
SURVEYING THE MILITARY

What America's Servicemembers, Veterans,
and Their Spouses Think About K–12
Education and the Profession

Paul DiPerna
Lindsey M. Burke
Anne Ryland



ABOUT EDCHOICE

EdChoice is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to advancing full and unencumbered educational choice as the best pathway to successful lives and a stronger society. EdChoice believes that families, not bureaucrats, are best equipped to make K–12 schooling decisions for their children. The organization works at the state level to educate diverse audiences, train advocates and engage policymakers on the benefits of high-quality school choice programs. EdChoice is the intellectual legacy of Milton and Rose D. Friedman, who founded the organization in 1996 as the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this report, we share results from a 2017 multi-mode survey of 1,200 active-duty military servicemembers, veterans, and their spouses. Our goal was to gain a better understanding of the view of military households and families toward K-12 education, especially regarding current developments in expanding educational options and access. We also wanted to learn more about attitudes toward the military profession as a whole.

Military servicemembers' quality of life not only affects military readiness in the present, but it also affects military recruitment in the future. For active-duty military preparing for deployment or already deployed far from home, the educational options available to their children can be a point of great concern. That stress may affect job performance or retention. The schooling options available to military-connected children can play a role in whether a family accepts an assignment or even factor into decisions to leave military service altogether.¹ Surveying military servicemembers, veterans, and their spouses gives us insight into military life, the profession and how family and vocational factors may provide context for schooling and K-12 education decisions.

With this study, we sought to address the following three research questions:

1. How do servicemembers, veterans, and their spouses view different types of K-12 educational choice policies?
2. What are military families' experiences in K-12 education and local district schooling?
3. What are military respondents' views and attitudes toward the military profession and their priorities?

Choice-Based Education Policies

Education Savings Accounts (ESAs)

- Military respondents were almost five times more likely to support ESAs than they were to oppose them (72% favor vs. 15% oppose) when given a description of the choice-based education policy. The margin (+57 points) is very large. The difference between strongly held positive and negative views is +25 points.
- The most common reasons military respondents support ESAs were “access to better academic environment” (30%), “more freedom and flexibility for parents” (28%), and a “focus on more individual attention” (22%). The most common reason they oppose ESAs is the belief they “divert funding away from public schools” (40%).

School Vouchers

- Nearly two out of three military households (64%) said they support school vouchers, compared with 27 percent who opposed when given a description of the education reform. The margin of support is +37 points. Military respondents were much more likely to express an intensely favorable view toward school vouchers than an intensely negative view by +16 points (28% “strongly favor” vs. 12% “strongly oppose”).

Tax-Credit Scholarships

- Military respondents clearly support the

¹Matthew Leatherman (2015), *The Army Goes to School: The Connection between K-12 Education Standards and the Military-Base Economy*, retrieved from Stimson Center website: <https://www.stimson.org/sites/default/files/file-attachments/ArmyGoesToSchool.pdf>; Jim Cowen and Marcus S. Lingenfelter (2017, February 27), *The Stealth Factor in Military Readiness* [Blog post], retrieved from <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/education/321321-the-stealth-factor-in-military-readiness>

concept of a tax-credit scholarship program. A substantial majority (63%) say they support such a policy, whereas 23 percent say they oppose tax-credit scholarships. The margin is +40 percentage points. Military households are almost three times as likely to express strong positive responses toward tax-credit scholarships than strong negative responses (24% “strongly favor” vs. 9% “strongly oppose”).

Schooling Preferences and Experiences

Changing Schools

We focused on the separate military populations of former school parents and current school parents to gain a better understanding of how often military families change K–12 schools and go through subsequent transitions.

- The median number of schools attended by the oldest child in the family is three (mean = 3.37), and the mean is comparable and statistically similar (mean = 3.20). There is still a large proportion of military families that have enrolled their oldest child in at least four different K–12 schools: 39 percent of former school parents and 31 percent of current school parents.

