



Community Connection

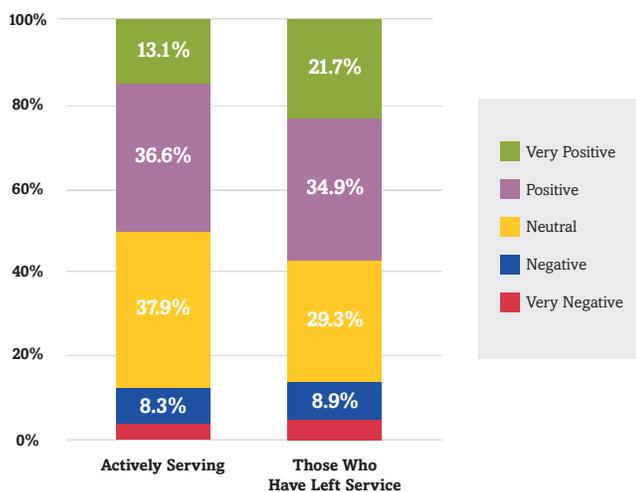
Everyone wants to feel connected. What happens when military families experience loneliness?

Loneliness is as much of a health and lifestyle risk factor as smoking, obesity, and air pollution. Frequent moves mean many military families are far from family support and surrounded by strangers in new locations, and social distancing in the wake of COVID-19 has changed the way we connect, leaving some feeling more isolated than ever. Reducing the impacts of military lifestyle factors will be critical in battling loneliness among military and veteran families.

Graphic Data

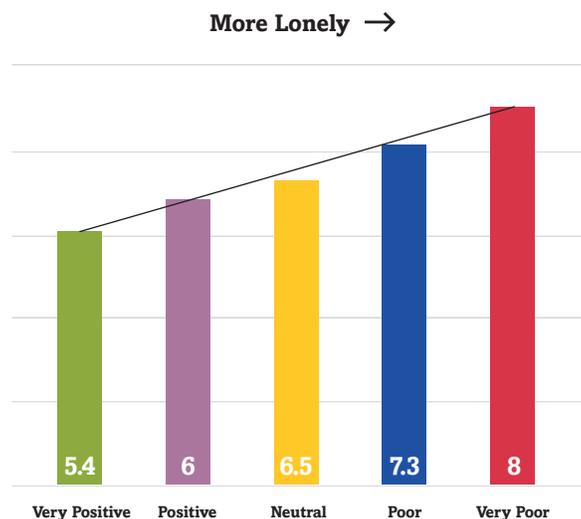
Civilian community experiences are different for actively serving families and those who have left service

More than half of respondents (52.9%), rated their experiences as positive or very positive. Those who have left service—military veterans, retirees, and their families—were even more likely to rate their experiences positively.



Active duty spouses with poor community experiences were more likely to be lonely

Using the UCLA Loneliness Scale, we found a statistically significant relationship between loneliness and active duty spouses who reported having poor community experiences. A rating between 6 and 9 is considered *lonely*.



52.9%
reported positive or very positive community experiences

Some respondents were more likely than others to rate as lonely:

- Caregivers
- Those experiencing food insecurity
- Respondents who were worried about their own alcohol use, or the use of someone they care about
- Those who had sought assistance for intimate partner violence in the previous two years
- Those who had contemplated suicide in the previous two years
- Those experiencing financial stress

Here Are Their Stories

“ At times very isolating, we have been living in small communities away from base. They do not want to get to know you if you are leaving in a couple of years. The communities have been nice just indifferent,”

said the spouse of an **active duty member** in Michigan.

“ I am a recluse. But not by choice,”

said the spouse of an **active duty member** in Washington.

“ The civilian community is very welcoming. Most of them do not understand the effects of military life at all but are interested in learning and can be better allies once they are aware of issues,”

said the spouse of an **active duty member** in South Carolina.

“ We live in a small city about 20 miles east of the base who are very welcoming and accommodating to the military population. We feel very fortunate, because not every duty station has been that way,”

said the spouse of an **active duty member** in Kansas.

Advisory recommendations

Call to Action

Recognize loneliness as a health concern and find ways to support families who may not have many community connections.



militaryfamilyadvisorynetwork.org

info@militaryfamilyadvisorynetwork.org

202.821.4195

Thank you to our research partners

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