about in the 2017 Active Duty Spouse Survey[24] (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Negative Financial Events in Past 12 Months (2017)

% of Active-Duty Spouse Respondents Reporting Negative Financial Events in the Past 12 Months

Source: 2017 Active Duty Spouse Survey[41]



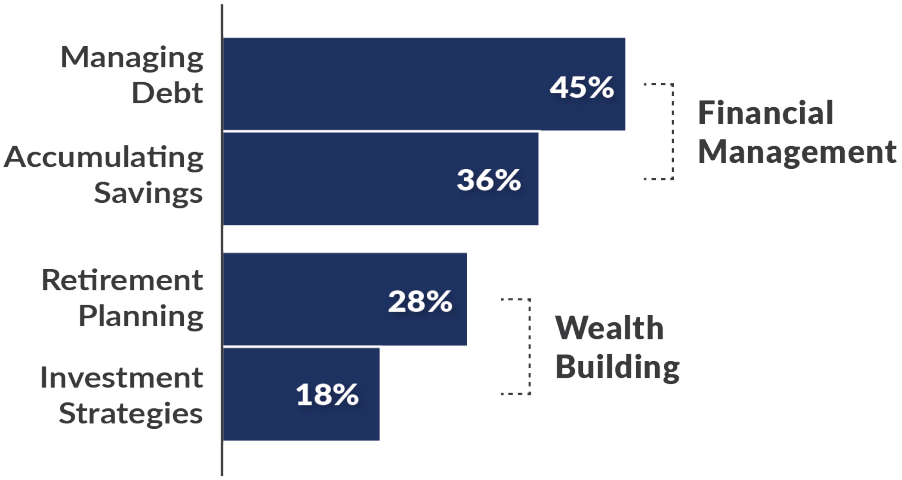
Note: Uses racial/ethnic demographic descriptions from source

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Active-duty family respondents of color report low confidence in long-term wealth-building strategies, with Black respondents reporting the least confidence in each area.

Active-duty family respondents* indicate high confidence in several areas of financial resilience, including managing debt (45%)[25] and accumulating savings (36%),[26] but just 18%[27] feel "very" or "completely confident" in investment strategies, and 56%[28] report low confidence (Figure 2). Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty family respondents report higher confidence than their Black and Asian peers in each area of financial confidence.[29] Perhaps reflective of the sense of confidence in management, if not in wealth-building, just 16%[30] of active-duty family respondents* report wanting a mentor for financial management, the least commonly-selected area of desired mentorship.

Figure 3: Level of Confidence in Financial Management and Wealth-Building
% of active-duty family respondents* reporting very or completely confident[42]



Ineligibility due to rank or income and a desire to avoid future debt are the top barriers to seeking financial assistance.

Among those who identified at least one barrier to pursuing financial assistance,[31] the most common barriers are: ineligibility due to rank or income (41%),[32] a desire to avoid future debt (37%),[33] a belief that others have a greater need (31%),[34] a desire to avoid chain of command involvement (29%),[35] a lack of knowledge of available resources (27%),[36] and pride, shame or embarrassment (27%).[37] While 69%[38] of military family respondents of color report at least one barrier to pursuing financial assistance, 76%[39] of Asian respondents identified one or multiple barriers, indicating that this group may be more reluctant to utilize financial assistance.

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

SPOTLIGHT ON:

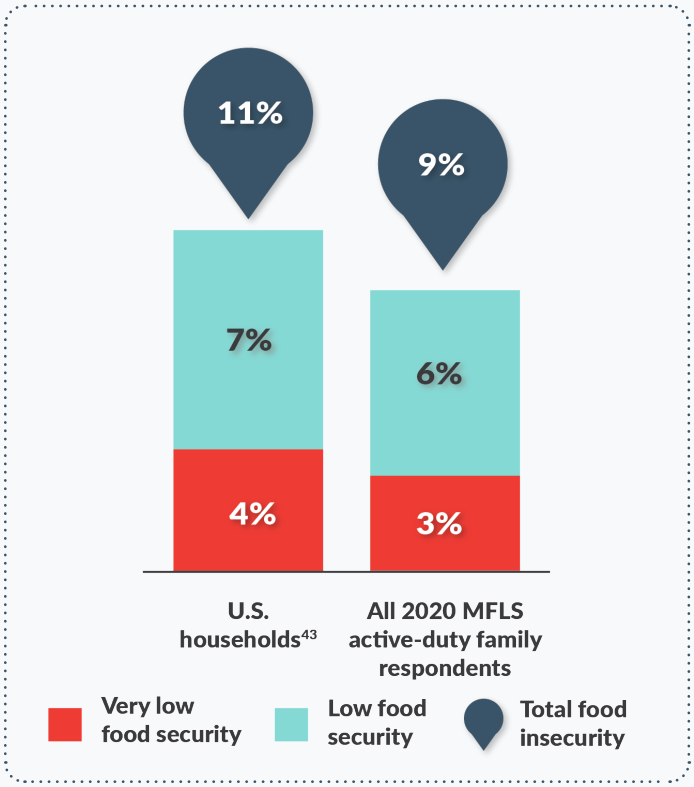
FOOD INSECURITY

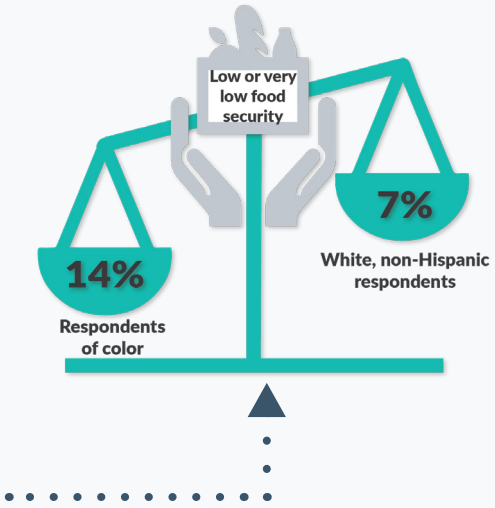
Active-duty family respondents of color to the 2020 Military Family Lifestyle Survey reported twice the level of food insecurity as their white, non-Hispanic counterparts.

Low and Very Low Food Security

% of active-duty family respondents

Source: 2020 Military Family Lifestyle Survey





> **There were so many families of color on base [...] getting WIC or public assistance. I was blown away, blown away. People assume, 'you're in the military, you get a check [on] the 1st and the 15th, you must be doing okay.' [...] No. No.**
>
> - Black Military Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Active-duty and Veteran respondents* report similar levels of need for food and nutrition programs, but a greater proportion of Veterans report their needs are unmet.

Food and Nutrition Assistance
(e.g., food stamps)

Active-duty family respondents*

27% report they need the resource[44]

- American Indian or Alaska Native[45] 44%
- Asian[46] 27%
- Black[47] 25%
- Hispanic/Latino/a/x[48] 17%

Of those with need, **46%**[56] report need is unmet[60]

Veteran family respondents*

30% report they need the resource[54]

Of those with need, **54%**[58] report need is unmet[60]

Food and Nutrition Assistance from School
(e.g., school lunch programs)

Active-duty family respondents*

37% report they need the resource[49]

- American Indian or Alaska Native[49] 49%
- Asian[50] 32%
- Black[51] 37%
- Hispanic/Latino/a/x[52] 33%

Of those with need, **26%**[57] report need is unmet[60]

Veteran family respondents*

35% report they need the resource[55]

Of those with need, **40%**[59] report need is unmet[60]

Top reason for not accessing food and nutrition programs:

"I didn't think I was eligible for this service"

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Finding 7
Military Spouse Employment

Military spouses of color report a greater need for two household incomes than their white, non-Hispanic peers, and they experience substantially higher unemployment rates and lower earnings than their civilian counterparts.

Despite robust research on active-duty military spouse unemployment and underemployment, limited research exists regarding employment outcomes for active-duty military spouses of color.[1] Exploratory analysis of preexisting datasets as part of this study find that active-duty military spouses of color are three times more likely to be unemployed, compared to civilian counterparts; they are unemployed at higher rates than white, non-Hispanic military spouses; they earn about 37% less than the total population; female active-duty military spouses of color experience even worse employment outcomes (with median earnings 54-66% lower than the total population) (Figure 3).[2]

> **While my spouse was stationed [at a military base in the South], I attempted to gain employment as a teacher. I had education, experience, and references. At one of the interviews, the principal told me that even though I was highly qualified for the job, he was looking for a more 'hometown' teacher, one that looked like the children in his school as opposed to me. There were very few if any African American children at the school. I was not hired due to my race. Now, after I shared this with the school district's superintendent, I did receive a job at another school, but I will never forget that and the pain it caused me.**
>
> - Black Military Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Military families of color report a greater need for two household incomes for overall financial stability; this increased reliance on a second income means that career disruptions for military spouses of color can have a disproportionate impact on overall household financial stability.

The number of dual-income households has been increasing since the 1970s due to the need for families to meet or exceed a minimum standard of living.[3] With the increasing costs of goods, housing prices, education, child care, etc., millennial military family respondents to the 2018 Military Family Lifestyle Survey (MFLS) reported a greater need for two incomes to support their family, compared to their older counterparts.[4] Exploratory analysis of existing data conducted as part of this study suggests the need for two incomes is even more salient for military families of color.

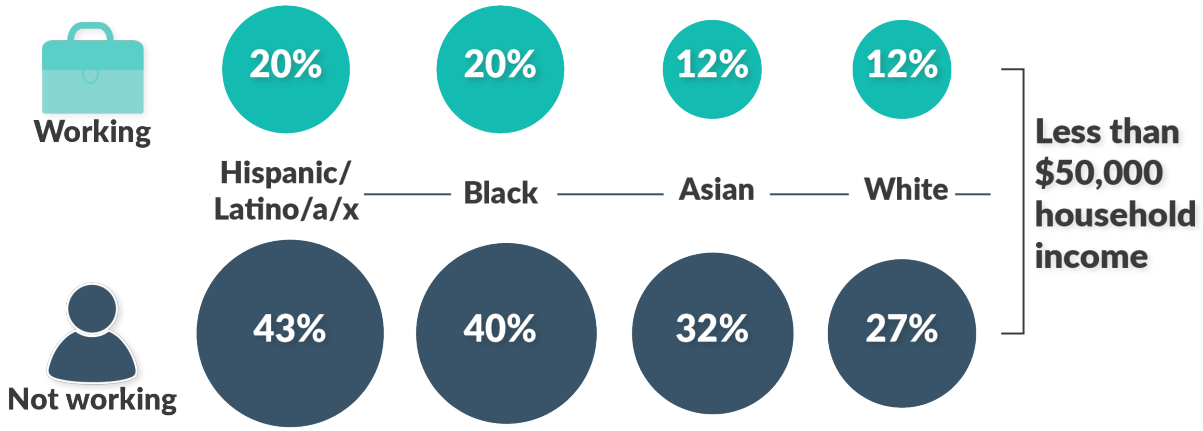
The 2017 Survey of Active Duty Spouses (ADSS) reported that 66% of employed minority military spouses' income contributed to more than half of their family's total household income, while only 41% of white, non-Hispanic military spouses reported the same.[5] Previously unpublished data from Blue Star Families' 2018 and 2019 MFLS found a similar trend: 74% of military spouse respondents of color reported that two incomes were vital, compared to 63% of white, non-Hispanic respondents; a notably greater proportion of Black military spouse respondents reported this to be the case (81%).[6]

This greater reliance on a second income means that disruptions to the career paths of military spouses of color can have a disproportionate impact on their family's overall household income, compared to their white, non-Hispanic peers (Figure 1). For example, a greater proportion of military spouse respondents of color to the 2018 and 2019 MFLS who were not working reported their family's household income to be $50,000 per year or less (40%), while just 27% of white, non-Hispanic spouse respondents reported the same.[7] Additionally, when military spouse respondents of color reported they were working, it reduced the percentage reporting household incomes of less than $50,000 per year by at least 20 percentage points, with Hispanic/Latino/a/x spouses reporting the greatest improvement (23 points); comparatively, white, non-Hispanic military spouse respondents only report a 15-point improvement.

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Figure 1: Gaining employment cuts poverty in half, but one in five employed Black and Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty spouse report household income of $50,000 or less per year[7]

% of active-duty spouse respondents reporting household income of less than $50,000 per year by employment status and race/ethnicity
Source: Aggregated data from 2018 and 2019 MFLS



Active-duty spouses of color, like their civilian counterparts, experience poorer employment outcomes associated with their gender and race/ethnicity, but these employment challenges are exacerbated by their military affiliation.

Existing research regarding active-duty spouse unemployment and underemployment has explored a wide range of topics, including, but not limited to, the effects of gender, permanent change of station (PCS) moves, average amount of time to obtain employment following a PCS move, state licensure, and presence of children, among many others.[8] Previous research has also explored unemployment rates based on military affiliation and, to a limited extent, race/ethnicity (existing research aggregates all respondents of color): active-duty military spouses are two to four times as likely to be unemployed than their non-military counterparts, and active-duty military spouses of color have higher unemployment rates than white, non-Hispanic active-duty spouses (Figure 2).[9] Furthermore, unemployment rates, which require the respondent to have been actively seeking employment in the previous four weeks, do not tell the full story: results from the 2020 MFLS indicated that 43% of spouses of color reported they are not working but need or want paid employment, compared to 32% of white, non-Hispanic spouses.[10]

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Despite significant differences in unemployment rates, previously unpublished results from the 2019 MFLS suggest there is only a minimal difference based on race/ethnicity in aggregated underemployment data: 77% of white, non-Hispanic active-duty spouse respondents who were employed full- or part-time reported at least one circumstance of underemployment, and 79% of active-duty spouse respondents of color reported the same.[11]

Figure 2: Unemployment Rates for Active-Duty Spouses by Race/Ethnicity
Sources: 2017 & 2019 ADSS,[12] 2020 MFLS[13]

	Aggregated racial/ethnic minority groups	White, non-Hispanic respondents
2017 Survey of Active-Duty Spouses	31%	19%
2019 Survey of Active-Duty Spouses	29%	*Information not available*
2020 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Respondents	27%	17%

Note: Racial/ethnic demographic definitions reflect those reported in the Survey of Active-Duty Spouses.

Previous research, however, has not disaggregated military spouse employment data by racial/ethnic group or analyzed it within the broader context of compounding intersectional challenges, including gender and military affiliation. While military service provides many service members of color, regardless of gender, better financial security than civilians of color both during service and after they transition into Veteran life (see Findings 6 and 8), female military spouses of color experience the opposite: all racial/ethnic groups have lower median earnings than their civilian counterparts, and Black and Hispanic female military spouses have substantially lower earnings (Figure 3). According to an analysis of the 2019 American Community Survey data, spouses of a service member on active-duty orders earn roughly 37% less than the total population ($29,300, compared to $42,600). Furthermore, in general, female military spouses earn less than male military spouses, and the gap in these earnings increases for Black and Hispanic female military spouses, who earn roughly 54% and 66% less than the total population, respectively (Figure 3).

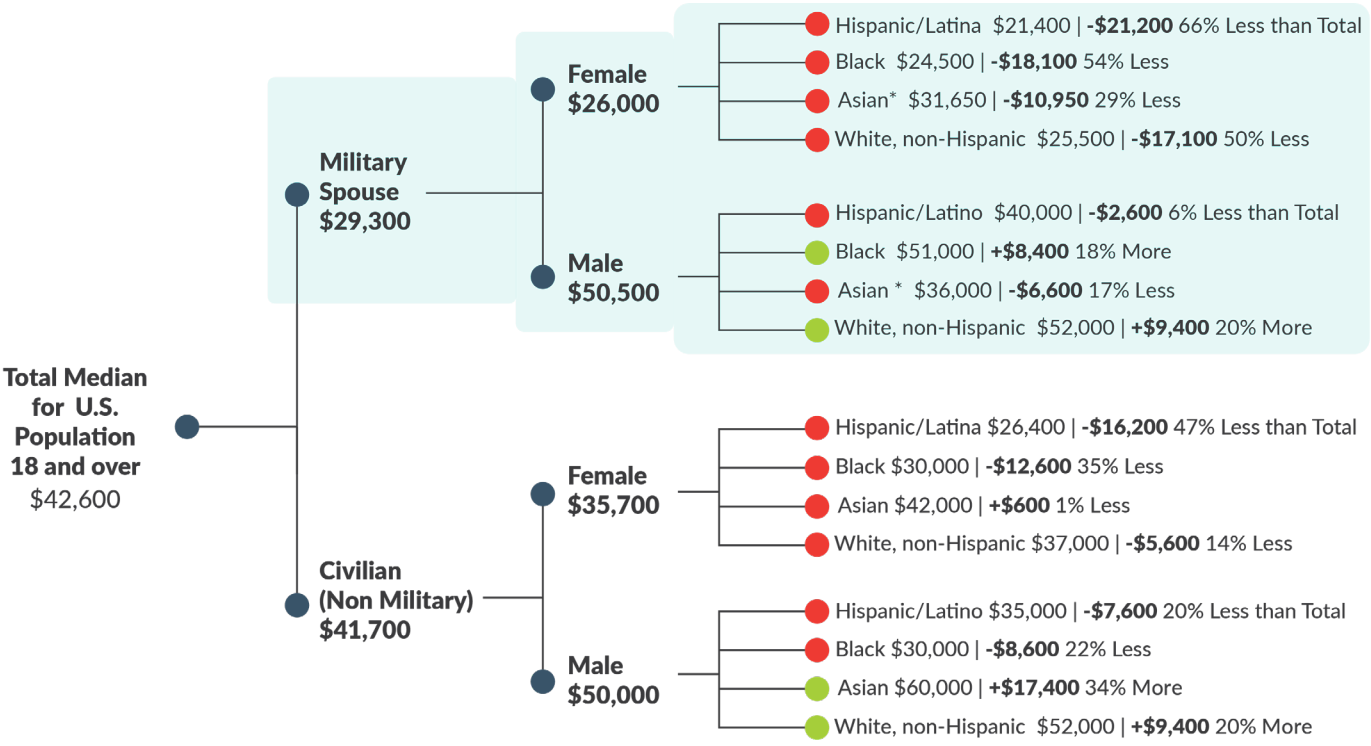
*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Figure 3: Median Earnings by Military Spouse Status, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity[32]

Median Earnings U.S. Population, 18 and older and in the labor force: $42,600;
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 earnings using 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

***small sample sizes**



Active-duty spouse respondents* report their employment outcomes are worse when compared to civilian counterparts and that they do not receive the same military service-connected career benefits as uniformed service members and Veterans.

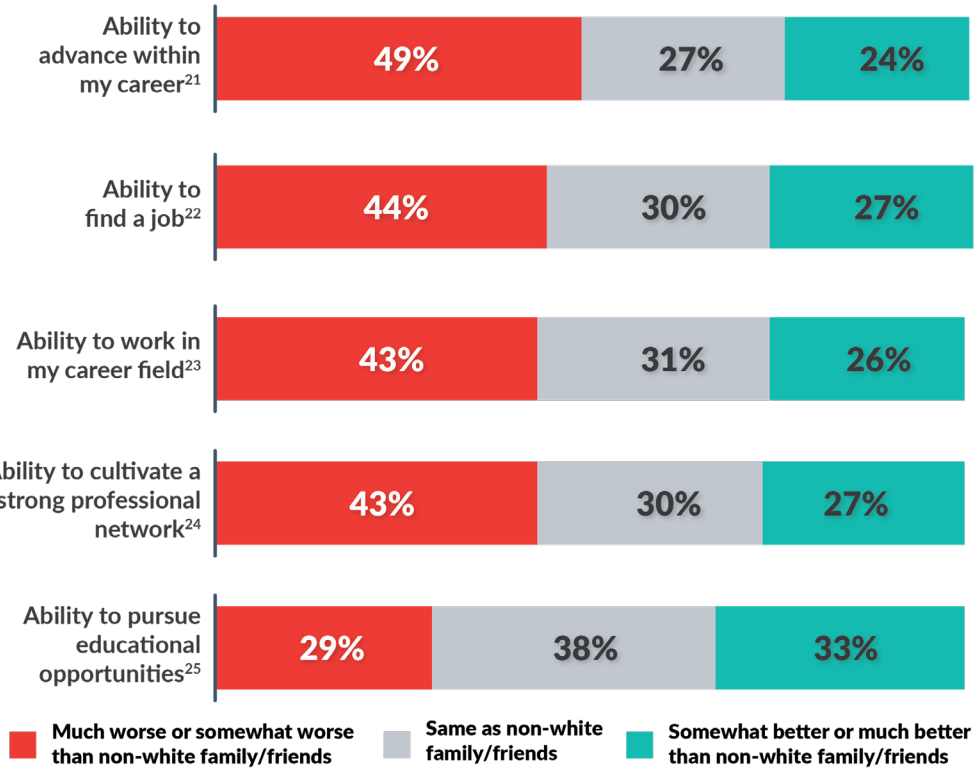
Career progression challenges for military spouses stem from a variety of factors, including, but not limited to, service member day-to-day job demands,[14] lack of affordable child care,[15] frequent PCS moves,[16] and difficulty pursuing further education.[17] These issues impact all military spouses, regardless of race/ethnicity, and it is reasonable to assume that white, non-Hispanic military spouses may also report they fare worse than their white, non-Hispanic family and friends. This survey, which specifically recruited respondents of color, sought to understand the degree to which military family members of color receive (or do not receive) the same benefits of service as service members of color often do. For this reason, there is no white, non-Hispanic comparison group at this time for the following employment-oriented perception-based questions, and this should be an area for future research.

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Nearly half (43-49%)[18] of active-duty spouse respondents* report a variety of employment outcomes to be "somewhat" or "much" worse than their non-white friends and family who are not connected to the military, and their responses (Figure 4) provide useful context for the unemployment and earnings data discussed above. As discussed in Finding 3, these numbers are substantially higher than the proportion of Veteran respondents* (about 1 in 4) who report elements of their employment situation to be "somewhat" or "much" worse than their non-white family and friends. Nevertheless, a smaller proportion of active-duty spouse respondents* (29%)[19] report their ability to pursue educational opportunities as "somewhat" or "much" worse than non-white family and friends who are not connected to the military, suggesting that the wide array of educational support programs and scholarships available to military spouses may be helping to alleviate some of these challenges.

Figure 4: Nearly half of active-duty spouse respondents of color report experiencing worse employment-related outcomes than non-white family and friends[20]

% of active-duty spouse respondents*



Impact of COVID-19

37%[26] **of active-duty spouse respondents*** report that since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, **their employment situation is better than that of their civilian family/friends** (of a similar racial/ethnic background).

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Active-duty spouse respondents* report similar barriers to accessing needed employment and career support resources as discussed in other areas of the report, but they place greater emphasis on the lack of child care as a hurdle.

Twelve percent[27] of active-duty spouse respondents* report not working, but wanting or needing paid employment, and actively seeking work in the last four weeks. Nearly half (46%)[28] of active-duty spouse respondents* report they have needed employment and career development resources (e.g., job training, job placement services, resume writing, starting a business) since January 2020; among those with a need, 39%[29] indicate that need is unmet. Of those with an unmet need, lack of knowledge about how to access the service, lack of child care, and uncertainty about eligibility are the top-three barriers.

Increasing mentorship opportunities is a way to support military spouses in their careers, and 41%[30] of active-duty spouse respondents* indicate that they want a mentor for employment, career exploration, professional development, and/or leadership development. Of those spouses who indicate wanting mentorship in any area, 62% report wanting a mentor who has similar professional interests, 59% report wanting a mentor of the same race/ethnicity, and 46% report wanting a mentor who is the same gender.[31]

> **Programs [need to be] inclusive and experienced with culture and our diverse heritage. Programs like [...] finding employment opportunities as an immigrant spouse, [and] access to grants or programs to help further education.**
>
> - Hispanic/Latino/a/x Military Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Finding 8
Veteran Employment
Despite mostly positive employment outcomes, Veterans of color face unique challenges when compared to their white, non-Hispanic Veteran counterparts.

As discussed in Finding 3, obtaining employment is an important facet of a Veteran's post-service transition experience. While Veterans face challenges with securing civilian employment, on average, Veterans are succeeding[1] when looking at some employment outcomes. However, racially and ethnically diverse Veterans experience higher unemployment rates and lower median earnings, compared to white, non-Hispanic, non-Veterans.[2] This suggests that existing employment initiatives should work to ensure racially/ethnically diverse Veterans are connected with high-quality civilian job opportunities to reduce economic disparities.

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

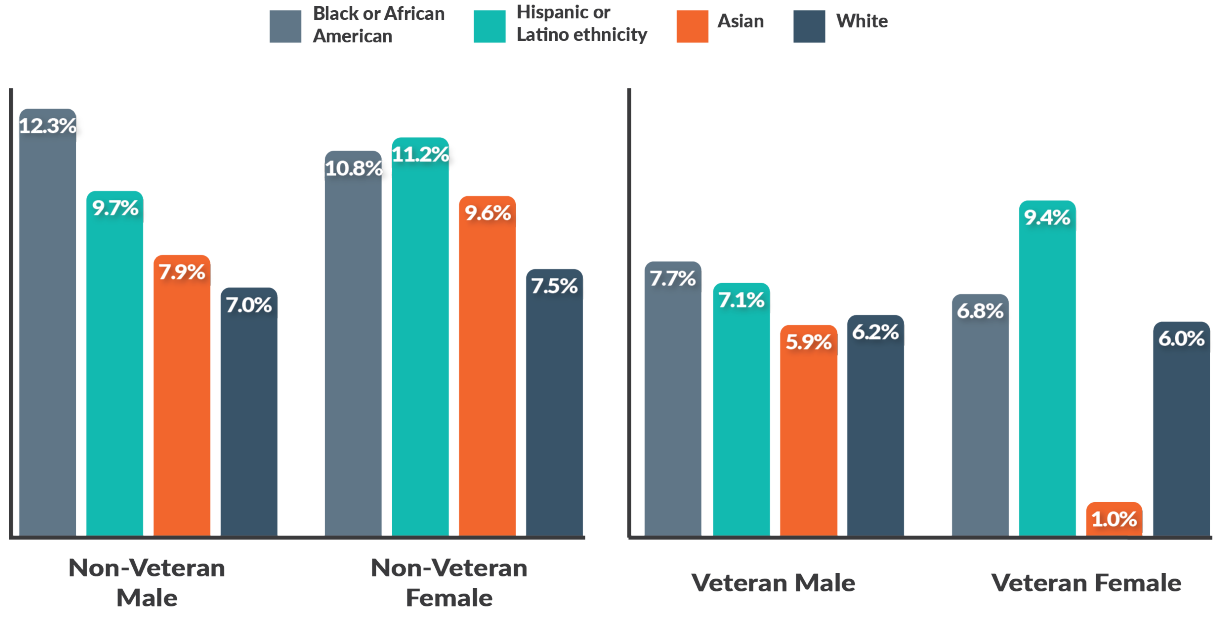
Military service contributes to better employment outcomes for Veterans, compared to their civilian counterparts. However, female and racial/ethnic minority Veterans generally do not experience the same benefits as the white, non-Hispanic men they served beside.

Four in 10 (41%)[3] Veteran respondents* indicate they are better able to find a job, compared to their non-white family/friends who are not connected to the military–a sentiment that is supported by national unemployment and earnings data. Veterans of all races/ethnicities (and both males and females) experience lower unemployment rates than their civilian peers[4] (Figure 1). While racial/ethnic minority Veterans are experiencing lower unemployment rates than their non-Veteran peers, they are falling behind their white, non-Hispanic Veteran counterparts. Racial/ethnic differences in unemployment among Veterans are most stark among female Veterans where Hispanic or Latina Veterans have an unemployment rate 3.4 percentage points higher than their white female Veteran peers.[5]

Similarly, Veterans fare better than their civilian counterparts in terms of median earnings, regardless of race/ethnicity and/or gender. However, racial/ethnic and gender disparities emerge when compared to their white, non-Hispanic Veteran peers (Figure 2). Of note, Asian Veterans and non-Veterans experience better employment outcomes than any other group, regardless of gender. In general, they have the highest median earnings and lowest unemployment rate, among both males and females, and when compared to all other analyzed racial/ethnic groups. Still, more in-depth research is needed, especially within the various racial/ethnic groups in the wake of COVID-19.[6]

Figure 1: Unemployment Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Veteran Status

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020 Annual Averages[26]



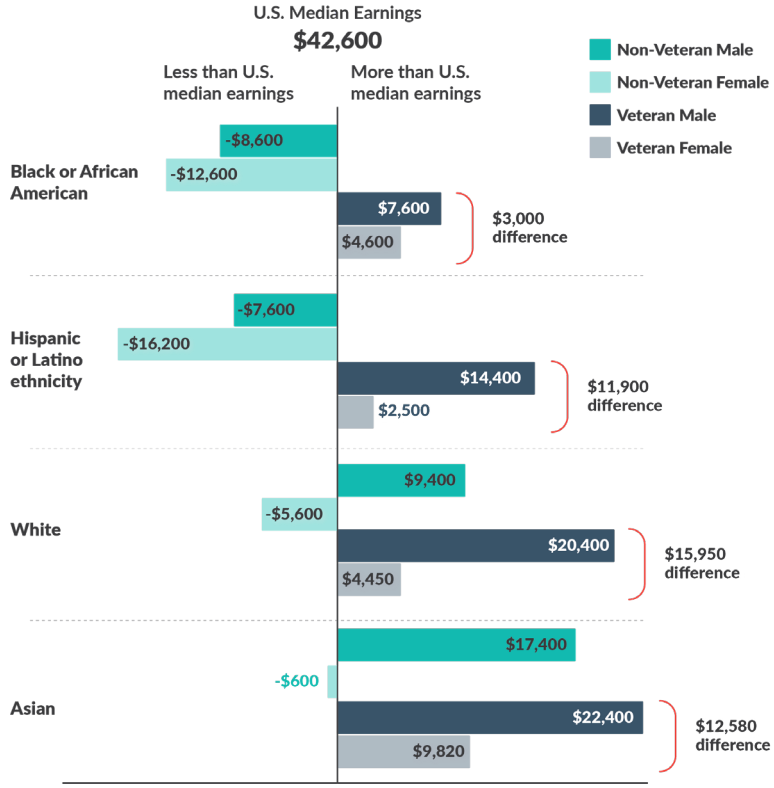
Note: Descriptions of race/ethnicity mirror the original data source

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Figure 2: Deviation from Median Earnings by Race/Ethnicity and Veteran Status

Median Earnings U.S. Population, 18 and older and in the labor force: $42,600[26]

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 earnings using 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Note: Descriptions of race/ethnicity mirror the original data source

COVID-19 introduced uncertainty regarding the degree to which positive employment trends for Veterans will hold in the long term.

The true impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Veteran employment in general, and with regard to race/ethnicity and gender, remains to be seen. On the one hand, labor market conditions at the onset of the pandemic were projected to disproportionately impact industries and metropolitan areas in which Veterans were highly represented, subjecting them to a high risk of job loss.[7] Although Veteran unemployment rates have improved, they have not returned to pre-COVID-19 levels. When asked about various COVID-19 impact areas, "employment situation" has the greatest proportion of Veteran respondents (23%) who selected "somewhat worse" or "much worse" than their friends and family (of the same racial/ethnic background without military connections).[8] On the other hand, roughly one-third (35%) of Veteran respondents* indicate their employment situation is "much better" or "somewhat better" than their non-military friends and family of the same racial/ethnic background. (Additional COVID-19 impact areas are explored in Findings 5, 6, 7, and 9.)

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Increased availability of online university/higher education courses (and the GI Bill modifications needed to enable them[9]) may have made pursuing further education more appealing and accessible, especially for Veterans with PTSD, anxiety, or other service-connected disabilities that can make it challenging for some Veterans to be on campus.[10] Nearly half (46%)[11] of Veteran respondents* report their ability to pursue educational opportunities is "much better" or "somewhat" better than that of their non-white friends and family who are not military-connected.

Like their active-duty service member counterparts, Veteran respondents of color report their race/ethnicity impacts them in the workplace.

Veterans may also face stigma in the workplace, which can result from a lack of military cultural competence and stereotypes regarding Veterans' health, among other things.[12] It is difficult to tease apart hiring and/or workplace discrimination stemming from Veteran status and/or racial/ethnic discrimination for Veterans of color, higlighting the importance of studying and understanding intersectionality once again. The results of this study indicate that many Veterans are subjected to racial/ethnic discrimination in the workplace: 44% of Veteran respondents* indicate they believe their "racial/ethnic identity has hurt their ability to get ahead at work."[13] Similar to active-duty service member respondents,* more than half of Veteran respondents* (65%) report experiencing unfair punitive counseling or investigation in the workplace.[14]

> **The use of offensive language, telling racially offensive jokes, symbols (white power), and symbolism (gorilla stickers placed on my door at work) in my federal work environment. My life became a living hell after I filed a formal EEO [Equal Employment Opportunity] complaint. I finally left the workplace. The case is still pending. Leadership continues to lie about the incidents and my reporting of them.**
>
> - Black Veteran and Veteran Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Veterans of color face challenges in finding employment that matches their skillset.

Veterans sometimes struggle to convey their skills gained during their military service for civilian employment opportunities, and potential employers may underestimate soft skills such as management and leadership that Veterans can bring to a new role.[15] One in four Veteran respondents* (25%) perceive their ability to "work in their career field"[16] to be "much worse" or "somewhat worse," compared to their non-white friends and family who are not military-connected; 30% report the same with regard to their ability to "advance within their career."[17] These results may reflect the difficulty in translating military service experience into civilian employment.

Additional barriers to Veteran employment, such as physical or mental health concerns[18] and perceived stigma, are documented. Findings from this survey suggest their severity may vary by race/ethnicity.[19] Of those Veteran respondents* to this survey who report they need employment and career development services since January 2020, 43%[20] did not get them. The top reasons for not using these programs and services are a lack of knowledge ("I did not know how to access this service" - 27%) and stigma ("I worried about what others [family, friends, coworkers/supervisor] would think of me if I used this service" - 16%).[21]

Frequent relocation during military service may make it difficult for Veterans to establish a strong professional network, which is key to connecting Veterans with desired employment opportunities.[22] Of Veteran respondents* who indicate they want a mentor, 51% desire a mentor for employment, career exploration, professional development, and leadership development.[23] One in five Veteran respondents* (21%) perceive their ability to cultivate a strong professional network as "somewhat worse" or "much worse" than that of their non-white friends and family who are not military-connected.[24]

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Chapter 4
Health Care Access

I would love for my husband to be able to meet with a therapist that looks like him. *They simply don't exist in our area. There are no Black male mental health providers through our VAMC [Veterans Administration Medical Center]. I feel like he would have a different connection.*
- Black Military Spouse

*Trying to find a psychiatrist or even a chaplain who can relate to how you felt when insurrectionists stormed the Capitol, as a person of color whose Black husband has served this country for 17 years...**well, that statement in itself should be an eye opener.***
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Military Spouse

A white doctor told my Black husband he didn't have a skin issue and didn't need a shaving waiver, he simply needed to learn how to shave.
- White Military Spouse in a Multiracial Family

I think overall we ***need to focus on mental health issues for all servicemen and women and their families.*** *I think more work needs to be done in this space and we need to find qualified people of color to administer the counseling needed.*
- Multiracial Military Spouse

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

*[I'm] currently dealing with hair loss...**due to lack of African American military doctors, it is hard to explain the type of problem African American women deal with when it comes to protective styles and hair care.***
- Black Military Spouse

*It is very difficult to explain to military providers **that my mother does not understand how to vouch for herself in a medical setting since she has never had access to care.** It is difficult to get them to listen to me since I am just the sponsor. **It is difficult to get them to provide translating services.** It is difficult for them to understand [that] my mother does not drive and has to travel to base by taking two buses for an hour-and-a-half commute. It is difficult for them to know that, **culturally, my mom is used to bringing all problems at one appointment, and she does not understand the need to space them along different appointments.** Telling her it's just normal is not enough. It demeans and belittles her emotional aspect of her health.*
- Hispanic/Latino/a/x Service Member

The Black experience is unique...in all aspects of life. I need a health care provider (physical and mental) that gets that.
- Black Service Member

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Finding 9
Military & Veteran Health Care

Active-duty and Veteran family respondents of color perceive better health care quality and overall health than their civilian counterparts. However, those using a civilian health care provider rank their quality of care as higher than those using a military treatment facility or VA provider.

A myriad of studies and reports have concluded that participation in the Military Health System (MHS) and/or the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) reduces health disparities among racial and ethnic minority communities in the United States.[1] However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, racial and ethnic disparities among communities of color have been front and center, with one of the most disturbing aspects of COVID-19 being the disproportionate harm it has caused to historically marginalized groups: Black, Hispanic/Latino/a/x, and Asian Americans have substantially higher rates of infection, hospitalization, and death, compared to white Americans.[2] Underlying these findings is the need for racially/ethnically culturally competent care, which was heavily emphasized by focus group participants and many survey respondents.

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

COVID-19 impacted active-duty and Veteran families of color to a greater degree than their white, non-Hispanic peers.

Blue Star Families research conducted in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic found Black and Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty family respondents perceived the pandemic to be a higher threat to their personal health than white, non-Hispanic respondents.[3] Research conducted since that time provides additional evidence that racial and ethnic disparities in COVID-19 infection and hospitalizations exist in the U.S. military despite universal eligibility for health care, similar rates of testing, and adjustment for comorbidities and other factors[4] (however, disparities are of lower magnitude than in civilian populations). Significant risk exists for Veterans of color as well, with Black and Hispanic/Latino/a/x Veterans at greater risk of death from COVID-19.[5] These findings suggest that **simply making health care coverage and facilities available[6] may be insufficient to ensure health equity within military- and Veteran-connected communities**.