School Type Preferences

- When asked for a preferred school type, nearly equal shares of military respondents said they would choose a regular public school (34%) or a private school (33%) as a first option for their child. One out of six respondents (17%) would select a public charter school. Smaller

proportions would either choose to homeschool their child (6%) or enroll in a virtual school (4%).

- Notably, four of the five school-type respondents in our survey prioritized “personalized attention/individual attention/one-on-one/class size” above all else as a top reason for selecting a type of school. Respondents who preferred regular public schools would most frequently say some aspect of “socialization” was a key reason for making their choice.

School Type Enrollments Other than District Schools

- Solid proportions of surveyed military parents report having experiences with public charter schools (34%), private schools (32%), and homeschooling (22%) for at least one-half of a school year.

Sacrifices Made for Children’s Education

- More than twice the number of military parents (44%) report taking an additional job compared to the one out of five parents (21%) in the general public. Military parents (37%) are also much more likely to change jobs than parents generally (14%).
- Military families (37%) are twice as likely as civilian families (17%) to say they have moved to be closer to their children’s schools.
- Approximately one-third of military parents (32%) said they have taken out a new loan, which is, again, a substantially higher level of activity than what we previously have observed among American parents (11%).ⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱPaul DiPerna and Andrew D. Catt (2016), *2016 Schooling in America Survey: Public Opinion on K–12 Education and School Choice* (Polling Paper 28), retrieved from EdChoice website: http://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2016-10_SIA-Poll-Update.pdf

- Military parents are much more likely than the national average to say they have paid for transportation for at least four months of a school year (37% vs. 15%, respectively). The spread between those two populations is 22 points.
- Military families are also much more likely than the national average to say they have paid for before/after-care services (difference = 19 points).
- A majority (56%) of respondents said they have “significantly changed their routine” for the sake of their children’s education, which is 18 points higher than the national average (38%).

Awareness of Federal Impact Aid Funding

- Just one out of three respondents (33%) said they were familiar with federal Impact Aid funding for public school districts with large concentrations of federally connected students. Impact Aid is federal funding that supports the education of federally connected children and compensates local areas for lost tax revenue because of a federal presence. Of the surveyed group, current school parents (49%) is the demographic most likely to be familiar with Impact Aid funding. Still, half of that population says they are unfamiliar with the program.

Views on the Military Profession and Priorities

Net Promoter Score (NPS)

We adapted the Net Promoter Score (NPS) as a way to measure loyalty and commitment to the military profession. NPS is essentially an index that ranges from -100 to 100 that organizations often use to measure the willingness of its stakeholders to

recommend a product, service, organization, or person to others. We use NPS as a proxy for gauging a population’s overall satisfaction, loyalty, or commitment.

A majority of respondents recommended service in the U.S. military. In our survey’s overall sample, there were 675 Promoters (56%), 311 Passives (26%), and 188 Detractors (16%). Our survey generated an NPS of 41 among all military respondents.

Veterans’ Reasons for Leaving the Military

Current school parents (26%) are significantly more likely to say spending time with family and other family reasons explain their decision to leave the military. Those serving longer in the military (11 or more years) are much more likely to say “retirement” is the reason, compared to those with fewer years of service.

Critical Issues Facing Military Households

About one out of five in the overall sample (21%) said economic issues were a top household priority. A slightly smaller proportion of respondents (17%) identified health issues and healthcare as the highest priority. Other general problems mentioned by respondents included inequality/racism (12%), Veteran Care/Veterans Administration (9%), and national security/terrorism issues (7%). Nine percent of all respondents said no problems need to be addressed by the federal government. Open responses mentioning “education” clustered with other issues below 5 percent.

Conclusion

America’s military servicemembers, past and present, are a uniquely positioned population for federal policymaking in K–12 education. Since the

1940s, the United States federal government has enacted laws to ensure that military families can access at least a basic education either directly on bases or in local public school districts. Since the federal government is responsible for the education and support of military families and methods of education delivery have diversified tremendously in recent years, why not give funds directly to these families to choose an education option that works best for their needs?

