

Blue Star Families Releases 2013 Military Family Lifestyle Survey

National Military Family Lifestyle Survey findings offer profound insight into the current concerns of military families and recommendations for policy, research, and partnership with the civilian community

Panel discussion with military experts and families discuss results and solutions, moderated by The New York Times' James Dao

Washington, D.C. (May 16, 2013)—Blue Star Families, a national non-profit organization supporting military families, today released the results of its 2013 Military Family Lifestyle Survey at an event cohosted by the Senate and Congressional Military Family Caucuses. Featuring a panel discussion between military experts and family members, moderated by James Dao of *The New York Times*, the event focused on issues of top concern to military families. The full survey report is available at www.bluestarfam.org/survey.

The fourth consecutive survey fielded by Blue Star Families, the 2013 Military Family Lifestyle Survey detailed the many challenges faced by military families after more than twelve years of continuous war. The key concerns identified include **pay and benefits, changes to retirement, military spouse employment, the effects of deployment on the emotional well-being and development of military children, and military child education.**

The 2013 Military Family Lifestyle Survey also uncovered valuable information on many important aspects of military family life, including relationships, suicide prevention, financial literacy, caregiving, communication, and public policy. The findings continued to indicate a distinct civilian-military cultural divide.¹ Eighty-eight percent of respondents disagreed with the statement, “The general public is aware of the impacts of military service on military families.” Ninety-two percent disagreed with the statement, “The general public truly understands the sacrifices made by service members and their families.”

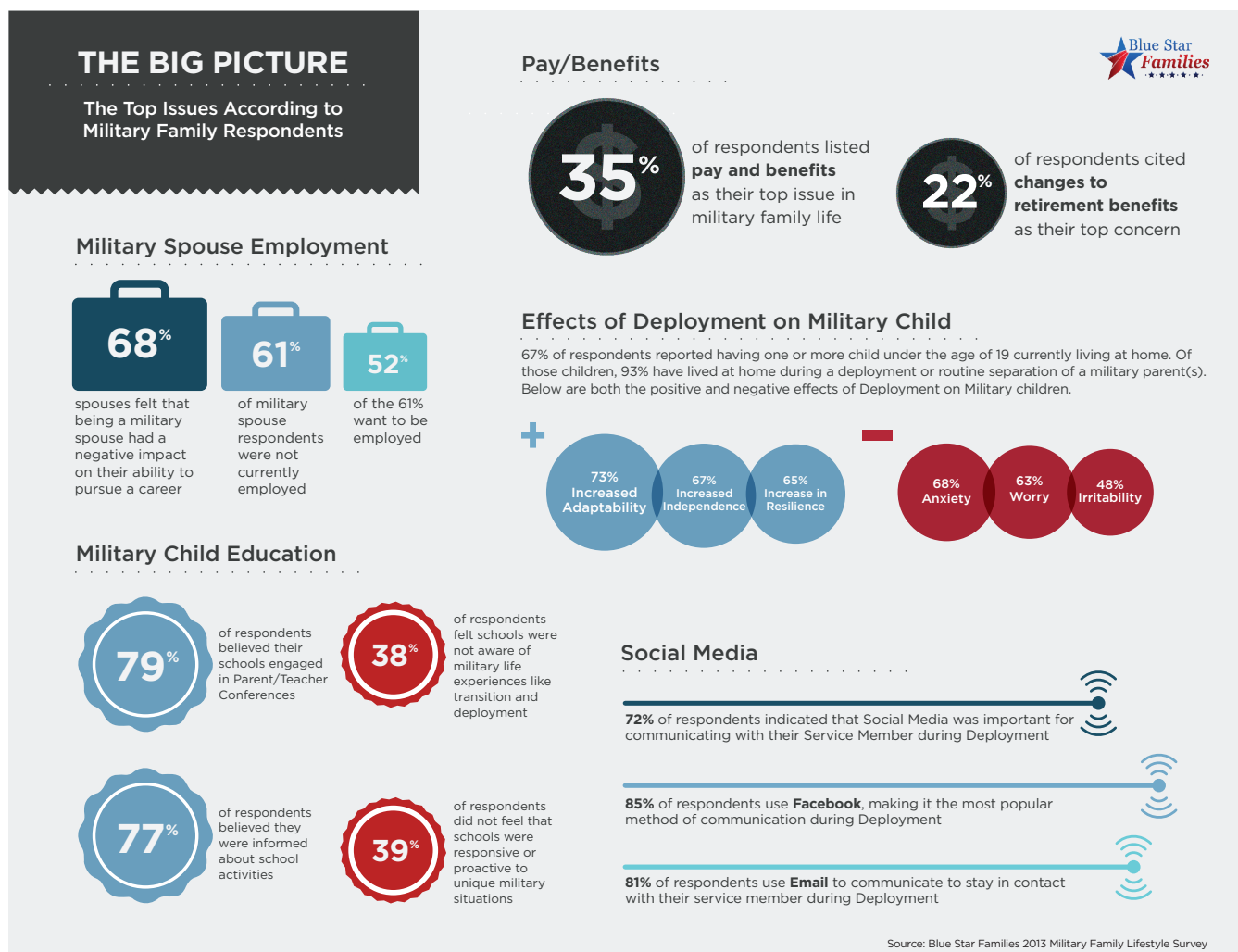
Regarding stress and mental health, 23% of all respondents and 24% of spouse respondents reported posttraumatic stress (“PTS”) symptoms in their service member regardless of diagnosis. Comparatively, 19% of service members reported having a PTS diagnosis and 21% reported symptoms regardless of diagnosis. Of those who reported that they or their service member had exhibited symptoms of PTS, 57% reported not seeking treatment through a military provider and **50% cited “confidentiality/career concerns” as a reason for not seeking treatment at all.**