> **I think something that would be really important for the military in the future is [to address the fact that] some of us have needs that are not being met.**
>
> - Hispanic/Latino/a/x Military Spouse

Many active-duty service member, Veteran, active-duty spouse, and Veteran spouse respondents of color perceive they have higher quality health care and overall health than their non-military peers since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

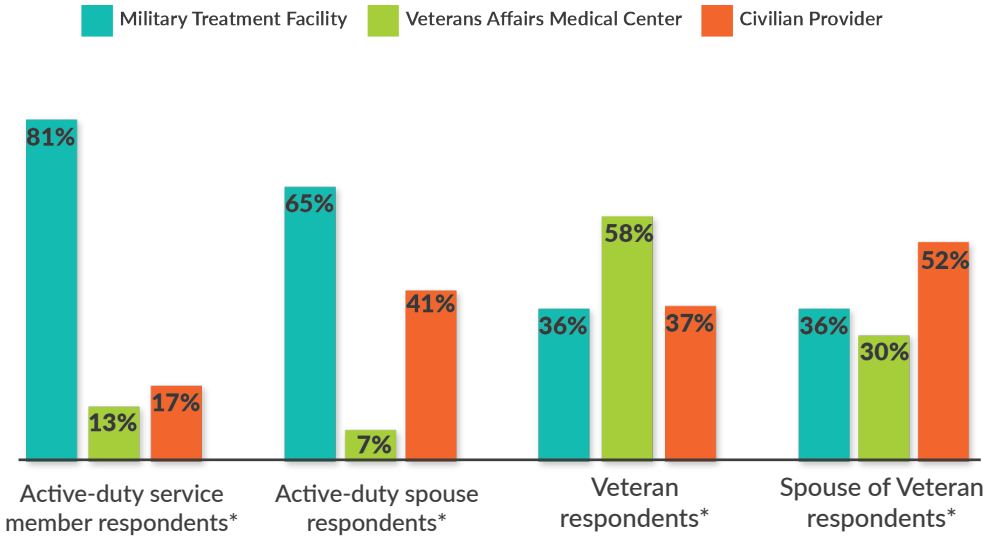
Consistent with the literature discussed above, survey respondents to this study also experienced a decline in the perception of the quality of their own health and their health care since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, though many note they have fared better than their civilian friends and family from a similar racial/ethnic background. When respondents* were asked about the perception of their overall health since COVID-19 started, about four in 10 respondents* of all military- and Veteran-connected subgroups (active-duty spouse, active-duty service member, Veteran, and spouse of a Veteran) report their **overall health** as being "much better" or "somewhat better" than their non-military peers (36-41%).[7] When asked about their perception of the **quality of their health care** since the COVID-19 pandemic started, a similar range from all military- and Veteran- connected subgroup respondents* report the quality of their health care since the pandemic as "much better" or "somewhat better" than their non-military affiliated peers (38-42%).[8] On both measures, a greater proportion of Veteran respondents* indicate this to be the case.

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Active-duty service member, active-duty spouse, and Veteran respondents access most of their medical care at Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) or the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). However, those using civilian medical providers rate them most favorably.

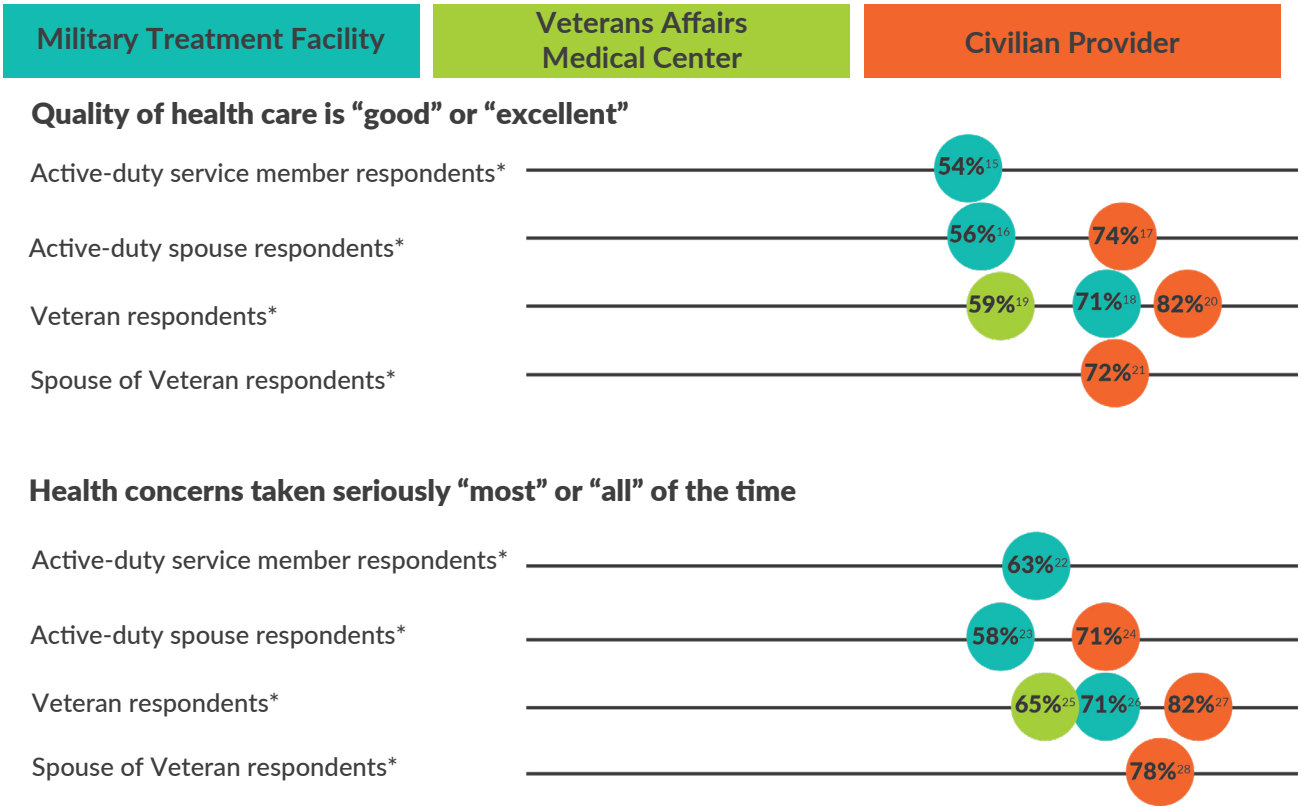
The VHA has been under recent scrutiny for health care equity concerns,[9] and research is mixed regarding the extent to which racial/ethnic disparities exist within the system.[10] In this survey, focusing specifically on active-duty and Veteran families of color, most respondents* (with the exception of spouses of Veterans) receive their care at an MTF and/or VHA medical center (Figure 1), and the majority report the quality of their care to be "good" or "excellent." However, respondents* who use civilian health care providers consistently rate the quality of their health care as better than that of respondents* receiving care through an MTF or VHA medical center (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Respondents' Providers of Routine Medical Care[14]
% of respondents*



*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Figure 2: Most Respondents Have Positive Perceptions of their Health Care Provider
% of respondents*



Note: Questions with fewer than 50 respondents are excluded.

> **I can hardly thank the VA enough [...] [T]hey give us unbelievable health care, which companies just don't do anymore.**
>
> -Hispanic/Latino/a/x Veteran Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Some respondents report experiencing barriers to finding culturally competent health care.

Cultural competence is an ongoing process, in which a health care provider works effectively within the patient's cultural context. This aspect of high-quality health care provision is becoming more prominent because conscious or unconscious bias, stereotyping, prejudice, and clinical uncertainty on health care providers may contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in health care.[11] To this end, the 2019 VHA Health Equity Action Plan[12] includes a section on "Workforce Cultural and Linguistic Competence," which may be a model for MHS and other military- and Veteran-serving health care providers to use as an approach to ensure health equity for people of color.

4 in 10 **active-duty and Veteran family respondents***
cannot find culturally competent health care

About four in 10 respondents* from all subgroups report having difficulty finding culturally competent health care providers (37%-42%).[13] When asked in an open-ended format to describe the attributes the respondent seeks in a culturally competent provider, the most commonly-cited responses are: the ability to obtain providers who are more aware of the physical, mental, and emotional experiences of people of color; caring/attentive providers; and diverse providers (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.).

> **Recently, I received mental health services and requested someone who at least spoke Spanish or was knowledgeable of the Hispanic community. I was paired with a military spouse white woman who really tried to help but was not at all able to help me because it felt as if I was teaching her about my culture so she could help me with my mental issues. It was very discouraging.**
>
> - Hispanic/Latino/a/x Military Spouse and Veteran

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

SPOTLIGHT ON:

CAREGIVING

Caregiving is common among respondents of color, with many reporting needing but not accessing resources.[29]

Identify as Caregivers

1 in 3 Veteran respondents*

and

1 in 4 active-duty family respondents*

5.5 million
MILITARY AND VETERAN-CONNECTED CAREGIVERS NATIONALLY[30]

Unmet Caregiving Resource Need
(among those with a need)

60% of Veteran family*

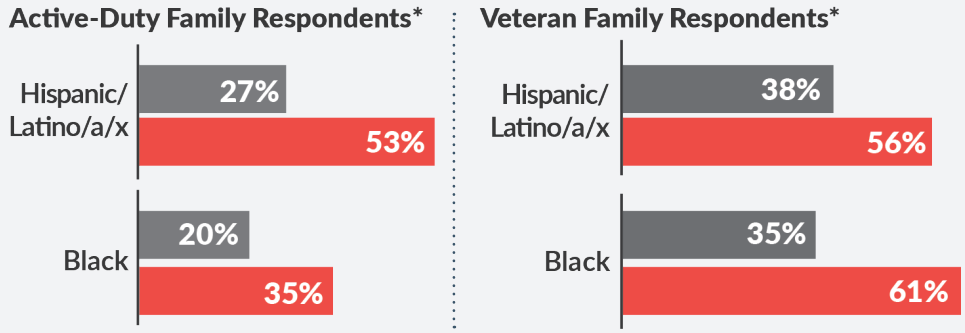
and

45% of active-duty family respondents*

Caregiving is most prevalent among Hispanic Veteran family respondents, while Black Veteran family respondents more commonly report unmet caregiving needs.[31]

Identify as caregivers

Among those with a need, % who report that need is unmet



Lack of knowledge and uncertainty regarding eligibility are the biggest barriers to accessing needed caregiver resources among respondents of color.[32]

Am I eligible?

19% of Veteran family respondents*

and

13% of active-duty family respondents*

How do I access resources?

26% of Veteran family respondents*

and

18% of active-duty family respondents*

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

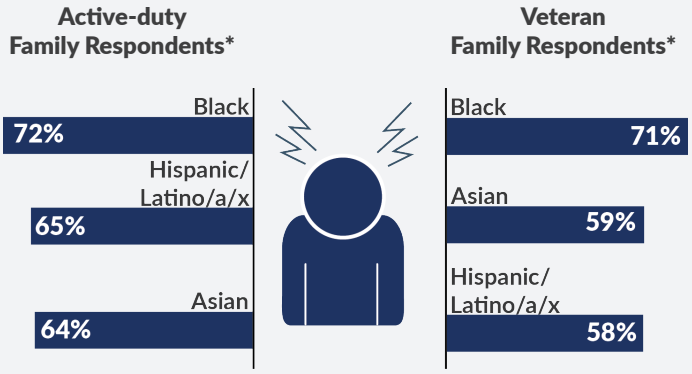
SPOTLIGHT ON:

MENTAL HEALTH

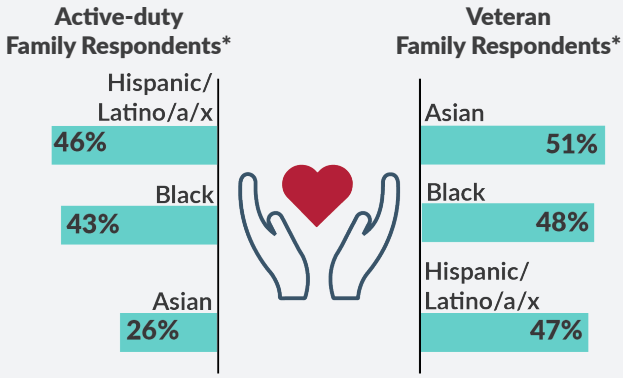
Active-duty and Veteran family respondents of color report high stress and use of mental health care since January 2020.[34]

Stress due to racial/ethnic tensions is most prevalent for Black respondents[35]

Have experienced stress due to racial/ethnic tensions...



Have sought mental health care...



Asian active-duty family respondents report the lowest utilization of care.[36]

Asian Americans who faced nearly **4,000 hate incidents** over the last year report increases in:

anxiety, depressive symptoms, and sleep problems.[37]

Yet, **Asian Americans** are **less likely** to access **mental health services** than **any other racial group**.[38]

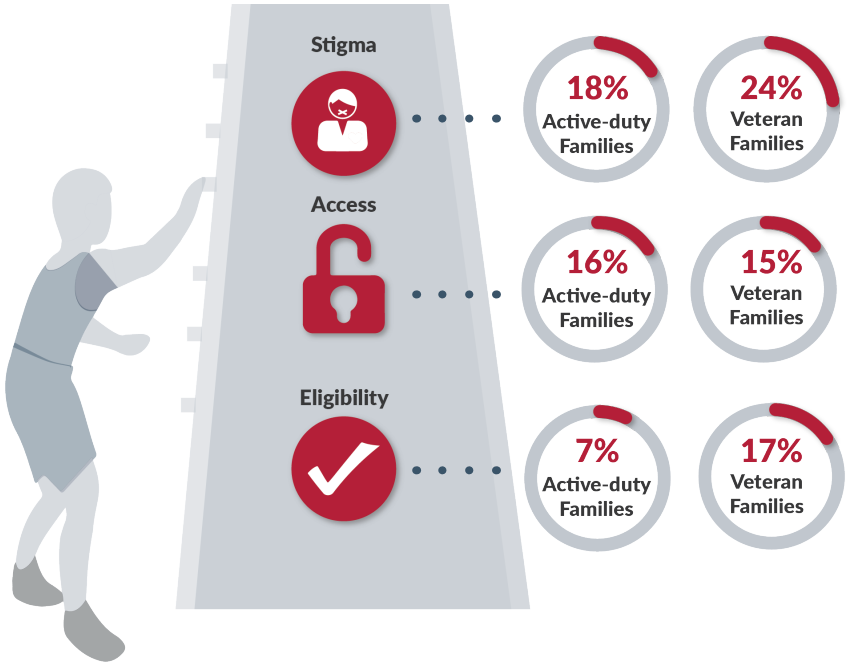
A therapist doesn't understand cultural stressors being a first generation immigrant has had on me and my marriage. I find myself having to explain a lot and sometimes I get dismissed. My health concerns are sometimes dismissed or not thoroughly checked out.

-Asian Military Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Not all Veteran and active-duty family respondents who require mental health care are accessing it. Stigma and lack of knowledge about access and eligibility are top barriers.[39]

Of those with unmet behavioral and mental health needs...



> **There seems to be a stigma over people of color going to see someone in the mental health field. Show that [Black, Indigenous and people of color] can see people in mental health without being ostracized and ridiculed. It doesn't have to be a billboard or anything. Just something small like a brochure that has people from all different cultures going to mental health for anything.**
>
> - Black Military Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Chapter 5
Education Access and Quality

I've spent my entire career in education. ***I'm also a person of color, which means it's somehow on me to let the director or the principal or the teacher know when [culturally-inappropriate practices] occur and to help guide them in the direction of training that would support students of color.*** It's not really my job, but I'm not going to let my children fall through any cracks, and I'm not going to let them be treated differently than white students.
- Multiracial Military Spouse

Quality care to me means that my children are cared for in the same manner that I care for them. *Meaning that the staff treats them like they are their own. So when I drop my kids off at their facility, I expect them to be treated no different than I would my best friend's children who happen to be several shades lighter than my own kids.*
- Black Military Spouse

***My children are almost always the only Black children at their school**, and it affects how they're treated and related to.*
- Black Service Member

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Our children have been in schools where diversity is not acknowledged or celebrated. [For example], Black History Month/Hispanic History Month.
- Black Military Spouse

Child care needs to be fixed. It's nearly impossible for a spouse to have a family and career while moving around. We have to choose to either have kids or work, and having no affordable or base child care means you can't do both.
- Multiracial Military Spouse

At parades, my children are often skipped over when candy is passed out. *We wave at everyone that passes by our home and, more often than not, are looked at by passersby and ignored. We are renting a home from landlords who told us, 'We've never done this before' (rented to non-whites), and asked us, 'What are you?' At restaurants, we typically get treated poorly or served after other patrons who've entered the establishment after us. We are typically stared at the entire time we are in public, so we've avoided going out or will travel to a larger city further away to do our shopping.*
- Black Military Spouse

Finding 10
Military Children

Active-duty families of color report generally favorable attitudes and outcomes regarding their children's child care and education; however, access to child care is a challenge for all active-duty families, regardless of race/ethnicity.

Existing research on military children generally concentrates on transitions and separations, and susceptibility to social, emotional, and academic challenges (both at home and at their school).[1] However, research focused specifically on military children of color is extremely limited, with even basic demographic information such as race or ethnicity of military children being unavailable. Furthermore, the use of parents' race/ethnicity as proxies for their children's racial/ethnic identity can be incomplete, as it does not consider multi-racial, adoptive/foster, or other diverse families.[2]

Civilian research about children of color (not limited to children of service members or Veterans) explores educational disparities that impact test scores, grade repetition, dropout and graduation rates, student involvement in gifted and talented programs, access to education resources and higher education, and discipline rates (including suspensions and school expulsions).[3] These disparities are often a result of racial and ethnic discrimination, which lead to unequal access to educational support and resources.[4] Though research is limited, it is likely these educational inequities are lessened for military children of color[5] due to the benefits of service on finances, health care access, and access to resources, as discussed in Findings 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, which may mitigate some of the risk factors found among the civilian population more broadly. That said, military child education and child care are perennial issues of concern for military families,[6] including families of color, and similar to non-military families of color, respondents* to this survey report seeking quality education and staff/student diversity.[7]

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Active-duty family respondents* report that a diverse staff is an important consideration when selecting child care providers and schools, but safety, staff quality, curriculum, and distance from home are more frequently cited as top attributes.

Civilian research has found that families of color (low-income families, in this case) sought quality education and capable staff, learning opportunities, nutritious meals, sensitive caregiving, safety, bilingual or matched race/ethnicity in caregivers,[8] and convenient, flexible, and affordable care when selecting a child care provider.[9] This same study also highlighted other factors, such as immigrant status, language spoken in the household, age of child(ren), family's socioeconomic status, and available resources, which can explain variations in child care preferences and choices. In K-12 school settings and in school choice, civilian families of color report similar preferences, such as academic quality, curriculum, safety, distance from home, and diversity of student population as primary concerns, though preferences and enrollment may differ.[10]

In line with civilian research, active-duty family respondents* requiring child care in this survey report a wide variety of important "top 5" attributes when selecting a child care or preschool provider, which include, but are not limited to, diversity-related attributes[11]: safety (55%), training and certification of staff (53%), learning philosophy or curriculum (50%), distance from home (37%), diversity of faculty/administrators (29%), and diversity of student population (28%).[12] Active-duty family respondents* with school-aged children[13] report similar "top 5" attributes when considering a school, but they place a slightly greater emphasis on diversity, most commonly selecting strong academic curriculum (62%), safety (57%), diversity of student population (43%), distance from home (36%), and diversity of faculty/administrators (33%).[14]

> **Quality child care is having a curriculum where all students' backgrounds are represented, not just a eurocentric curriculum. It also means safety and knowing that I can trust that my children's teachers will promote diversity and inclusion and go out of his or her way to learn about my children and their backgrounds.**
>
> - Black Military Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Most active-duty family respondents of color report their children's school and/or child care staff represent the diversity of its student body.

According to civilian literature, children of color (not limited to children of service members or Veterans) experience positive outcomes when they attend school and child care facilities that provide[15] culturally relevant materials and toys and have diverse student populations and staff[16]; parent engagement and communication increase when they attend child care facilities, either a center or in-home, that reflect their own family's experiences.[17] Similarly, diversity in both staff and students is tied to better outcomes for school-aged children, particularly adolescents. While the child care industry's labor force is relatively diverse,[18] this is not necessarily true for K-12 education; some K-12 schools reflect the diversity of their student population in staff, and others do not.[19]

Active-duty respondents* to this survey suggest that their children's child care centers and schools are doing well on these diversity-related metrics. The large majority of active-duty respondents* who require child care agree that "the staff at [their] child care or early childhood education program reflects the diversity of the families within the program" (65%),[20] "there are toys and reading materials that reflect diversity and inclusion" (63%),[21] and "there are opportunities for their children to play with children of other races and/or cultures" (82%).[22] In line with the civilian research discussed above, a slightly smaller majority perceive diversity-related attributes in their K-12 schools: 53% report that the "staff reflects the diversity of the families,"[23] 53% report "there are reading materials which reflect diversity and inclusion,"[24] and 77% report "there are opportunities for children to meet and play with a variety of children of different races/ and or cultures."[25]

"What does quality child care mean to you?"

#1 Caring staff

#2 Child is learning and growing

#3 Safe & clean facility

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Most active-duty family respondents to the 2019 Military Family Lifestyle Survey (MFLS) reported generally positive school experiences for their children, regardless of race/ethnicity.

Research on school belonging is typically conducted with adolescents and has tied a sense of belonging at school to both immediate and long-term academic and well-being outcomes, many of which are also linked to the racial/ethnic diversity of the school.[26] Another study found that adolescents who did not belong to the ethnic majority in the school class had increased odds for loneliness, compared to adolescents who belonged to the ethnic majority; having more same-ethnic classmates lowered the odds for loneliness.[27] Fortunately, there is also evidence that availability and participation in affinity groups (such as Black Student Unions, multicultural alliances, etc.) may help mitigate the negative effects of not having a diverse student body on school connectedness.[28]

Previously unpublished 2019 MFLS data showed very few differences by race/ethnicity on a number of school-related measures, and these similarities in responses are positive indicators for military children of color. The 2019 survey included several measures, such as adherence to Interstate Compact rules, school welcoming and communication, parent comfort with school engagement and advocacy, and child thriving and belonging – with little variation by race/ethnicity on any of them.[29] For example, when asked to respond to the item "my oldest child seems to feel a strong sense of belonging to their school": 64% of white, non-Hispanic active-duty family respondents strongly agreed or agreed, as did 64% of Asian respondents, 61% of Black respondents, and 60% of Latino/a/x respondents.[30]

There were also few differences by race/ethnicity in items related to military cultural competency at school, with 48% of white, non-Hispanic active-duty family respondents, 52% of Asian respondents, 47% of Black respondents, and 44% of Latino/a/x respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement: "The support from my oldest child's school for families dealing with military life is excellent."[31] This is an example of the need for future research addressing intersectionality in military children and families or color, particularly in child care and school settings.[32]

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Child care needs and provider usage differ by race/ethnicity, but overall access rates are similar.

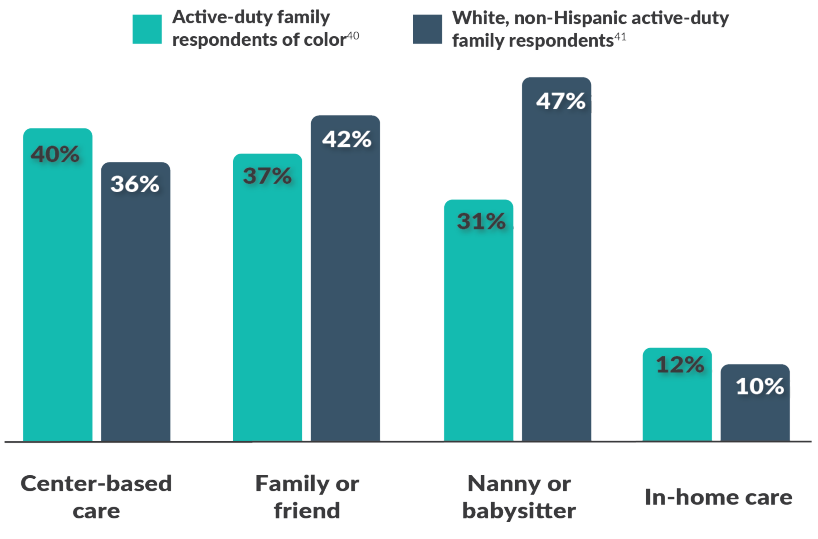
Civilian research shows variation in the type of child care being accessed by Black, Hispanic, Asian, and other racial/ethnic minority families. For example, Hispanic children are most likely to be cared for by another family member or relative; center-based care usage is highest among Asian and Pacific Islander and Black, non-Hispanic families, and immigrant families are less likely overall to use child care.[33] However, active-duty families are inevitably influenced by factors unique to military life: frequent relocations potentially make it difficult to utilize child care providers with long waitlists; living far from relatives could make it more difficult to use extended family for routine child care support; and access to income-based, tiered child care tuition and fee assistance rates make accessing child care more equitable if capacity exists on the installation or in the community.

Previously unpublished data from the 2018 MFLS found that three-quarters of active-duty family respondents of color had a child care need, similar to their white, non-Hispanic counterparts.[34] Of those who needed child care, responses differed between racial/ethnic groups, with 33% of active-duty family respondents of color requiring "weekly, full-time child care so [they could] work or attend school (35 hours or more per week)," compared to 23% of white, non-Hispanic active-duty family respondents reporting the same.[35]

Further exploration of 2018 MFLS data suggests no disparities in child care access among active-duty family respondents, however, with about a quarter reporting they were able to find child care for their current situation, regardless of the respondent's race/ethnicity.[36] Nonetheless, differences emerged by race/ethnicity regarding what type of child care families utilized (Figure 1). Publicly-available data from the 2017 Survey of Active Duty Spouses indicates that child care usage is highest among non-Hispanic Black spouses (69%) and lowest among Hispanic spouses (58%).[37] This study also suggests that racial/ethnic minority spouses use military-provided child care at higher rates than their non-Hispanic white peers: 54% of "minority" spouses reported using military-provided care either on- or off-installation, compared to 41% of white, non-Hispanic spouses.[38]

Figure 1: Child Care Delivery Utilization Among Active-Duty Family Respondents by Race/Ethnicity

% of active-duty family respondents to the 2018 MFLS[39]



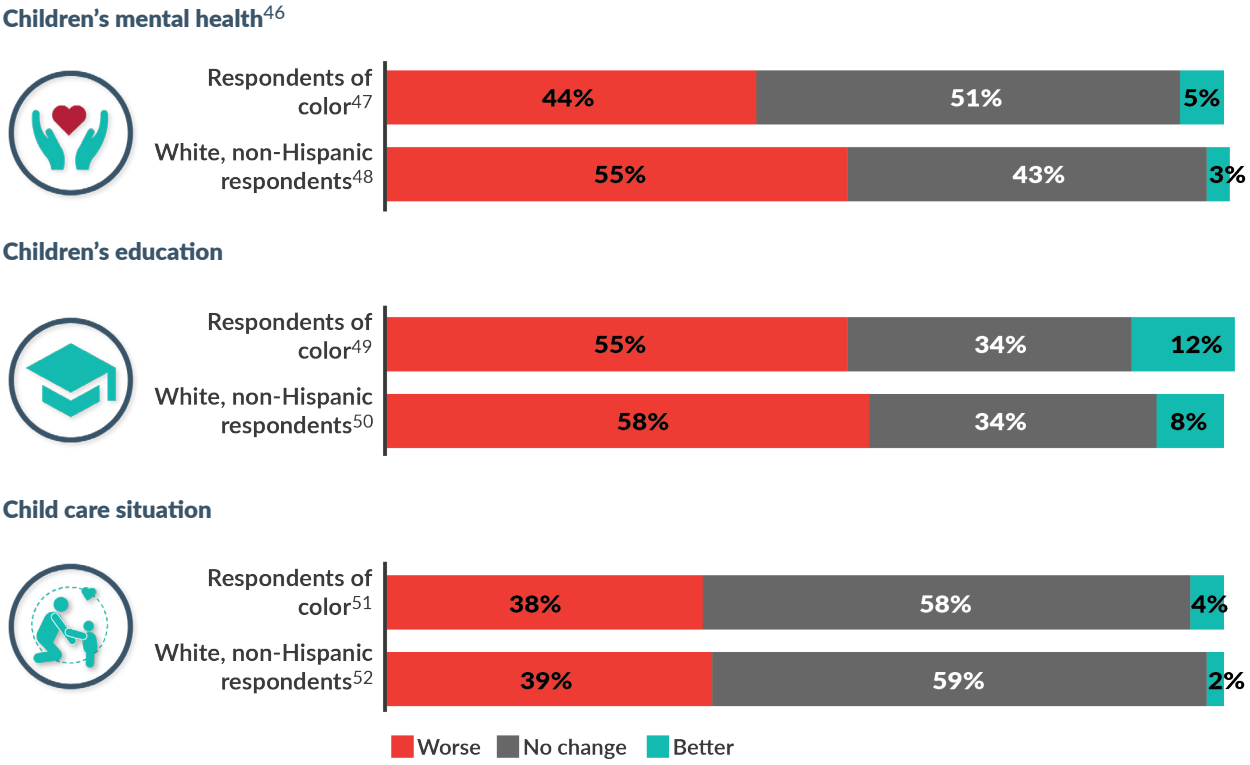
*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on military children of color remain inconclusive, but early data suggests few racial/ethnic disparities in children's education and child care situation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted students of color in various ways. The United States Department of Education reported on the developing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on American students and shared emerging evidence of racial disparities related to academic achievement and access to educational opportunities and resources, as well as access to educational support for students of color with disabilities.[42] Additionally, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children's Hospital Association declared the pandemic-related decline in youth mental health to be a national emergency.[43] Civilian research indicates that mental health impacts of the pandemic differ based on social and cultural factors, including race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status.[44] In a potential departure from civilian literature, however, active-duty family respondents to the 2020 MFLS (fielded in September 2020) reported little variation by race/ethnicity with regard to the perceived impact of the pandemic on their children's education and child care situation; white, non-Hispanic active-duty family respondents perceived a worse impact to their children's mental health, compared to respondents of color[45] (Figure 2). The extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic impacted military children of color warrants longitudinal research as long-term effects take hold in the coming years.

Figure 2: Impact of COVID-19 on Military Children

% of active-duty family respondents to the 2020 MFLS



Note: Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Despite the positive indicators discussed throughout this finding, open-ended responses reflect frustration and perceptions of discrimination within schools and child care settings for some parents of color.

A recent report from the U.S. Government Accounting Office analyzed data from 2011 to 2019 and found that Black and Hispanic students in Department of Defense schools scored consistently higher than their public-school peers for fourth- and eighth-grade reading and math.[53] This finding highlights several other positive indicators related to the education of active-duty children of color. However, when respondents were asked in an open-ended format to describe "policies or practices that are not culturally appropriate/do not feel culturally appropriate for [their] family," in their child care provider or school, the top themes across responses relate to disagreements with curriculum, perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, and lack of cultural awareness or acknowledgment of cultural differences. In some cases, respondents tie these issues to broader implications for their family regarding trust in the school system, their family's racial/ethnic identity, and/or their child's well-being.

> **During a unit on 'community helpers,' my oldest was asked to write a paragraph about how Christopher Columbus was a community helper. There was only one person of color included in the unit, and no females. I wrote to the teacher and explained that my child would not be writing a paragraph about Columbus. The teacher responded that she was following [the state's] curriculum guidelines and that there was not time for her to add additional people to balance out the dominance of white males in the unit.**
>
> - American Indian or Alaska Native Military Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Finding 11

Postsecondary Education & Officer Accessions

Postsecondary education participation is more common among active-duty and Veteran family respondents of color than civilian counterparts, but it could be a barrier to diversifying the officer corps.

For over a century, service members and Veterans have had the opportunity to pursue postsecondary education as a benefit of their military service through programs like the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), Tuition Assistance, and/or the GI Bill.[1] Access to these benefits and military service generally increases the likelihood of service members and Veterans pursuing higher education, and respondents* are no different.[2] Despite increased participation in postsecondary education compared to civilian counterparts, racial/ethnic diversity is still sparse in the officer corps (see Finding 2), as a postsecondary degree is generally required to be commissioned.[3]

Postsecondary education is a top reason for joining military service among service members and Veterans of color.

While service members and Veterans of color report a myriad of reasons for joining the military, research from the Institute for Veterans and Military Families found two out of three Black, Hispanic/Latino/a/x, and Asian respondents report "educational benefits" as a motivator.[4] Similarly, "educational benefits" was the most commonly cited reason for joining service among Black and Hispanic/Latino/a/x service member respondents to the 2018 Military Family Lifestyle Survey and a top-three reason among Asian service member respondents.[5]

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

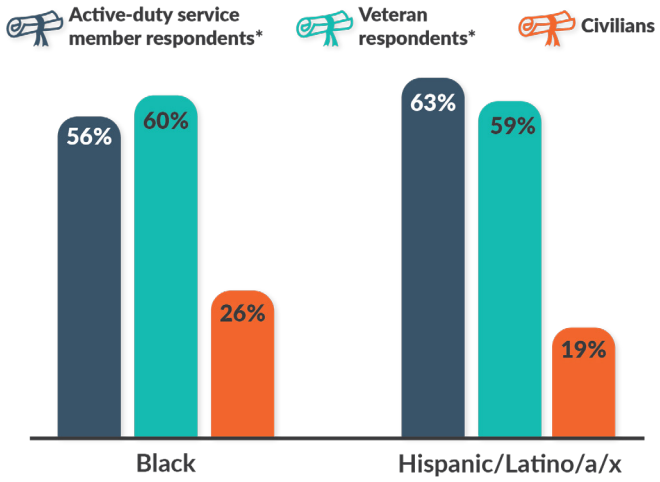
With access to education benefits, more than twice as many Black and Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty service members and Veteran respondents earn four-year degrees than their civilian counterparts.

Consistent with the literature,[6] bachelor's and graduate degree attainment for Black and Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty service member and Veteran respondents* is notably higher than civilian counterparts (Figure 1). About six in 10 Black and Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty service member and Veteran respondents* (56-63%)[7] hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 26% of Black civilian counterparts and 19% of Hispanic civilian counterparts (as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau[8]). A small sample size limited the comparison of bachelor's or higher degree attainment for Asian service member and Veteran respondents* independently; however, the proportion of aggregated active-duty and Veteran *family* respondents (64%)[9] reporting at least a bachelor's degree is slightly higher than their civilian counterparts[10] (58%).

Figure 1: More than twice as many Black and Hispanic respondents who have served in the military attain a bachelor's or higher degree, compared to civilian counterparts

% of respondents*

Source (Civilian Data): U.S. Census Bureau, 2020



*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

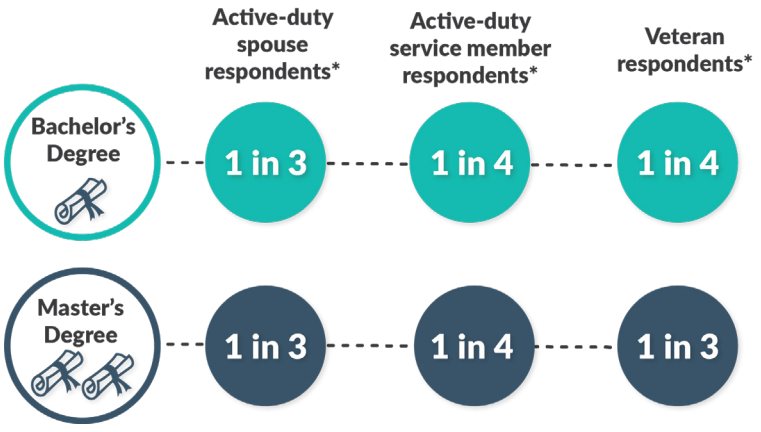
Among military-affiliated subgroups, bachelor's degree attainment is highest for active-duty spouse respondents.*

One in three active-duty spouse respondents* report holding bachelor's degrees, compared to one in four active-duty service member and Veteran respondents.*[11] This is consistent with previous research,[12] and a variety of variables may contribute to this phenomenon, including, but not limited to: access to military spouse-specific upskilling and educational benefits[13] and the gender gap[14] in civilian higher education attainment (the majority of active-duty spouse respondents* identify as female[15]). Furthermore, as discussed in Finding 7, 33% of active-duty spouse respondents* perceive their "ability to pursue educational opportunities" to be better than that of their non-white family and friends not connected to the military. Consistent with previous Blue Star Families research that found many military families choose to live apart ("geo-bach") so the civilian spouse could maintain or pursue a career,[16] active-duty spouse respondents* to this survey further illustrate the variety of military life decisions they make in order to continue advancing in their postsecondary educational pursuits and career goals (e.g., determining how to rank installation preferences, whether to live apart from their service member, where to live upon arrival to a new installation, etc.).

> **I resided in a different location from my spouse due to schooling. I was at the cusp of completing my undergraduate degree and I wasn't transferring before graduation.**
>
> - Hispanic/Latino/a/x Military Spouse

Figure 2: Respondents'* Highest Level of Education Completed by Military Affiliation[17]

% of respondents*



Note: The response rate on this question was too low to report for spouses of Veterans/retirees.

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Access to dependent education benefits may facilitate degree attainment for Veteran family respondents,* though future research is needed.