Military families are proactive in the way they support their children's education, and direct receipt of funds—perhaps via ESAs—could extend their involvement and further personalize the education of military-connected students whose lives require immense mobility and flexibility.

EdChoice's other national and state surveys have shown that the majority of Americans favor choice policies in general, so these results match expectations.ⁱⁱⁱ What is surprising is the magnitude and intensity of support in comparison to the general population. These results seem to suggest military parents' strong desire for better access to school choice options like education savings accounts, vouchers, and tax-credit scholarships.

A window of attention opened by the military community's evolving needs and priorities, recent decentralizing K-12 policies, and emerging choice-based funding mechanisms together demand the need for policymakers and school choice proponents to better understand the educational circumstances of military families. Military families have already sacrificed so much for their country and—as reported in this survey—for the education and well-being of their children. Our survey findings indicate policy influencers and policymakers have a real opportunity to address military families' preferences for personalized student learning and greater access to options in K-12 education.

ⁱⁱⁱFor more information about EdChoice's surveys and polls, see the EdChoice Research Library: EdChoice, Research [web page], accessed September 1, 2017, retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/what-we-do/research>

INTRODUCTION

In this report we share results from a 2017 multi-mode survey of 1,200 active-duty military servicemembers¹, veterans, and their spouses. Our objective was to gain a better understanding of the views of military households and families toward K–12 education, especially regarding current developments in expanding educational options and access. We also wanted to learn more about attitudes toward the military profession as a whole. Our survey research reflects a snapshot in time. The findings presented later in this report are meant to be descriptive in their nature and not intended to make causal claims.

Why Survey Military Families?

Surveying military families can give us insight into military life and the profession and how family and vocational factors may provide context for schooling and K–12 education decisions. Although servicemembers' education benefits, such as those provided through the G.I. Bill to cover many higher education expenses, are considerable, less consideration is given to the educational options available to the children of military families. It is important for elected officials and other policymakers to better understand the needs, interests, and priorities of military families. They represent a population that has unique needs, and their quality of life has important implications for the defensive preparedness and readiness that affects the entire nation.

Military servicemembers' quality of life not only affects military readiness in the present, it also affects military recruitment in the future. For servicemembers who are preparing for deployment or are already deployed far from home, the educational options available to their children can be a point of great concern. That stress can affect job performance and retention.² The schooling options available to military-connected children may play a role in whether a family accepts an

assignment or even factor into decisions to leave military service altogether. The Pentagon made policy changes in 2016 enabling some families to remain at duty stations for longer time periods—a direct response “to complaints by military parents who are loathe to move if the next duty station has poorly performing schools.”³ The nation has a vested interest in the quality of life of its active-duty military personnel. It is valuable to take stock of how and why military families are making decisions about education and the types of policies military families think are important.

How Can a Survey of Military Households Be Useful?

This project should be useful for military leaders, federal and state policymakers, and K–12 education stakeholders for several reasons.

Few researchers have focused on understanding military families' opinions and attitudes toward K–12 education in the United States, despite the importance they place on access to quality schools. This survey should contribute to our understanding of the unique intersection of military life and K–12 education, providing a rare window into the preferences of military households.

We believe this study is the first of its kind to survey active-duty servicemembers, veterans, and military spouses on a range of issues pertaining specifically to schooling activities and preferences and their views toward educational choice policies, such as school vouchers, public charter schools, and education savings accounts.

Why Is a Survey of Military Families Timely?

This survey is also timely because of the growing presence of school choice programs throughout the country. Today, there are 62 publicly funded private

educational choice programs operating in 29 states and the District of Columbia. (Hereafter, we use “educational choice,” “school choice,” and “choice-based” interchangeably.) We estimate that school voucher, education savings accounts (hereafter, “ESAs”), and tax-credit scholarship programs combine to serve at least 504,000 school children in the 2017–18 school year. By contrast, there were approximately 206,000 participating school choice students in those three types of programs in the 2010–11 school year.⁴ Both the number of participating students and the number of options have more than doubled in the span of seven years.⁵ Most programs operate in the Midwestern and Southern regions of the country.