Held at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center in Washington, D.C., and attended by government, military and community leaders, the launch event featured a panel of experts on military family issues discussing the survey findings with military families and service members.

Joining Mr. Dao in the panel discussion were **Colonel Anthony M. Henderson**, USMC, Special Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; **Ms. Mary Winnefeld**, spouse of Admiral James A. Winnefeld, Jr., Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; **Dr. Mary M. Keller**, President and CEO of the Military Child Education Coalition; **Ms. Noreen O’Neil**, Deputy Director of the Military Spouse Employment Program for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s Hiring Our Heroes Program; **Staff Sergeant Jennifer Hunt**, a noncommissioned officer in the Army Reserves; and **Ms. Angie McDaniel**, spouse of a Naval officer.

Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), co-chair of the Senate Military Family Caucus, said, “The strength of our military is inextricably linked to the strength of our military families. These families sacrifice so much for our country and we owe it to them to ensure they have the support, services and resources they need. This survey provides these families with a voice so that we can better meet their needs and address their concerns.”

“Military spouses and families endure so much on our behalf that many of us will never fully understand the scope of their sacrifice. Their selflessness and patriotism are an inspiration to all of us. I applaud the efforts of Blue Star Families and hope this survey can be helpful to our work here in Congress,” said Senator Richard Burr (R-NC).



“It is only with metrics that we can determine where we are and thus how to get where we need to be,” said Congressman Sanford Bishop (D-GA2). “Once again Blue Star Families has provided an excellent analysis of the critical issues that directly affect our military families. It is now our job in Congress to take this vital information and work with our colleagues to address these issues in order to assist the backbone of our armed forces, the military family.”

“When a service member joins the military, it’s not just a job; it’s a family commitment to our country,” said Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA5). “This year’s Blue Star Families Military Family Lifestyle survey will help us better understand the challenges that military families face every day, give us actionable data to meet their needs, and elevate our nation’s commitment in a way that makes our military families safer and stronger.”

As a follow up to the survey release, Facebook will host an online live panel on June 12, 2013, to discuss veteran and military spouse employment. In addition, USAA will host an online panel to discuss finance issues among military families that will air in mid-June. More details about both events will be available shortly.

Blue Star Families’ 2013 Military Family Lifestyle Survey was made possible with the support of many organizations and interested groups, including Blue Shield of California Foundation, Facebook, Care.com, Hunt Companies, Inc. and USAA.

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About Blue Star Families

Blue Star Families is a national, nonprofit network of military families from all ranks and services, including guard and reserve, dedicated to supporting, connecting and empowering military families. Blue Star Families hosts a robust array of morale and empowerment programs, including Books on Bases, Blue Star Museums, Operation Honor Corp, Blue Star Careers and Operation Appreciation. Blue Star Families also works directly with the Department of Defense and senior members of local, State and Federal government to bring the most important military family issues to light. Working in concert with fellow nonprofits, community advocates, and public officials, Blue Star Families raises awareness of the challenges and strengths of military family life and works to make military life more sustainable. Our worldwide membership includes military spouses, children, parents, and friends, as well as service members, veterans and civilians.

To learn more about Blue Star Families, visit <http://www.bluestarfam.org/>. Join us on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.

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Survey report and infographic available for download at <http://bluestarfam.org/PressBox>.

¹ Blue Star Families, Department of Research and Policy. 2012 Military Family Lifestyle Survey: Findings and Analysis. Washington, D.C. May 2012. Last accessed 13 April 2013 at www.bluestarfam.s3.amazonaws.com/42/65/a/1110/CompReport2012.pdf.