75%[18]
of Veteran family respondents* with a parent, stepparent, or grandparent who served earned a postsecondary degree

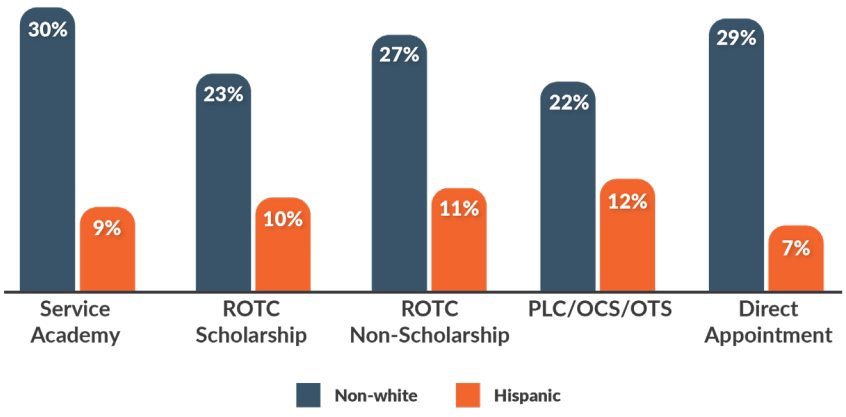
vs.

64%[19]
of those who do not have a parent or grandparent history of service

Fewer ROTC scholarship officer accessions are service members of color, compared to most other commissioning options.

Racial/ethnic diversity in the officer corps is low, compared to the enlisted corps, and it becomes even less diverse as rank increases (see Finding 2).[20] The bachelor's degree requirement for commissioning may be one barrier to officer corps' racial/ethnic diversity given that fewer young people of color hold bachelor's degrees than their white non-Hispanic peers.[21] ROTC scholarships can expand access for racially/ethnically diverse prospective officer recruits by offering a funded pathway to bachelor's degree attainment and an officer career. However, in 2019, only 23% of officers commissioning through ROTC scholarships were non-white, and 10% were Hispanic.[22] Future research should explore this in more depth: for example, are a disproportionate number of ROTC scholarships being awarded to white, non-Hispanic prospective officers? And/or are ROTC cadets/midshipmen of color not completing their ROTC scholarship program?

Figure 3: DoD Officer Accessions by Commissioning Source (2019)
% of total DoD officer accessions by commissioning source (2019)
Source: 2019 Population Representation in the Military Services report[23]



*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Chapter 6
Identity and Culture

*Some units are great. Others, not so much. **I don't even know where the disconnect is** and why [in some units] you can be allowed to treat people unfairly, while in other units, commanders are great.*
- Hispanic/Latino/a/x Service Member

***I have always felt that the military community forces me to mute my Latina heritage** and 'I shouldn't speak my native language because it's not what we speak.' In military communities/functions, I feel I lose a big part of my pride in my identity as a proud Latina and woman of color. So, I chose to find my community outside of that.*
- Hispanic/Latino/a/x Military Spouse

***Being a female of Middle Eastern descent has always been a challenge.** Being the only female in local groups or being in groups with 'extreme' military females. It's tense.*
- Middle Eastern / Northern African Veteran

*Out of uniform, I'm just another target for harassment. My life is less important in situations that my white colleagues don't encounter, and **if I ask for help, no one will come to my aid, or if they do, they first ask what I did wrong.***
- Black Service Member

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

***I feel like I can't be authentically me** (individually and in how I want to raise our children) in this military life without jeopardizing my husband's career or our kids' activities, or our social life every time we move.*
- Asian Military Spouse

*Usually, we are the only ones who are non-white in a FRG [Family Readiness Group] meeting or group function with my husband's peers. Not always, but usually. So I have found that if I don't speak to someone, then I am ostracized. But I usually have to make the first move. And seeing that I am surrounded by everyone who is white, that often gets taxing and uncomfortable and I end up not participating in these events. **It's hard being the only Polynesian in the group.***
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander Military Spouse

*It always feels like I am not enough, not American or Mexican enough. Like **I always have to somehow compensate for being an immigrant to make others ok with me being in the community**.*
- Hispanic/Latino/a/x Military Spouse and Veteran

*Earlier this year, while hate crimes against Asians were on the rise, **I got spat on by a stranger** while I was walking around town in broad daylight. **My fellow military members didn't express concern about my well-being** or acknowledge I had reason to worry about my own safety or that of my elderly mother.*
- Asian Reserve Service Member

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

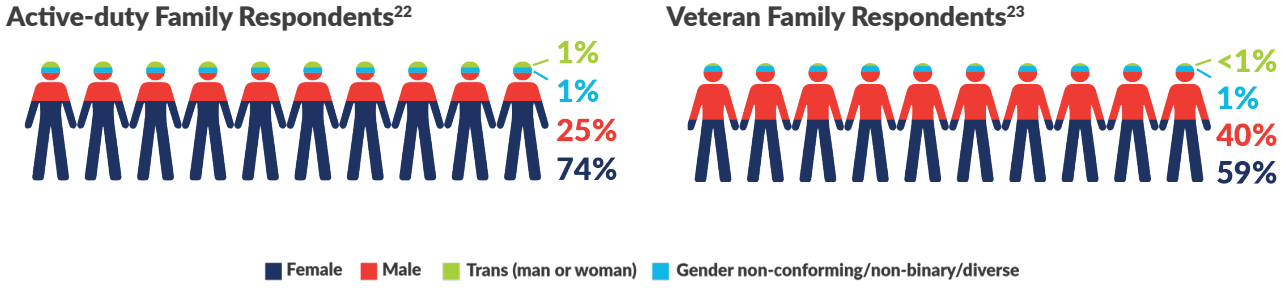
Finding 12
Identity

Respondents of color report their race/ethnicity has the strongest influence on their overall identity, but many are uncertain about whether their race/ethnicity or another demographic characteristic is influencing their negative experiences.

> **Somedays you go like, I give up, I don't know what fight I'm fighting today. Is it race or is it rank?**
>
> - Black Military Spouse

While research often naturally focuses on the influence of race/ethnicity in the lives of people of color, many respondents* have other characteristics and identities that also shape their military life experiences. In addition to their racial/ethnic minority status, **74% of active-duty and 59% of Veteran family respondents* identify as female**[1], and **6% of all active-duty and Veteran family respondents* identify as non-heterosexual**.[2] Open-ended responses and focus group conversations demonstrate how these and other identities[3] (including those unique to the military) intersect and complicate how participants are seen and understood in their military and Veteran communities.[4]

Figure 1: Respondents'* Gender Identity[21]
% of respondents who identify as...



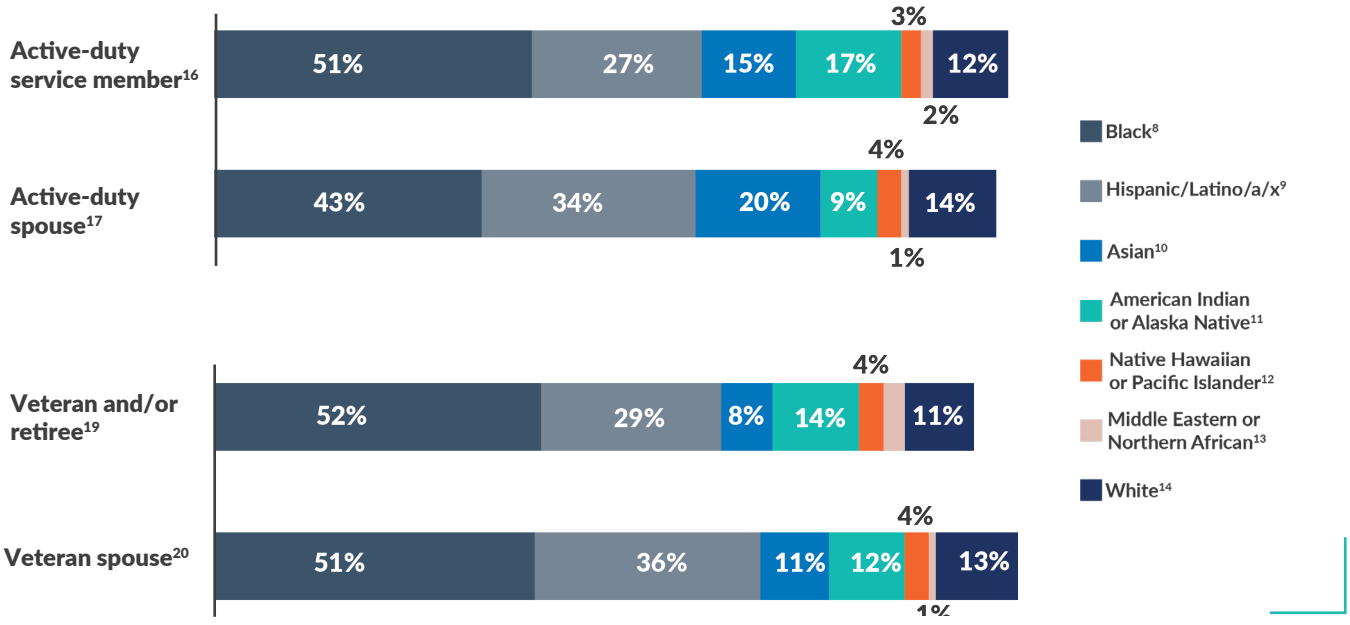
*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

The sample size limited intersectional analysis within this report; however, broadly understanding how respondents'* intersecting identities manifest is important context, particularly regarding those who hold multiple historically-marginalized identities.[5] For example, considering the "Black female service member experience" as distinct and unique from the "Black" or "female" service member experience paints a more accurate picture of respondents' lived experiences. Additionally, doing so illuminates how intersectionality compounds marginalization and informs more effective strategies for improving the service experiences of diverse subgroups.[6]

> **The officer community in the Marine Corps is small and the "typical" officer is often a heterosexual white male and his family is of Caucasian descent. [...] there are several instances when spouses of other officers have assumed that my husband is enlisted, one spouse even apologiz[ed] for making such an assumption.**
>
> - Asian Military Spouse

Figure 2: Respondents of Color by Racial/Ethnic Identity[7]

% of respondents who identify as...[18]



*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Most family respondents of color report their race/ethnicity influences their overall identity, but those who say it influences their overall identity to "a great extent" report challenges connecting with their military/Veteran community.

Three in four active-duty (78%) and Veteran (74%) family respondents* report their race/ethnicity influences their overall identity. Similar to their civilian counterparts[24], Black active-duty family respondents* report their race/ethnicity influences their overall identity most often (88%), followed by Asian (78%) and Hispanic/Latino/a/x (72%) family respondents*.[25] Among respondents* who identify strongly with their race/ethnicity, half (50%) report feeling "comfortable" or "very comfortable" in their military community.[26] However, 48% of active-duty family respondents who identify their race/ethnicity influences their overall identity to "a great extent" report they have considered/did consider leaving the military because they felt isolated or unwelcomed in the workplace.[27] Civilian and military personnel research finds that people of color often choose to behave more "white" in professional contexts to avoid being excluded and gain acceptance from their peers.

Several open-ended responses detail how not looking or acting white holds respondents back from building connections with military peers.[28] **These experiences may influence how respondents of color, particularly active-duty respondents, connect with their own military/Veteran identity**. A notably greater proportion of Veteran family respondents* (58%) report their military/Veteran affiliation has a strong influence on their identity, compared to their active-duty family counterparts (47%)[29]; however, little variation exists by race/ethnicity among either population.

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

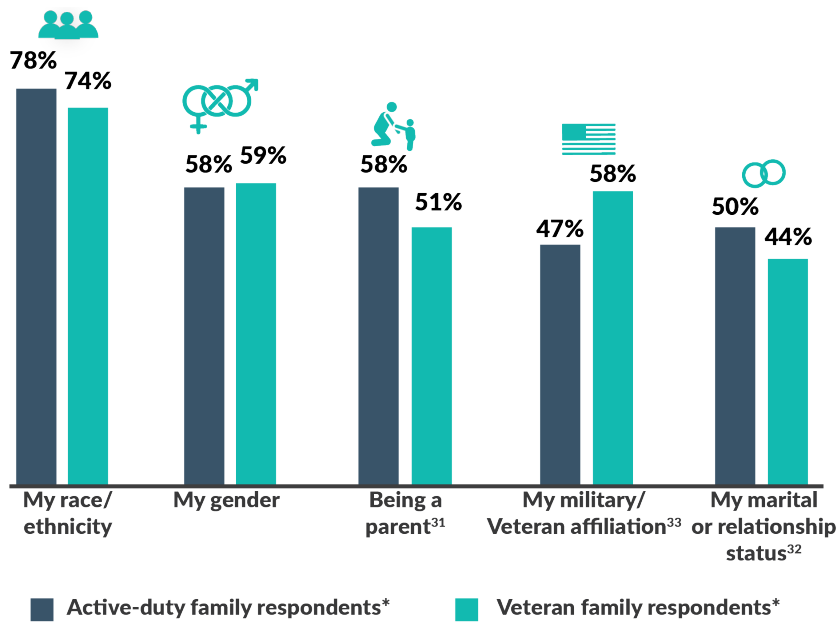
> **[The] times I've reached out to try and better explain a topic or the perspective others may be missing I received backlash. It's almost as if my honest feedback and attempts to address concerns are boiled down to a joke. [...] replies start with "pulling the race card" or "pulling the gender card." [...] And it's pervasive. So much so that at times I actively avoid the service member veteran community because I find it toxic.**
>
> -Black Reserve Service Member

Gender, being a parent, and marital/relationship status also commonly influence how family respondents of color identify.

Survey and open-ended responses demonstrate that respondents' military life experiences are not solely shaped by race/ethnicity.[34] Overall, 67% of Black, 57% of Asian, and 55% of Hispanic/Latino/a/x family respondents* report their gender influences their overall identity[35], while parental and marital/relationship status are also salient parts of how nearly half of active-duty and Veteran family respondents* identify.[36]

Figure 3: Perceptions of Influences on Overall Identity

% of respondents* who report their overall identity is influenced by...



*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

The intersection of these identities exacerbates respondents' challenges, particularly for those with multiple historically marginalized identities.

Consistent with literature on female Veterans, **survey respondents and focus group participants with multiple historically marginalized identities describe feeling isolated, disconnected, and sometimes dismissed by their military peers**.[37] Overall, a smaller proportion of female active-duty service member and Veteran respondents* report feeling like valued members of their military community, compared to their male peers (63% vs. 72% among active-duty service member respondents and 55% vs. 71% Veteran respondents).[38] Additionally, proportionally fewer female active-duty service member respondents* than male respondents* report feeling a sense of belonging (63% vs. 73%).[39] Factors that further compound these experiences include military markers of difference, such as rank, time in service, military occupational specialty, and military service era.[40] Survey respondents and focus group participants who hold multiple intersecting minority characteristics frequently express frustration because it is often unclear whether their race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, rank, national origin, or a combination of characteristics are the reason they are treated differently.

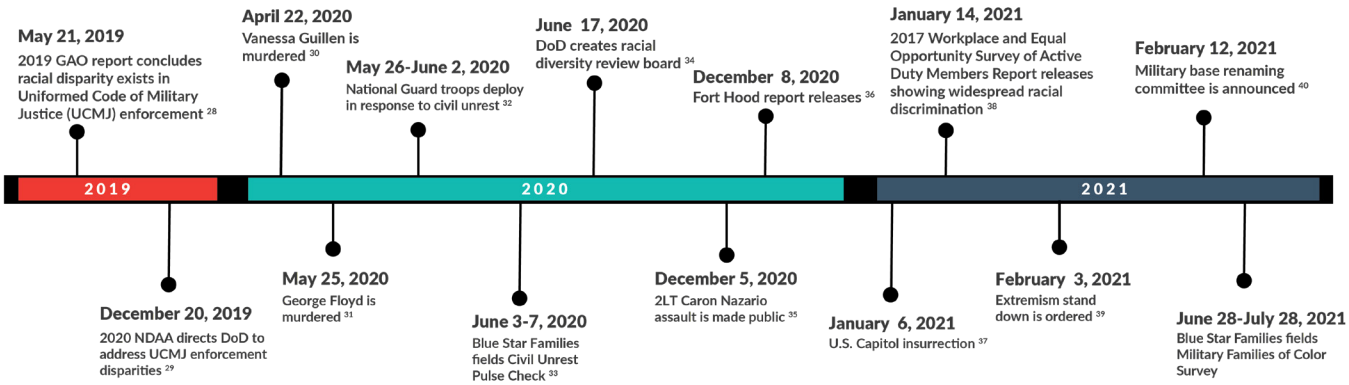
> **I feel like I don't belong and no one understands me and my culture. All my coworkers and superiors are white males - I am a female and Latina. It is hard to connect with them.**
>
> -Hispanic/Latino/a/x Service Member

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.

Finding 13
Current Cultural Environment
Most respondents of color view the military's "colorblind" mentality as inaccurate and potentially corrosive and recognize racial equity work is both necessary and divisive.

Many people of color in the United States have historically endured long-lasting hardship, specifically physical violence and discrimination. However, the high-profile murder of George Floyd, increased hate crimes towards and harassment of Asian Americans during the pandemic, the immigrant crisis at the border, and hate crimes against people of Middle Eastern descent have created an especially challenging cultural environment over the past two years. While the military is often regarded as an exemplar institution for racial integration, the cultural environment of U.S. society spills over into the military, impacting military families of color.[1] The emotional toll this violence has taken, particularly on Black families, has been well-documented.[2] In addition to contemplating the weight of these incidents during an ongoing pandemic, military families of color have also been at the center of controversial conversations about racial/ethnic equity in the military.[3] Veterans and service members of color have come forward to share experiences of hostility and racism in their military careers, advocating for greater emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the ranks.[4] Respondents* to this survey echo many of these challenges and want their military leaders and communities to recognize and address their unique needs. Indeed, 64% of active-duty family respondents* agree that racial equity research/initiatives are "necessary to improve life for military-connected families of color."[5]

Figure 1: Racial Equity and the Military Today (Selected Events: 2019 - 2021)



*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
**Unless otherwise noted, "white respondents" refers to individuals who did not identify a racial/ethnic identity other than white, and who also did not identify themselves as being a member of a multiracial/ethnic family.

The majority of respondents of color do not perceive the military is blind to race/ethnicity and report negative consequences of adopting a "colorblind" mentality.

The military is recognized for being a cohesive group, in which every person is sworn to uphold the same oaths, and is trained not to view peers by the color of their skin but by the color of their uniform.[6] This "colorblind" mentality has historically been implemented as a strategy to promote racial/ethnic equality and increase unit cohesion.[7] However, fewer than one in three (30%)active-duty and Veteran family respondents* to this survey agree that the military is indeed "blind to race/ethnicity," citing numerous ways that families of color experience the military differently than their white, non-Hispanic counterparts.[8] When these experiences are rejected on the principle that the military is or should be blind to race/ethnicity, the voices of military families of color are systematically ignored.

Like their civilian peers, most active-duty family respondents* believe this "colorblind" mentality is not only invalid but actively harmful[9]: half (51%) believe that this "colorblind" mentality "erases a piece of [their]identity."[10] This sentiment was most commonly reported by Black active-duty family respondents (63%), followed by Hispanic/Latino/a/x (48%), then Asian (44%) respondents.[11]

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
**Unless otherwise noted, "white respondents" refers to individuals who did not identify a racial/ethnic identity other than white, and who also did not identify themselves as being a member of a multiracial/ethnic family.
The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Respondents of color, particularly Black respondents, report hearing racist comments from military-connected peers.

A 2019 *Military Times* poll reported that more than half of racial/ethnic minority service members said they have personally witnessed examples of white nationalism or ideological-driven racism within the ranks.[12] Consistent with these findings, over half of active-duty family respondents* (57%) to this survey report they have heard their military-connected peers make racist comments or jokes about other peers (e.g., other military spouses, other military service members, etc.).[13] Black active-duty family respondents most commonly report hearing these comments (65%), followed by Hispanic/Latino/a/x (55%), then Asian (51%) respondents.[14] This issue does not appear to be restricted to the enlisted ranks, with similar proportions of active-duty family officer (49%) and enlisted (51%) respondents* reporting they have heard their military-connected peers make racist comments or jokes.

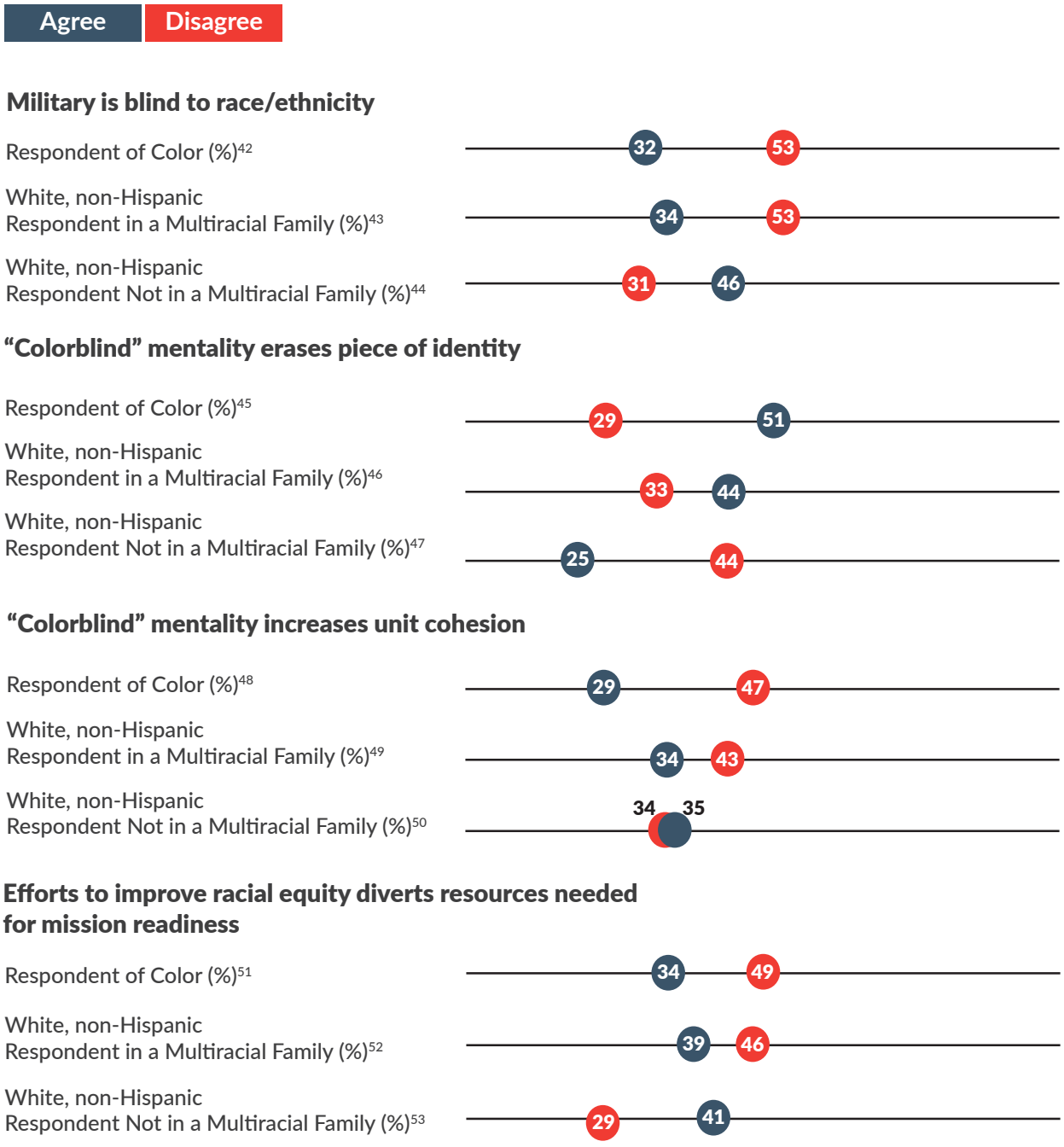
Focus group participants frequently noted that they did not often recognize or respond to these racist comments early in their career, suggesting they either became more attuned to them with age, or greater time in service provided more opportunities to experience them. The quantitative data is consistent with these stories, and a higher proportion of mid-level non-commissioned officer (NCO) (54%) and field grade officer (52%) family respondents* report this, compared to their junior enlisted (34%) and company grade (46%) counterparts. However, fewer senior NCO family respondents* report this (34%) than mid-level, which may be an indication that those having experienced these remarks may leave service at higher rates. While more data is needed to understand this phenomenon within the officer corps, the premise is further supported by Finding 2, which explores retention of service members of color.

> **White spouses say things to me that are race insensitive. [...] They are unaware of their biases, but think they are not racist. Recent attacks (DEI messaging meant well) on racist behavior are not working because it makes the divide wider when people don't even understand their decades of bias enough to be open to the conversation. Spouses who think they are 'colorblind' are the most dangerous in my opinion [...].**
>
> - Hispanic/Latino/a/x Military Spouse

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
**Unless otherwise noted, "white respondents" refers to individuals who did not identify a racial/ethnic identity other than white, and who also did not identify themselves as being a member of a multiracial/ethnic family.

Figure 2: Perceptions of the Military's "Colorblind" Mentality[41]

% of active-duty family (ADF) respondents*



*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
**Unless otherwise noted, "white respondents" refers to individuals who did not identify a racial/ethnic identity other than white, and who also did not identify themselves as being a member of a multiracial/ethnic family.

White, non-Hispanic active-duty family respondents who are not members of a multiracial family see value in a "colorblind" mentality and report hesitation about engaging in racial equity initiatives.

Although this survey was marketed to families of color, 304 white, non-Hispanic active-duty family respondents who are not members of a multiracial family ("white respondents**" henceforth) also responded.[15] Their responses, in comparison to their peers of color, are notable. A similar proportion of both white** active-duty family respondents and active-duty family respondents of color perceive the military to be blind to race/ethnicity (about one in three). However, while 57% of active-duty family respondents of color report hearing peers make racist comments, a much smaller proportion (28%) of white** active-duty family respondents say the same.[16] White** active-duty family respondents are also more prone to perceiving benefits of the military possessing a "colorblind" mentality, such as increased unit cohesion (35%), compared to 29% of active-duty family respondents of color who report the same.[17]

Consequently, a notably higher proportion of white** active-duty family respondents feel equity research studies/initiatives have the potential to worsen racial/ethnic divisions/tensions (38%), compared to active-duty family respondents of color (23%).[18] Similarly, 41% of white** active-duty family respondents report that current efforts to improve racial equity within the military diverts resources needed for mission readiness, compared to 34% of active-duty family respondents of color who say the same.[19] These perspectives are not dissimilar from those held by white members of civilian communities who have been found to favor colorblindness when talking with children about race, even more often since the death of George Floyd.[20] Dissenting opinions from white service members about racial equity initiatives in the military are also well-documented on social media, in political activism, and in open-ended responses to this survey and previous unpublished Blue Star Families research.[21]

> **We don't see color in the military or otherwise. Our brothers and sisters are just that. We bleed green! We honor green! And those that have done the same are the same as me!**
>
> - White Veteran and Spouse of a Veteran

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
**Unless otherwise noted, "white respondents" refers to individuals who did not identify a racial/ethnic identity other than white, and who also did not identify themselves as being a member of a multiracial/ethnic family.
The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

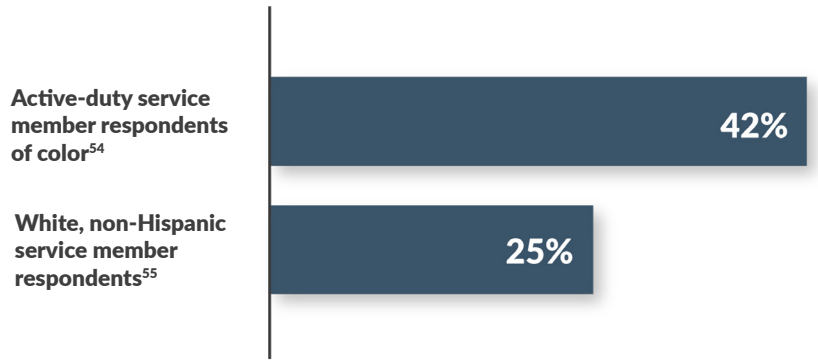
Extremism training receives mixed reviews from all respondent groups; respondents report "increased participant interaction" as the top way to improve training.

In spring 2021, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin ordered a "stand down" to address concerns about extremism in the ranks following broad civil unrest and reports of military-connected individuals' participation in the January 6th, 2021, insurrection.[22] The training reviewed the meaning of the Oath of Office, prohibited extremist activities and outlined service members' responsibility to report if they observe peers participating in groups that "advance, encourage, or advocate illegal discrimination based on race, creed, color, sex, religion, ethnicity, or national origin, or those that advance, encourage, or advocate the use of force, violence, or criminal activity or otherwise advance efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights" (DoDI 1325.06, Encl. 3, para 8.b.).[23]

Although the training was mandatory, **12% of all active-duty service member respondents report not participating** in it.[24] Among those who did participate, perceptions about the training's efficacy are mixed. Over one-third (42%) of active-duty service member respondents* feel the training was "not at all effective," 32% feel it was "somewhat effective," and 26% feel it was "very or extremely effective.[25] Consistent with publicly-reported coverage[26] of the stand down, nearly half (45%) of open-ended respondents report that more participant interaction is needed to increase effectiveness.[27]

Figure 3: Active-duty service members of color view extremism training as less effective than their white, non-Hispanic colleagues[53]

% of training participants reporting training as "not at all effective"



Note: Excluding those who did not participate in extremism training

*Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated having at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white.
**Unless otherwise noted, "white respondents" refers to individuals who did not identify a racial/ethnic identity other than white, and who also did not identify themselves as being a member of a multiracial/ethnic family.

Chapter 7
Looking Forward

The military has EEO [Equal Employment Opportunity] cultural events to "check the box" at each military installation we've been at. ***I don't believe all Soldiers who are not POC understand the importance of inclusivity or how POC feel or live.***
- Hispanic/Latino/a/x Military Spouse

People should be held accountable on all levels. *The problem is that situations are swept under the rug...the whole idea of I've got your back so I'll keep quiet when I observe you doing/saying something wrong has to change. No matter if you are a friend or co-worker, until you start holding others accountable, nothing will change.*
- White Military Spouse in a Multiracial Family

The biggest difference I see amongst old friends and peers is the inability to condemn what is wrong. ***I need my "allies" to condemn the actions that are being broadcasted.*** *I need them to say that racism is wrong and then back it up with holding people accountable. I need that from my family, friends, peers, and the military.*
- Native Hawaiin or Pacific Islander Military Spouse

Training only works if you plan to have action afterwards. ***There needs to be a true action plan implemented prior to the training so that it will actually stick.*** *Removal of management that doesn't agree with the anti racism training and procedures.*
- Black Service Member

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Black History Month, Hispanic History Month, whatever the case may be, the military is really good at doing on base events but rarely do we invite the local community in for [diversity] events. [...] It was great for Fourth of July, everybody was happy, locals were happy, but they weren't part of our diversity celebrations either, and I think opening those up to the local community really may open up some eyes.
- Hispanic/Native American Retiree

In situations where I am the only person of color, I have felt like I need to be the spokesperson for all people of color and it can be overwhelming.
- Black/African-American Military Spouse

The saying, "you know it when you see it" applies to knowing when you're doing well for military families of color. When they feel comfortable enough to step up to volunteer positions in spouse clubs, activities on base, key spouse positions, and "additional duty" positions.
- Asian Reserve Service Member

...the civilian and government or military side [need to] just get together[...] ***there's no one size fits all but to be just more mindful and get access to everyone regardless of who they are.***
- Black Veteran

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

Addressing disparities affecting military families of color is a matter of national security and necessary to ensure long-term military readiness.

Blue Star Families conducted this study in consonance with our mission to help military families thrive to strengthen the All-Volunteer Force. A significant number of our current and future military come from diverse families. Their experience within the military and within the communities where their service takes them matters for the resilience, safety, growth, readiness, retention, and recruiting of our All-Volunteer Force. In terms of recruiting: today, a significant number of recruits come from diverse families. By 2027, most prospective recruits (U.S. population 29 or younger)[1] will be people of color with diverse backgrounds, and the military will be competing for their talent. People of color considering military service will look for representation in senior leadership and key leadership positions and assignments, as they see in other sectors. However, the senior leaders they want to see entered service 25 to 30 years ago, and too few of them have made it to senior ranks, especially within the Officer corps (see Finding 2).

Our military today is racially and ethnically diverse; 31% of the total DoD military force identify as a racial/ethnic minority.[2] Additionally, a sizeable number of white, non-Hispanic service members having an immediate family member of a different race or ethnicity. Considering these mixed-race families, it is very likely that the majority of military families have diversity within the family unit. Due to shifting national demographics that will certainly be true in the future.[3]

Coupled with the fact that 71% of American youth are ineligible for military service,[4] the military must undertake significant steps to recruit service members of color and retain them and their families. The findings from this study offer insight into new ways to increase the retention of service members of color: improve experiences for family members of color, and remove career penalties or unfavorable consequences for service members who choose to prioritize the safety and comfort of their family over their career.

The military alone cannot solve the challenges this study reveals.

The military has been taking steps to address racial/ethnic disparities in personnel and readiness reforms for decades, with mixed results, but they are not alone. The challenges revealed by the study reflect challenges in American society. In fact, there are a number of areas in which the military out-performs the society-at-large in terms of positive outcomes for people and families of color. Moreover, in most of the challenges identified in this report, the military alone cannot be the sole agent of change. Every organization, community, and individual which desires to support military and Veteran families will be less effective if they fail to consider the unique experiences of military and Veteran families of color in their efforts.

To that end, the Blue Star Families team interviewed over 100 government, non-profit, and community stakeholders to identify and prioritize viable recommendations and best practices to begin moving forward. These are intended to help leaders prioritize action and start new conversations about creating sustainable change.

Recommendations

Build Stronger Relationships and More Inclusive Military and Veteran Communities

Detailed in depth on pg. 100

1. **Be an Ally:** Speak up against racism and racist comments.
2. **Actively pursue** inclusive mentorship opportunities and integrate them into existing job requirements and programs to support all military- and Veteran-connected groups, including spouses and military children.
3. **Provide** military and Veteran service members and families opportunities to engage in difficult but productive conversations about race, ethnicity, and more.

Empower Civilian Communities to Support Military and Veteran Families of Color & Encourage Military Installations to Continually Engage Their Local Communities

Detailed in depth on pg. 104

1. **Allocate** additional resources to strengthen civil-military relationships at the local level and bolster support systems on installations.
2. **Collaborate** at the local level and proactively include military- and Veteran-connected families of color in local community conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).
3. **Infuse** local civilian organizations with diverse talent and knowledge about military and Veteran communities by hiring more military spouses, Veterans, and spouses of Veterans of color.

Strengthen and Diversify the All-Volunteer Force

Detailed in depth on pg. 108

1. **Update** diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) plans to address challenges military dependents of color face and identify best practices for working with local civilian communities to solve them.
2. **Apply** best practices from other industries and sectors to support service members of color throughout their time in service.
3. **Assess** existing military entry paths and remove barriers to entry for prospective service members of color.
4. **Continue to diversify** ROTC scholarship recipients through broader recruitment, and assess program completion and commissioning rates among those enrolled in the program.

Improve Data Collection and Understanding

Detailed in depth on pg. 111

1. **Improve** existing data collection to identify and address disparities for service members, Veterans, and family members of color in a more reliable and timely fashion.
2. **Explore** how to use existing data to improve experiences for military and Veteran families of color.
3. **Deepen understanding** of issues identified in this report and others.

Best Practices

White Oak Collaborative Subcommittee on Racial Equity and Inclusion: Recommended Practices for Military and Veteran Serving Organizations

Detailed in depth on pg. 115 and at
bluestarfam.org/racial-equity-initiative/collaboration

1. **Be intentional**
2. **Gather data**
3. **Implement** equitable and inclusive policies and practices
4. **Train** managers and staff
5. **Engage more and better:** Diversity brings diversity
6. **Review** progress and develop new goals

How the Private Sector & Philanthropic Foundations Can Support Military and Veteran Families of Color

Detailed in depth on pg. 118

1. **Highlight the importance** of serving military and Veteran families of color among existing grantees.
2. **Invest in organizations** that support and have a strong staff and board representation from military and/or Veteran families of color.
3. **Consider supplier diversity.**
4. **Break down walls** between existing initiatives within your company. Initiatives that support military or Veteran families, and initiatives that support DEI work should not be mutually exclusive or operate in silos.

Recommendations

Build Stronger and More Inclusive Relationships Within Military and Veteran Communities

1. Be an Ally: Speak up against racism and racist comments.

57% **of active-duty family respondents* report hearing military-connected peers make racist comments or jokes**

&

46% **of active-duty family respondents* report they have been the subject of slurs or jokes at least once in their military community since January 2020**

"Calling out inappropriate comments and behavior"
is the most requested allyship action

Out-right and veiled racist comments – including "jokes"– "are linked to low self-esteem, increased stress levels, anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts"[5] among underrepresented groups. Moreover, even when the speaker's intention is not to hurt, such expressions "harm the psychological and physical well-being of minorities."[6]

Everyone can support their friends, colleagues, and brothers and sisters in arms by speaking up when they hear racist comments, and it is crucial for authority figures – including members of the chain of command and senior spouses – who are leaders and advocates to do so.

See it in action

The Southern Poverty Law Center's Learning for Justice Project: Six Steps to Speak Up[7]
Learn more about how you can tailor these steps to your personal situation:
Speak-Up-2021.pdf (learningforjustice.org)

- **"Be Ready.** You know another moment like this will happen, so prepare yourself for it. Think of yourself as the one who will speak up. Promise yourself not to remain silent.
- **Identify the Behavior.** Sometimes, pointing out the behavior candidly helps someone hear what they're really saying. When identifying behavior, however, avoid labeling, name-calling or the use of loaded terms. Describe the behavior; don't label the person.
- **Appeal to Principles.** If the speaker is someone you have a relationship with — a sister, friend or co-worker, for example — call on their higher principles.