Understanding Military Families’ Needs and Priorities

Findings in this report can provide actionable information for federal lawmakers and military leaders. Our survey included questions about military families’ views on the profession, their awareness of the federal Impact Aid program,⁶ and how their local school districts are meeting their needs.

The federal government has a unique responsibility to military-connected children. Article 1, Section 9 of the U.S. Constitution establishes that national defense is the responsibility of the federal government. Article 4, Section 4 mandates that the federal government is to provide for the national defense. And Article 1, Section 10 declares that national defense is exclusively the function of the federal government.⁷

Because of this responsibility, the federal government has long supported the education of military-connected children through the Impact Aid program, which has a current FY17 budget of \$1.3 billion.⁸ The Department of Defense also takes direct responsibility for the education of some military-connected children by way of operating a small number of DOD schools on military bases. This survey should provide helpful information to federal lawmakers and military leaders about the challenges and needs military families face and the types of policies they support.

Types of School Choice

For this study we focus on three educational choice mechanisms: school vouchers, education savings accounts, and tax-credit scholarships.

- **School vouchers** give parents the option to send their children to the private school of their choice, often including both religious and non-religious schools. Tax dollars typically allocated by state government to a public school district are reallocated to parents in the form of a “school voucher” to pay partial or full tuition for their children’s schooling.
- **Education savings accounts (ESAs)** are government-authorized savings accounts with restricted, but multiple uses for educational purposes. Parents can then use these funds to pay for: school tuition, tutoring, online education programs, therapies for students with special needs, textbooks or other instructional materials, or saving for future K–12 or college expenses.
- **Tax-credit scholarship** programs allow individual and business donors to offset their tax liabilities by making charitable contributions to nonprofit organizations that distribute private school scholarships. A nonprofit organization gives a scholarship to a qualifying student who would like to enroll in a private school of his or her choice, including both religious and non-religious schools. The student’s family then uses the scholarship to pay partial or full tuition for the chosen private school.

This survey also captures information about quality of life in the military and how military families relate to the profession, which military leaders and other stakeholders may find helpful. It helps us understand how military families juggle the demands of the profession and what types of sacrifices families make to meet their children's needs.

Key Terms

- **Federally connected children:** children of active-duty servicemembers, civilian children who have a parent who lives or works on federal property, and children who live on tribal lands
- **Military-connected children:** children of active-duty servicemembers
- **Active-duty servicemember:** member of the U.S. Armed Forces (Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard) who is currently serving
- **Veteran:** retired member of the U.S. Armed Forces (Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard)
- **Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools:** A public school operated by the Department of Defense on a military base either located within the contiguous or continental United States or located abroad. A public school (with some eligibility requirements) operated by the Department of Defense on a military base either located within the contiguous or continental United States or located abroad.
- **Impact Aid:** Federal funding to support the education of federally connected children, and to compensate local areas for lost tax revenue due to a federal presence

Research Themes and Report Organization

In our effort to provide helpful information for the stakeholders mentioned, our project focuses on three core questions:

1. What are active-duty and veteran respondents' views and attitudes on the military profession and their household priorities?
2. How do military families view their experiences in K–12 education and local district schooling?
3. What are the levels, margins, and intensities of support and opposition for different types of K–12 educational choice policies, including school vouchers, education savings accounts, and tax-credit scholarships?

In the first section of this report, we provide some background on the history of the education of military children and on the current policies that support their education. We also discuss the lack of access to educational options available to military families. The second section briefly reviews the existing research literature and other publicly released military surveys. Our third and fourth sections walk through the survey data and methods and describe the main survey findings. Our fifth and final section reviews the main findings in light of larger policy questions and discusses key takeaways and potential implications for the different audiences reading this report.

BACKGROUND

Military life has changed dramatically over the past century, but little has changed in the way of the educational options available to children of active-duty servicemembers. Although many other aspects of military life have been modernized to better serve our armed forces, the education of military-connected children still operates via an outmoded residential assignment model and has not kept pace with the unique needs of military families.

