

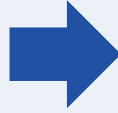
Family Relationships

MFAN's Military Family Support Programming survey sought to understand family relationships as a component of military and veteran family well-being. Findings about the impact of military life are tied back to the family well-being scale and the UCLA Loneliness Scale.

In 2021, more than half of military and veteran respondents reported feeling lonely

54.0%

of military and veteran family respondents reported feeling lonely



Respondents who do not report loneliness are significantly more likely to have excellent family health and are less likely to have poor family health. Respondents who report loneliness are significantly more likely to report overall moderate family well-being.

Marriage in the military comes with challenges. Despite hardships, military and veteran families are resilient

Some respondents felt that their marriages had grown stronger as a result of the challenges of marriage in the military, while others held resentment towards the military for the negative impact it had on their lives and the careers of military spouses. Effects of military on marriage:

1

Negative impacts of military work and culture (i.e. absence of service member)

2

Negative relationships between spouses (i.e. couples on the brink of divorce)

3

Positive benefits (i.e. sense of purpose, learned lessons, strength in partnership)

4

Negative mental health effects (i.e. generalized stress, anxiety, depression, PTSD)

5

Negative employment/finance effects (i.e. spousal unemployment, delayed careers)

Respondents discuss the impact of the military on family relationships throughout the phases of military life

Impact through stages of military life

Military lifestyle necessitates frequent moves, putting physical distance between families, which ultimately impacts the relationships they hold with extended family.



15.6%

Reported struggling with the military lifestyle (frequent moves)

"With constantly PCSing, it is difficult to establish a long-lasting relationship. Especially the kids. Moving, changing schools in the middle of the semester, leaving friends, etc. It's super hard for them."



Spouse of an active duty Army member

34.4%

Reported struggling with the distance from family

"[Military life] has created a lot of strain. Extended family members don't understand the stress level we are under and haven't been understanding when the service member missed important holidays or wanted to spend what little time they had in port with their kids and wife rather than them."



Spouse of an active duty Navy member

23.3%

Reported having strained relationships with extended family

Caregivers are more likely to report loneliness and moderate or poor family health than non-caregivers

11.0% of respondents provided care for a service member or veteran



70.5% (of the 11.0%) of caregivers provided care to their spouse



Caregivers were significantly more likely to report loneliness on the UCLA Loneliness Scale and more likely to report moderate or poor family health than non-caregiving respondents.

Caregiver supports

Many respondents did not use support systems and said they were unaware of available support. Caregivers that did use support mentioned military-connected support and nonprofit support.

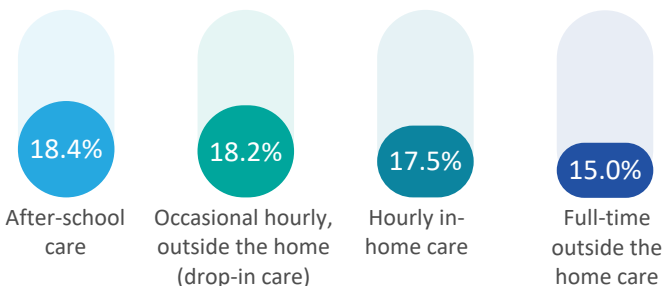


Missing caregiver supports fall into three groups:

- Care for all caregivers
- Physical and mental health support
- Desired care and programs

Almost half (48.8%) of respondents with children under 18 at home needed child care in the past two years

Type of child care needed



78.3% of respondents reported finding child care as very difficult or difficult in the past two years.

Respondents with children wish they had these supports:

- Accessible and affordable childcare
- Additional financial support
- Built-in support systems and improved amenities
- Easier access to consistent information/resources