- **Set Limits.** You cannot control another person, but you can say, "Don't tell racist jokes in my presence anymore. If you do, I will leave." Or, "My workspace is not a place I allow bigoted remarks to be made. I can't control what you say outside of this space, but here I ask that you respect my wishes." Then follow through.
- **Find an Ally/Be an Ally.** When frustrated in your own campaign against everyday bigotry, seek out like-minded people and ask them to support you in whatever ways they can. And don't forget to return the favor: If you aren't the first voice to speak up against everyday bigotry, be the next voice.
- **Be Vigilant.** Remember: Change happens slowly. People make small steps, typically, not large ones. Stay prepared, and keep speaking up. Don't risk silence."

2. Integrate inclusive mentorship opportunities into existing job requirements and programs to support all military and Veteran groups, including spouses and military children.

64% of active-duty service member **&**

56% of active-duty spouse respondents* report desiring some form of mentorship

Mentoring offers a wide array of benefits,[8] including, but not limited to, building competence, leadership skills, self-awareness, and morale,[9] while enhancing retention and promotion, especially for people of color.[10] The military has long recognized the benefits of, and need for, expanded mentorship programs,[11] and this study provides insight into how those programs can be implemented to meet the needs expressed by active-duty service member and active-duty spouse respondents.

For example:

- Existing programs can be assessed to determine their effectiveness at supporting service members of color. New modules and guidance can be provided to mentors in existing programs to address career development and personal concerns. "Employment, career exploration, professional development, and leadership development" is the top desired mentorship focus area for active-duty service members and active-duty spouse respondents and is also the focal point of many existing mentorship programs.

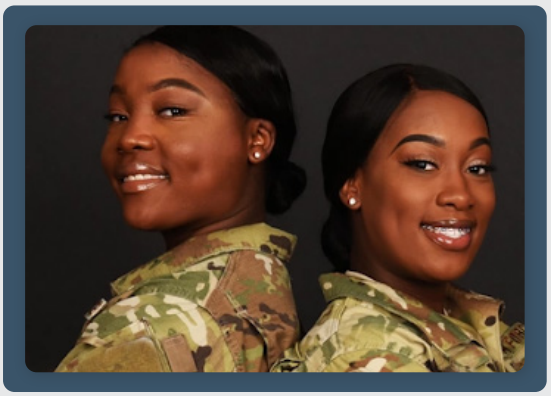
See it in action

The Air Force's LEVEL Up Program[12]

The Air Force recently launched a six-month, cohort-style professional development pilot program designed through an equity and inclusion lens and specifically intended to usher diverse candidates into leadership.

- Expand mentorship topic areas beyond professional development. "Family life / social skills" was the second most common desired mentorship area for both active-duty service member and spouse respondents*, followed by "education, access, academic enrichment" and "financial management." Examples of innovative structures for these programs include e-mentoring, reverse mentoring, group mentoring, and rank-neutral mentoring.

See it in action:

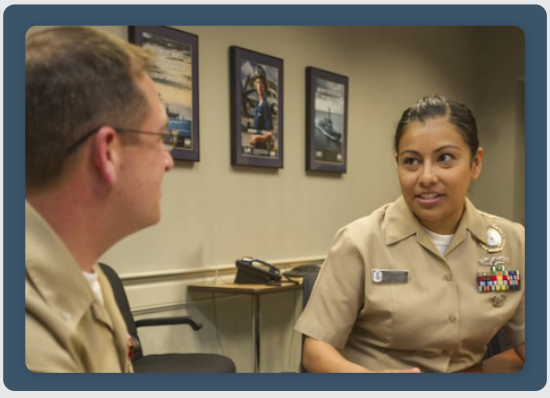


The Army's Female Mentoring and Morale Program (FMMP) and Sisters in Arms (SIA)[13]

Both the FMMP and SIA began as a grass-roots, group mentorship program, and the Army is currently expanding the program to additional installations. This program provides an open, cross-rank platform for mentorship, teaching, learning, and bonding.

The Navy's Reverse Mentoring program[14]

Initiated by the Navy's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, reverse mentoring is intended to build awareness of biases and barriers in the Navy by pairing senior leaders – who tend to be older and whiter – with more junior Sailors – who tend to be younger and more diverse.



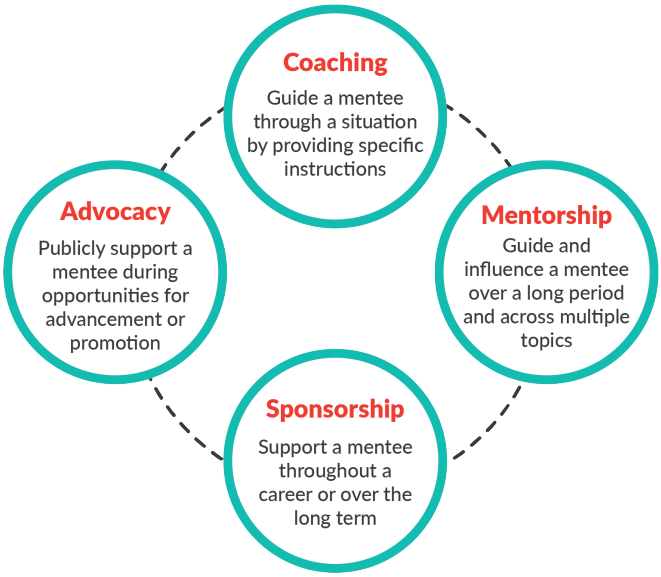
The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

See it in action

U.S. Special Operations Command Spouse Mentorship Programs[15]

Funded by the Preservation of the Force and Family (POTFF) program, some spouses in special operations units have access to bi-directional mentorship programs that are spouse-led with unit/command support (as opposed to some Family Readiness programs, which are unit/command-led with spouse support). These programs are a promising model for peer-to-peer/rank-blind mentorship programs for military spouses outside of the traditional Family Readiness programming.

- To maximize the utility of any mentorship program, members of Blue Star Families' Racial Equity and Inclusion Committee **developed the following framework to address the multi-faceted needs expressed by service members and families of color in this study:**



3. Provide opportunities for military and Veteran service members and families to engage in difficult but productive conversations about race, ethnicity, and more.

#1 Recommended Action Military Can Take to Address Racial Equity Concerns:

"More diversity training and opportunities for open dialogue"
among all respondents when asked in an open-ended format

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

These spaces – dedicated to learning and listening – should be established early (e.g., starting in MEPS, Basic Training, ROTC, etc.), occur often (continuously offered in all Professional Military Education (PME) modules, mentoring programs, etc.), and be included in family programs. These forums exist within the services and can be expanded in scope and/or frequency to address chronic issues and current events. For example, in 2020, the Department of Defense hosted a town hall emphasizing the importance of diversity and inclusion.[16] This program demonstrates the military's dedication to this issue, and provides a model for smaller forums.

See it in action:

The U.S. Army's Project Inclusion Listening Sessions[17]

The Army has hosted more than six dozen listening sessions for Soldiers and civilians to discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion issues that impact readiness and unit cohesion. According to Anselm Beach, deputy assistant secretary of the Army - Equity and Inclusion, these sessions encourage participants to share their own experiences, learn from others, and influence the future of Army policy. This model can be scaled and targeted to support the military spouse community, installations, and military units of any size.

Empower Communities and Installations to Support Military and Veteran Families of Color

1. Allocate additional resources to strengthen civil-military relationships at the local level and bolster support systems on installations.

Local civilian elected officials can take steps to ensure government officials and employees are making their community as welcoming as possible for all military and Veteran families of color. In some cases, they may require external funding to do so. Philanthropic organizations, Congress, and other grant-making organizations should assess possibilities for making such funds available.

For example:

- Public administration officials (including elected leaders, service providers, and local non-profits) in communities with military installations and/or a large Veteran population may require local government officials to undertake cultural competence training inclusive of both military and Veteran life and race/ethnicity.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

See it in action:

The International City/County Management Association's Equity Officer Institute

Recently launched its free Equity Officer Institute for local government officials committed to addressing race, equity, inclusion, and social justice issues.[18]

- Local communities and installations can work to strengthen community-police relationships and build trust with local community members of color through grant programs, embedded liaison programs, cultural competency training, and intentional partnerships.[19] The military can also address concerns such as those raised in the Fort Hood report and ensure military Criminal Investigation Division (CID) personnel are embedded in local police departments at every installation.[20]

Only 30% of Black active-duty family respondents trust their local civilian law enforcement, and half trust military law enforcement.

- Local service and resource providers should maintain online and virtual resources beyond pandemic restrictions. Although the COVID-19 pandemic had detrimental effects on much of society, military and Veteran families were able to take advantage of newly virtual resources. This study suggests that any steps to make resources more accessible will benefit military and Veteran families of color.

- All service and resource providers should assess military and Veteran resources through a racial equity lens and all racial equity and inclusion resources through a military and Veteran lens. Military and Veteran communities are diverse, and support systems and resources must understand and acknowledge this diversity.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

- State leaders should assess licensure requirements to support military families of color who want to maintain employment and/or continuity of care services across state lines. Licensure reciprocity could have an outsize impact on military families of color. For example, military spouses of color face substantially greater unemployment and lower earnings; licensure reciprocity provides those in licensed fields more flexibility in working with their employer to retain their position when they move. Additionally, finding a culturally-competent care provider was a challenge for active-duty family respondents. If these families have identified a health or mental health provider with whom they feel comfortable and that provider offers telehealth services, it would be beneficial for families of color to maintain continuity of care with their provider. However, in some cases, they are unable to do so if the provider is required to have a license in the state where the care recipient resides.

Military and installation leaders can maximize their support for military families of color both on and off base by surging resources to installations in less racially diverse areas and emplace metrics to measure their effectiveness.

For example:

- Establish and/or support affinity groups at installations, especially in less racially/ethnically diverse areas. These groups may provide a much-needed source of support for service members, spouses, and military youth of color in these communities. Additionally, these groups can be a forum for bidirectional resource/information sharing.

- Installations located in less racially/ethnically-diverse civilian communities may have a greater need for culturally-competent care and diverse service providers on the installation. Leaders in these locations should strive to hire a diverse staff, and ensure that all officials interfacing with the civilian community (e.g. school liaison officers, military law enforcement professionals, physical and mental health care providers, etc.,) receive supplementary cultural competence training, and proactively seek to identify challenges stemming from racism in the local community.

2. Collaborate at the local level and proactively include military and Veteran families of color in community conversations about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Military and Veteran families are members of the communities where they live however, the organizations that specialize in supporting them are not always well-connected to local community organizations, particularly those working to address racial equity concerns. Collaborative action across sectors at the local level is necessary to address the needs of military and Veteran communities of color.

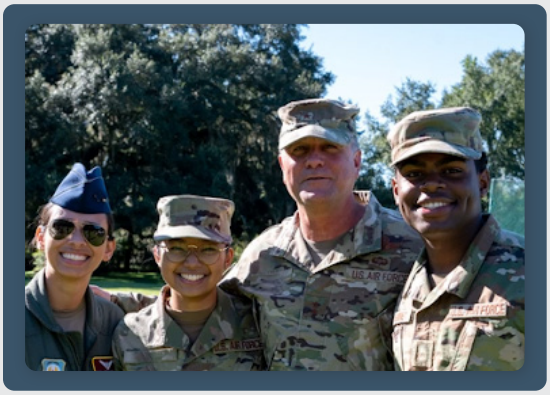
For example:

- Community and installation leaders should establish or expand existing forums to include representatives from civilian, military, and Veteran communities, and proactively have military and Veteran families of color in conversations about community issues. This group must address military and Veteran issues through a racial equity lens and include installation commanders, non-profit organizations and their funders, community organizations, governance organizations, local law enforcement, and other local leaders.

See it in action:

Maxwell Air Force Base's Freedom to Serve Initiative[21]

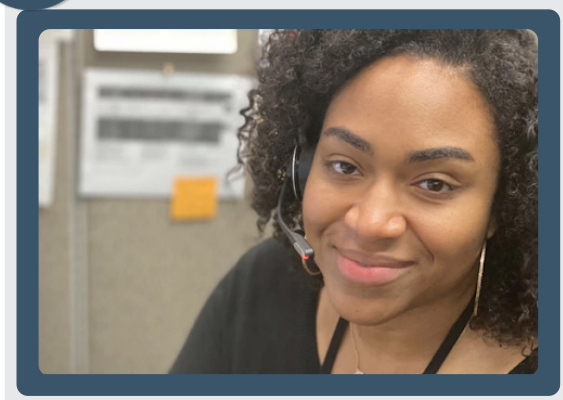
The Freedom to Serve Initiative was established to identify challenges and obstacles to inclusion that exist on the installation and in the local community that "impede Airmen's ability to excel." This group streamlines communication, collects stories, and develops action plans to help create equal opportunities for all Airmen across the installation.



3. Infuse local civilian organizations with diverse talent and knowledge about military and Veteran communities by hiring more military spouses, Veterans, and spouses of Veterans of color.

Hiring initiatives for Veterans and military spouses and dependents throughout the community can provide many benefits. In addition to addressing acute employment needs for military spouses of color, community organizations gain valuable knowledge which helps to inform future programming or policies designed to support military and Veteran communities, including those of color.

See it in action:



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Instant Teams[22]

Instant Teams is a Military Spouse Owned-certified company that values military hiring and racial/ethnic diversity: 66% of its workforce are military-affiliated and 52% of its team members identify as non-white.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Build a Stronger and More Diverse All-Volunteer Force

1. Update diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) plans to address the challenges military dependents of color face and identify best practices for working with local civilian communities to solve them.

30% of active-duty family respondents* turned down orders, knowing that it may negatively impact the service member's career.

"Racism in the local community"
is **#3** reason for doing so

The military alone cannot solve the issues identified in this study. However, formally acknowledging the role local communities play, can serve as a catalyst for collaborative and multi-sector action at the local level. While the DEI reports and plans published by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the various service branches over the past five years are an excellent step forward in addressing many of the challenges, none explicitly address the role communities play in making military families of color feel welcome or the unique experiences of military spouses and children of color. By incorporating these elements into strategic DEI plans, military service branches and installation leaders can maximize mission readiness at the national level (by increasing retention of racially/ethnically diverse troops), at the local level (by helping build stronger communities), and at the family level (by helping families develop a stronger sense of belonging to their local communities).

2. Apply best practices from other industries and sectors to support service members of color throughout their time in service.

1 in 10 active-duty service member respondents* report they are "never able to self-advocate for strong evaluations, assignments, etc."

Many industries, including the defense sector, have been working to advance DEI issues for decades. While the military has led on some issues, structural and cultural barriers have prevented the adoption of other best practices.

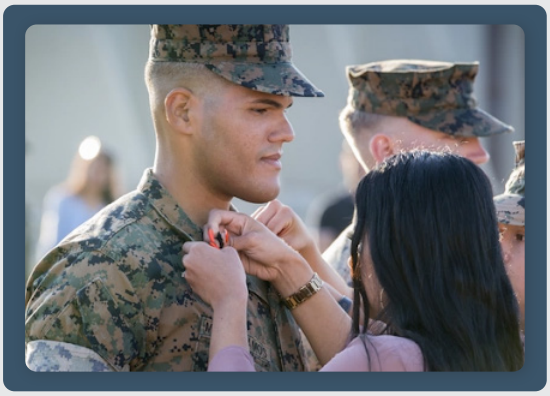
For example:

- The service branches should continue to seek innovative ways to increase service members' control over their careers while also enabling career advancement for those with non-traditional career paths. Blue Star Families has long advocated for this recommendation, which will be welcomed by all military families, not only families of color. Nevertheless, civilian community climate issues identified in this report will take years to resolve. Until that time, the reality is that military families of color will make decisions (such as turning down orders, ranking installation preferences differently, and leaving service) that undermine their service member's career.

See it in action:

The Marine Corps' Talent Management 2030 Plan: Increasing Career Flexibility[23]

The Marine Corps' Talent Management 2030 plan includes a wide array of ambitious talent management reforms that address many of the challenges identified in this study. Regarding increasing career flexibility, the plan seeks to implement policies that encourage reforms such as penalty-free promotion opt-outs and lateral move retention incentives.



- The service branches should explore the viability of establishing a DEI or racial equity and inclusion (REI) skill identifier or occupational specialty to seed this expertise throughout the force. Most Fortune 500 companies have a group of professionals who specialize throughout their career in DEI issues, and while the service branches, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and some installations have specific offices dedicated to DEI, housing that expertise at the smallest unit level possible could help alleviate many concerns. This would be separate and distinct from the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) formal reporting and complaint process and would instead bring added training value and subject matter expertise.

3. Assess existing military entrance programs and remove barriers to entry for potential service members of color

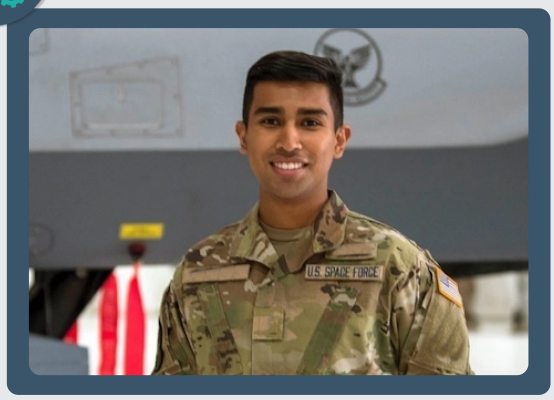
Service members of color are well-represented in the enlisted ranks, but recruiting and retaining Officers of color remains a challenge (See Finding 2). Existing data and trends can be used to inform these possible solutions.

For example:

- Continue to develop partnerships with higher education institutions to encourage diverse and long-term investment in STEM-related career fields and increase the pool of those with a higher propensity to serve. Building relationships with universities with strong STEM programs and diverse student populations encourages diverse recruitment of service members and civilians within the service branches.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

See it in action:



The Space Force's University Partnership Program (UPP)[24]

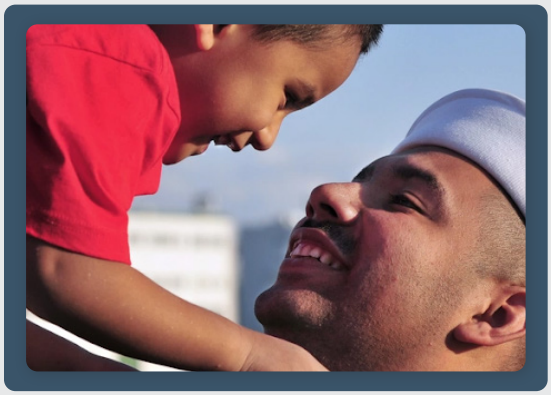
The Space Force has partnerships with 11 higher education institutions for its University Partnership Program (UPP), including a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and some of the most prestigious universities in the nation.

- Services can reform the current accession quality rating systems, which consistently and significantly rate Black service members, in particular, as lower quality compared to their white, non-Hispanic peers. It is well documented that students of color receive lower scores on standardized tests,[25] however, concerning military service, these quality scores can influence long-term career trajectories and occupational specialty selection and assignment.

See it in action:

The Navy's Task Force One Report Recommendation: The "Whole Person" Framework for Rating[26]

The Navy's Task Force One report recommends "establishing a 'whole person' evaluation framework that deemphasizes the use of standardized academic tests"to increase the "number of minority applications, selections, and commissioning to reflect relevant national demographic percentages."



4. Continue to diversify ROTC scholarship recipients through broader recruitment, and assess program completion and commissioning rates among those enrolled in the program.

Strides have been made to increase the number of scholarship opportunities at HBCUs, and these should continue. However, these are not the only institutions with racially and ethnically diverse populations. Currently, a smaller proportion of officers of color commission through ROTC scholarships compared to other commissioning sources,[27] however, the research team was unable to locate data regarding the number of ROTC scholarships awarded to future officers of color compared to white, non-Hispanic future officers. Had this data been available, it may have been possible to determine whether this lower rate of commissioning stems from fewer scholarships being awarded or a lower program completion rate. The services should analyze this data and emplace programmatic support systems as needed to support future officers of color enrolled in ROTC scholarship programs.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Improve Data Collection and Understanding

1. Improve existing data collection efforts and use data to identify and address disparities for service members, Veterans, and family members of color.

The military and Department of Veterans Affairs have data about service members, Veterans, and, to a lesser extent, military dependents and/or caregivers. Despite these widespread data collection efforts, however, the exploratory analysis phase of this study identified a range of discrepancies in data sources, omitted variable bias in critical surveys, and challenges when trying to access publicly available data. To address these challenges, government officials and elected leaders from across the executive and legislative branches should work together to identify and remove barriers, streamline and improve the effectiveness of data collection efforts, reform existing survey instruments and other reporting forms where possible, and improve public access to existing datasets.

For example, the following would have been helpful during this research:

- All federal agencies should add military and Veteran identifiers to existing records and include this information in publicly-available datasets and reports. This one change would empower researchers working on various military or Veteran issues to access larger data sets and conduct more reliable research.

- Create the capacity to reliably assess and report racial/ethnic demographics for military dependents, especially spouses and children. No reliable, publicly-accessible demographic data is available for military children, and data collected as part of the Survey of Active Duty Spouses[28] is weighted to control other variables (e.g., rank) that make it difficult to discern the true proportion of military spouses identifying as a person of color. Collection through systems such as the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) record and publicly reporting dependent demographics through existing reports (e.g., Survey of Active Duty Spouses,[29] Demographics Profile of the Military,[30] or Population Representation Reports[31]) would greatly improve understanding of these populations.

- Researchers within the military and VA should audit their existing survey instruments through a racial equity lens to identify ways to improve interpretation (e.g., asking about frequency, severity, and location of instances of racial/ethnic discrimination rather than simply if the respondent has experienced it), eliminate omitted variable bias (e.g., including answer choices for respondents of color to voice concerns about racism in communities or military circles), and capture more timely and actionable information (e.g., adding time frames when capturing information about experiences of discrimination to identify emerging trends and the effectiveness of solutions).

See it in action:

The Army's Career Engagement Survey[32]

The Department of the Army Career Engagement Survey (DACES) released its first annual report in December 2021.[33] Results provide excellent insight into issues and concerns that would lead current service members to leave service. For example, the survey identified that 16.5% of respondents reported that mistreatment in the workplace is an "extremely important" reason to leave the Army. When asked to elaborate on what type of mistreatment might precipitate such a decision, "Race," "Gender," and "Color" (all of which are federally protected classes[34]) were the three most common responses. (This question was not reported by race/ethnicity.)

2. Explore how to use existing data to improve experiences for military and Veteran families of color.

- The 2022 National Defense Authorization Act requires a "survey on relations between members of the Armed Forces and communities."[35] (This provision was included in response to a survey conducted by the Association of Defense Communities, which also identified race/ethnicity-related challenges for military families of color in their communities).[36] This community climate survey presents an opportunity to glean valuable insight into civil-military relations at the local level on a wide array of issues, including schools, employment opportunities, and overall experience. It also offers a mechanism by which the military can understand whether or not racial/ethnic tensions exist at the local level, and if so, identify collaborative solutions tailored to the local environment.
- **Analyze** existing data on service member evaluations to determine whether service members of color experience lower ratings, in general and (if they exist) incorporate proposals to address disparities into existing talent management plans. Ideas put forward by survey respondents and focus group participants include: continuous training regarding the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion to readiness; improved unconscious bias training that is required for all individuals conducting evaluations; inclusion of unconscious bias education into professional military education curricula; and restoring "360 evaluations" in service branches where they no longer occur.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

3. Deepen understanding of issues identified in this report and others.

This study is the first of its kind to explore the experiences of military family members of color, and the work should not end with this report. There are steps that military and legislative leaders can take to improve researchers' ability to understand and support these populations.

For example:

- **Change** legislation to allow federal agencies to shift to a combined race/ethnicity question, in line with recommendations from the U.S. Census Bureau.[37] The current standards on capturing data on race/ethnicity are based on the 1997 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidance.[38] It includes two ethnic categories (Hispanic or Latino, and Not Hispanic or Latino) and five racial categories (American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN), Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI), and White). Shifting nationwide racial/ethnic demographics and a sharply increasing multiracial population necessitate re-framing how we capture this data to reflect this reality better. Furthermore, the current omission of "Middle Eastern or Northern African" as an independent category makes it difficult to understand the experiences of these individuals in existing data, though it is possible they and their families have unique experiences of service during the Global War on Terror.

- **Conduct** routine exit interviews in all service branches and consider expanding these interviews to include military spouses. Exit interviews are commonplace in other sectors and provide the opportunity to more quickly identify and respond to emerging issues leading families to leave military service.

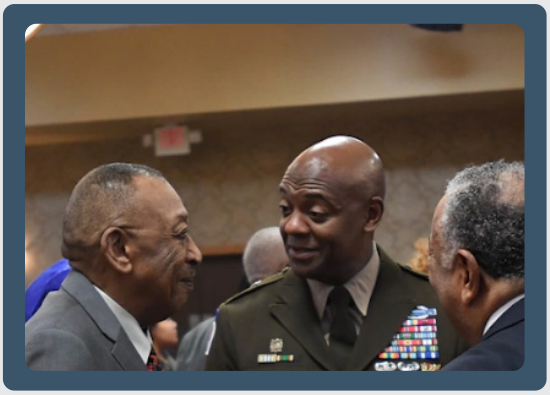
- **Commission** needs assessments at the local level. Where possible, conduct local needs assessments within the military community or partner with local civilian organizations to ensure that the unique experiences of military and Veteran families of color are considered when developing the study.This report demonstrates the need for a better understanding of military and Veteran families of color; however, what is most needed is installation- and community-specific data.

- **Commission and enable** specific studies on sub-groups (e.g., military children of color, military spouses of color, singular racial or ethnic groups) requiring larger datasets. Responsibly making data available to researchers will benefit the entire community and inform how support organizations and communities can be more effective in their work.

See it in action:

The Department of the Army's Career Engagement Survey's (DACES) Data Sharing[39]

The DACES report included the following statement detailing how to obtain a dataset: "In addition, DACES data can also separately be leveraged for secondary research use. DACES contains an Informed Consent statement at the start of the survey, which asks participants about their interest in allowing their responses to be used for future research purposes. During Year 1, 80.5% of the service members who completed a DACES survey consented to allowing their responses to be used for research purposes. Because this report is designed to share DACES findings broadly, only consented responses were analyzed (see page 16). Requests to analyze DACES data may be determined as either Not Research (e.g., command surveillance) or Research (e.g., Exempt or Non-Exempt Human Subjects Research) by an authorized Exempt Determination Official (EDO) or Institutional Review Board (IRB), depending on the intent of the analysis and the purpose of disseminating results."



The Department of Veterans Affairs Minority Veterans Report[40]

The Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans issues a biennial report to identify outcome disparities for Veterans of color. A similar approach could be taken to better understand and track outcomes for military spouses and children of color once data collection measures are in place that enables this analysis.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Best Practices

For Military and Veteran Serving Organizations

White Oak Collaborative Subcommittee on Racial Equity and Inclusion Recommended Practices for Military and Veteran Serving Organizations

The White Oak Collaborative is a cross-sector coalition committed to supporting service members, Veterans, wounded warriors, caregivers, survivors, and their families. More than 200 members representing military and Veteran support organizations, other nonprofits, and private, philanthropic, government, and community sectors have come together to engage in this non-partisan work. More information and examples of the practices included below, as well as the opportunity to sign-on to endorse these practices, are available on our website (bluestarfam.org/racial-equity-initiative/collaboration).

We, the undersigned military and Veteran serving organizations, are recommending the following practices and programs for our field and beyond. Many of us have piloted these practices in our own organizations. We are committed to these practices to create robust support for all members of our communities including underserved and underrepresented members. We encourage other organizations to make use of these recommendations to create more just, equitable, and inclusive community support organizations.

Be Intentional

- Consider the organization's vision, mission, and strategic plan through a lens of racial equity and inclusion.
- Establish and document clear goals, metrics, and expectations for racial equity and inclusion, especially regarding time and money.

Gather Data

- Measure *who* is part of and served by your organization: regularly collect descriptive and demographic data about your governing board (and other advisory/steering boards), staff, and membership.
    - Once you know *who* you serve, consider measuring *how* your board(s), staff, and members experience your organization. Do this by gathering additional data related to equity (including retention, promotion, and compensation rate for employees from underrepresented groups) and data related to inclusivity and satisfaction.
- Develop a method of gathering intake information and feedback from board members, staff, volunteers, partners, external experts, and members.
- Disaggregate new and existing data/feedback by underrepresented groups.

Implement Equitable and Inclusive Policies and Practices

- Review company policies and revise them to reflect equity- and inclusion-oriented strategic and long-term plans.
- Incorporate racially equitable and inclusive practices into day-to-day operations. For example, use inclusive and intersectional language in internal messaging and conversations.

Train managers and staff

- Develop plans for ongoing training for managers, staff, and volunteers.
- Provide opportunities to reinforce formal training through informal discussions and personal education.

Engage more and better: Diversity Brings Diversity

- Reach a wider population from which to draw board members, staff, volunteers, partners, and members.
- Develop diverse and novel recruitment programs to ensure representation from underrepresented groups.
- Engage inclusively. For example, seek representation and inclusivity in virtual and physical messages, language, and imagery.

Review Progress and Develop New Goals

- Regularly examine progress and report to the governing board.
- Identify and fix what isn't working.
- Develop new or amend short-, medium-, and long-term goals when appropriate.

White Oak Collaborative Subcommittee on Racial Equity and Inclusion Member Organizations

How the Corporate and Philanthropic Sector Can Support Military and Veteran Families of Color

1. Highlight the importance of serving military and Veteran families of color among existing grantees, including both military-serving nonprofits and those who serve the community at large.
When convening or evaluating corporate-philanthropy grantees, facilitate conversations about how their work is serving military families of color.

2. Invest in organizations that support and have a strong staff and board representation from military and/or Veteran families of color.
Financially supporting non-profit organizations that serve military and Veteran families of color is critical to reach and serve racially and ethnically diverse military families.

3. Consider supplier diversity.
Additionally, explore building Veterans and military spouses of color into supplier diversity goals to maximize social impact objectives.

4. Break down walls between existing initiatives within your company. Initiatives that support military or Veteran families and initiatives that support diversity, equity, and inclusion should not be mutually exclusive or operate in silos.
For example, consider funding that encourages existing employee resource groups (ERGs) to host events that combine awareness about different issues. Joint events and learning opportunities between military and diversity ERGs can bridge the gap between two or more of a company's impact initiatives in ways that foster inclusion and recognize the diverse nature of military service. Furthermore, military families and Veterans come from a diverse community and have members represented in many ERGs; use this as an asset to build military family lifestyle cultural competence within your organization. Resources such as the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) provide resources that profile the contributions to the military of diverse groups. They can provide crucial data to bridge the divide on these important areas of work.

See it in action:

Celebrating Native American Heritage Month & Veterans Day at Amazon

Amazon's Global Military Affairs and Indigenous ERGs partnered for an event that celebrated Native American Heritage Month and Veterans Day to educate viewers on the importance of Native American military history and the Navajo Code Talkers.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

METHODOLOGY

This research effort consisted of the following four phases. Please note that this section will focus primarily on the methodology for the ***'Understanding the Experiences of Military Families of Color'*** survey.

Phase I, Exploratory Analysis: In addition to a comprehensive literature review, the team explored a variety of existing data sets through a racial/ethnic equity lens (including Blue Star Families' 2016-2020 Military Family Lifestyle Survey data, 2019 American Community Survey data, and publicly-available descriptive statistics provided by the Department of Defense, the Center for Naval Analysis, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Office of People Analytics). Results from these analyses are utilized to supplement findings throughout the report and detailed analysis notes are included in accompanying endnotes.

Phase II, Focus Groups: To inform survey instrument design, the research team hosted five focus groups (and several interviews), including one in Spanish. Insights from focus group participants are also interwoven throughout the report.

Phase III, Survey: The survey instrument was designed specifically for military and Veteran families of color, to include multiracial/ethnic families. Participant recruitment communications about the survey were therefore designed for these audiences. Nevertheless, the survey did allow white, non-Hispanic respondents who did not report being a member of a multiracial/ethnic family to participate in several perception and policy-oriented sections.

Phase IV, Study Analysis & Recommendation Development: This report represents the culmination of the study and encompasses results from the literature review, exploratory analysis of previously-collected datasets, and statistics from this new survey. The research team interviewed or met with over 100 stakeholders from nonprofit, community, and governmental organizations to learn more about existing programs that might address challenges the study uncovered and to identify potential solutions and best practices for inclusion in this report.

Survey procedure

The survey instrument, titled 'Understanding the Experiences of Military Families of Color,' was designed by both Blue Star Families and Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF). Prior to the survey fielding, the research effort started with five focus groups beginning in February 2021 to guide and inform survey development. The study (including focus groups and the survey) received approval from Syracuse University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and was fielded with Qualtrics, an online survey collection tool (Qualtrics, Inc., Provo, UT) from June 25th to July 29th, 2021.

To recruit respondents for this survey, Blue Star Families utilized several snowball sampling strategies to maximize participation among racially/ethnically diverse survey participants outside of Blue Star Families' membership. These strategies included recruiting and deploying a team of 75 volunteer survey ambassadors and several racially/ethnically diverse social media influencers to share about the survey on popular social media sites. The Marketing and Communications team also joined forces with diverse survey outreach partners who shared about the survey within their networks of military service members, Veterans, and family members of color. Social media advertising on Instagram and Facebook and organic sharing of the survey by participants also increased engagement among target audiences.

Potential respondents could access the survey link from a computer or mobile device via email, social media pages, or Blue Star Families' website. Survey participation was considered voluntary, and the information provided was confidential. To incentivize participation, respondents could elect to enter a drawing to receive one of 20 $50 gift certificates. Following the link, the survey began with a consent form, including the purpose, risks, and benefits of the research, and respondent consent was required to participate. Potential respondents under the age of 18 were not authorized to continue. All questions except for consent to participate, military affiliation, and age were voluntary, and respondents could skip any questions they did not wish to answer. Survey branching and skip logic techniques were utilized to ensure survey respondents would only be shown questions that applied to them.

Analysis

Upon closing the survey, an intensive data cleaning protocol was instituted to address missing data and invalid responses. This process included several sets and steps of criteria for removal, including, but not limited to, duplicate responses, survey completion in under five minutes, and nonsensical phrases to open-ended questions repeated across multiple respondents. A team of four researchers reviewed and reached an agreement on cases that met any of the criteria for invalid responses. Following data cleaning, the total sample is 2,731 respondents. For additional information, please contact survey@bluestarfam.org.

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach. The majority of quantitative survey questions were multiple-choice. There were also several select-all questions, as well as Likert scale questions to indicate respondents' level of agreement. Respondents could skip any questions they did not wish to answer, and "Does not apply," "Not applicable," and "I don't know" were listed as answer choices when needed. In some cases, responses of "Does not apply," "Not applicable," and/or "I don't know" were excluded from analyses, and this choice is noted in the accompanying endnotes within the report. Therefore, in combination with survey branching and logic, sample sizes vary across survey questions. Analyses primarily included descriptives and cross-tabulations. When appropriate, survey items were cut by various respondent groups (e.g., active-duty service member respondents of color, Black active-duty family respondents).

Additionally, 22 open-ended questions were included for qualitative analysis. The analyst used a content analysis methodology to identify key themes from the data. The content analysis process is as follows: First, the data were reviewed for emergent themes; second, each response was categorized by relevant theme(s); third, a final tabulation of responses by theme was created. After each question was analyzed, quotes were identified to illustrate each theme. The Applied Research team intentionally selected quotes to share throughout the report that reflect the diversity of respondent backgrounds across racial and ethnic groups, branch of service, gender, etc.

Lastly, information on analyses from external data sources, such as 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) data, is provided in the endnotes throughout the report.

Definitions

The survey utilized a select-all, combination race/ethnicity question as recommended by the U.S. Census Bureau[1]. For this reason, "respondent of color" refers to anyone who selected any race/ethnicity other than only white[2]. Respondents of color could select multiple racial/ethnic identities, including white, and their responses may therefore be reflected in multiple comparison groups when racial and ethnic groups are analyzed separately (e.g., respondents identifying both as "Black" and "Asian" are counted in both analyses, but only once when aggregated "respondents of color" are reported).

Military affiliation was also a select-all question, and this report analyzes data from service members, Veterans, and spouses as both independent groups and aggregated "family" units. For example, "active-duty family respondent" statistics provide data on respondents identifying as either an active-duty service member OR a spouse of an active-duty service member. In the event that a respondent holds both spouse and service member identities, they are only reported once within the active-duty family group. It is important to note that "family" responses do not refer to paired dyads.

Respondents who selected National Guard service member, spouse/domestic partner of National Guard service member, Reserve service member, or spouse/domestic partner of Reserve service member (whether they indicated to be activated or not) were not included in the active-duty family respondent group. Additionally, sample sizes limited separate analyses of National Guard and Reserve family respondents.

Respondents who selected Veteran or retired service member were categorized as Veteran respondents. Veteran family respondents included those respondents who selected Veteran, retired service member, or spouse/domestic partner of Veteran/retired service member. In this case as well, "family" responses do not refer to paired dyads.

[1] Marks, R. & Jones, N. (2020, February). Collecting and tabulating ethnicity and race responses in the 2020 census. [Training materials]. Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau. https://www2.census.gov/about/training-workshops/2020/2020-02-19-pop-presentation.pdf

[2] Respondents were asked "How do you describe yourself? Please select all that apply." Respondents were recoded as a "respondent of color" if they selected any of the following racial/ethnic options: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino/a/x or of Spanish origin, Middle Eastern or Northern African, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or a write-in option. Respondents may have selected multiple options, including white, along with another racial/ethnic identity.