The Changing Nature of Military Life

The day-to-day lives of military families have changed considerably since 1775, when George Washington established the first military base at West Point. At the time and throughout the centuries to follow, military bases served as home and a central location for community services for servicemen and their families. Military families resided on base, shopped for food at the base commissary, and even visited military doctors in military hospitals, and—up until the past 60 years—did most of this in relatively isolated base locations. Military bases were located in rural areas, removed from their civilian counterparts, necessitating that the bases provide military dependents with everything from health-related services to education. Officers on military bases even began establishing schools on base as the Common Schools movement gained steam during the 19th century.⁹

Congress authorized the operation of these dependent schools on military bases in 1821,¹⁰ but sizeable growth in armed services personnel, combined with the return of servicemen and their families to military installations during and after World War II, strained the system of schools. The nearby communities in close proximity to military bases assumed responsibility for much of the increased population, which included an influx of military-connected children in the local district school systems.¹¹ Congress passed the federal Impact Aid program in 1950, providing federal funding for military-connected children in public school districts.¹² This marked a shift in responsibility for the education of military-connected children from the Department of Defense (DOD) to the Department of Education (DOE), which at the time was part of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Federal policymakers would later include children living on tribal lands as eligible recipients of Impact Aid funding.

Contemporary Military Education Arrangements.

In the latter half of the 20th century, the number

of schools operating on base dropped dramatically, as increasing numbers of military children enrolled in local public schools near their parents' duty station. Responsibility for the limited number of base-operated schools was returned to the DOD from the DOE in 1981.¹³ Today, schools located on bases educate just 4 percent of all military-connected children. Over time, the military population became increasingly integrated with the civilian population, with military life transitioning from base-centric communities to one in which active-duty personnel lived alongside their civilian counterparts in towns near bases.

Today, active-duty military personnel live alongside their civilian counterparts from San Diego, California to Fairfax County, Virginia. Although the residential life of most service members looks different than it did a century ago, many challenges persist. Active-duty military families move frequently, and their children are too often assigned to district schools nearest to base even if those public schools are “underperforming” or are simply not a good fit for their child, which can “reduce a family’s satisfaction with a military career.”¹⁴ Dissatisfaction with their child’s assigned public school nearest to base could partly explain why homeschooling is an appealing option, with approximately 7 percent of military families choosing to homeschool—nearly double the rate of the civilian population¹⁵ (3.4 percent in 2012, the most recent year for which data are available).¹⁶

Military-Connected Children in the United States

Today, there are about 750,000 school-aged children living in active-duty member households.¹⁷ Thirteen percent of military-connected children attend Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools around the world and domestically, with domestic schools operating under the auspices of the the DoDEA Americas system. Of the 13 percent of military-connected children attending DoDEA schools, 4 percent attend school on the bases located in the United States. Another 7 percent of military-connected

children are homeschooled by their parents.¹⁸ About 80 percent of military-connected children attend public schools.¹⁹

Impact Aid Today

The federal Impact Aid program, originally passed in 1950, continues to this day and helps support the education of the 80 percent of military-connected children in public schools. This Department of Education program currently provides \$1.3 billion in funding to local districts throughout the country. Impact Aid funding serves a dual purpose:

- 1) to support the education of federally connected children, and
- 2) to compensate local areas for lost tax revenue due to a federal presence.

Local areas lose property tax revenue when untaxable federally owned lands or tribal lands are present and can also lose revenue because they are unable to collect property or other taxes from the individuals—civilian or military—who live and work on federal or tribal lands. In many cases, military families pay taxes to their original states and localities, even though they spend their lives moving from place to place in other parts of the country and enrolling their children in local school systems. The students who are considered federally connected include children of active-duty service members, civilian children who have a parent who lives or works on federal property, and children who live on tribal lands. The U.S. Department of Education distributes funding to districts with federally connected children based on a formula that takes into account local per-pupil expenditures, dependence on Impact Aid, and the number and type of federally connected children who reside in the area.

