



Commonwealth of Virginia

RODNEY L. LUSK

Fairfax County, Franconia District Supervisor
6121 Franconia Road, Alexandria, Virginia 22310



Phone: 703-971-6262
Email: Franconia@fairfaxcounty.gov
Website: fairfaxcounty.gov/Franconia

Joint Board Matter with Supervisor Penny Gross

October 24, 2023

Mr. Chairman – November marks the 30th Anniversary of Military Family Appreciation Month, originally established in 1993, by the Armed Services YMCA. Since this time, November has been designated a time to honor and recognize the commitment and contributions made by military families in support of our nation and its military services. No matter what rank or branch, or where life has taken them, our nation's military families share the common threads of service and sacrifice.

According to 2021 data from Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University, there are over **45,000** active-duty military, selected reserve, and their families living in Fairfax County. There are over 14,500 military connected children in Fairfax County Public Schools.

Additionally, the annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey by Blue Star Families, a national military nonprofit, indicates that only 33% of active-duty family respondents agree they feel a sense of belonging to their local communities while 52% of these same respondents agree that their children's schools understand the unique challenges of military families.

We are all grateful as a County for the service and sacrifice of our active duty, reserve, and veteran service members and their spouses and children. In the National Capital Region, Fairfax County is a premier destination for our military families to relocate because of our amazing resources: our schools, libraries, parks, and all the services the County provides.

Military families are among the most engaged community volunteers. They serve on their local civic associations, HOAs, PTAs and PTOs. They coach their children's local sports teams, they serve as scout leaders and are engaged in their local faith communities. Our County is enriched by having such a large percentage of military families living in our communities.

Mr. Chairman, I move that the Board designate November as "Military Family Appreciation Month" in Fairfax County to coincide with the already established National Military Family Appreciation Month. I also move that the County Executive task OPA to work with the DC Chapter of Blue Star Families, a recognized national military service organization with local presence, to revise and update our website with more information and resources to help our active duty, reserve, and veteran military families transition, live, and thrive in Fairfax County. I also move that a proclamation be prepared in acknowledgement of Military Family Appreciation Month to be presented at a future meeting of the Board of Supervisors.

9,363 respondents including active-duty, National Guard and Reserve service members, Veterans, and their family members.

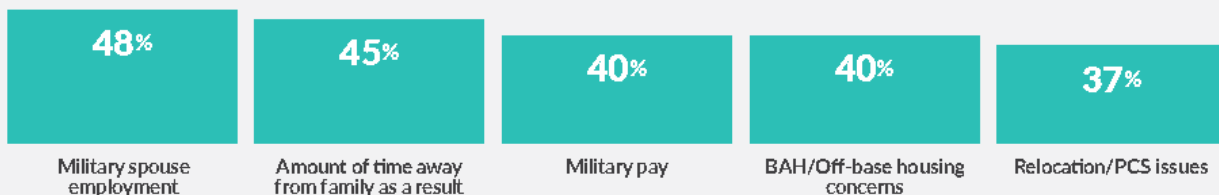


Military Family Lifestyle Survey

Presenting Sponsor



Top 5 Issues for Active-Duty Families in 2022



Active-Duty Families and Their Civilian Communities

Belonging

33%



of active-duty family respondents agree¹ that they feel a sense of belonging to their local civilian community.

Schools

52%



of active-duty family respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that the school attended by their oldest child in grades K-12 understands the unique challenges of military families.²

Resources

Most commonly used civilian resources:

Sports/recreation for children and/or family members

Health care

Social support resources



Active-Duty Family Mental Health

Desire for mental health care

23%

of active-duty family respondents report they do not currently receive mental health care, **but would like to receive it.**

16%

of active-duty family respondents with at least one child in grades K-12³ report their child (or children) does not currently receive mental health care, **but they would like them to receive it.**

20%

of active-duty family respondents reported having an adult friend or family member who expressed suicidal thoughts, made a suicide attempt, or died by suicide in the year prior to survey fielding.

32%

of active-duty family respondents with at least one child in grades K-12⁴ had a child experience bullying on school property.⁵

¹ Respondents who "somewhat agree," "agree," or "strongly agree" with the statement "I feel a sense of belonging to my local civilian community." Question and answer choice wording changed slightly from previous MFLS surveys.

² Active-duty family respondents with at least one child enrolled in K-12 education for the 2021-2022 school year were asked to think about their oldest child in grades K-12 when responding to child education questions.

³ For the 2021/2022 school year.

⁴ In the 12 months prior to survey fielding.



Military Family Lifestyle Survey

Active-Duty Family Financial Well-Being

Financial Stress

72%

of active-duty family respondents report their family financial situation as "doing okay" or "living comfortably."

Top Contributors to Financial Stress⁶



Housing

81%



of active-duty family respondents who reported monthly housing expenses not covered by their BAH also reported paying in excess of \$200 per month⁷ out-of-pocket.

Spouse Employment⁸

Labor force participation rate

65%

Compared to national labor force participation rate⁹ – 72%

Employed (in labor force)

Among those who are working



Working full time



Working part time

79%

Unemployed (in labor force)

21%

Compared to national unemployment rate¹⁰ – 6%

2 in 5

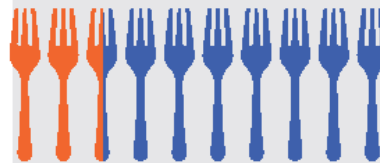
active-duty spouse respondents¹¹ report "Child care is too expensive" as the top reason they are not working.

Food Insecurity

16%

of active-duty family respondents reported experiencing low/very low food security levels.¹²

However, that number changes when broken down:

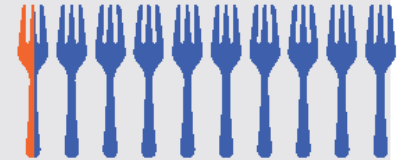


26%

Enlisted active-duty family respondents with low/very low food security

4%

Officer active-duty family respondents with low/very low food security



Blue Star Families' annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey provides a comprehensive understanding of what it means to serve as a military family. For that reason it is a blueprint for strengthening America and identifying how we can continue to enhance military family life.

⁶ For active-duty families who indicated they have financial stress.

⁷ The anticipated monthly housing cost share is \$74-\$168.

⁸ Active-duty spouse respondents who are not also active-duty service members.

⁹ Civilian comparison group data comes from statistics reported for women, age 18-44, in the Current Population Survey (CPS) 2021 Annual Average Employment Status (not seasonally adjusted).

¹¹ Active-duty spouse respondents who are not also an active-duty service member and who want or need to work but are not currently employed.

¹² In the 12 months preceding survey fielding.

In collaboration with

Syracuse University

D'Aniello Institute for Veterans & Military Families

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