Active-duty family respondents of color (referred to as active-duty family respondents* throughout the report) had to identify as an active-duty service member or spouse of an active-duty service member and also select any race/ethnicity (including the write-in option) other than only white. Similarly, Veteran family respondents of color (referred to as Veteran family respondents*) had to identify as a Veteran, retired service member, or spouse/domestic partner of a Veteran/retired service member and also select any of the listed race/ethnicity options, aside from white only.

Those respondents who are categorized as white, non-Hispanic respondents in a multiracial/multiethnic family (referred to as "white multiracial/multiethnic family respondents") only selected white (and no other answer choices) to the race/ethnicity select-all question and also reported they are a member of a multi-racial/ethnic family (e.g., "Do you have a spouse or child of a different race/ethnicity?").

Respondents

Of the finalized 2,731 respondents who started the survey, 1,984 (73%) completed the instrument. Both military affiliation and race/ethnicity were offered as select-all questions. The total sample (2,731) includes active-duty family respondents of color (33%); Veteran family respondents of color (21%); white, non-Hispanic active-duty family respondents in a multiracial/multiethnic family (5%); white, non-Hispanic Veteran family respondents in a multiracial/multiethnic family (4%); and other groups not delineated here were not included in the analysis (e.g., parents, siblings, etc.) . Of active-duty family respondents of color, 68% (622) identified as an active-duty spouse and 33% (303) as an active-duty service member. Over half (52%, 306) of Veteran family respondents of color identified as a Veteran, 34% (197) as a retired service member, and 31% (180) as a spouse of a Veteran/retired service member.

Please see Tables 1 and 2 for information on the race/ethnicity, gender, age, and region of these sample groups.

Table 1: Respondents of Color

	Active-Duty Service Member		Active-Duty Spouse		Active-Duty Family	
Race/Ethnicity	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
American Indian or Alaska Native	51	17%	53	9%	102	11%
Asian	45	15%	122	20%	164	18%
Black or African American	153	51%	268	43%	413	45%
Hispanic or Latino/a/x or of Spanish origin	81	27%	210	34%	285	31%

	Active-Duty Service Member		Active-Duty Spouse		Active-Duty Family	
Race/Ethnicity	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
Middle Eastern or Northern African	7	2%	8	1%	14	2%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	8	3%	27	4%	33	4%
White (selected in addition to the above races/ethnicities)	36	12%	87	14%	119	13%
Some other race or ethnicity, please specify	5	2%	19	3%	23	3%
Total	**303**		**622**		**909**	

	Veteran/Retired Service Member		Veteran/Retired Service Member Spouse		Veteran Family	
Race/Ethnicity	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
American Indian or Alaska Native	60	14%	21	12%	76	13%
Asian	35	8%	20	11%	54	9%
Black or African American	228	52%	91	51%	302	52%
Hispanic or Latino/a/x or of Spanish origin	128	29%	65	36%	179	31%
Middle Eastern or Northern African	12	3%	1	1%	12	2%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	17	4%	7	4%	21	4%
White (selected in addition to the above races/ethnicities)	49	11%	23	13%	67	11%
Some other race or ethnicity, please specify	27	6%	15	8%	39	7%
Total	**437**		**180**		**586**	

Table 1: Respondents of Color

	Active-Duty Service Member		Active-Duty Spouse		Active-Duty Family	
Gender	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
Man	187	63%	42	7%	223	25%
Woman	105	35%	568	92%	663	74%
Trans man	3	1%	2	0%	5	1%
Trans woman	0	0%	2	0%	2	0%
Gender non-conforming/gender non-binary/gender diverse	1	0%	4	1%	5	1%
Other	1	0%	1	0%	2	0%
Total	**297**		**619**		**900**	

	Veteran/Retired Service Member		Veteran/Retired Service Member Spouse		Veteran Family	
Gender	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
Man	217	50%	19	11%	230	40%
Woman	208	48%	157	88%	341	59%
Trans man	2	0%	1	1%	3	1%
Trans woman	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Gender non-conforming/gender non-binary/gender diverse	3	1%	1	1%	4	1%
Other	3	1%	1	1%	3	1%
Total	**433**		**179**		**581**	

Table 1: Respondents of Color

	Active-Duty Service Member		Active-Duty Spouse		Active-Duty Family	
Age	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
18-30	109	36%	127	20%	232	26%
31-40	137	45%	313	50%	443	49%
41-50	49	16%	162	26%	206	23%
51-60	8	3%	17	3%	25	3%
Over 60	0	0%	3	0%	3	0%
Total	**303**		**622**		**909**	
	Veteran/Retired Service Member		**Veteran/Retired Service Member Spouse**		**Veteran Family**	
Age	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
18-30	39	9%	16	9%	52	9%
31-40	91	21%	47	26%	128	22%
41-50	136	31%	63	35%	186	32%
51-60	80	18%	21	12%	97	17%
Over 60	91	21%	33	18%	123	21%
Total	**437**		**180**		**586**	

Table 1: Respondents of Color

	Active-Duty Service Member		Active-Duty Spouse		Active-Duty Family	
Census Region	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
South	76	45%	143	41%	214	42%
West	49	29%	109	31%	158	31%
Northeast	19	11%	40	11%	56	11%
Midwest	15	9%	36	10%	50	10%
Outside the U.S.	11	6%	22	6%	33	6%
Total	**170**		**350**		**511**	

	Veteran/Retired Service Member		Veteran/Retired Service Member Spouse		Veteran Family	
Census Region	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
South	91	42%	49	42%	136	45%
West	67	31%	30	31%	92	30%
Northeast	24	11%	12	11%	34	11%
Midwest	25	12%	6	10%	30	10%
Outside the U.S.	10	5%	3	6%	12	4%
Total	**217**		**100**		**304**	

Note:
1. Race/Ethnicity was a select-all question so respondents could select multiple racial/ethnic identities and therefore, percentages do not add up to 100%.

2. Military affiliation was a select-all question so respondents could select multiple military identities (e.g., a respondent could identify as a Veteran and a Spouse of a Veteran) and therefore, there is overlap among respondent groups.

3.Some nonessential demographic variables, including the U.S. region where the respondent currently resides, were included toward the end of the survey instrument, and therefore, some respondents dropped off or skipped the question.

Table 2: White, non-Hispanic Respondents
(did not select any other racial/ethnic identities)

	Active-Duty Service Member		Active-Duty Spouse		Active-Duty Family	
Race/Ethnicity	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
White, non-Hispanic and in a multiracial/multiethnic family	36	26%	105	34%	140	32%
White, non-Hispanic and NOT in a multiracial/multiethnic family	102	74%	205	66%	304	68%
Total white respondents	**138**		**310**		**444**	
	Veteran/Retired Service Member		**Veteran/Retired Service Member Spouse**		**Veteran Family**	
Race/Ethnicity	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
White, non-Hispanic and in a multiracial/multiethnic family	85	30%	33	26%	112	28%
White, non-Hispanic and NOT in a multiracial/multiethnic family	200	70%	93	74%	282	72%
Total white respondents	**285**		**126**		**394**	

Limitations

While this survey is one of the first and only that focuses on the experiences of military and Veteran families of color in such depth and scope, there are several limitations to bear in mind.

First, this survey is not intended to be statistically representative of the experiences of all active-duty and Veteran families of color. The intention of using a convenience sampling method was so the survey could have a robust representation of respondents of color–whose voices are often diluted in surveys without a conscious plan–to broaden and strengthen their ethnic and racial composition. However, because of this strategy to maximize participation by respondents of color, the team also cannot guarantee that the views of the respondents are statistically representative of all active-duty and Veteran families of color. Additionally, since our respondent sample is mainly focused on respondents of color (and to a lesser extent, those who are white and are part of a multi-racial/ethnic family), there is no comparison group of respondents who selected white only (and did not select any

other answer choices) and who are not part of a multi-racial/ethnic family. All comparisons to white, non-Hispanic active-duty or Veteran subgroups and/or civilians are drawn from separate data sources (see third limitation below for additional details).

Second, while there was a conscious effort and outreach to ensure that the survey would be able to focus on respondents of color, the proportional differences in terms of military-affiliated and racial/ethnic identities vary across the board, as described in the earlier "Respondents" section. The overall results from the survey can be more or less influenced by the proportion of different groups of respondents. Specifically, military affiliation, racial/ethnic identity, and/or the intersection of those elements may all contribute to different opinions and life experiences.

Third, because this survey is the start of a research agenda looking at an emergent topic in a systematic manner, analysis of the survey is bolstered by other existing government data and related research. However, as a consequence, the team was therefore limited in comparisons across different cross-sectional surveys and data sources, paying particular attention to the wording of survey questions and the sample itself. As an example, a historical analysis of the Military Family Lifestyle Survey (MFLS) was utilized throughout the report. Respondent race/ethnicity was measured as a select-all item in the 2018 and 2019 MFLS, but as a single-response item in the 2020 MFLS. Additionally, due to sample size restrictions in the 2018 MFLS, respondents were grouped into "respondents of color," similar to the approach in the present survey. Ultimately, for consistency, clarity, and legibility, detailed information about each statistic from this survey and from external data sources is included in the relevant Finding's endnotes (e.g., frequencies, question response rate, any differences in definitions, etc.).

Lastly, this survey was fielded during the COVID-19 pandemic and following a year of broad civil unrest and national discourse about issues related to race and ethnicity. This is important context when reading findings related to community experiences and perceptions. As a cross-sectional survey, responses may be sensitive to current events, and standard limitations of survey research such as non-response bias and social desirability bias may exist. As a result of the biases and limitations mentioned above, it is important to note that generalizability to all military and Veteran families of color is limited.

Endnotes & References

Historical Context Endnotes

[1] Military Leadership Diversity Commission (2011)
[2] Military Leadership Diversity Commission (2011); The Military Leadership Diversity Commission report discusses the development, progress, and lessons learned from previous racial/ethnic inclusion efforts including The Fahy Committee and The Gesell Committee.
[3] Levinson (2020)
[4] History.com Editors (2010)
[5] Acuna (2011)
[6] Acuna (2011)
[7] Acuna (2011); Woods (2013)
[8] League of United Latin American Citizens (n.d.); In the summer of 2020 LULAC, helped to elevate the story of PFC Vanessa Guillen's disappearance and murder. Today, LULAC continues to work on military issues specific to the Latino community. These include support for deported Latino veterans, renaming Fort Hood renamed after a Latino Army Veteran, St. Roy P. Benavidez and providing services and resources to veterans.
[9] National Association for Black Veterans, Inc. (n.d.; The ROCKS, Inc. is a tax-exempt non-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) comprised of ROTC and Military Academy Cadets, active duty, reserve component, commissioned officers and active duty or reserve component warrant officers and Department of Defense GS12 and above civilians. The organization was formed to provide mentorship, professional development and social interaction to strengthen the officer corps.
[10] National Association for Black Veterans, Inc. (n.d.); Established and incorporated by seven Vietnam Combat Veterans in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (1969). In 1973 it was reorganized to become a membership service organization with the charge to address issues concerning Black and other minority Veterans.
[11] Engleson (2021); ANSO is a 501c3 nonprofit dedicated to the recruitment, retention and promotion of Hispanics and Latinos across all ranks of the United States Sea Services.
[12] Black Veterans Project. (n.d.); The mission of Black Veterans Project is to acknowledge and amplify the unique achievements and contributions of Black military veterans.Lead a movement for racial inclusion and justice across the five branches of the United States military while ensuring the welfare of all Black veterans who've served.
[13] Pan-Pacific American Leaders and Mentors. A professional network of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, military and civilian, committed to serving the Nation by providing leadership, education, mentoring and fellowship opportunities.
[14] Black Veterans for Social Justice. (n.d.); Established in 1979, Black Veterans for Social Justice is a non-profit, community-based organization servicing veterans, their families, and members of the community.
[15] Black Military Wives. (n.d.); Black Military Wives, LLC (B.M.W.) was created for the unique, cultural needs of Black women who are/were connected to the military by marriage OR their own service in the military. The purpose of B.M.W. is to provide emotional support and information to women who are/were officially affiliated with the DoD branches of the United States Armed Forces (Air Force, Army, Navy or Marine Corps).
[16] Esposas Militares Hispanas USA Armed Forces. (n.d.); Mission: Serve our Hispanic families by offering the necessary tools to promote knowledge about military life in their own language.
[17] Blue Star Families (2020)
[18] History.com Editors (2010)
[19] Military Leadership Diversity Commission (2011); Executive Order 9981 - President Truman's Executive Order to abolish widespread racial/ethnic discrimination and desegregate the armed services.
[20] Military Leadership Diversity Commission (2011); President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity (Fahy Committee) was established when President Truman issued policy to abolish wide spread racial/ethnic discrimination in the Armed Forces. The Fahy Committee (1949-1950) worked to ensure all branches of the armed services complied with Executive Order 9981.
[21] American GI Forum of Texas (2021)
[22] Military Leadership Diversity Commission (2011); Established by President Kennedy, the President's Committee on Quality of Opportunity in the Armed Forces (Gesell Committee) "assessed the status of blacks in the military and find ways to improve their opportunities."

[23] Department of Defense (1964); Following the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, DoD issued a policy that contained specific provisions to address discrimination faced off installations.
[24] National Association for Black Veterans, Inc. (n.d.)
[25] Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute. (n.d.)
[26] The National Board of the ROCKS, Inc. (n.d.)
[27] Black Veterans for Social Justice. (n.d.)
[28] Engleson, J. (2021)
[29] Esposas Militares (2021)
[30] Military Leadership Diversity Commission (2011); National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, Section 596 created the Military Diversity Leadership Commission to "conduct a comprehensive evaluation and assessment of policies that provide opportunities for the promotion and advancement of minority members of the Armed Forces, including minority members who are senior officers."
[31] Pan-Pacific American Leaders and Mentors (2021)
[32] Black Military Wives (2021)
[33] Black Veterans Project (2021)
[34] U.S. Department of Defense (2020, June 18)); Secretary of Defense issued: Actions for Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the Department of Defense memo June 18, 2020
[35] U.S. Department of Defense. (2020, December 18)
[36] Blue Star Families (2020)

Historical Context References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Acuna, R. (2011). *Occupied America: a history of Chicanos*. (7th ed.). Longman/Pearson.

American GI Forum of Texas, Inc. (2021, June 17). About Us. https://agiftx.com/about-us/

Black Military Wives. (n.d.) *About B.M.W. Black Military Wives*. https://blackmilitarywives.com/about/

Black Veterans for Social Justice. (n.d.). https://bvsj.org/

Black Veterans Project. (n.d.) https://www.blackveteransproject.org/

Blue Star Families. (2020). *Racial equity initiative*. https://bluestarfam.org/racial-equity-initiative/

Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute. (n.d.) *History*. https://www.defenseculture.mil/About-DEOMI/History/

Department of Defense. (1964, July 24). DoD 5525.2: Processing of Requests by Military Personnel for Action by the Attorney General Under the Civil Rights Act

Engleson, J. (2021, October 10). *The All-Inclusive Hispanic/Latino(a) Leaders Resource Group for all ranks of the U.S. Maritime Services*. Association of Naval Services Officers. https://www.ansomil.org/

Esposas Militares Hispanas USA Armed Forces. (n.d.) *Esposas Militares Hispanas USA Armed Forces*. https://www.esposasmilitaresusa.org/

History.com Editors. (2010, May 27). *G.I. Bill*. https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/gi-bill

League of United Latin American Citizens. (n.d.). *Justice for Vanessa Guillén*. https://lulac.org/VanessaGuillen/

League of United Latin American Citizens. (n.d.). *Veterans*. https://lulac.org/veterans/

Levinson, R. (2020, September 11). *Many Black World War II veterans were denied their GI bill benefits. Time to fix that*. War on the Rocks. https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/many-black-world-war-ii-veterans-were-denied-their-gi-bill-benefits-time-to-fix-that/

Military Leadership Diversity Commission. (2011, March 15). *From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st-Century Military Final Report*. https://diversity.defense.gov/Portals/51/Documents/Special%20Feature/MLDC_Final_Report.pdf

National Association for Black Veterans, Inc. (n.d.). https://nabvets.com/nabvets/claims-services/

Pan-Pacific American Leaders and Mentors. (2021). https://www.ppalm.org/

The National Board of the ROCKS, Inc. (n.d.). *History*. https://www.rocksinc.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=459944&module_id=51117

U.S. Department of Defense. (2020, June 18). *Secretary Mark T. Esper message to the Force on DOD diversity and inclusiveness.* https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2224494/secretary-mark-t-esper-message-to-the-force-on-dod-diversity-and-inclusiveness/

U.S. Department of Defense. (2020, December 18). U.S. Department of Defense Board on Diversity and Inclusion Report. Defense.gov. https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/18/2002554852/-1/-1/0/DOD-DIVERSITY-AND-INCLUSION-FINAL-BOARD-REPORT.PDF

Woods, L. L. (2013). Almost "no negro veteran … could get a loan": African Americans, the GI bill, and the NAACP Campaign Against Residential Segregation, 1917–1960. *The Journal of African American History*, 98(3), 392–417. https://doi.org/10.5323/jafriamerhist.98.3.0392

Finding 1 Endnotes

[1] Association of the U.S. Army (2019); Suits (2018); Vergun (2019); Zielinski & Beyer (2019)
[2] Department of Defense (2020); Secretary of the Air Force (2019); United States Army (2020); United States Coast Guard (2020); United States Navy (2021)
[3] Krysan & Bader (2009); Badger (2015); Krysan, Couper, Farley et al. (2009); Pager & Pedulla (2015)
[4] n=770 active-duty family respondents of color; n=123 white multiracial/ethnic family respondents
[5] n=825
[6] n=771 active-duty family respondents of color; n=124 white multiracial/ethnic family respondents
[7] n=772 active-duty family respondents of color; n=124 white multiracial/ethnic family respondents
[8] Black (53%; n=356), Asian (49%; n=142), Hispanic/Latino/a/x (40%; n=247)
[9] Racial/ethnic groups with at least 75 respondents to these questions were analyzed. When asked whether the respondent "considered discrimination regarding base/installation preferences," the majority of both Black (n=357; 56%) and American Indian/Alaska Native (n=83; 51%) respondents reported this to be the case. Forty-one percent of Asian respondents (n=143) and 38% of Hispanic/Latino/a/x respondents (n=246) indicated the same. When asked whether the respondent "considered concerns about safety regarding base/installation preferences due to my (or my family member's) racial/ethnic identity," the majority of Black respondents reported this to be the case (n=356; 53%). Forty-one percent of Asian respondents (n=143), 31% of Hispanic/Latino/a/x respondents (n=247), and 38% of American Indian/Alaska Native respondents (n=84) indicated the same.
[10] When providing race/ethnicity in the 2020 MFLS, the question was posed as a single-select question instead of a multi-select question.
[11] This answer choice was not the most commonly-selected for all other racial/ethnic groups, however, a greater proportion of these respondents selected it than their white, non-Hispanic counterparts.
[12] Sixteen active-duty service member respondents* reported this was "sometimes" the case and 14 reported it to be "often" the case; 3 did not know. Inclusion of this statistic is to provide context for the perceived level of

agency in their assignment and is not intended to be an indictment of personnel decisions made for the purposes of military readiness.

[13] n=621 active-duty, 383 Veteran and 104 white multiracial/ethnic family respondents*; No notable variation among the racial/ethnic groups with at least 100 active-duty family respondents was identified, with 26-29% of Asian, Black, and Hispanic respondents reporting having made the decision "not to accept an assignment (PCS orders or job) knowing that it may negatively impact the service member's career." However, although samples were smaller than 100 respondents, close to half of respondents from American Indian (49%) and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (48%) groups reported this to be the case, suggesting an area for future research.

[14] n=187. Too few respondents to analyze active-duty, white, non-Hispanic members of multi-racial families or variation among racial/ethnic groups.

[15] n=209

[16] n=83

[17] n=775 active-duty, 473 Veteran and 124 white multiracial/ethnic family respondents*ɣ

[18] Department of the Army (2021)

[19] Department of the Army (2021)

[20] Blue Star Families (2020)

[21] n=359 Black active-duty family and 261 Black Veteran family respondents; All racial/ethnic groups with at least 100 respondents were analyzed. Among active-duty family respondents, 25% Hispanic/Latino/a/x (n=246)and 28% of Asian (n=145) report the same.

[22] When asked which option best describes where the respondent lived, 39% of 2019 and 34% of 2018 MFLS active-duty family respondents of color (aggregated data) reported living in military housing on or off of the installation compared to 36% of white, non-Hispanic respondents in 2019 and 30% in 2018. Of all racial/ethnic groups analyzed, the greatest proportion of Hispanic/Latino/a/x respondents (43% in 2019 and 36% in 2018) reported living on the installation. These findings are consistent with the 2017 Survey of Active Duty Spouses (pg. 24), which found 32% of white and 37% of non-white, non-Hispanic, and 39% of Hispanic military spouses living in military housing either on or off the installation. (pg. 24)

[23] When asked if their family had geo-bached in the previous five years, grouped responses from the 2018 and 2019 MFLS show no demonstrable difference by race/ethnicity. In 2019 MFLS data only, a slightly greater proportion of Black ADF respondents than white, non-Hispanic respondents, however the same does not hold true in 2018 MFLS data. Analysis only included Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, and white respondents.

[24] Percent of active-duty family respondents answering "yes" to having geo-bached while married and during their family's time in service: 52% American Indian or Alaska Native (n=85), 36% Asian (n=139), 35% Black (n=341), 37% Hispanic/Latino/a/x (n=232).

[25] United States Census 2019 population estimates: 76% White alone, 13% Black, 1.3% American Indian and Alaska Native alone, 6% Asian alone, >1% Native American or other Pacific Islander alone, 19% Hispanic (United States Census, 2019). Active-duty demographics: 69% White, 17% Black or African American, 1.1% American Indian or Alaska Native, 5% Asian, 1.2% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 17% Hispanic; Military OneSource (n.d.)

[26] Goldberg et al. (2018); Phillips & Arango (2020)

[27] Forty-three percent of 2020 MFLS respondents who have experienced military-connected racial discrimination would recommend military service to a young person compared to 63% of those who have not experienced racial discrimination; Blue Star Families (2020)

[28] Office of People Analytics (2021)

[29] Office of People Analytics (2021); Moreno (2020)

[30] Active-duty family respondents* (n=771), Veteran family respondents* (n=469), and active-duty white, non-Hispanic multiracial/ethnic family respondentsɣ (n=124)

[31] Active-duty family respondents* (n=772), Veteran family respondents* (n=469), and active-duty white, non-Hispanic multiracial/ethnic family respondents (n=124)ɣ

[32] 33% (n=775) active-duty family, 34% (n=473) Veteran family and 31% (n=124) white multiracial/ethnic family respondents*ɣ

[33] n=770 active-duty family respondents*

[34] Question text: "Considering your and/or your family's racial/ethnic identity only, how comfortable would you feel being stationed in the following areas." Little variation exists among racial/ethnic groups analyzed, however, Black respondents are proportionally less comfortable in Alaska and Asian respondents are proportionally less comfortable in the South. Respondents who reported "I don't know" were excluded from analysis.

[35] n=607

[36] n=603; A proportionally greater number of Black respondents report not feeling at all comfortable being stationed in Alaska (25% w/IDK or 29% w/o IDK) compared to other racial/ethnic groups analyzed (</= 17%)
[37] n= 679; A proportionally greater number of Asian respondents report not feeling at all comfortable being stationed in the south (25% w/IDK or 27% w/o IDK) compared to other racial/ethnic groups analyzed (20%)
[38] n=647
[39] n=658
[40] n=669
[41] CREATE Lab (n.d.)
[42] n=825 (local civilian community); n=820 (military/civilian community)

Finding 1 References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Association of the U.S. Army. (2019, June 11). Retaining soldiers through their families. https://www.ausa.org/news/retaining-soldiers-through-their-families

Badger, E. (2015, July 17). How race still influences where we choose to live. Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/07/17/how-race-still-influences-where-we-chose-to-live/

Blue Star Families. (n.d.). Unpublished analysis: 2018 and 2019 Military Family Lifestyle Survey data.

Blue Star Families. (2020). 2020 military family lifestyle survey: Finding 1. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BSF_MFLS_CompReport_FINDING_1.pdf

CREATE Lab (n.d.). US Veterans by race, non-white, 2018 5-year estimate. Constructed from United States Census, ACS 2018, NHGIS. Created by the EarthTime team, Carnegie Mellon University. https://earthtime.org/

Department of Defense. (2020, December 18). U.S. Department of Defense board on diversity and inclusion report. Defense.gov. https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/18/2002554852/-1/-1/0/DOD-DIVERSITY-AND-INCLUSION-FINAL-BOARD-REPORT.PDF

Goldberg, M.S., Cheng, K., Huff, N.M., Kimko, D.D., and Saizan, A.M. (2018, November). Geographic diversity in military recruiting. Institute for Defense Analysis. https://www.ida.org/-/media/feature/publications/g/ge/geographic-diversity-in-military-recruiting/d-9079.ashx

Krysan, M. and Bader, M. (2009) Racial blind spots: Black-White-Latino differences in community knowledge. Social Problems, 56(4), 677–701. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2009.56.4.677

Krysan, M., Couper, M. P., Farley, R., & Forman, T. A. (2009). Does race matter in neighborhood preferences? Results from a video experiment. American Journal of Sociology, 115(2), 527–559. https://doi.org/10.1086/599248

Military OneSource. (n.d.). 2020 Demographics: Active duty. https://demographics.militaryonesource.mil/chapter-2-active-duty-personnel/

Moreno, J.E. (2020, July 3). LULAC president urges Latinas not to join the military after disappearance of Fort Hood soldier. The Hill. https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/505819-lulac-president-urges-latinas-not-to-join-the-military-after

Office of People Analytics (2018, May). 2017 Survey of active duty spouses: Tabulation of responses. Defense Technical Information Center. https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/AD1081212

Office of People Analytics. (2021, August 4). Fall 2020 propensity update. Department of Defense. https://jamrs.defense.gov/Portals/20/YP48Fall2020PUBLICRELEASEPropensityUpdate_20210628.pdf.

Pager, D., & Pedulla, D. S. (2015). Race, self-selection, and the job search process. American Journal of Sociology, 120(4), 1005–1054. https://doi.org/10.1086/681072

Phillips, D., and Arango, T. (2020, January 11). Who signs up to fight? Makeup of U.S. recruits shows glaring disparity. New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/10/us/military-enlistment.html

Secretary of the Air Force (2019). Air Force policy directive (AFPD) 36-70, diversity & inclusion. United States Air Force. https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/diversity/1/afi36-7001.pdf

Suits, D.L. (2018, October 19). Study reveals impact of Army Families on retention, recruiting. Department of the Army. https://www.army.mil/article/212578/study_reveals_impact_of_army_families_on_retention_recruiting

U.S. Army. (2020, September 1). The Army people strategy: Diversity, equity, and inclusion annex. https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/the_army_people_strategy_diversity_equity_and_inclusion_annex_2020_09_01_signed_final.pdf

U.S. Census. (2019). U.S. Census Bureau quickfacts: United States. Census.gov. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/US

U.S. Coast Guard. (2020, June 25). United States Coast Guard diversity & inclusion plan 2019-2023. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/DIAP/

U.S. Navy. (2021, January 26). Task force one Navy: Final report. Department of Defense. https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jan/26/2002570959/-1/-1/1/TASK%20FORCE%20ONE%20NAVY%20FINAL%20REPORT.PDF

Vergun, D. (2019, May 17). DOD improves recruiting, retention efforts. U.S. Department of Defense. https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/1851357/dod-improves-recruiting-retention-efforts/

Finding 2 Endnotes

[1] Department of Defense (2020)
[2] Seventeen percent of service members are Black compared to the Black population in the United States (13%); United States Census Bureau (2019); Military OneSource. (n.d.)
[3] Military OneSource. (n.d.)
[4] United States Census 2019 population estimates: 76% White alone, 13% Black, 1.3% American Indian and Alaska Native alone, 6% Asian alone, >1% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander alone, 19% Hispanic (United States Census, 2019). Active-Duty demographics: 69% White, 17% Black or African American, 1.1% American Indian or Alaska Native, 5% Asian, 1.2% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 17% Hispanic; Military OneSource. (n.d.)
[5] Council on Foreign Relations (2020); The Space Force was not included in this analysis.
[6] Council on Foreign Relations (2020)
[7] Nelson (2021)
[8] Department of Defense (2020)
[9] Department of Defense (2020)
[10] Notable underrepresentation in Black E5 and E6 promotions, Asian American E8-E9 promotions, and Native American E5-E7 promotions. Asian American promoted below the average to all ranks. Black promoted below average rate to E5-E7, but above average E8-E9. Hispanic/Latino promoted below average for all ranks except E7. Pacific Islander promoted below the average to E5-E6. Native American promoted below the average rate to E5-E8 and above average to E9. Black, Hispanic/Latino and Asian American officers underrepresented for O5 and O6 promotions; (The Inspector General Department of the Air Force (2021).
[11] Department of Defense (2020)
[12] When providing race/ethnicity in the 2020 MFLS, the question was posed as a single-select question instead of a multi-select question.
[13] Blue Star Families (2020). Comparisons to white, non-Hispanic active-duty service members was not published in the 2020 MFLS report. Contact survey@bluestarfam.org for further information.
[14] n=290
[15] Percentage of active-duty service member respondents reporting “My racial/ethnic identity has ‘significantly’ or ‘slightly’ hurt my ability to get ahead at work”: 48% Black (n=145), 28% Hispanic (n=80), 38% American Indian or Alaskan Native (n=48), 36% Asian (n=45). Analyzed racial/ethnic groups with at least 45 respondents to this question.
[16] Percentage of active-duty service member respondents reporting “I don’t know” when asked whether their racial/ethnic identity has impacted their ability to get ahead at work: 11% Hispanic (n=80), compared to 5% of Black (n=145), 4% of Asian (n=45), and 2% of American Indian / Alaska Native (n=48) respondents.
[17] When asked “Considering your current immediate supervisor (or whomever administers each of the following), to what extent do you believe you receive ...” (“preferred assignments” n=240; “ability to self-advocate strong evaluations, assignments, etc.” n=239)

[18] Research by McDonald and Day underscores continued gender and race based inequality in the labor market is influenced by social connections (social capital) which provide individuals with resources and which further their careers.
[19] McClellan (2020)
[20] Department of Defense (2020); Secretary of the Air Force (2019); United States Army (2020); United States Coast Guard (2020); United States Navy (2021); Additionally, the Department of the Army Career Engagement Survey First Annual Report revealed "fairness of Army promotions" was not a top reason to leave overall, but it was a top reason to leave for four of the demographic subgroups examined: junior enlisted (#1 reason to leave), senior enlisted (#3 reason to leave), Black/African American SMs (#5 reason to leave), and American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AI/AN|NH/PI) SMs (#5 reason to leave); Vie, Trivette, & Lathrop (2021)
[21] In 2020, then Secretary of Defense Mark Esper ordered the removal of all photos from promotion board packets; Sisk (2020)
[22] As of this writing, no official reports have been made publicly available regarding whether or not these efforts are succeeding, and public statements suggest conflicting data across the service branches. For example, during a roundtable in 2021, Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Admiral John Nowell Jr. stated, "we can show you where, as you look at diversity, it went down with photos removed" (Toropin, 2021); U.S. Army commented on a public Facebook post on October 7, 2021, stating the following: "When we removed photos and names from promotion packets it did two things--it allowed for the merits of the candidates to be the focus and coincidentally made the group chosen more diverse. These things are first identified and coordinated from events like these listening sessions." U.S. Army (2021)
[23] Department of Defense (2020); Secretary of the Air Force (2019); United States Army (2020); United States Coast Guard (2020); United States Navy (2021)
[24] n=253
[25] n=245
[26] n=156
[27] n=150
[28] Response rates were too low to analyze data for active-duty service members only.
[29] Figures derived from the 2020 Demographics Interactive Profile of the Military Community: Active Duty Members. Space Force does not have demographic information available and is not included. This report is produced by Military OneSource, data source is the DMDC Active Duty Military Personnel Master File (September 2020). Coast Guard figures derived from the Fiscal Year 2019 Population Representation in the Military Services (Pop Rep): Table E-13 Coast Guard Active Component Enlisted Members, FY19: by Gender and Race/Ethnicity.
[30] Figures derived from the 2020 Demographics Interactive Profile of the Military Community: Active Duty Members. Space Force does not have demographic information available and is not included. This report is produced by Military OneSource, data source is the DMDC Active Duty Military Personnel Master File (September 2020).
[31] Figure derived from the Fiscal Year 2019 Population Representation in the Military Services (Pop Rep): Table B-39. Active Component Commissioned Officer Corps, FY19: by Paygrade, Service, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity, using the figures for Males/Females. All non-white racial groups were aggregated to simplify analysis. This report is produced by the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Resources and Force Readiness division.
[32] Figure derived from 2019 Pop Rep: Table B-37. Active Component Enlisted Members, FY19: by Pay Grade, Service, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity, using the figures for Males/Females. All non-white racial groups were aggregated to simplify analysis.
[33] n=242
[34] n=240
[35] n=238
[36] n=239
[37] n=224
[38] n=224
[39] n=226
[40] n=224
[41] n=225
[42] n=347 Veteran of color respondents; n=258 active-duty service member of colors respondents

[43] The 2017 Workplace and Equal Opportunity Survey of Active Duty Members reports Black (31.2%) and Asian (23.3%) members were more likely to indicate experiencing Racial/Ethnic Harassment/ Discrimination than White members (12.7%). Of members who indicated experiencing racial/ethnic harassment/discrimination within the past 12 months, 34% of members indicated they thought about getting out of their Service and 7% indicated they requested a transfer. Black (14%) members were more likely to indicate they requested a transfer than other active duty members, whereas White (3%) members were less likely. Overall Total Minority (10%) members were also more likely to indicate they requested a transfer than White members. Additionally, 10% indicated experiencing professional retaliation and 14% indicated experiencing social retaliation as a result of the one situation. Collectively, 18% indicated experiencing at least one type of retaliation as a result of the one situation. Finally, 42% indicated that one situation was corrected regardless of whether or not they reported it.

[44] n=183

[45] n=218

[46] n=351

[47] n=186

[48] n=224

[49] n=367

[50] n=182

[51] n=219

[52] n=343

[53] This experience highlights how this form of camaraderie-building may create a culture permissive of racial/ethnic discrimination, as has been found in the Army with regard to the relationship between exposure to repeated sexual jokes and sexual harassment. While camaraderie is critical to unit cohesion and mission success, this permissive culture may also be impacting discrimination incident reporting, perceptions of retaliation, and important military family life decisions (see Finding 4); Brooks (2018); A recent Army study on sexual harassment and gender discrimination found that soldiers who experienced harassment typically also experienced repeated sexual jokes and offensive or persistent discussions of sex (Calkins, et. al, 2021).

[54] When providing race/ethnicity in the 2020 MFLS, the question was posed as a single-select question instead of a multi-select question.

[55] Blue Star Families (2020). Comparisons to white, non-Hispanic active-duty service members was not published in the 2020 MFLS report. Contact survey@bluestarfam.org for further information.

[56] n=236 active-duty service member of color respondents; n=317 Veteran of color respondents

[57] Respondents who reported they had experienced retaliation for standing up for something were asked to describe the situation in open-ended responses (n=125).

[58] n=284

[59] n=284; Question text: Which of the following "allyship" actions would you like to see more of your white, non-Hispanic colleagues, friends, and acquaintances take to support you? Select all that apply.

Finding 2 References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Blue Star Families. (2020). 2020 Military family lifestyle survey comprehensive report. Blue Star Families. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BSF_MFLS_CompReport_FULL.pdf

Brooks, S. K., & Greenberg, N. (2017). Non-deployment factors affecting psychological wellbeing in military personnel: Literature review. Journal of Mental Health, 27(1), 80–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/09638237.2016.1276536

Council on Foreign Relations. (2020, July 13). Demographics of the U.S. military. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/demographics-us-military

Calkins, Avery, Matthew Cefalu, Terry L. Schell, Linda Cottrell, Sarah O. Meadows, and Rebecca L. Collins, Sexual Harassment and Gender Discrimination in the Active-Component Army: Variation in Most Serious Event Characteristics by Gender and Installation Risk, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-A1385-1, 2021. As of January 12, 2022: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1385-1.html

Calkins, A., Cefalu, M., Schell, T. L., Cottrell, L., Meadows, S. O., & Collins, R. L. (2021, August 2). Sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the active-component Army. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1385-1.html

Daniel, S., Claros, Y., Namrow, N., Siebel, M., Campbell, A., McGrath, D., & Klahr, A. (2019). 2017 workplace and equal opportunity survey of active duty members. Office of People Analytics. https://www.opa.mil/research-analysis/quality-of-work-life/workplace-climate/2017-workplace-and-equal-opportunity-survey-of-active-duty-members/2017-workplace-and-equal-opportunity-survey-of-active-duty-members-executive-report

Department of Defense. (2020, December 18). U.S. Department of Defense board on diversity and inclusion report. Defense.gov. https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/18/2002554852/-1/-1/0/DOD-DIVERSITY-AND-INCLUSION-FINAL-BOARD-REPORT.PDF

The Inspector General Department of the Air Force. (2020, December). Report of inquiry (S8918P) disparity review. United States Air Force. https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/2021SAF/09_Sept/DR_ROI_Baseline.pdf

Ives, M., & Cramer, M. (2021, April 10). Black Army officer pepper-sprayed in traffic stop accuses officers of assault. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/10/us/caron-nazario-windsor-police-virginia.html

Jones, J. M. (2021, August 13). In U.S., Black confidence in police recovers from 2020 low. Gallup.com. https://news.gallup.com/poll/352304/black-confidence-police-recovers-2020-low.aspx

McClellan, B. J. (2020). Disparity in Black officer promotions: A survey of implicit racial attitudes among US Army officers (Doctoral dissertation, Northeastern University) Northeastern University Library Digital Repository. https://repository.library.northeastern.edu/files/neu:m046pd543

McDonald, S., Day, J.C. (2010) Race, gender, and the invisible hand of social capital. Sociology Compass, 4: 532-543. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2010.00298.x

McFarland, K. D. (2010). The Korean War, an annotated bibliography. Routledge.