Lack of Educational Choice

The vast majority of military-connected children attend assigned public schools. Incredibly, fewer than half reside in states with any school choice options at all. (See Table 1.) Yet the quality of educational options available to military families can play a major role in whether a family accepts an assignment or even decides to leave military service altogether.²⁰ A recent survey conducted and published by *Military Times* revealed that 35 percent of respondents said that dissatisfaction with their child's education was a "significant factor" in their decision to remain in or leave military service.²¹ Further evidence of dissatisfaction with their children's assigned school can be found in recent changes made by the Pentagon in 2016 that enabled some families to stay for longer periods of time at duty stations. The policy change was a direct response to "complaints by military parents who are loathe to move if the next duty station has poorly performing schools."²² Even when active-duty military families do reside in states with school choice programs, many programs are limited in scope, capping student eligibility.

Reviewing Surveys of Military Households

Understanding the unique challenges of military life and its effect on the educational experiences of military-connected children is critical both for the future life prospects of the children themselves and for the retention of their parents in the armed services. As scholars from the University of Missouri explained, "Unlike civilians, members of the military cannot refuse to relocate, and because families have limited decision-making power during this process, adolescents in military families may feel especially powerless over the happenings in their own lives."²³ Yet, industry organizations have conducted a very limited number of surveys of the educational experiences and preferences of military families in recent years. A survey by the *Military Times* in collaboration with the

TABLE 1

Military Presence in States with Private School Choice Programs

| State | Number of Military Bases | Number of Active-Duty Military Personnel | Private School Choice Program(s)? |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Alabama | 4 | 8,732 | Yes |
| Arizona | 4 | 17,916 | Yes |
| Arkansas | 4 | 4,106 | Yes |
| Florida | 37 | 57,807 | Yes |
| Georgia | 13 | 61,288 | Yes |
| Illinois | 6 | 19,182 | Yes |
| Indiana | 6 | 950 | Yes |
| Iowa | 3 | 263 | Yes |
| Kansas | 8 | 22,673 | Yes |
| Louisiana | 9 | 15,967 | Yes |
| Maine | 11 | 758 | Yes |
| Maryland | 16 | 30,382 | Yes |
| Mississippi | 10 | 9,568 | Yes |
| Montana | 2 | 3,325 | Yes |
| Nevada | 3 | 10,295 | Yes |
| New Hampshire | 1 | 834 | Yes |
| North Carolina | 20 | 106,262 | Yes |
| Ohio | 10 | 6,591 | Yes |
| Oklahoma | 6 | 18,729 | Yes |
| Pennsylvania | 9 | 2,661 | Yes |
| Rhode Island | 7 | 3,052 | Yes |
| South Carolina | 8 | 31,984 | Yes |
| South Dakota | 2 | 3,195 | Yes |
| Tennessee | 5 | 2,189 | Yes |
| Utah | 4 | 4,091 | Yes |
| Vermont | 2 | 156 | Yes |
| Virginia | 27 | 91,134 | Yes |
| Washington, D.C. | 6 | 9,841 | Yes |
| Wisconsin | 8 | 968 | Yes |
| School Choice State TOTAL | 251 | 544,899 | 28 States and D.C. |
| Alaska | 9 | 19,436 | No |
| California | 50 | 132,827 | No |
| Colorado | 7 | 35,114 | No |
| Connecticut | 4 | 4,603 | No |
| Delaware | 3 | 3,350 | No |
| Hawaii | 15 | 40,034 | No |
| Idaho | 4 | 3,336 | No |
| Kentucky | 4 | 33,129 | No |
| Massachusetts | 16 | 3,606 | No |
| Michigan | 20 | 2,160 | No |
| Minnesota | 1 | 649 | No |
| Missouri | 3 | 14,942 | No |
| Nebraska | 2 | 6,207 | No |
| New Jersey | 15 | 7,519 | No |
| New Mexico | 5 | 12,054 | No |
| New York | 16 | 21,496 | No |
| North Dakota | 3 | 7,050 | No |
| Oregon | 10 | 1,535 | No |
| Texas | 26 | 118,952 | No |
| Washington | 16 | 46,378 | No |
| West Virginia | 2 | 258 | No |
| Wyoming | 2 | 3,089 | No |
| Non-School Choice State TOTAL | 233 | 517,724 | 22 States |

Notes: States are counted as having private school choice if they operate either a school voucher program, education savings account program, or tax-credit scholarship program. For this analysis we exclude personal-use tax credits and deductions.