Military OneSource. (n.d.). 2020 demographics: Interactive profile of the military community. https://demographics.militaryonesource.mil/chapter-2-active-duty-personnel/

Nelson, L. (2021, August 11). Lack of diversity in U.S. Coast Guard greater in higher ranks; comprehensive and sustained changes recommended to improve. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/news/press/2021/08/11.html

Office of the Undersecretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness. (2020). Population representation in the military services: Fiscal year 2019 summary report. CNA. http://www.cna.org/research/pop-rep

Secretary of the Air Force (2019). Air Force policy directive (AFPD) 36-70, diversity & inclusion. United States Air Force. https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/diversity/1/afpd36-70.pdf

Sisk, R. (2020, July 15). Esper bans use of promotion board photos, orders review of hair and grooming standards. Military.com. https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/07/15/esper-bans-use-of-promotion-board-photos-orders-review-of-hair-and-grooming-standards.html

Toropin, K. (2021, August 3). Navy's personnel boss says getting rid of photos in promotion boards hurt diversity. Military.com. https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/08/03/navys-personnel-boss-says-getting-rid-of-photos-promotion-boards-hurt-diversity.html

U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). Quick facts: United States. Census.gov. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/US

U.S. Army. (2021, October 7) For the #USArmy, diversity isn't about a number. It's about building high-performing and cohesive teams in an inclusive environment [Image attached] [Status update]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/USarmy/posts/234902558665092

U.S. Army. (2020, September 1). The Army people strategy: Diversity, equity, and inclusion annex. https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/the_army_people_strategy_diversity_equity_and_inclusion_annex_2020_09_01_signed_final.pdf

U.S. Coast Guard. (2020, June 25). United States Coast Guard diversity & inclusion plan 2019-2023. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/DIAP/

U.S. Navy. (2021, January 26). Task force one Navy: Final report. Department of Defense. https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jan/26/2002570959/-1/-1/1/TASK%20FORCE%20ONE%20NAVY%20FINAL%20REPORT.PDF

Vie, L. L., Trivette, E. V., & Lathrop, A. D. (2021, June). Department of the Army career engagement survey first annual report. Department of the Armyhttps://talent.army.mil/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/DACES-Annual-Report_JUNE2021.pdf.

Finding 3 Endnotes

[1] Shue, Matthias, Watson et al. (2021)
[2] (Kintzle, S. & Castro, C. A., 2018)
[3] Department of Defense, 2016; Department of Veterans Affairs (n.d))
[4] n=279
[5] n=56
[6] (Keeling, M., Borah, E. V., Kintzle, S., Kleykamp, M., & Robertson, H. C., 2020)
[7] This response was tied with "caregiving resources" (25%); n=126
[8] n=31
[9] (Aronson, K. R., Perkins, D. F., Morgan, N. R., Bleser, J. A., Vogt, D., Copeland, L. A., Finley, E. P., & Gilman, C. L., 2020)
[10] ibid
[11] ibid
[12] (Aronson, K. R., Perkins, D. F., Morgan, N. R., Bleser, J. A., Vogt, D., Copeland, L., … Gilman, C., 2019)
[13] (Morgan, N. R., Aronson, K. R., Perkins, D. F., Bleser, J. A., Davenport, K., Vogt, D., Copeland, L. A., Finley, E. P., & Gilman, C. L., 2020)
[14] (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017)
[15] Data Source: US Census, ACS 2018, NHGIS. Created by the EarthTime team, CREATE Lab, Carnegie Mellon University. https://earthtime.org/. The CREATE Lab is made possible by the Heinz Endowment.
[16] n=524
[17] (Saha, S., Freeman, M., Toure, J., Tippens, K. M., Weeks, C., & Ibrahim, S., 2008; Thayer, R. L., 2021, December 17)
[18] (Kondo, K., Low, A., Everson, T., Gordon, C., Veazie, S., Lozier, C. C., Freeman, M.; Motu'apuaka, M., Mendelson, A., Friesen, M., Paynter, R., Friesen, C., Anderson, J., Boundy, E., Saha, S., Quiñones, A., Kansagara, D., 2017, September; Sheehan, C. M., & Hayward, M. D., 2019)
[19] (Copeland L.A., Finley E.P., Vogt D., Perkins D.F., Nillni Y.I., 2020, March)
[20] (Aronson, K.R., Perkins, D.F., Morgan, N.R., Bleser, J.A., Vogt, D., Copeland, L., … Gilman, C., 2019).
[21] (Morgan, N. R., Aronson, K. R., Perkins, D. F., Bleser, J. A., Davenport, K., Vogt, D., Copeland, L. A., Finley, E. P., & Gilman, C. L., 2020; Copeland L.A., Finley E.P., Vogt D., Perkins D.F., Nillni Y.I., 2020, March; Aronson, K.R., Perkins, D.F., Morgan, N.R., Bleser, J.A., Vogt, D., Copeland, L., … Gilman, C., 2019)
[22] Veteran needs during their transition may vary by gender. For example, women veterans have been found to be twice as likely to use healthcare early in their transition compared to male veterans, but they are equally as likely to utilize VHA care (Copeland LA, Finley EP, Vogt D, Perkins DF, Nillni YI., 2020, March). This suggests that female veterans are underutilizing VHA services. This could have a negative impact on their utilization of other programs, such as housing, that the VHA can connect them to. A Veteran's rank and discharge status also play a large role in determining the unique challenges that a veteran faces during their transition back to civilian life.

A recent study of newly transitioned post-9/11 veterans found that those from junior enlisted ranks were less likely to utilize counseling services and were less likely to use non-VA health care (Aronson, K. R., Perkins, D. F., Morgan, N. R., Bleser, J. A., Vogt, D., Copeland, L. A., Finley, E. P., & Gilman, C. L., 2020). This may be because senior enlisted and officer ranked veterans were three to five times more likely to use programs that enhance access to healthcare. In addition to differences in healthcare utilization, studies have shown that junior enlisted ranks are less likely to use employment programs compared to those in the senior enlisted and officer ranks (Aronson, K. R., Perkins, D. F., Morgan, N. R., Bleser, J. A., Vogt, D., Copeland, L., … Gilman, C., 2019).

[23] Maury, R.V., Zoli, C., Fay, D., Armstrong, N., Linsner, R., Sears, K., Tihic, M., Cantor, G., & Keville, M.R., 2020, September; Maury, R.V.; Zoli, C., Fay, D.; Armstrong, N.; Boldon, N.Y.; Linsner, R. K; Sears, K. Cantor, G.; & Keville, M.R., 2020, February). The data analyzed from the 2016-2018 Military Family Lifestyle Surveys were aggregated to increase sample size. Across the 2016, 2017, and 2018 surveys both race/ethnicity and veteran status were assessed using the exact same items. Race/ethnicity was assessed as a select all question, though answer choices differ from this survey. For transition survey items, the sample sizes for each racial/ethnic group were as follows: Hispanic or Latino/a Veteran respondents: n=151, Black/African American Veteran respondents: n=113, Asian Veteran respondents: n=59, and for Veteran respondents who selected only white/ Non-Hispanic as their race/ethnicity: n=1,416.

Finding 3 References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Aronson, K. R., Perkins, D. F., Morgan, N. R., Bleser, J. A., Vogt, D., Copeland, L., Gilman, C. (2019). Post-9/11 Veteran Transitions to Civilian Life: Predictors of the Use of Employment Programs. Journal of Veterans Studies, 5(1), 14–22. http://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v5i1.127

Aronson, K. R., Perkins, D. F., Morgan, N. R., Bleser, J. A., Vogt, D., Copeland, L. A., Finley, E. P., & Gilman, C. L. (2020). Use of health services among post-9/11 veterans with mental health conditions within 90 days of separation from the military. Psychiatric Services (Washington, D.C.), 71(7), 670-677. https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.201900326

Copeland LA, Finley EP, Vogt D, Perkins DF, Nillni YI. Gender differences in newly separated veterans' use of healthcare. The American Journal of Managed Care. 26(3):97-104. https://doi.org/10.37765/ajmc.2020.42633

Department of Defense . (2016). DoD TAP: Transition assistance program. https://www.dodtap.mil/core_curriculum.html.

Department of Veterans Affairs. (2017). Minority Veterans report: Military service history and VA benefit utilization statistics. Office of Data Governance and Analytics. https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/Minority_Veterans_Report.pdf

Department of Veterans Affairs. VetSuccess on Campus Fact Sheet. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. https://www.benefits.va.gov/VOCREHAB/docs/VetSuccessOnCampusFactSheet2018.pdf.

Keeling, M., Borah, E. V., Kintzle, S., Kleykamp, M., & Robertson, H. C. (2020). Military spouses transition too! A call to action to address spouses' military to civilian transition. Journal of Family Social Work, 23(1), 3-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/10522158.2019.1652219

Kintzle, S. & Castro, C. A. (2018). Examining veteran transition to the workplace through military transition theory. In P. D. Harms and P. L. Perrewé (Eds.), Occupational stress and well-being in military contexts (pp. 117-127). EmeraldPublishing Limited.

Kondo, K., Low, A., Everson, T., Gordon, C. D., Veazie, S., Lozier, C. C., Freeman, M., Motu'apuaka, M., Mendelson, A., Friesen, M., Paynter, R., Friesen, C., Anderson, J., Boundy, E., Saha, S., Quiñones, A., Kansagara, D. (2017, September). Health disparities in Veterans: A map of the evidence. Medical Care. 55(n.i.)S9-S15. https://doi.org/10.1097/MLR.0000000000000756

Maury, R.V., Zoli, C., Fay, D., Armstrong, N., Linsner, R., Sears, K., Tihic, M., Cantor, G., & Keville, M.R. (2020, September). Hispanics and Latinos in the military: From service to civilian life. Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University. https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/IVMF-Hispanics-and-Latinos-in-the-Military-Infographic-Sept-2020.pdf

Maury, R.V., Zoli, C., Fay, D.; Armstrong, N., Boldon, N.Y., Linsner, R. K, Sears, K. Cantor, G., & Keville, M.R. (2020, February). Black & African Americans in the military: From service to civilian life. Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University. https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2021_BlackHistoryMonth_1.27.21_P3.pdf

Maury, R.V., Linsner, R.K., Zoli, C., Fay, D. (2020, March). Women in the military: Transition, employment, and higher education after service. Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University. https://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1064&context=ivmf

Morgan, N. R., Aronson, K. R., Perkins, D. F., Bleser, J. A., Davenport, K., Vogt, D., Copeland, L. A., Finley, E. P., & Gilman, C. L. (2020). Reducing barriers to post-9/11 veterans' use of programs and services as they transition to civilian life. BMC Health Services Research, 20(1), 525-525. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-020-05320-4

Saha, S., Freeman, M., Toure, J., Tippens, K. M., Weeks, C., & Ibrahim, S. (2008). Racial and ethnic disparities in the VA health care system: a systematic review. Journal of general internal medicine, 23(5), 654–671. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-008-0521-4

Sheehan, C. M., & Hayward, M. D. (2019). Black/white differences in mortality among veteran and non-veteran males. Social Science Research, 79, 101-114. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2019.02.006

Shue, S., Matthias, M. S., Watson, D. P., Miller, K. K., & Munk, N. (2021). The career transition experiences of military veterans: A qualitative study. Military Psychology, 33(6), 359-371. https://doi.org/10.1080/08995605.2021.1962175

Thayer, R. L. (2021, December 17). VA looking to move resources to facilities in southern US to meet growing veterans population in the region. Stars and Stripes. https://www.stripes.com/veterans/2021-12-16/veterans-affairs-mcdonough-texas-health-care-3997708.html.

Vogt, D., King, M. W., Borowski, S., Finley, E. P., Perkins, D. F., & Copeland, L. A. (2021). Identifying factors that contribute to military veterans' post-military well-being. Applied Psychology : Health and Well-being, 13(2), 341-356. https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12252

Finding 4 Endnotes

[1] Ruiz, Horowitz, & Tamir, 2020, July 1; Human Rights Watch, 2020, May 12; Addo, 2020.
[2] n=526 (excludes those reporting "I don't know").
[3] n=510 (excludes those reporting "I don't know").
[4] n=523 (excludes those reporting "I don't know").
[5] n=530 (excludes those reporting "I don't know").
[6] After excluding those reporting "I don't know," 425 respondents residing in the Midwest (n=46), West (n=141), South (n=188), and Northeast (n=50) provided an answer when asked: "Considering interactions in your local CIVILIAN community since January 2020, how often have you experienced the following? - 'I have been threatened or harassed.'" After excluding those reporting "I don't know," 427 respondents residing in the Midwest (n=44), West (n=140), South (n=190), and Northeast (n=53) provided an answer when asked "Considering interactions in your local CIVILIAN community since January 2020, how often have you experienced the following? - 'I feared for my personal safety because of my race/ethnicity.'" Both questions were asked using the following scaled answer choices: Never, 1-4 times, 5-10 times, More than 10 times; 'at least one incident' includes anyone who selected 1-4 times, 5-10 times, and more than 10 times. For the purposes of analysis, regions were defined using census aggregation: Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin); West (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming); South (Alabama, Arkansas,

District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia); and Northeast (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont).

[7] Jones, 2021.

[8] Ives & Cramer, 2021.

[9] Finley & Foreman, 2021, April 18; Pickrell, 2021, April 13.

[10] Gilberstadt, H., 2020, June 5; Newall, Jackson, & Sawyer, 2021, March 5.

[11] n=243

[12] n=247

[13] n=259

[14] n=263

[15] n=42

[16] n=145

[17] n=52

[18] Profiled by military law enforcement - Black (33%, n=243), Asian (14%, n=100), and Hispanic (16%, n=160); profiled by civilian law enforcement - Black (36%, n=247), Asian (20%, n=100), Hispanic (14%, n=160). Trust of military law enforcement - Black (49%, n=259), Asian (69%, n=109), Hispanic (60%, n=177). Trust of civilian law enforcement - Black (30%, n=263), Asian (50%, n=109), Hispanic (45%, n=177).

Finding 4 References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Addo I. Y. (2020). Double pandemic: racial discrimination amid coronavirus disease 2019. Social Sciences & Humanities Open, 2(1), 100074. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2020.100074

Finley, B., and Foreman T. (2021, April 18). Police mistreatment of Black service members common even before Virginia case. Military Times. https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2021/04/18/police-mistreatment-of-black-service-members-common-even-before-virginia-case/

Gilberstadt, H. (2020, June 5). A month before George Floyd's death, black and white Americans differed sharply in confidence in the police. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/05/a-month-before-george-floyds-death-black-and-white-americans-differed-sharply-in-confidence-in-the-police/

Human Rights Watch. (2020, May 12). Covid-19 fueling anti-Asian racism and xenophobia worldwide: National action plans deeded to counter intolerance. https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/12/covid-19-fueling-anti-asian-racism-and-xenophobia-worldwide

Ives, M., & Cramer, M. (2021, April 10). Black Army officer pepper-sprayed in traffic stop accuses officers of assault. The New York Times. Retrieved October 8, 2021, from https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/10/us/caron-nazario-windsor-police-virginia.html

Jones, J. M. (2021, August 13). In U.S., Black confidence in police recovers from 2020 low. Gallup.com. https://news.gallup.com/poll/352304/black-confidence-police-recovers-2020-low.aspx

Newall, M., Jackson, C., Sawyer, J. (2021, March 5). Americans' trust in law enforcement, desire to protect law and order on the rise. USAToday/Ipsos. https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/americans-trust-law-enforcement-desire-protect-law-and-order-rise

Pickrell, R. (2021, April 13). Veterans of color say video of police pepper-spraying a Black Army officer shows that not even a military uniform is protection from police violence. Business Insider. https://www.businessinsider.com/veterans-of-color-response-video-soldier-military-uniform-police-brutality-2021-4

Ruiz, N.G., Horowitz, J.M., & Tamir, C. (2020, July 1). Many Black and Asian Americans say they have experienced discrimination amid the COVID-19 outbreak. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/07/01/many-black-and-asian-americans-say-they-have-experienced-discrimination-amid-the-covid-19-outbreak/

Finding 5 Endnotes

[1] Blue Star Families, 2020, September; Blue Star Families, 2020, November.
[2] Black (25%), Hispanic/Latinx (20%), white (16%) respondents indicated "communication about resources/services available" as an "unmet community need" (Blue Star Families, 2020, September).
[3] Blue Star Families, 2020, November.
[4] Blue Star Families, 2020, November.
[5] Pratt & Hahn, 2021.
[6] Question: Have you or your family used services or programs of the following types since January 2020? Respondents indicate needing the service ("No, I/we needed it but didn't get it" OR "Yes").
[7] Among respondents who indicate they needed a resource, the percentage who report "I/we needed it but didn't get it."
[8] n=656
[9] n=554
[10] n=55
[11] n=392
[12] n=325
[13] n=44
[14] n=656
[15] n=343
[16] n=83. Note: "Other" (13%) is tied with "affordability" as the third most commonly-cited barrier to utilizing behavioral and mental health services among active-duty family respondents*; responses vary. However, stories of difficulties obtaining referrals illustrate the most common theme in write-in responses. Responses were not re-coded as "accessibility," which is already the second most common barrier.
[17] n=390
[18] n=245
[19] n=58. Note: "Other" is the third most commonly selected barrier (12%); write-in responses vary and do not coalesce around a specific theme. With "Other" removed, "knowledge" and "affordability" are tied.
[20] n=647
[21] n=239
[22] n=58. Note: "Other" is the second most commonly selected answer choice (9%), and nearly all write-in responses describe a form of ineligibility; these responses were not re-coded as "eligibility" is already the most commonly selected barrier. Once "Other" is removed, "affordability" and "stigma" are tied for second.
[23] n=379
[24] n=132
[25] n=50
[26] n=652
[27] n=174
[28] n=73
[29] n=388
[30] n=116
[31] n=58. Note: "Other" is the third most commonly selected answer choice (12%), and nearly all respondents indicate "they did not qualify." These responses were not re-coded to "eligibility," which is already the top barrier for Veteran family respondents.* Once "Other" is removed, five answer choices are tied for third: stigma, proximity, availability, lack of child care, and lack of time.
[32] n=655
[33] n=318
[34] n=120
[35] n=389
[36] n=192
[37] n=81. Note: "Other" is the second most commonly selected answer choice (14%); the only theme emerging

from write-in responses is the lack of a response from existing resources when the individual reached out (4 respondents note this). With "Other" removed, "stigma" is the third most common barrier.

[38] n=656
[39] n=200
[40] n=83
[41] n=383
[42] n=129
[43] n=74. Note: "Other" is the third most commonly selected barrier identified (14%), and write-in responses primarily highlight accessibility concerns caused by COVID-19 or eligibility barriers specific to the individual respondent; these responses were not re-coded, as "knowledge" and "eligibility" are already the top two barriers among Veteran respondents* requiring but not accessing caregiving resources. Once "Other" is removed, "availability" is the third most commonly selected response.
[44] n=656
[45] n=169
[46] n=63
[47] n=385
[48] n=114
[49] n=63. Note: "Other" is the third most commonly selected barrier (14%), and write-in responses vary with no apparent themes. Once "Other" is removed, "affordability" is the third most commonly selected answer choice.
[50] n=654
[51] n=341
[52] n=89
[53] n=391
[54] n=221
[55] n=70. Note: "stigma" and "proximity" are tied.
[56] n=656
[57] n=256
[58] n=70
[59] n=385
[60] n=170
[61] n=66. Note: "Other" is the third most commonly selected answer choice (12%), but most write-in responses are a description of an accessibility concern caused by COVID-19; these responses were not re-coded as "knowledge about accessibility" is already the top reported barrier among Veteran respondents* who require legal services but did not receive them. Once "Other" is removed, "proximity" is the third most common barrier.
[62] n=660
[63] n=224
[64] n=82
[65] n=393
[66] n=252
[67] n=62
[68] Wu & Eamon, 2010; Huebner, Alidootsi, Brickel, & Wade, 2010.
[69] In 2018, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reported that—due to things like historical discriminatory policies, insufficient resources, and inefficient federal program delivery—Native Americans continue to rank near the bottom of all Americans in terms of health, education, and employment. (U.S. Government Accountability Office, n.d.; Fonseca, 2018, December 20).
[70] Utilizing data from the Asian American Quality of Life Survey, researchers found 44% of participants were categorized as having mental distress and about 6.1% having serious mental illness. However, only 23% had accessed services. Seven percent reported there was a time they needed mental health care and could not get it. (Reinert, Fritze, & Nguyen, October 2021). Additionally, analysis of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Survey on Drug Use and Health revealed Asian youth were the least likely to have seen a professional or received medication for their depression among all analyzed groups. (Jang, et. al., 2019).
[71] USDA Economic Research Service, 2021.
[72] A study on Hispanic caregivers revealed only 35% of Hispanic caregivers accessed caregiving support and resources. Hispanic caregivers are only half as likely as non-Hispanic caregivers to have ever used the internet to search for information on any subject (43% vs. 81%). (Evercare and National Alliance for Caregiving, 2008, November).
[73] Question: Have you or your family used services or programs of the following types since January 2020?

Respondents indicate needing the service ("No, I/we needed it but didn't get it" OR "Yes").

[74] Among respondents who indicate they needed a resource, the percentage who report "I/we needed it but didn't get it."

[75] n=73

[76] n=66

[77] n=73

[78] n=72

[79] n=71

[80] n=72

[81] n=74

[82] n=73

[83] n=72

[84] n=73

[85] n=73

[86] n=125

[87] n=109

[88] n=125

[89] n=54

[90] n=124

[91] n=124

[92] n=124

[93] n=59

[94] n=125

[95] n=125

[96] n=125

[97] n=60

[98] n=125

[99] n=125

[100] n=299

[101] n=254

[102] n=299

[103] n=163

[104] n=293

[105] n=108

[106] n=299

[107] n=76

[108] n=299

[109] n=155

[110] n=298

[111] n=86

[112] n=299

[113] n=72

[114] n=299

[115] n=160

[116] n=299

[117] n=111

[118] n=303

[119] n=102

[120] n=204

[121] n=159

[122] n=204

[123] n=92

[124] n=200

[125] n=67

[126] n=203

[127] n=203

[128] n=89

[129] n=204
[130] n=51
[131] n=204
[132] n=203
[133] n=88
[134] n=204
[135] n=68
[136] n=204
[137] n=58

Finding 5 References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Blue Star Families. (2020, September). Pain points poll deep dive: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on Black and Hispanic/Latinx families. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/BDG-PPP-DeepDive-Black-Hispanic-Respondents.pdf

Blue Star Families. (2020, November). Resilience under stress study. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/RUSS-Report-11.4.20_FINAL.pdf

Evercare and National Alliance for Caregiving. (2008, November). Evercare study of Hispanic family caregiving in the U.S. Family Caregiver Alliance. https://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Hispanic_Caregiver_Study_web_ENG_FINAL_11_04_08.pdf.

Fonseca, F. (2018, December 20). Report: US fails in funding obligation to Native Americans. AP NEWS. https://apnews.com/article/north-america-us-news-ut-state-wire-az-state-wire-wa-state-wire-b0809ce879294ca7b07ef7ef633adb12.

Huebner, A., Alidootsi, B., Brickel, M., & Wade, K. (2010). Summary of findings: military family needs assessment. Office of the Secretary of Defense. https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/Project%20Documents/MilitaryHOMEFRONT/Service%20Providers/DoD%20Conferences/MFPP/Needs%20Assessment/Summary_of_Findings_Military_Family_Needs_Assessment_Final.pdf

Jang, Y., Yoon, H., Park, N. S., Rhee, M. K., & Chiriboga, D. A. (2019). Mental health service use and perceived unmet needs for mental health care in Asian Americans. Community Mental Health Journal. 55(2), 241–248. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-018-0348-3

Pratt, E., & Hahn, H. (2021). What happens when people face unfair treatment or judgment when applying for public assistance or social services? Urban Institute. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/104566/what-happens-when-people-face-unfair-treatment-or-judgment-when-applying-for-public-assistance-or-social-services_0.pdf.

Reinert, M, Fritze, D. & Nguyen, T. (2021, October). The state of mental health in America 2022. Mental Health America. https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/2022%20State%20of%20Mental%20Health%20in%20America.pdf

Wu, C.-F., & Eamon, M. K. (2010). Need for and barriers to accessing public benefits among low-income families with children. Children and Youth Services Review. 32(1), 58–66. https://doi-org.lopes.idm.oclc.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2009.07.001

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2021). Food security status of U.S. households in 2020. Economic Research Service. https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx

U.S. Government Accountability Office (n.d.). Tribal and Native American issues.https://www.gao.gov/tribal-and-native-american-issues.

Zoli, C, Maury, R, & Fay, D, (2015). Missing perspectives: Servicemembers' transition from service to civilian life - data-driven research to enact the promise of the post-9/11 GI Bill. Institute for Veterans & Military Families, Syracuse University. https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/MissingPerspectivesACC_03.02.18.pdf

Finding 6 Endnotes

[1] Burk, 2007; Moskos and Butler, 1996.
[2] Kerrison, 2009. Note: Most existing research on the financial benefits of military service, particularly for military families of color, pre-dates the 2008 recession and offers conflicting narratives, with some studies finding positive financial outcomes associated with military service, and others finding this not to be the case, particularly for veterans transitioning back into civilian life.
[3] Strochak, Hyun, and Goodman, 2020.
[4] "While statistically similar, average household income of white, non-Hispanic active-duty households is slightly greater than that of their non-military counterparts" (Strochak, Hyun, and Goodman, 2020).
[5] ibid
[6] n=597. Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[7] n=600. Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[8] n=600. Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[9] n=273. Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[10] n=185. Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[11] n=146. Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[12] n=600. Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[13] n=569. Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[14] n=579. Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[15] n=610. Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[16] n=610. Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[17] n=578. Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[18] n=576. Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[19] Blue Star Families, n.d. (unpublished data). 2020 Military Family Lifestyle Survey; Office of People Analytics, 2018, May.
[20] Office of People Analytics, 2018, May.
[21] ibid
[22] ibid
[23] ibid
[24] ibid
[25] n=585. Respondents who indicated "Do not need" were excluded from this analysis.
[26] n=593. Respondents who indicated "Do not need" were excluded from this analysis.
[27] n=599. Respondents who indicated "Do not need" were excluded from this analysis.
[28] n=599. Respondents who indicated "Do not need" were excluded from this analysis.
[29] Investment: (Black, 17%, n=275), (Asian, 14%, n=112), (Hispanic, 20%, n=185); Savings: (Black, 34%, n=270), (Asian, 31%, n=110), (Hispanic, 42%, n=183); Retirement: (Black, 26%, n=272), (Asian, 30%, n=110), (Hispanic, 30%, n=186); Debt: (Black, 44%, n=270), (Asian, 41%, n=105), (Hispanic, 50%, n=183). Respondents who indicated "Do not need" were excluded from this analysis.
[30] n=719
[31] n=417
[32] n=170
[33] n=153
[34] n=128
[35] n=123
[36] n=113
[37] n=112

[38] n=606
[39] n=116
[40] Strochak, Hyun, and Goodman, L., 2020.
[41] n=296
[41] Office of People Analytics, 2018, May:

	White, non-Hispanic Spouses	Minority Spouses	Black non-Hispanic Spouses
Bounced 2 or more checks	3%	4%	4%
Failed to make minimum payment on a credit card or other account	6%	11%	17%
Fell behind in paying rent or mortgage	2%	4%	5%
Was pressured to pay bills by stores, creditors, or bill collectors	7%	12%	16%
Had telephone, cable or internet shut off	3%	6%	8%
Had water, heat, or electricity shut off	1%	2%	2%
Had a household appliance or furniture repossessed	0%	1%	1%
Failed to make a car payment	3%	6%	9%
Had a car repossessed	0%	1%	1%
Filed for personal bankruptcy	0%	1%	2%
Had to pay overdraft fees to your bank or credit union 2 or more times	9%	14%	18%
Borrowed money from family and/or friends to pay bills	10%	14%	15%
Took money out of a retirement fund or investment to pay living expenses	8%	10%	12%
Had personal relationship problems with a partner due to finances	18%	21%	25%
Had your (or your spouse's) security clearance affected due to your financial condition	0%	2%	3%
Used a local food pantry	2%	4%	3%

[42] Debt n=585, savings n=593, retirement n=595, investment n=599
[43] USDA Economic Research Service, 2021.
[44] n=652. Question: Have you or your family used services or programs of the following types since January 2020? Respondents indicate needing the service ("No, I/we needed it but didn't get it" OR "Yes").
[45] n=71
[46] n=124
[47] n=299
[48] n=203
[49] n=647
[50] n=72
[51] n=124
[52] n=293
[53] n=200
[54] n=388
[55] n=379
[56] n=174
[57] n=239
[58] n=116
[59] n=132
[60] Among respondents who indicate they needed a resource, the percentage who report "I/we needed it but didn't get it."

Finding 6 References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Burk, J. (2007). The changing moral contract for military service. In A.J. Bacevich (Ed.), The long war: A new history of national security policy since World War II (pp. 405-55). New York: Columbia Univ. Press.

Kerrison, E.M. (2009). Paradigms of Inequality: Exploring how race conditions the relationship between income attainment and veteran status [Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation]. Villanova.

Moskos C.C, Butler J.S. (1996). All that we can be. New York: Basic Books.

Office of People Analytics. (2018, May). 2017 Survey of Active Duty Spouses. Tabulations of Responses. OPA Report No. 2018-006. http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/order.html

Strochak, S., Hyun Choi, J., Goodman, L. (2020). The impacts of US military service on homeownership and income. Urban Institute. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/101495/the_impacts_of_us_military_service_on_homeownership_and_income.pdf

U.S. Department of Agriculture (2021). Food security status of U.S. households in 2020. Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx

Finding 7 Endnotes

[1] Bradbard, Maury, & Armstrong, 2016, July; Maury & Stone, 2014; Hiring Our Heroes, 2017. 2017, July; Blue Star Families, 2020.

[2] Earnings for military spouses is data analyzed using Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Sophia Foster, Ronald Goeken, Jose Pacas, Megan Schouweiler, and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 11.0 [U.S. Census Bureau 2019 American Community Survey]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2021. https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V11.0. Notes: The variables created for military spouse and civilian for the above come from U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for 2019 only. Military spouses are identified as being in the armed forces family/household, but dual military families are excluded from this analysis. A Veteran can be identified as a military spouse if they are not in the active-duty component but are a Veteran. A civilian can be identified as neither being in the armed forces family/household as well as Veteran family/household. The variables used in the labor force are from calculated employment status variables and only include those that are employed and unemployed and exclude those not in the labor force. The variable for income calculations is "inctot" – total personal income. In all calculations, (1) values of 9999999 are excluded, (2) all negative values are excluded, and (3) all values of zero (0) are excluded. Thus, values presented are all positive income values with no inflation adjustment. In addition, the calculations for all groups are of those in the labor force only and population 18 and over.

[3] Leonce, 2020.

[4] Blue Star Families, 2019.

[5] Office of People Analytics, 2019.

[6] Unpublished results from Blue Star Families' 2018 and 2019 MFLS. Respondents from the 2018 and 2019 data sets were aggregated to increase the response rate in the analysis; the primary limitation from this approach is that it is possible that individual respondents took both surveys and are counted twice in the analysis. Race/ethnicity was asked as a select-all question in both surveys, and respondents who selected more than one identity of color may also be counted more than once. Analysis regarding "white, non-Hispanic" respondents excludes respondents who identified at least one racial/ethnic identity other than white. Frequencies of respondents by race/ethnicity: Aggregated "military spouse respondents of color" (n=1,218; includes "other" and all other racial/ethnic groups), including Black (n=313), Hispanic (n=835), Asian (n=315), and white, non-Hispanic (n=6,101).

[7] Respondents from the 2018 and 2019 MFLS data sets were aggregated for the purposes of this analysis, a choice made to increase the overall response rate, but this also has limitations. Limitations are as follows: (1) respondents may have taken both the 2018 and 2019 surveys, and because identifying information was not obtained in both years, there was no way to de-duplicate responses; (2) race/ethnicity was asked as a select-all question in both surveys, meaning that overlap is a possibility, aside from the "white, non-Hispanic" group, which excluded any respondents identifying with at least one identity other than white; (3) "active-duty spouses" were defined to include activated National Guard and Reserve spouses in the 2018 and 2019 surveys, whereas in Blue Star Families' research conducted in 2020 or later, only spouses of non-National Guard or Reserve–active-duty spouses–are defined as "active-duty"; (4) employment status was inquired about in a slightly different fashion in the 2018 vs. 2019 MFLS: In 2018, respondents were asked, "Are you currently employed outside the home, including work from home, online, or contract work?" (answer choices: yes, full time; yes, part time; no, active duty; does not apply; prefer not to answer). In this analysis, those responding "yes, full time," "yes, part time," or "active duty" were considered to be "working." In the 2019 survey, respondents were asked, "Are you currently employed, including work from home, online, or contract work?" (answer choices: Yes, I am an active-duty service member; Yes, full-time work [35 or more hours per week]; Yes, part-time work [fewer than 35 hours per week]; No, but I want or need to work; No, and I don't want or need to work; Retired; Does not apply; and Prefer not to answer). In this analysis, those responding to "yes, full-time work," "yes, part-time work," and "yes, I am an active-duty service member" were considered to be "working." When asked about household income in the 2018 and 2019 surveys, respondents were asked to select an income range for the years prior (2017 and 2018) in lieu of reporting a whole number, which constrained analysis. For the purposes of this study, responses were broken into a dichotomous variable: Under $50,000 and over $50,000. This income level was selected because it was the closest income level to 130% of the national poverty level in 2019, which also had a response rate sufficient for analysis. Frequencies of active-duty spouses included in analysis by race/ethnicity: all active-duty spouse respondents of color (n=1564), including Hispanic (n=799), Black (n=301), and Asian (n=285), and white, non-Hispanic (n=5,834).

[8] Office of People Analytics, 2020; Blue Star Families, 2018; Blue Star Families, 2019; Blue Star Families, 2020; Blue Star Families, 2021; Hiring Our Heroes, 2017.

[9] Office of People Analytics, 2020.

[10] Blue Star Families, 2021.

[11] Unpublished results from the 2019 Military Family Lifestyle Survey. Respondents who were employed were asked to identify whether or not several criteria often associated with underemployment were associated with their employment status. White, non-Hispanic active-duty spouse respondents (n=1,365) and active-duty spouse respondents of color (n=332). Contact survey@bluestarfam.org for additional information.

[12] Office of People Analytics, 2018, May; Office of People Analytics, 2020.

[13] Blue Star Families, 2021. Race/ethnicity was asked as a single-select question in the 2020 MFLS.

[14] Blue Star Families, 2020. Blue Star Families, 2021.

[15] ibid.

[16] Blue Star Families, 2019; Office of People Analytics, 2020.

[17] Borah & Fina, 2017.

[18] Frequencies: "ability to find a job" (n=362), "ability to work in my career field" (n=353); "ability to advance within my career" (n=349), "ability to pursue educational opportunities" (n=368); "ability to cultivate a strong professional network" (n=360); respondents who indicated "I don't know" are excluded from the analysis.

[19] n=368.

[20] Question: In general, how do you feel about each of the following aspects of your employment situation, compared to your non-white friends and family who are not connected to the military? For the purposes of analysis, "much worse" and "somewhat worse" were aggregated to "worse"; "much better" and "somewhat better" were aggregated to "better." Respondents who indicated they "did not know" are excluded from the analysis.

[21] n=349; respondents who indicated "I don't know" are excluded from the analysis.

[22] n=362; respondents who indicated "I don't know" are excluded from the analysis.

[23] n=353; respondents who indicated "I don't know" are excluded from the analysis.

[24] n=360; respondents who indicated "I don't know" are excluded from the analysis.

[25] n=368; respondents who indicated "I don't know" are excluded from the analysis.

[26] n=392; excludes respondents who selected "I don't know."

[27] n=368.

[28] n=211.

[29] n=211.

[30] n=261.
[31] n=261.
[32] Earnings for military spouses is data analyzed using Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Sophia Foster, Ronald Goeken, Jose Pacas, Megan Schouweiler, and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 11.0 [U.S. Census Bureau 2019 American Community Survey]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2021. https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V11.0. Notes: The variables created for military spouse and civilian for the above come from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for 2019 only. Military spouses are identified as being in the armed forces family/household, but dual military families are excluded from this analysis. A Veteran can be identified as a military spouse if they are not in the active-duty component but are a Veteran. A civilian can be identified as neither being in the armed forces family/household as well as Veteran family/household. The variables used in the labor force are from calculated employment status variables and only include those employed and unemployed and exclude those not in the labor force. The variable for income calculations is "inctot" – total personal income. In all calculations, (1) values of 9999999 are excluded, (2) all negative values are excluded, and (3) all values of zero (0) are excluded. Thus, values presented are all positive income values with no inflation adjustment. In addition, the calculations for all groups are of those in the labor force only and population 18 and over.

Finding 7 References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Barroso, A., & Brown, A. (2021). Gender pay gap in U.S. held steady in 2020. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/05/25/gender-pay-gap-facts/

Blue Star Families. (2020). 2019 Military family lifestyle comprehensive report. https://bluestarfam.org/survey

Blue Star Families. (2021). 2020 Military family lifestyle comprehensive report. https://bluestarfam.org/survey

Borah, E., & Fina, B. (2017). Military spouses speak up: A qualitative study of military and veteran spouses' perspectives. Journal of Family Social Work, 20(2), 144-161. https://doi.org/10.1080/10522158.2017.1284702

Bradbard, D.A., Maury, R., & Armstrong, N.A. (2016). The force behind the force: A business case for leveraging military spouse talent (employing military spouses, paper no. 1). Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University. https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/The-Force-Behind-the-Force-Full-Report-2.pdf

Hiring Our Heroes, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. (2017). Military spouses in the workplace: Understanding the impacts of spouse unemployment on military recruitment, retention, and readiness. https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Military%20Spouses%20in%20the%20Workplace.pdf

Leonce, T. E. (2020). The inevitable rise in dual-income households and the intertemporal effects on labor markets. Compensation & Benefits Review, 52(2), 64-76. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886368719900032

Maury, R. & Stone, B. (2014). Military spouse employment report. Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University, in collaboration with: Military Officers Association of America. https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/MilitarySpouseEmploymentReport_2013.pdf

Meadows, S. O., Griffin, B. A., Karney, B. R., & Pollak, J. (2016). Employment gaps between military spouses and matched civilians. Armed Forces and Society, 42(3), 542-561. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X15607810

U.S. Department of Defense, Office of People Analytics. (2018, May). 2017 Survey of Active Duty Spouses. Tabulations of Responses. OPA Report No. 2018-006. http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/order.html

U.S. Department of Defense, Office of People Analytics. (2020). 2019 Survey of Active Duty Spouses. https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Surveys/ADSS1901_MOS-Briefing-508-Revised.pdf

U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense. 2019 Profile of the Military Community. https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2019-demographics-report.pdf

Finding 8 Endnotes

[1] Gumber & Vespa, 2020; Angrist, 1990; Maury, Stone, & Armstrong, 2018, December.
[2] Kleycamp, 2013; Maury, Stone, & Armstrong, 2018, December.
[3] 33% indicated their ability to find a job was the same, and 26% indicated their ability to find a job was somewhat worse or much worse, compared to non-white family/friends who are not connected to the military (n=219). Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[4] Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020.
[5] ibid.
[6] Horsley, 2020; Pickert, 2021; Kam, 2021.
[7] Ramchand, Harrell, Berglass, & Marshall Lauck, 2020.
[8] 42% indicated that their employment situation was the same, and 23% indicated that their employment situation was somewhat worse or much worse, compared to family/friends (of the same race/ethnicity) who are not connected to the military (n=224). Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[9] Shane, 2021, December 15.
[10] Zoli, Maury, & Fay, 2015, November.
[11] 40% indicated that their ability to pursue educational opportunities was the same, and 14% indicated that their ability to pursue educational opportunities was somewhat worse or much worse, compared to non-white family/friends who are not connected to the military (n=222). Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[12] Shepherd, Sherman, MacLean, & Kay, 2021; Shepherd, Kay, & Gray, 2019; Stone, Legnick-Hall, & Muldoon, 2018;
Stone & Stone, 2015.
[13] n=308.
[14] n=310.
[15] Keeling, Kintzle, & Castro, 2018; Bradbard & Armstrong, 2016, February; Curry Hall, et al., 2014.
[16] 38% indicated that their ability to work in their career field was the same, and 37% indicated that their ability to pursue educational opportunities was somewhat better or much better compared to non-white family/friends who are not connected to the military (n=215). Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[17] 35% indicated that their ability to advance within their career was the same, and 35% indicated that their ability to pursue educational opportunities was somewhat better or much better compared to non-white family/friends who are not connected to the military (n=217). Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[18] Studies have shown that Veterans with physical or mental health concerns stemming from military service have poorer employment outcomes, compared to Veterans who do not. Concerted efforts should therefore be made to ensure that Veterans are accessing health care and vocational resources through the VA (see Finding 11).
[19] Bradbard, & Maury, 2021; Zoli, Maury, & Fay, 2015, November; Vogt, 2011.
[20] n=134.
[21] n=56.
[22] Bradbard & Armstrong, 2016, February; Bradbard, Maury, & Armstrong, 2016, December; Curry Hall, et al., 2014.
[23] n=178.
[24] 41% indicated that their ability to cultivate a strong professional network was the same, and 38% indicated that their ability to pursue educational opportunities was somewhat better or much better, compared to non-white family/friends who are not connected to the military (n=223). Respondents who indicated "I don't know" were excluded from this analysis.
[25] Unemployment for Veterans is data analyzed using BLS, 2020 Annual Average, Current Population Survey; population 18 and over. Race and ethnicity are two separate questions. Persons who ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Data for American Indian/Alaska Native and Native HawaiianOther

Pacific Islander are too small to report.

[26] Earnings for Veterans is data analyzed using Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Sophia Foster, Ronald Goeken, Jose Pacas, Megan Schouweiler and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 11.0 [U.S. Census Bureau 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates only reported 2019]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2021. https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V11.0. Notes: The variables created for veteran and civilian earnings are from U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for 2019 only. A Veterans is identified as someone who has served on active duty but is not currently serving. Civilians are identified as neither being in the armed forces family/household as well as veteran family/household. The variable for income calculations is "inctot," total personal income. In all calculations, (1) values of 9999999 were excluded, (2) all negative values were excluded, and (3) all values of zero (0) were excluded. Thus, values presented are all positive income values with no inflation adjustment. In addition, the calculations for all groups are of those in the labor force only and population 18 and over. Race and ethnicity are two separate questions. Persons who ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Data for American Indian/Alaska Native and Native HawaiianOther Pacific Islander are too small to report.

Finding 8 References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Angrist, J. (1990). Lifetime earnings and the Vietnam era draft lottery: Evidence from Social Security Administrative records. American Economic Review, 80(3), 313-336. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2006669.

Bradbard, D. A. & Armstrong, N. A. (2016, February). Work after service: Developing workforce readiness and veteran talent for the future. The Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY. https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/USAA_Report_Jan27FINAL.pdf.

Bradbard, D. A., Maury, R. V. (2021). The evolution of the veteran employment landscape – five key highlights. The Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY. https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/article/the-evolution-of-the-veteran-employment-landscape/.

Bradbard, D. A., Maury, R., & Armstrong, N. A., (2016, December). Pathways to opportunity: Financial flexibility and workforce readiness (Workforce Readiness Briefs, Paper No. 4). The Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY. https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/PathwaystoOpportunity.FinancialFlexibilityandWorkforceReadinessACC_02.23.18.pdf.

Curry Hall, Kimberly, Margaret C. Harrell, Barbara Bicksler, Robert Stewart, and Michael P. Fisher, Veteran Employment: Lessons from the 100,000 Jobs Mission, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-836-JPMCF, 2014. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR836.html

Greenberg, G., Rosenhack, R. A., Desai, R. A. (2007). Risk of incarceration amongst male veterans and nonveterans. Armed Forces & Society, 33(3), 337-350. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48608778

Gumber, C. & Vespa, J. (2020, November). The employment, earnings, and occupations of post-9/11 veterans (American Community Survey Briefs, ACS-46). U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2020. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/acs-46.pdf

Horsley, S. (2020). 'Overlooked': Asian American jobless rate surges but few take notice. NPR, Morning Edition. https://www.npr.org/2020/10/01/918834644/overlooked-asian-american-jobless-rate-surges-but-few-take-notice

Kam, K. (2021, January 28). Why Asian American women have had highest jobless rates during last 6 months of covid. NBCNews. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/why-asian-american-women-have-had-highest-jobless-rates-during-n1255699

Keeling, M. E., Ozuna, S. M., Kintzle, S., & Castro, C. A. (2019). Veterans' civilian employment experiences: Lessons learnt from focus groups. Journal of Career Development, 46(6), 692-705. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845318776785

Kleycamp, M. (2013). Unemployment, earnings, and enrollment among post-9/11 veterans. Social Science Research, 42(3). 836-851. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.12.017

Lundquist, J. (2004). When race makes no difference: Marriage and the military. Social Forces, 83 (2), 731-757. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3598346

Lundquist, J. (2006). The Black-White gap in marital dissolution among young adults: What can a counterfactual scenario tell us? Social Problems, 53(3), 421-441. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2006.53.3.421.

Lundquist, J. (2007). A comparison of civilian and enlisted divorce rates during the early all volunteer force era. Journal of Political and Military Sociology, 35(2), 199-217 http://www.jstor.org/stable/45369140.

Lundquist, J. (2008). Ethnic and gender satisfaction in the military: The effect of a meritocratic institution. American Sociological Review, 73(3), 477-496 https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240807300306

Maury, R., Stone, B., & Armstrong, N. (2018, December). Enhancing veterans' access to STEM education and careers: A labor market analysis of veterans in the STEM workforce. The Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY. https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/IVMF_Veterans-in-STEM_Tech-Full-Report_Dec-2018_FinalV2.pdf

McClendon, J., Kressin, N., Perkins, D., Copeland, L., Finley, E., & Vogt, D. (2021). The impact of discriminatory stress on changes in posttraumatic stress severity at the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender. Journal of Trauma & Dissociation, 22(2), 170-187. https://doi.org/10.1080/15299732.2020.1869079

Mincy, R., ed. (2006). Black Males Left Behind. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.

Montgomery, A. E., Szymkowiak, D., & Tsai, J. (2020). Housing instability and homeless program use among veterans: The intersection of race, sex, and homelessness. Housing Policy Debate, 30(3), 396-408. https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2020.1712613

Pickert, R. (2021, January 27). Jobless for Longer: How the Pandemic Has Hit Asian Americans. Bloomberg. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-27/jobless-for-longer-how-the-pandemic-has-hit-asian-americans

Ramchand, R., Harrell, M.C., Berglass, N., & Lauck, M. (2020, March). Veterans and COVID-19: Projecting the economic, social, and mental health needs of America's veterans. Bob Woodruff Foundation. https://bobwoodrufffoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/BWF_WhitePaper-COVID19-5.0-Final.pdf

Shane, L. (2021, December 15). Student vets taking remote classes next semester will still get full GI Bill benefits thanks to new plan. Military Times. https://www.militarytimes.com/education-transition/2021/12/15/student-vets-taking-remote-classes-next-semester-will-still-get-full-gi-bill-benefits-thanks-to-new-plan/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1641871584809574&usg=AOvVaw2E55zdASvtSWcQt8-ejW4

Shapiro, T. (2004). The hidden cost of being African-American: How wealth perpetuates inequality. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shepherd, S., Sherman, D. K., MacLean, A., & Kay, A. C. (2021). The challenges of military veterans in their transition to the workplace: A call for integrating basic and applied psychological science. Associations for Psychological Science, 16(3), 590-613. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691620953096

Shepherd S., Kay A.C., & Gray K. (2019). Military veterans are morally typecast as agentic but unfeeling: Implications for veteran employment. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 153, 75-88. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2019.06.003

Stone, C.B., Legnick-Hall, M., Muldoon, J. (2018). Do stereotypes of veterans affect chances of employment? The Psychologist-Manager Journal, 21(1), 1-33. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/mgr0000068

Stone, C., & Stone, D. L. (2015). Factors affecting hiring decisions about veterans. Human Resource Management Review, 25(1), 68-79. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2014.06.003

Teachman, J. (2007). Race, military service, and marital timing: Evidence from the NLSY-79. Demography, 44(2), 389-404. https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.2007.0018

Teachman, J. & Call, V. (1996). The effect of military service on educational, occupational, and income attainment. Social Science Research, 25(1), 1-31. https://doi.org/10.1006/ssre.1996.0001

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). Annual Average Current Population Survey; population 18 and over. https://www.bls.gov/cps/

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021, March). Employment Situation of Veterans. https://www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2017). Minority veterans report: Military service history and VA benefit utilization statistics. National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. Retrieved from https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/Minority_Veterans_Report.pdf

Vogt, D. (2011). Mental health stigma as a barrier to service use: Findings and recommendations for research based on military and veteran populations. Psychiatric Services 62(2), 135-142. https://doi.org/10.1176/ps.62.2.pss6202_0135

Zoli, C., Maury, R., & Fay, D. (2015, November). Missing perspectives: Servicemembers' transition from service to civilian life — data-driven research to enact the promise of the post-9/11 GI bill. Institute for Veterans & Military Families, Syracuse University. https://surface.syr.edu/ivmf/7/

Finding 9 Endnotes

[1] Pierre-Louis & Hamilton, 2014; Hutchinson et al., 2016; Chaudhary et al., 2019; Wong et al, 2019; Goldberg et al., 2020.
[2] Ndugga & Artiga, 2021; Lopez et al., 2021.
[3] Blue Star Families, 2020. Unpublished data from this study further substantiate these findings: though samples of each race/ethnic group are small, a greater proportion of active-duty family respondents of color reported COVID-19 had a "major" or "severe" impact on their personal health, when compared to white respondents (10% n=227 v 6%, n=688).
[4] Young et al., 2021.
[5] Ioannou, Locke, and Green, 2020.
[6] These benefits provide care to approximately 1.4 million active component service members and 9.5 million total beneficiaries (Tanielian & Farmer, 2019).
[7] Active-duty service member (41%, n=206), active-duty spouse (36%, n=434), Veteran (41%, n=263), spouse of Veteran (40%, n=119) respondents.*
[8] Active-duty service member (38%, n=198), active-duty spouse (40%, n=433), Veteran (42%, n=257), and spouse of Veteran (39%, n=117) respondents.*
[9] Wentling, July 9, 2021.
[10] Weeks & West, 2019; Price, et al., 2018; Farmer et al., 2016; Saha et al., 2008; Ward et al., 2021 March 2.
[11] Institute Of Medicine, 2003; Saha et al., 2008.
[12] Veterans Health Administration, 2020, February.
[13] Active-duty service members (42%, n=201), active-duty spouses (37%, n=404), Veterans (40%, n=256) and Veteran spouses (41%, n=115).
[14] Respondents could select more than one care provider. This analysis does not exclude respondents who selected more than one military affiliation due to a low response rate (e.g., an individual who reports they are both an active-duty spouse and a Veteran appears in both categories in this analysis). This analysis includes: active-duty service members (n=198), active-duty spouses (n=408), Veterans (n=255), and spouses of Veterans (n=118).

[15] n=160
[16] n=266
[17] n=167
[18] n=92
[19] n=148
[20] n=93
[21] n=60
[22] n=160
[23] n=264
[24] n=167
[25] n=92
[26] n=147
[27] n=92
[28] n=60
[29] Caregivers: Active-duty (26%, n=571) or Veteran (37%, n=353) family respondents*; Among respondents who needed caregiving resources, 45% of active duty family respondents* (n=200) and 60% of Veteran family respondents* (n=129) did not receive them
[30] Rylee et al., 2019. It is estimated that approximately 1 million caregivers are providing care specifically for the newer generation of Veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Strong, 2018; Tanielian, 2013).
[31] Caregivers: Black active-duty family (20%, n=253), Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty family (27%, n=172), Black Veteran family (35%, n=168), Hispanic/Latino/a/x Veteran family (38%, n=109) respondents; Among respondents who needed caregiving resources: 35% of Black active-duty family (n=86), 53% of Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty family (n=51), 61% of Black Veteran family (n=74), and 56% of Hispanic/Latino/a/x Veteran family (n=39 did not receive them).
[32] Encountering barriers to accessing needed resources is common among caregivers. Rylee et al. (2019) found a prevalence of unmet information and support needs in a sample of military caregivers. For families of color, lack of access is particularly salient. Hannold et. al. (2011) found that OEF/OIF Hispanic/Latino family members reported a need for family support and an inability to access it.
[33] Active-duty family respondents*: Don't Know How To Access (18%, n=83); Don't Think Eligible (13%, n=83); Veteran family respondents*: Don't Know How To Access (26%, n=74); Don't Think Eligible (19%, n=74).
[34] During times of civil unrest, military and Veteran families of color report increased stress due to incidents of crisis against people of color (Williams, 2018). In the week following George Floyd's death, for example, nearly half of Black Americans reported depression and anxiety at significantly higher rates than that of white Americans (Eichstaedt et al., 2021).
[35] Among survey respondents,* stress due to racial/ethnic tensions in 2020 was the most prevalent for Black active-duty (72%, n=274) and Veteran family respondents (71%, n=183), followed by Hispanic/Latino/a/x active-duty family (65%, n=177), Asian active-duty family (65%, n=106), Hispanic/Latino/a/x Veteran family (58%, n=116) [Q7.2], and Asian Veteran family (59%, n=32) respondents.
[36] Asian (51%, n=35) and Black Veteran families (48%, n=97) most frequently report seeking care, while Asian active-duty families report this least often (18%). Other respondent groups: Black active-duty family (43%, n=299), Hispanic active-duty family (36%, n=204), Hispanic Veteran family (47%, n=134) respondents.
[37] Chae et al. (2021).
[38] Abrams (2021).
[39] Barriers among active-duty family respondents* to this survey: Stigma (18%), Don't Think Eligible (7%), Don't Know How To Access (16%); Barriers among Veteran families of color: Stigma (24%), Don't Think Eligible (17%), Don't Know How To Access (10%). This is in line with literature: there is a strong stigma attached to seeking mental health care in the military (Acosta et al., 2014; Brown and Bruce, 2016; Hurtado et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2016; VanSickle et al., 2016), and Veterans often carry this belief with them following separation (Chase et al., 2016; Kulesza et al., 2015).

Finding 9 References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Abrams, Z. (2021). The mental health impact of anti-Asian racism. Monitor on Psychology, 52(5), 22. https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/07/impact-anti-asian-racism

Acosta, Joie D., Amariah Becker, Jennifer L. Cerully, Michael P. Fisher, Laurie T. Martin, Raffaele Vardavas, Mary Ellen Slaughter, and Terry L. Schell, Mental Health Stigma in the Military, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-426-OSD, 2014. As of January 12, 2022: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR426.html

Blue Star Families. (2020). Resilience under stress study. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/RUSS-Report-11.4.20_FINAL.pdf

Brown N. & Bruce S. (2016). Stigma, career worry, and mental illness symptomatology: Factors influencing treatment-seeking for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom soldiers and veterans. Psychological Trauma, 8(3), 276–283. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000082

Chae, D., Yip, T., Martz, C., Chung, K., Richeson, J., Hajat, A., Curtis, D., Rogers, L., & LaVeist, T. (2021). Vicarious racism and vigilance during the COVID-19 pandemic: Mental health implications among Asian and Black Americans. Public Health Reports, 136(4), 508–517. https://doi.org/10.1177/00333549211018675

Chaudhary, M., de Jager, E., Bhulani, N., Kwon, N., Haider, A., Goralnick, E., Koehlmoos, T., & Schoenfeld, A. (2019). No racial disparities in surgical care quality observed after coronary artery bypass grafting in TRICARE patients. Health Affairs, 38(8), 1307–1312. https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2019.00265

Eichstaedt, J., Sherman, G., Giorgi, S., Roberts, S., Reynolds, M., Ungar, L., & Guntuku, S. (2021). The emotional and mental health impact of the murder of George Floyd on the US population. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 118 (39), 2109-2118. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2109139118

Farmer, C.M., Hosek, S.D., & Adamson, D.M. (2016). Balancing demand and supply for Veterans' health care: A Summary of three RAND assessments conducted under the Veterans Choice Act. RAND Health Quarterly, 6(1). https://www.rand.org/pubs/periodicals/health-quarterly/issues/v6/n1/12.html.

Garza, R. (2019). Patient perception in quality of healthcare in civilian and military hospitals. Open Access Thesis and Dissertations, 1989. https://scholarworks.utep.edu/open_etd/1989

Goldberg, S., Fortney, J., Chen, J., Young, B., Lehavot, K., & Simpson, T. (2020). Military service and military health care coverage are associated with reduced racial disparities in time to mental health treatment initiation. Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 47(4), 555–568. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-020-01017-2

Hannold, E., Freytes, I., & Uphold, C. (2011). Unmet health service needs experienced by Puerto Rican OEF/OIF veterans and families post deployment. Military Medicine, 176(4), 381–388. https://doi.org/10.7205/milmed-d-10-00334

Hurtado, L., Simon-Arndt, C., McAnany, J., & Crain, J. (2015). Acceptability of mental health stigma-reduction training and initial effects on awareness among military personnel. Springerplus, 4. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40064-015-1402-z

Hutchinson, J., Mack, R., Perez-Koehlmoos, T., & DeLeon, P. (2016). Lessons for health equity: Military medicine as a window to universal health insurance. NAM Perspectives, 6(11). https://doi.org/10.31478/201611a

Ioannou, G., Locke, E., & Green, P. (2020). Risk factors for hospitalization, mechanical ventilation, or death among 10,131 US veterans with SARS-CoV-2 infection. JAMA Network Open, 3(9), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.22310

Kim, P., Toblin R., Riviere, L., Kok, B., Grossman, S., & Wilk, J. (2016). Provider and non-provider sources of mental health help in the military and the effects of stigma, negative attitudes, and organizational barriers to care. Psychiatric Services, 67(2), 221–226. https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.201400519

Lopez L., Hart L., Katz, M. (2021). Racial and ethnic health disparities related to COVID-19. JAMA, 325(8), 719–720. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2020.26443

Pierre-Louis, B., Moore, A., & Hamilton, J. (2014). The military health care system may have the potential to prevent health care disparities. Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, 2(3), 280–289. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-014-0067-6

Ndugga, N., Artiga, S. (2021). Disparities in health and health care: 5 key questions and answers. Kaiser Family Foundation. https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/disparities-in-health-and-health-care-5-key-question-and-answers/

Nicosia, Nancy, Barbara O. Wynn, and John A. Romley, Assessing the Performance of Military Treatment Facilities, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-803-OSD, 2011. As of January 12, 2022: https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG803.html

Pierre-Louis, B., Moore, A., & Hamilton, J. (2014). The military health care system may have the potential to prevent health care disparities. Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, 2(3), 280–289. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-014-0067-6

Price, R., Sloss, E., Cefalu, M., Farmer, C., & Hussey, P. (2018). Comparing quality of care in veterans affairs and non-veterans affairs settings. Journal of Internal Medicine, 33(10), 1631-1638. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-018-4433-7

Rylee, T., Sarkar, S., Reed, S., Rafizadeh, E., & Bell, J. (2019). Unmet needs for information and support among military caregivers. Military Medicine, 184(11-12), 922–928. https://doi.org/10.1093/milmed/usz109

Saha, S., Beach, M., & Cooper, L. (2008). Patient centeredness, cultural competence and Healthcare Quality. Journal of the National Medical Association, 100(11), 1275–1285. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0027-9684(15)31505-4

Saha, S., Freeman, M., Toure, J., Tippens, K. M., Weeks, C., & Ibrahim, S. (2008). Racial and ethnic disparities in the VA health care system: a systematic review. Journal of General Internal Medicine, 23(5), 654–671. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-008-0521-4

Strong, J. (2018). Military Caregivers. Clinical Social Work Journal, 46, 156–163. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-018-0657-6

Tanielian, T., Farmer, C. (2019). The US military health system: Promoting readiness and providing health care. Health Affairs, 38(8), 1259–1267. https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2019.00239

Tanielian, Terri, Rajeev Ramchand, Michael P. Fisher, Carra S. Sims, Racine S. Harris, and Margaret C. Harrell, Military Caregivers: Cornerstones of Support for Our Nation's Wounded, Ill, and Injured Veterans, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-244-TEDF, 2013. As of January 12, 2022: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR244.html

VanSickle, M., Werbel, A., Perera, K., Pak, K., DeYoung, K., Ghahramanlou-Holloway, M. (2016). Perceived barriers to seeking mental health care among United States Marine Corps noncommissioned officers serving as gatekeepers for suicide prevention. Psychological Assessment, 28(8), 1020–1025. https://doi.org/10.1037/pas0000212

U.S. Institute of Medicine, Committee on Understanding and Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care. (2003). Unequal treatment: Confronting racial and ethnic disparities in health care. National Academies Press. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK220355

U.S. Veterans Health Administration. (2019). VHA Health Equity Action Plan. Office of Health Equity https://www.va.gov/HEALTHEQUITY/docs/Health_Equity_Action_Plan_Final_022020.pdf

Ward, R. E., Nguyen, X. T., Li, Y., Lord, E. M., Lecky, V., Song, R. J., Casas, J. P., Cho, K., Gaziano, J. M., Harrington, K. M., Whitbourne, S. B. (2021). Racial and Ethnic Disparities in U.S. Veteran Health Characteristics. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18(5), 2411. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052411

Weeks, W.B. & West, A.N. (2019) Veterans Health Administration hospitals outperform non–veterans health administration hospitals in most health care markets. Annals of internal medicine, 170(6), 426-428. https://doi.org/10.7326/M18-1540

Wentling, N. (2021, July 9). Black Veterans Project accuses VA of hiding discriminatory practices. Military.com. https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/07/09/black-veterans-project-accuses-va-of-hiding-discriminatory-practices.html

Williams, D. R. (2018). Stress and the mental health of populations of color: Advancing our understanding of race-related stressors. Journal of health and social behavior, 59(4), 466–485. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022146518814251

Wong, M., Hoggatt, K., Steers, W., Frayne, S., Huynh, A., Yano, E., Saechao, F., Ziaeian, B., & Washington, D. (2019). Racial/ethnic disparities in mortality across the Veterans Health Administration. Health Equity, 3(1), 99–108. https://doi.org/10.1089/heq.2018.0086

Young, J., Stahlman, S., Clausen, S., Bova, M., & Mancuso, J. (2021). Racial and ethnic disparities in COVID-19 infection and hospitalization in the active component of the U.S. military. American Journal of Public Health, 111 (12), 2194-2201. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2021.306527

Finding 10 Endnotes

[1] Cole, 2016; De Pedro, et al., 2018; Ruff & Keim, 2014.
[2] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019.
[3] American Psychological Association, 2012, August 3; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2015, August 14.
[4] Darling-Hammond, 2016, July 28.
[5] Clever & Segel, 2013.
[6] Blue Star Families, 2020; Blue Star Families, 2019; Blue Star Families, 2018.
[7] Markowitz, et. al., 2020.
[8] Uttal, 1997.
[9] Chaudry, et. al., 2011.
[10] Prieto, et. al., 2019; Chaudry, et. al, 2011; Shlay, 2010.
[11] For the purposes of this survey, child care is defined as supervision by anyone other than a child's parents/guardians and can be paid or unpaid. For example, a friend, relative, babysitter, nanny, child care center, etc. are considered as child care for this question. This question was only shown to respondents who answered yes to the following: "Do you require child care?" (excluding after-school care for K-12 children). Question: Which attributes are the MOST important to you when considering a child care / preschool provider? Please select your top five. "Cost" or "affordability" was inadvertently omitted from the pick list in this survey during the instrument editing process and almost certainly introduces omitted variable bias to this analysis. Future research will include this as a variable for analysis.
[12] n=178.
[13] Question was shown to respondents who answered "yes" to "Do you have a child eligible for K-12 enrollment?" Question: Which attributes are the MOST important to you when considering a school for your child(ren)? Please select your top five.
[14] n=393.
[15] When providers and parents speak the same language, parent engagement and communication increases. Hill & Torres (2010); Mundt, et. al. (2015).
[16] Miller, 2018, September 10; New America, n.d.; Chiefs for Change, n.d.; Miller, 2019, May 28.
[17] Miller, 2018, September 10; Miller, 2019, May 28.
[18] Paschall, et. al., 2020.
[19] Madsen, et. al., 2016.
[20] n=160. This survey did not ask the respondent to elaborate on the racial/ethnic makeup of the program, only whether the diversity of the staff reflects the racial/ethnic composition of the families in the program. Additionally, 4% of active-duty family respondents* did not know if the staff reflects the diversity of the students, and 12% did not know if the reading materials reflect diversity.
[21] n=160.

[22] n=161.
[23] n=368. This survey did not ask the respondent to elaborate on the racial/ethnic makeup of the school, only whether the diversity of the staff reflects the racial/ethnic composition of the families attending the school. Additionally, 10% of active-duty family respondents* did not know if the staff reflects the diversity of the students, and 15% did not know if the reading materials reflect diversity. It is possible that this is a function of remote/hybrid schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic and suggests another area for future research.
[24] n=365.
[25] n=367. This survey did not ask the respondent to elaborate on the racial/ethnic makeup of the school, only whether the diversity of the staff reflects the racial/ethnic composition of the families attending the school. Additionally, 10% of active-duty family respondents* did not know if the staff reflects the diversity of the students, and 15% did not know if the reading materials reflect diversity. It is possible that this is a function of remote/hybrid schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic and suggests another area for future research.
[26] Ernestus, et. al., 2014; Kaminski, et. al., 2010; Greene & Way, 2005; Healey & Stroman, 2021, February.
[27] Madsen, et. al., 2016.
[28] Voight, et. al., 2015.
[29] The 2019 MFLS asked parents with school-aged children of all ages to report on perceived outcomes for their oldest child and their oldest child's school.
[30] These results could vary by a host of factors (such as oldest child's age, gender, family characteristics, school characteristics, etc.); however, these variables were not captured or could not be analyzed due to small sample sizes for various racial/ethnic groups. Frequencies of respondents who answered this question in the 2019 MFLS by race/ethnicity: white, non-Hispanic (n=1648), Asian (n=85), Black (n=115), and Hispanic (n=248).
[31] Frequencies of respondents who answered this question in the 2019 MFLS by race/ethnicity: white, non-Hispanic (n=1627), Asian (n=83), Black (n=115), and Hispanic (n=240).
[32] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019.
[33] Johnson-Staub, 2017, December.
[34] All respondents with children under the age of 17 were shown this section of the 2018 MFLS. "Child Care" was defined as "supervision by anyone other than a child's parents, and can be paid or unpaid. For example, a friend, relative, babysitter, nanny, child care center, etc. are considered child care for this question." Frequencies of active-duty family respondents to this question: respondents of color (n=741) and white, non-Hispanic respondents (n=2,640).
[35] Frequencies of active-duty family respondents to this question: respondents of color (n=554) and white, non-Hispanic respondents (n=1,936).
[36] Frequencies of active-duty family respondents to this question: respondents of color (n=549) and white, non-Hispanic respondents (n=1,927).
[37] Office of People Analytics, 2018, May. The 2017 Survey of Active Duty Spouses does not provide usage rates for
all racial/ethnic groups in published data.
[38] ibid.
[39] This question was only shown to respondents who required any form of child care. The survey instrument did not differentiate between "family" and "friend" ("I have a family member or friend who helps me"), meaning that a direct comparison to civilian literature cannot be made. Military families often live far from family, so it is likely that respondents were referring to a friend supporting them, whereas civilian literature suggests greater preference for familial child care support, especially among Hispanic families. This question was offered as a "select all" question, and many families utilize multiple options. For the purposes of this analysis, all child care center options were collapsed and include on-base/installation child care in a CDC for full-time care, on-base/installation child care in a CDC for drop-in care, and off-base private child care center. Similarly, in-home care options were collapsed and include off- or on-base in-home childcare provider. "Nanny or babysitter" includes "provider who comes to home or lives with me (e.g., nanny or au pair)" and "I hire a babysitter when needed."
[40] n=549.
[41] n=1,919.
[42] Office for Civil Rights, 2021, June 9.
[43] Pew Trusts, 2021, November 8; American Academy of Pediatrics, 2021, October 19.
[44] Penner, Hernandez, & Sharp, 2020; Bhogal, et. al., 2021.
[45] Unpublished data from Blue Star Families' 2020 MFLS. This analysis is limited by sample size and cannot speak to potential subsample differences (e.g., differences in children's ages, number of children, etc.). Race/ethnicity was measured as a single select item in the 2020 MFLS. Contact survey@bluestarfam.org for additional information.

[46] This series of questions asked the respondent the degree to which COVID-19 had impacted their children's mental health, meaning it is possible military children of color experienced negative mental health impacts not reported here. For example, as reported in Finding 9, race/ethnicity-related stressors were also apparent during the pandemic, which are also likely to affect the well-being of children, but researchers have noted the difficulty in teasing apart the effects of the pandemic and these sociopolitical events. (Meade, 2021) Lastly, we are not able to determine if there were differences by racial/ethnic group in military children's mental health before the pandemic.

[47] n=617.

[48] n=1,865.

[49] n=618.

[50] n=1,848.

[51] n=539.

[52] n=1,653.

[53] U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2022, January 21). K-12 education: Students in DOD schools generally score higher than public school students on national assessments. https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105058.pdf

Finding 10 References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2021, October 19). AAP-AACAP-CHA declaration of a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health. https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/child-and-adolescent-healthy-mental-development/aap-aacap-cha-declaration-of-a-national-emergency-in-child-and-adolescent-mental-health/

American Psychological Association. (2012, August 3). Ethnic and racial disparities in education. https://www.apa.org/ed/resources/racial-disparities.pdf

Bhogal, A., Borg, B., Jovanovic, T., & Marusak, H. A. (2021). Are the kids really alright? Impact of COVID-19 on mental health in a majority Black American sample of school children. Psychiatry Research, 304, 1141-1146. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2021.114146

Blue Star Families. (2020). 2020 Military family lifestyle survey comprehensive report. Blue Star Families. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BSF_MFLS_CompReport_FULL.pdf.

Blue Star Families. (2019). 2019 Military family lifestyle survey comprehensive report. Blue Star Families. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/BSF-2019-Survey-Comprehensive-Report-Digital-rev200305.pdf

Blue Star Families. (2018). 2018 Military family lifestyle survey comprehensive report. Blue Star Families. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2018MFLS-ComprehensiveReport-DIGITAL-FINAL.pdf

Carlin, C., Davis, E. E., Krafft, C., & Tout, K. (2019). Parental preferences and patterns of child care use among low-income families: A Bayesian analysis. Children and Youth Services Review, 99, 172–185. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.02.006

Chaudry, A., Pedroza, J.M., Sandstrom, H., Danziger, A., Grosz, M., Scott, M., Ting, S. (2011). Child care choices of low-income working families. Washington, DC: Urban Institute. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/27331/412343-Child-Care-Choices-of-Low-Income-Working-Families.PDFClever, M., & Segel, D. R. (2013). The demographics of military children and families. The Future of Children, 23(2), 13-40. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1018362.pdf

Chiefs for Change. (n.d.). High-quality instructional materials. https://chiefsforchange.org/beliefs/high-quality-instructional-materials/

Cole, R. F. (2016). Supporting Students in Military Families during Times of Transition: A Call for Awareness and Action. Professional School Counseling. https://doi.org/10.5330/1096-2409-20.1.36

Darling-Hammond, L. (2016, July 28). Unequal opportunity: race and education. Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/unequal-opportunity-race-and-education/

De Pedro, K. T., Astor, R. A., Gilreath, T. D., Benbenishty, R., & Berkowitz, R. (2018). School Climate, Deployment, and Mental Health Among Students in Military-Connected Schools. Youth & Society, 50(1), 93–115. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X15592296

Ernestus, S. M., Prelow, H. M., Ramrattan, M. E., & Wilson, S. A.(2014). Self-system processes as a mediator of school connectedness and depressive symptomatology in African American and European American adolescents. School Mental Health, 6(3),175–183. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-014-9122-z

Greene, M. L., & Way, N. (2005). Self esteem trajectories among ethnic minority adolescents: a growth curve analysis of the patterns and predictors of change. Journal of Research on Adolescence, 15(2), 151–178. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2005.00090.x

Healey, K., & Stroman, C. (2021, February). Structures for belonging: A synthesis of research on belonging-supportive learning environments. Student Experience Network. Retrieved December 17, 2021, from https://studentexperiencenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Structures-for-Belonging.pdf

Hill, N. E., & Torres, K. (2010). Negotiating the American dream: The paradox of aspirations and achievement among Latino students and engagement between their families and schools. Journal of Social Issues, 66(1), 95-112. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2009.01635.x

Johnson-Staub, C. (2017, December). Equity starts early. The Center for Law and Social Policy. https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2017/12/2017_EquityStartsEarly_0.pdf

Kaminski, J. W., Puddy, R. W., Hall, D. M., Cashman, S. Y., Crosby, A. E., & Ortega, L. A. (2010). The relative influence of different domains of social connectedness on self-directed violence in adolescence. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 39(5), 460–473. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-009-9472-2

Madsen, K. R., Damsgaard, M. T., Rubin, M., Jervelund, S. S., Lasgaard, M., Walsh, S., Stevens, G. G. W. J. M., & Holstein, B. E. (2016). Loneliness and ethnic composition of the school class: a nationally random sample of adolescents. Journal of Youth and Adolescence: A Multidisciplinary Research Publication, 45(7), 1350–1365. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0432-3

Markowitz, A. J., Bassok, D., & Grissom, J. A. (2020). Teacher-child racial/ethnic match and parental engagement with head start. American Educational Research Journal, 57(5), 2132–2174. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831219899356

Meade, J. (2021). Mental health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and adolescents: A review of the current research. Pediatric Clinics of North America, 68, 945-959. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pcl.2021.05.003

Miller, C. (2019, May 28). The importance of promoting diversity in early childhood programs. The Infant Crier. Michigan Association of Infant Mental Health. https://infantcrier.mi-aimh.org/the-importance-of-promoting-diversity-in-early-childhood-programs/

Miller, C. C. (2018, September 10). Does teacher diversity matter in student learning? The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/10/upshot/teacher-diversity-effect-students-learning.html

Mundt, K., Gregory, A., Melzi, G., & McWayne, C. M. (2015). The influence of ethnic match on Latino school-based family engagement. Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 37(2), 170–185. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986315570287

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2019). Strengthening the military family readiness system for a changing American society. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/25380.

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2021). Early childhood program participation: 2019. National Center for Educational Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=4

New America. (n.d.). Culturally responsive teaching. New America. https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/culturally-responsive-teaching/understanding-culturally-responsive-teaching/

Office for Civil Rights. (2021, June 9). Education in a pandemic. Department of Education. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf?tpcc=nlcapsule

Office of People Analytics. (2018, May). 2017 Survey of Active Duty Spouses Tabulation of Responses. Department of Defense. https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1081212.pdf

Paschall, K., Madill, R., & Halle, T. (2020). Demographic characteristics of the early care and education workforce: Comparisons with child and community characteristics. OPRE Report #2020-108. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/demographic-characteristics-ECE-dec-2020.pdf

Paschall, K., Madill, R., & Halle, T. (2020). Professional characteristics of the early care and education workforce: Descriptions by race, ethnicity, languages spoken, and nativity Status. OPRE Report #2020-107. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/professional-characteristics-ECE-dec-2020.pdf

Penner, F., Hernandez, J. H., & Sharp, C. (2020). Change in youth mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic in a majority Hispanic/Latinx US sample. Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 60(4), 513-523. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2020.12.027

Pew Trusts. (2021, November 8). Covid harmed kids' mental health-and schools are feeling it. The Pew Charitable Trusts. https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/11/08/covid-harmed-kids-mental-health-and-schools-are-feeling-it

Prieto, L., Aguero-Valverde, J., Zarrate-Cardenas, G., & Van Maarseveen, M. (2019) Parental preferences in the choice for a specialty school. Journal of School Choice, 13(2), 198-227. https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2018.1442087

Ruff, S., & Keim, M. (2014). Revolving doors: The impact of multiple school transitions on military children. Professional Counselor, 4(2), 103-113. https://tpcjournal.nbcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Pages-103-113-Ruff-PDF.pdf

Shlay, A. B. (2010). African American, White, and Hispanic child care preferences: A factorial survey analysis of welfare leavers by race and ethnicity. Social Science Research, 39(1), 125-141. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2009.07.005

U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2015, August 14). Racial disparities in education and the role of government. https://www.gao.gov/blog/racial-disparities-education-and-role-government

U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2022, January 21). K-12 education: Students in DOD schools generally score higher than public school students on national assessments. https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105058.pdf

Uttal, L. (1997). "Trust your instincts" Racial ethnic and class-based preferences in employed mothers' childcare choices. Qualitative Sociology. 20(2). 253-274. http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1024765719203

Voight, A., Hanson, T., O'Malley, M., & Adekanye, L. (2015). The racial school climate gap: within-school disparities in students' experiences of safety, support, and connectedness. American Journal of Community Psychology, 56(3-4), 252–267. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-015-9751-x

Finding 11 Endnotes

[1] Smoale & Loane, 2008, June 25; Masland & Lyons, 2015.
[2] Wang, Elder, & Spence, 2012; National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2017, March; Wenger & Ward, 2022.
[3] Department of Defense, 2020, December 18.
[4] 62% of Black/African American, 61% of Hispanic, and 71% of Asian respondents reported this. (Maury, et. al., 2020; Maury, Linsner, and Harvie, 2021; Maury, et. al., 2020, September; Zoli, Maury, & Fay, 2015, November).
[5] n=34 Black, n=66 Hispanic/Latino/a/x, and n=37 Asian service member respondents.
[6] Wenger, J. & Ward, J. (2022). The role of education benefits in supporting veterans as they transition to civilian life: Veterans' issues in focus. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PEA1363-4.html.
[7] n=91 Black and n=51 Hispanic/Latino/a/x service member respondents; n=125 Black and n=71 Hispanic/Latino/a/x Veteran respondents.
[8] Note: This data is derived from descriptive statistics provided by the U.S. Census Bureau: Table 3. Detailed Years of School Completed by People 25 Years and Over by Sex, Age Groups, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2019. Analysis aggregated the percent of the civilian noninstitutionalized population who obtained a Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, professional degree, or a Doctorate degree.
[9] n=132.
[10] This data is derived from descriptive statistics provided by the U.S. Census Bureau: Table 3. Detailed Years of School Completed by People 25 Years and Over by Sex, Age Groups, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2019. Analysis aggregated the percent of the civilian noninstitutionalized population who obtained a Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, professional degree, or a Doctorate degree.
[11] n=394 active-duty spouse respondents of color, n=191 active-duty service member respondents of color, n=254 Veteran respondents of color.
[12] Parker, 2021; Office of People Analytics, 2018.
[13] Military OneSource, 2021; U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2021; Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2021.
[14] National Center for Education Statistics, 2019.
[15] 92% of active-duty spouses of color identify as female.
[16] Blue Star Families, 2021.
[17] n=394 active-duty spouse respondents of color, n=191 active-duty service member respondents of color, n=254 Veteran respondents of color.
[18] n=198.
[19] n=159.
[20] Department of Defense, 2020, December 18.
[21] United States Census Bureau, 2020, March 30.
[22] CNA, 2019 PopRep.
[23] Note: Figure constructed from 2019 Pop Rep: Table B-32. Active Component Commissioned Officer Gains, FY19: by Source of Commission, Service, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity

Finding 11 References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

CNA (2019). Table B-32. Active component commissioned officer gains, FY18: by source of commission, service, gender, and race/ethnicity. https://www.cna.org/pop-rep/2018/appendixb/b_32.html

Department of Defense. (2020, December 18). U.S. Department of Defense board on diversity and inclusion report. https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/18/2002554852/-1/-1/0/DOD-DIVERSITY-AND-INCLUSION-FINAL-BOARD-REPORT.PDF

Institute for Veterans and Military Families. (2021). Our programs. Syracuse University. https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/apply/our-programs/

Masland, & Lyons, G. M. (2015). Education and military leadership. A study of the ROTC. Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400877270

Maury, R.V., Linsner, R., Harvie, J.Y. (2021, May). Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders in the military: From service to civilian life. Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University. https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Asian-Americans-and-Pacific-Islanders-in-the-Military-From-Service-to-Civilian-Life.pdf

Maury, R.V., Zoli, C., Fay, D., Armstrong, N., Boldon, N.Y. Linsner, R. K, Sears, K. Cantor, G., & Keville, M.R. (2020, February). Black & African Americans in the military: From service to civilian life. Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University. https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2021_BlackHistoryMonth_1.27.21_P3.pdf

Maury, R.V., Zoli, C., Fay, D., Armstrong, N., Linsner, R., Sears, K., Tihic, M., Cantor, G., & Keville, M.R. (2020, September). Hispanics and Latinos in the Military: From service to civilian life. Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University. https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/IVMF-Hispanics-and-Latinos-in-the-Military-Infographic-Sept-2020.pdf

Military OneSource. (2021) Get started with MyCAA. https://mycaa.militaryonesource.mil/mycaa/get-started

National Center for Education Statistics (2019). Table 104.10. Rates of high school completion and bachelor's degree attainment among persons age 25 and over, by race/ethnicity and sex: Selected years, 1910 through 2019. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_104.10.asp

National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. (2017, March). Minority veterans report: Military service history and VA benefit utilization statistics. Department of Veterans Affairs. https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/Minority_Veterans_Report.pdf

Parker, K. (2021). What's behind the growing gap between men and women in college completion? Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/11/08/whats-behind-the-growing-gap-between-men-and-women-in-college-completion/

Smoale, D. & Loane, S. (2008, June 25). A brief history of veterans' education benefits and their value. Congressional Research Service. https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/RL34549.pdf

U.S. Census Bureau (2020, March 30). Educational attainment in the United States: 2019. https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2019/demo/educational-attainment/cps-detailed-tables.html

U.S. Chamber of Commerce. (2021). Resources for military spouses. Hiring Our Heroes. https://www.hiringourheroes.org/career-services/military-spouse-resources/

U.S. Department of Defense, Office of People Analytics. (2018). 2017 Survey of Active Duty Spouses. https://www.militaryonesource.mil/data-research-and-statistics/survey-findings/2017-spouses-survey/

Wang, L., Elder, G. H., Jr, & Spence, N. J. (2012). Status configurations, military service and higher education. Social forces, 91(2), 397–422. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sos174

Wenger, J. & Ward, J. (2022). The role of education benefits in supporting veterans as they transition to civilian life: Veterans' issues in focus. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PEA1363-4.html

Zoli, C., Maury, R., & Fay, D. (2015, November). Missing perspectives: Servicemembers' transition from service to civilian life — data-driven research to enact the promise of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University. https://surface.syr.edu/ivmf/7/

Finding 12 Endnotes

[1] n=900 active-duty family of color respondents; n=581 Veteran family of color respondents
[2] n=1,064
[3] Additional minoritized identities that likely disproportionately impact military families of color include immigration status, national origin, native language, etc. and should be explored in more depth in future research.
[4] Meade (2020); Carlson, Endlsey, Motley, Shawahin, & Williams (2018)
[5] Crenshaw, Kennedy, & Bartlett (1991); Sasson-Levy (2017)
[6] Christoffersen (2017); Crenshaw, Kennedy, & Bartlett (1991)
[7] Question text: "How do you describe yourself? Please select all that apply." The race/ethnicity question was a multi-select question, and totals may sum to more than 100%. Respondents who selected "some other race or ethnicity" are not reflected in this table. "Family" unit statistics aggregate the spouse and service member (or Veteran) respondents; those who selected both identities are de-duplicated.
[8] The answer choice offered to respondents was "Black or African-American (for example African American, Nigerian, Jamaican, Ethiopian, Haitian, Somali)." For the sake of consistency and brevity within this report those selecting this answer choice are referred to as "Black" throughout the report.
[9] The answer choice offered to respondents was "Hispanic or Latino/a/x or of Spanish origin (for example Mexican or Mexican American, Salvadoran, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Cuban, Colombian)." For the sake of consistency and brevity within this report those selecting this answer choice are referred to as "Hispanic/Latino/a/x" throughout the report.
[10] The answer choice offered to respondents was "Asian (for example Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Korean, Asian Indian, Japanese)." For the sake of consistency and brevity within this report those selecting this answer choice are referred to as "Asian" throughout the report.
[11] The answer choice offered to respondents was "American Indian or Alaska Native (for example Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan)." For the sake of consistency and brevity within this report those selecting this answer choice are referred to as "American Indian or Alaska Native" throughout the report.
[12] The answer choice offered to respondents was "Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (for example Native Hawaiian, Tongan, Samoan, Fijian, Chamorro, Marshallese)." For the sake of consistency and brevity within this report those selecting this answer choice are referred to as "Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander" throughout the report.
[13] The answer choice offered to respondents was "Middle Eastern or Northern African (for example Lebanese, Syrian, Iranian, Moroccan, Egyptian, Israeli)." For the sake of consistency and brevity within this report those selecting this answer choice are referred to as "Middle Eastern or Northern African" throughout the report.
[14] The answer choice offered to respondents was " White (for example German, Italian, Irish, Polish, English, French)." Because the intent of this report is to highlight the experiences of military families of color (including multiracial/ethnic families), respondents who selected "white" in addition to at least one other non-white identity are included in discussions of their non-white identity. Findings regarding white respondents who did not identify at least one other racial/ethnic identity are specifically indicated as such in the text or footnotes.
[15] n=909
[16] n=303
[17] n=622
[18] Total active-duty family respondents * (n=909); total Veteran family respondents* (n=586)
[19] n=437
[20] n=180
[21] Question text: "What is your gender?" Due to rounding, totals may not sum to 100%.
[22] n=900
[23] n=581
[24] In a 2019 Pew Research study, 52% of Black respondents said their racial/ethnic identity is "extremely important" to how they think about themselves, compared to 31% of Hispanic and 27% of Asian respondents; Horowitz, Brown & Cox (2019, April 9)
[25] n=370 Black, n=256 Hispanic/Latino/a/x, and n=151 Asian family of color respondents
[26] 30% of family of color respondents say they are "neutral," 38% are "comfortable," and 12% are "very comfortable" in their military/veteran community
[27] n=190

[28] This challenging cultural and psychological negotiation between rejecting and adopt the norms and practices of an institution's dominant culture as a member of the culture minority, known as acculturation, may further impact foreign-born and immigrant respondents, as well as those who speak English as a second language; Berry (2015).
[29] n=523 Veteran family of color respondents; n=822 active-duty family of color respondents
[30] Question text: "To what extent does each of the following influence your overall identity? Select all that apply."
[31] 64% of Asian, 64% of Hispanic/Latino/a/x and 58% of Black family of color respondents say being a parent influences their overall identity.
[32] 58% of Hispanic/Latino/a/x, 51% of Black and 50% of Asian family of color respondents say their marital/relationship status influences their overall identity.
[33] 71% of active-duty and 44% of Veteran family of color respondents identify as military spouses or spouses of veterans.
[34] Le Menestrel & Kizer (2019)
[35] n=370 Black, n=256 Hispanic/Latino/a/x, and n=151 Asian family of color respondents
[36] n=822 active-duty family of color respondents; n=523 Veteran family of color respondents
[37] Meade (2020); Strong, Crowe & Lawson (2018)
[38] n=138 male active-duty service member of color respondents; n=81 female active-duty service member of color respondents; n=162 male Veteran of color respondents; n=141 female Veteran of color respondents
[39] n=139 male active-duty service member of color respondents; n=83 female active-duty service member of color respondents
[40] Meade (2020)

Finding 12 References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Berry, J. W. (2015). Acculturation. In J. E. Grusec & P. D. Hastings (Eds.), Handbook of socialization: Theory and research (pp. 520–538). The Guilford Press.

Carlson, M., Endlsey, M., Motley, D., Shawahin, L. N., & Williams, M. T. (2018). Addressing the Impact of Racism on Veterans of Color: A Race-Based Stress and Trauma Intervention. Psychology of Violence, 8(6), 748–762. https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000221

Christoffersen, A. (2017, March). Intersectional approaches to equality research and data. Equality Challenge Unit. http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Research_and_data_briefing_2_Intersectional_approaches_to_equality_research_and_data.pdf

Cohen, R. (2021, September 9). Air Force finds hurdles to success for women, Hispanics, other minorities in second disparity review. Air Force Times. https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2021/09/09/air-force-finds-hurdles-to-success-for-women-hispanics-other-minorities-in-second-disparity-review/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2009.10.21&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Military%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

Crenshaw, K., Kennedy, R., & Bartlett, K. T. (1991). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics [1989]. In Feminist Legal Theory (1st ed., pp. 57–80). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429500480-5

Dempsey, J., & Shapiro, R. Y. (2009). The Army's Hispanic Future. Armed Forces and Society, 35(3), 526–561. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X08327821

Horowitz, J.M., Brown, A., Cox, K. (2019, April 9). Race in America in 2019. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/04/09/race-in-america-2019/

Le Menestrel, S., & Kizer, K. (2019). Strengthening the Military Family Readiness System for a Changing American Society. National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/25380

McCluney, C. L., Durkee, M. I., Smith, R. E., Robotham, K. J., & Lee, S. S.-L. (2021). To be, or not to be…Black: The effects of racial codeswitching on perceived professionalism in the workplace. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 97, 104199–. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2021.104199

Meade, V. (2020). Embracing Diverse Women Veteran Narratives: Intersectionality and Women Veterans Identity. Journal of Veterans Studies, 6(3), pp. 47–53. DOI: https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v6i3.218

Sasson-Levy, O. (2017) Ethnicity and Gender in Militaries: An Intersectional Analysis. In: Woodward R., Duncanson C. (eds) The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-51677-0_8

Strong, J.D., Crowe, B.M. & Lawson, S. Female Veterans: Navigating Two Identities. Clinical Social Work Journal, 46, pp. 92–99 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-017-0636-3

Finding 13 Endnotes

[1] Burk, J. (2007)
[2] Bor, J., Venkataramani, A. S., Williams, D. R., & Tsai, A. C. (2018)
[3] Stafford, K., Laporta, J., Morrison, A., Wieffering, H. (2021, May 27)
[4] Glenn, H. (2020, July 6); Cooper, H. (2020, May 25); CBS News. (2020, August 10)
[5] n=875
[6] Dorman, J. (2021, June 26); Cotton, T. (2021, April 1); Maucione, S. (2020, August 31)
[7] Ray, V. E. (2018); Johnson, T. (2021, June); Babbitt, L. G., Toosi, N. R., & Sommers, S. R. (2016); Bonilla-Silva, E. (2014)
[8] Discussed in open-ended responses, n=1370
[9] Neville, H. A., Gallardo, M. E., & Sue, D. W. (Eds.). (2016)
[10] n=863
[11] n=387 Black, 279 Hispanic/Latino/a/x, and 155 Asian active-duty family respondents
[12] Our research partner, the Institute for Veterans and Military Families, conducted this poll on behalf of Military Times. Shane III, L. (2020, September 3)
[13] n=862
[14] n=388 Black, 276 Hispanic/Latino/a/x, and 153 Asian active-duty family respondents
[15] While findings from this sample cannot be generalized to the entire population of white military members due to recruitment strategies, their perspectives illustrate some of the opposing views held by members of the racial/ethnic majority in the military cultural context. n=299 white non-Hispanic family respondents who are not members of a multi-racial family
[16] n=299 white non-Hispanic family respondents who are not members of a multiracial family; n=862 active-duty family respondents of color
[17] n=299 white non-Hispanic family respondents who are not members of a multiracial family; n=860 active-duty family respondents of color
[18] n=299 white non-Hispanic family respondents who are not members of a multiracial family; n=875 active-duty family respondents of color
[19] n=299 white non-Hispanic family respondents who are not members of a multiracial family; n=864 active-duty family respondents of color
[20] Vittrup, B. (2018); Sullivan, J. N., Eberhardt, J. L., & Roberts, S. O. (2021)
[21] Losey, S. (2021, September 16); Feldscher, J. (2021, June 11).
[22] Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. (2021, February 5); Jackson, J. (2021, June 16).
[23] Office of the Secretary of Defense (2021, February)
[24] n=327
[25] n=175
[26] Myers, Meghann (2021, March 22).
[27] n=107
[28] Government Accountability Office. (2019)
[29] United States Senate Armed Services Committee. (2019, December 20)
[30] Diaz, J., Cramer, M., Morales, C. (2021, April 30).
[31] History.com Editors. (2021, March 24).

[32] Sternlight, A. (2020, June 2).
[33] Blue Star Families. (2020, June 3).
[34] Maucione, S. (2020, June 18).
[35] Ives, M., Cramer, M. (2021, April 10).
[36] United States Army. (2020, December 8).
[37] Tan, S., Shin, Y., Rindler, D. (2021, January 9).
[38] Stewart, P. (2021, January 14).
[39] Secretary of Defense. (2021, February 5).
[40] Vergun, D. (2021, February 12).
[41] Question Text - "It is sometimes said that the military is blind to race/ethnicity (e.g., "We only see green/blue," etc.). With this in mind, do you disagree or agree with the following statements." A neutral response option was provided.
[42] n=878
[43] Refers to white, non-Hispanic active-duty family respondents who are members of a multiracial/ethnic family; n=137
[44] n=299
[45] n=863
[46] Refers to white, non-Hispanic active-duty family respondents who are members of a multiracial/ethnic family; n=136
[47] n=299
[48] n=860
[49] Refers to white, non-Hispanic active-duty family respondents who are members of a multiracial/ethnic family; n=134
[50] n=299
[51] n=864
[52] Refers to white, non-Hispanic active-duty family respondents who are members of a multiracial/ethnic family, n=137
[53] n=299
[54] Question Text: "How effective was the 'extremism' stand down training you participated in earlier this year?"
[55] n=175
[56] n=112

Finding 13 References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Babbitt, L. G., Toosi, N. R., & Sommers, S. R. (2016). A broad and insidious appeal: Unpacking the reasons for endorsing racial color blindness. In the myth of racial color blindness: Manifestations, dynamics, and impact. (pp. 53–68). American Psychological Association. https://doi-org.utep.idm.oclc.org/10.1037/14754-004

Blue Star Families. (2020, June 3). Pulse check: Use of troops to quell civil unrest. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Pulse-Check_V1.pdf

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2014). Racism without racists : color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America (Fourth edition.). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Bor, J., Venkataramani, A. S., Williams, D. R., & Tsai, A. C. (2018). Police killings and their spillover effects on the mental health of black Americans: a population-based, quasi-experimental study. The Lancet (British Edition), 392(10144), 302–310. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31130-9

Burk, J. (2007). The changing moral contract for military service. In The Long War: A New History of National Security Policy Since World War II, ed. AJ Bacevich, pp. 405-55. New York: Columbia Univ. Press.

CBS News. (2020, August 10). Military veterans say racism in the ranks often isn't camouflaged: "It hurt me dearly." https://www.cbsnews.com/news/military-veterans-say-racism-in-the-ranks-often-isnt-camouflaged/

Cooper, H. (2020, May 25). African-Americans are highly visible in the military, but almost invisible at the top. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/25/us/politics/military-minorities-leadership.html

Cotton, T. (2021, April 1). There's no place in America's military for racist training. National Review. https://www.nationalreview.com/2021/04/theres-no-place-in-americas-military-for-racist-training/

Diaz, J., Cramer, M., Morales, C. (2021, April 30). What to know about the death of Vanessa Guillen. New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/article/vanessa-guillen-fort-hood.html

Dorman, J. (2021, June 26). A GOP Senate candidate claims that the military has been 'colorblind' for 'almost 200 years,' but the armed services were desegregated in 1948. Business Insider. https://www.businessinsider.com/sean-parnell-race-military-colorblind-200-years-pennsylvania-senate-candidate-2021-6

Feldscher, J. (2021, June 11). Hundreds of troops complain about 'woke' racism, extremism training, cotton claims. Defense One. https://www.defenseone.com/policy/2021/06/hundreds-troops-complain-about-woke-racism-extremism-training-cotton-claims/174672/

Glenn, H. (2020, July 6). West point graduates' letter calls for academy to address racism. NPR. https://www.npr.org/sections/live-updates-protests-for-racial-justice/2020/07/06/887540591/west-point-graduates-letter-calls-for-academy-to-address-racism

Government Accountability Office. (2019). 2019 Annual report: additional opportunities to reduce fragmentation, overlap, and duplication and achieve billions in financial benefits (GAO-19-285SP). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-19-285sp

History.com Editors. (2021, March 24). George Floyd is killed by a police officer, igniting historic protests. HISTORY. https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/george-floyd-killed-by-police-officer

Ives, M., Cramer, M. (2021, April 10). Black Army officer pepper-sprayed in traffic stop accuses officers of assault. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/10/us/caron-nazario-windsor-police-virginia.html

Jackson, J. (2021, June 16). More than 50 current, former military members have been charged in capitol riot. Newsweek. https://www.newsweek.com/more-50-current-former-military-members-have-been-charged-capitol-riot-1601295

Johnson, T. (2021, June). When the stars begin to fall: overcoming racism and renewing the promise of America. Atlantic Monthly Press.

Losey, S. (2021, September 16). Air Force leaders: Time to 'wake up' about racial disparities in service. Military.com. https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/09/16/air-force-leaders-time-wake-about-racial-disparities-service.html

Maucione, S. (2020, June 18). DoD creates board to provide concrete recommendations on race and diversity. Federal News Network. https://federalnewsnetwork.com/defense-main/2020/06/dod-creates-board-to-provide-concrete-recommendations-on-race-and-diversity/

Maucione, S. (2020, August 31). Army isn't only green anymore as leaders address race. Federal News Network. https://federalnewsnetwork.com/army/2020/08/the-army-isnt-only-green-anymore-as-leaders-address-race/

Myers, Meghann (2021, March 22). Some troops disappointed by check-the-block extremism stand-downs, others laud commanders. Military Times. https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2021/03/22/some-troops-disappointed-by-check-the-block-extremism-stand-downs-others-laud-commanders/

Neville, H. A., Gallardo, M. E., & Sue, D. W. (Eds.). (2016). Introduction: Has the United States really moved beyond race? In H. A. Neville, M. E. Gallardo, & D. W. Sue (Eds.), The myth of racial color blindness: Manifestations, dynamics, and impact (pp. 3–21). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/14754-001

Office of the Secretary of Defense (2021, February). Leadership stand-down to address extremism in the force: "All Hands" (COVID-19 mitigated) discussion. https://media.defense.gov/2021/Feb/26/2002589872/-1/-1/1/LEADERSHIP-STAND-DOWN-FRAMEWORK.PDF

Ray, V. E. (2018). Critical diversity in the U.S. military: From diversity to racialized organizations. In Challenging the Status Quo. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004291225_015

Secretary of Defense. (2021, February 5). Memorandum for senior Pentagon leadership defense agency and DoD field activity directors: stand-down to address extremism in the ranks. https://media.defense.gov/2021/Feb/05/2002577485/-1/-1/0/STAND-DOWN-TO-ADDRESS-EXTREMISM-IN-THE-RANKS.PDF

Shane III, L. (2020, September 3). Troops: White nationalism a national security threat equal to ISIS, al-Qaida. Military Times. https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/09/03/troops-white-nationalism-a-national-security-threat-equal-to-isis-al-qaeda/

Stafford, K., Laporta, J., Morrison, A., Wieffering, H. (2021, May 27). Deep-rooted racism, discrimination permeate US military. Associated Press. https://apnews.com/article/us-military-racism-discrimination-4e840e0acc7ef07fd635a312d9375413

Sternlight, A. (2020, June 2). Over 4,400 arrests, 62,000 National Guard troops deployed: George Floyd protests by the numbers. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexandrasternlicht/2020/06/02/over-4400-arrests-62000-national-guard-troops-deployed-george-floyd-protests-by-the-numbers/?sh=4378893dd4fe

Stewart, P. (2021, January 14). Exclusive: Long-withheld Pentagon survey shows widespread racial discrimination, harassment. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-military-civilrights-exclusive-idUSKBN29J1N1

Sullivan, J. N., Eberhardt, J. L., & Roberts, S. O. (2021). Conversations about race in Black and white US families: before and after George Floyd's death. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences - PNAS, 118(38), 1–. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2106366118

Tan, S., Shin, Y., Rindler, D. (2021, January 9). How one of America's ugliest days unraveled inside and outside the Capitol. The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/interactive/2021/capitol-insurrection-visual-timeline/

U.S. Army. (2020, December 8). Fort Hood independent review. https://www.army.mil/forthoodreview/

U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee. (2019, December 20). S.1790 - National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020. https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1790

Vergun, D. (2021, February 12). Austin announces members of base-naming commission. U.S. Department of Defense. https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2503070/austin-announces-members-of-base-naming-commission/

Vittrup, B. (2018). Color blind or Color conscious? White American mothers' approaches to racial Socialization. Journal of Family Issues, 39(3), 668–692. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X16676858

Recommendations Endnotes

[1] By 2027, the majority of Americans age 29 or younger will be people of color. Frey (2018)

[2] 26% of the total DoD Military Force identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or Multi-Racial. 16% of the total DoD Military Force identifies as Hispanic or Latino. U.S. Department of Defense (2020)

[3] According to 2020 Census data, the U.S. is in the midst of a major demographic shift, with the proportion of individuals who identify as "white alone" (meaning they have no other racial/ethnic identity other than white) decreasing by 8.6% since 2010 (Jones, et. al., 2021, August 12). In 2020, more than 40% of Americans identified as people of color in the Census (Frey, 2021, August 13). All racial/ethnic minority

populations increased their representation from 2010 to 2020, with the number of multiracial Americans increasing by 276% (an increase largely attributed to an increase in multiracial marriages) (Jones, et. al., 2021, August 12; Frey, 2021, August 13). These demographic shifts are anticipated to continue, with the Census Bureau projecting the white, non-Hispanic population to decrease by 9.7% (nearly 19 million people) by 2060, when this group is projected to become the minority of the total U.S. population (44.3%). (Vespa, Medina, & Armstrong, 2020, February).

[4] Spoehr, T., & Handy, B. (2018, February 13)
[5] Spanierman, Clark & Kim (2021)
[6] ibid.
[7] Learning for Justice (2021).
[8] Reeves (2019); eMentor Connect (2022); Asare (2019)
[9] U.S. Army (2013)
[10] eMentor Connect (2022)
[11] Military Leadership Diversity Commission (2010)
[12] U.S. Air Force (2022)
[13] Williams (2019)
[14] U.S. Navy (n.d.)
[15] Sussman (2018)
[16] Vergun (2020)
[17] Chrisco-Yanker (2021)
[18] ICMA (2022)
[19] Lachman, Beth E., Susan A. Resetar, and Frank Camm, Military Installation Public-to-Public Partnerships: Lessons from Past and Current Experiences, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1419-A/AF/NAVY/OSD, 2016. As of January 12, 2022: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1419.html
[20] "State and federal prosecuting attorneys and local law enforcement advised that there was little interaction between their offices and Fort Hood CID. Unlike other Army posts there were no CID Agents imbedded at any of the local police departments. [...] It was discovered that the Killeen Police Department (KPD) made a formal request to Fort Hood CID to imbed an Agent with them because they handle over 100 Soldier-subject cases a year and many victims were Soldiers. The Chief of the KPD produced a PowerPoint (PPT) presentation for the FHIRC which was used to support the request to CID. The presentation opened with the purpose of the request: 'To develop a strong partnership with the Killeen PD and Fort Hood CID to allow for early identification or problems and rapid joint solutions reducing crime and violence involving US Army personnel.' The PPT went on to describe the current state as ad hoc coordination. The presentation pointed out that there were no specific MOUs, designated points of contact or regularly scheduled contact (i.e. monthly liaison, etc.). It was a well-reasoned and justified request; however, CID leadership advised a Member of the FHIRC that there were no Special Agents with the requisite skills and experience to imbed with local law enforcement. Another limitation was that any Agent who was assigned would be subject to movement via a PCS or deployment." Fort Hood Independent Review Committee (2020), p. 65
[21] Welty, C. (2020)
[22] Instant Teams (2022)
[23] U.S. Marine Corps (2021, November)
[24] Secretary of the Air Force Affairs (2021, December 01)
[25] Smith & Reeves (2020, December 01); Rosales & Walker (2021, March 03)
[26] U.S. Navy (2021, January 26).
[27] CNA (2019)
[28] Office of People Analytics (2020)
[29] ibid.
[30] U.S. Department of Defense (2020)
[31] CNA (n.d)
[32] Department of the Army (2021)
[33] Winkie (2021)
[34] U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commision (n.d.)
[35] Text - S.1605 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022. (2021, December 27)
[36] Association of Defense Communities (2021)
[37] Jones, Marks,, Ramierez & Rios-Vargas (2021)
[38] Office of Management and Budget (2016)

[39] U.S. Army (2021, June).
[40] Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans (2020)

Recommendations References

Unless otherwise noted, images are sourced from Blue Star Families Stock Photos, DVIDSHub.net, Unsplash.com. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans (2020). Biennial Report 2020. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. https://www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans/docs/acmv/acmvBiennialReport2020.pdf

Asare, J.G. (2019). The key to diversity and inclusion is mentorship. *Forbes*. https://www.forbes.com/sites/janicegassam/2019/09/26/the-key-to-diversity-and-inclusion-is-mentorship/?sh=788ac9e87fbd

Chrisco-Yanker, RE. (2021). *A year of listening: Your voice matters*. U.S. Army. https://www.army.mil/article/250852/a_year_of_listening_your_voice_matters

CNA. (n.d). *Population representation in the military services*. https://www.cna.org/research/pop-rep

CNA (2019). *Table B-32. Active component commissioned officer gains, FY18: by source of commission, service, gender, and race/ethnicity*. https://www.cna.org/pop-rep/2018/appendixb/b_32.html

Department of the Army. (2021, June) *Department of the Army career engagement survey first annual report*. Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army. https://talent.army.mil/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/DACES-Annual-Report_JUNE2021.pdf

eMentor Connect (2022). *Workplace mentoring: The diversity & inclusion key*. https://ementorconnect.com/workplace-mentoring-progams-are-the-key-to-diversity-and-inclusion/

Fagan, A. (2021). The detrimental effects of microaggressions. *Psychology Today*. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/evidence-based-living/202110/the-detrimental-effects-microaggressions

Fort Hood Independent Review Committee (2020). *Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee*. U.S. Army. https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/forthoodreview/2020-12-03_FHIRC_report_redacted.pdf

Frey, W. H. (2021, August 13). *New 2020 census results show increased diversity countering decade-long declines in America's white and youth populations.* Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/research/new-2020-census-results-show-increased-diversity-countering-decade-long-declines-in-americas-white-and-youth-populations/

Frey, W.H. (2018, March, 13). *The US will become 'minority white' in 2045, Census projects*. Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/03/14/the-us-will-become-minority-white-in-2045-census-projects/

ICMA. (2022). *Equity officer institute*. https://icma.org/equity-officer-institute

Instant Teams. (2022). Diversity, equality and inclusion at Instant Teams. https://instantteams.com/diversity-inclusion/

Jones, N., Marks, M., Ramierez, R., & Rios-Vargas, M. (2021, August 12). *2020 census illuminates racial and ethnic composition of the country*. U.S. Census. https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html

Lachman, Beth E., Susan A. Resetar, and Frank Camm, Military Installation Public-to-Public Partnerships: Lessons from Past and Current Experiences, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1419-A/AF/NAVY/OSD, 2016. As of January 12, 2022: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1419.html

Learning for Justice (2021). *Speak up! Responding to everyday bigotry*. Southern Poverty Law Center. https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/Speak-Up-2021.pdf

Military Leadership Diversity Commission (2010). Mentoring programs across the services. U.S. Department of Defense. https://diversity.defense.gov/Portals/51/Documents/Resources/Commission/docs/Issue%20Papers/Paper%2033%20-%20Mentoring%20Programs%20Across%20Services.pdf

Office of Management and Budget. (2016, September 30). Standards for maintaining, collecting, and presenting federal data on race and ethnicity. *Federal Register*. https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/09/30/2016-23672/standards-for-maintaining-collecting-and-presenting-federal-data-on-race-and-ethnicity

Office of People Analytics. (2020, December 20). *2019 Survey of Active Duty Spouses*. https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Surveys/ADSS1901_MOS-Briefing-508-Revised.pdf

Reeves, M. (2019). *Promoting diversity in the workplace through mentorship*. Together Platform. https://www.togetherplatform.com/blog/promoting-diversity-in-the-workplace-through-mentorship

Rosales, J., & Walker, T. (2021, March 03). The racist beginnings of standardized testing. *NEA News*. https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/racist-beginnings-standardized-testing

Sawyer, C.R., Desalvo, B., Gottschalck, A. (2022, January 10). *New Census Bureau data product measures communities' social vulnerability and equity*. U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2022/01/measuring-community-resilience-equitably.html?utm_campaign=20220110msacos1ccstors&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Secretary of the Air Force Affairs (2021, December 01). Space Force welcomes North Carolina A & T to the University Partnership Program. *Space Force News*. https://www.spaceforce.mil/News/Article/2857912/space-force-welcomes-north-carolina-at-to-the-university-partnership-program/

Smith, E., Reeves, R.V. (2020, December 01). *SAT math scores mirror and maintain racial inequity*. Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/12/01/sat-math-scores-mirror-and-maintain-racial-inequity/

Spanierman, L. B., Clark, D. A., & Kim, Y. (2021). Reviewing racial microaggressions research: documenting targets' experiences, harmful sequelae, and resistance strategies. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 16(5), 1037–1059. https://doi.org/10.1177/17456916211019944

Spoehr, T., & Handy, B. (2018, February 13). *The looming national security crisis: Young Americans unable to serve in the military*. The Heritage Foundation. https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/the-looming-national-security-crisis-young-americans-unable-serve-the-military

Sussman, E. (2018). *Everyone needs a 3 a.m. friend: SOF spouses hone mentorship skills, connect*. *U.S. Army*. https://www.army.mil/article/203006/everyone_needs_a_3_a_m_friend_sof_spouses_hone_mentorship_skills_connect

Text - S.1605 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022. (2021, December 27). https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1605/text

U.S. Air Force. (2022). *Level up: Leaders equitably valued at every level*. Deputy Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Cyber Effects Operations. https://www.aflevelup.info/

U.S. Army. (2013). *Army mentorship program*. https://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2013/12/09/

U.S. Department of Defense. (2020). *2020 demographics profile of the military community*. https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2020-demographics-report.pdf

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commision (n.d.). *Who is protected from employment discrmination?* https://www.eeoc.gov/employers/small-business/3-who-protected-employment-discrimination

U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2019, December 11). *VA health care: Opportunities exist for VA to better identify and address racial and ethnic disparities*. https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-83

U.S. Marine Corps. (2021, November). *Talent management 2030*. Department of the Navy. https://www.hqmc.marines.mil/Portals/142/Users/183/35/4535/Talent%20Management%202030_November%202021.pdf?ver=E88HXGUdUQoiB-edNPKOaA%3d%3d

U.S. Navy (n.d.). Reverse mentoring. U.S. Navy. https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/Portals/55/Support/21stCenturySailor/Inclusion/Reverse%20Mentoring%20Guide.pdf?ver=RvFd0z4LmFnWjxvSF02oCA%3d%3d

U.S. Navy. (2021, January 26). *Task force one Navy: Final report*. Department of Defense. https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jan/26/2002570959/-1/-1/1/TASK%20FORCE%20ONE%20NAVY%20FINAL%20REPORT.PDF

Vergun, D. (2020). DOD takes action to support diversity, inclusion. U.S. Department of Defense. https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2274972/top-dod-officials-to-hold-virtual-town-hall-meeting/

Vespa, J., Medina, L., & Armstrong, D.M. (2020, February). *Demographic turning points for the United States: Population projections for 2020 to 2060*. U.S. Census. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1144.pdf

Welty, C. (2020). Maxwell initiative aims to create a more inclusive force, remove barriers. *Air University Public Affairs*. https://www.maxwell.af.mil/News/Display/Article/2430658/maxwell-initiative-aims-to-create-a-more-inclusive-force-remove-barriers/

Winkie, D. (2021, December 06). Unprecedented survey: Why do soldiers leave or stay in the Army? *Army Times*. https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2021/12/06/unprecedented-survey-why-do-soldiers-leave-or-stay-in-the-army/

Williams, B. (2019). *Mentoships program provides support to Army women*. U.S. Army. https://www.army.mil/article/215841/mentorship_program_provides_support_to_army_women