Source: Active-duty military numbers from Governing Magazine, Data: Military Active-Duty Personnel, Civilians by State [web page], retrieved from <http://www.governing.com/gov-data/military-civilian-active-duty-employee-workforce-numbers-by-state.html>; base numbers compiled from Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_military_bases.

Collaborative for Student Success and a series of surveys spanning a decade conducted by Blue Star Families are among the most notable and high-profile survey projects in the field.

The findings in this report build on our understanding of the day-to-day challenges of military families, particularly as they pertain to the education of their children, and provide new insight into active-duty members' and veterans' opinions on alternative options for K–12 education. These findings add to a limited body of survey work conducted over the past decades, which is reviewed below.

Military Times/Collaborative for Student Success Survey

A 2017 survey conducted by the Collaborative for Student Success in conjunction with *Military Times* found that the education available to the children of military families had significant implications for their military service and their armed services career path. A full 70 percent of respondents reported that moving between states created additional challenges for their children's education. Forty percent of respondents relayed that they had declined or would decline a "career-advancing job at a different installation" in order to stay at their current duty station if it meant their child could remain in a "high-performing" school. Most notably, 35 percent of respondents said that "dissatisfaction with a child's education was or is 'a significant factor' in deciding whether or not to continue military service."²⁴

Blue Star Families Surveys

Since 2009, Blue Star Families has conducted the *Military Family Lifestyle Survey*, surveying active-duty servicemembers, their families, and veterans on a wide range of issues. They conducted and published their most recent survey, the seventh annual *Military Lifestyle Survey*, in 2016. As is the case every year, the survey asked respondents

about their views pertaining to the education available to them and their children. In the 2016 survey, 46 percent of respondents (active-duty and veteran) listed education benefits among the top five reasons for joining the military. For millennial-aged servicemembers, education benefits were their top reason for joining the military. Although they viewed those benefits positively, they gave the education available to military-connected children lower marks.

Children of military families attend an average of six to nine schools from kindergarten through high school graduation. Survey respondents reported being dissatisfied with their schooling options. Just one-third (33 percent) of parent respondents said that their child's school "was doing a good job complying with the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children," a state effort to provide consistent policy for military-connected children in participating school districts.²⁵

Although the educational opportunities available to their children did not make it into the top five concerns of military families during the 2016 survey, it did a year earlier, when 28 percent of spouses of active-duty service members listed the educational opportunities available to their children as a top concern.²⁶ Also notable in the 2015 survey was the reported rate of homeschooling among military families, which topped 7 percent—a rate of homeschooling nearly twice that of the civilian population, which stood at 3.4 percent in 2012 (the most recent year for which data are available).²⁷ Among military spouses who were not in the workforce, 13 percent did not work in order to homeschool their children. As the Blue Star Families survey noted, "Homeschooling may appeal to military families because this option affords flexibility, resources, and portability when continuing their children's education. Homeschooling can be a solution for families who cannot afford private tuition and have concerns about the quality or environment of public schools near the installation to which their service member has been assigned."²⁸

Another notable finding from the 2015 survey included high rates of “geo-bach’ing” among servicemembers with school-aged children. The survey found that some 30 percent of active-duty families spent an additional 6–12 months living separately in addition to separation caused by deployment. This separation is known as “geographic bachelor states” or “geo-bach’ing.” More than one-quarter (27 percent) of service members who reported geo-bach’ing did so because of their children’s education. Separation to maintain school continuity is not the only challenge military families with school-aged children face. Eighteen percent of respondents reported having children with special needs, which can increase the need for specific educational services.²⁹

Concern about the educational options available to children of military families has increased substantially over the past decade, with 28 percent of 2015 respondents listing it as a top-five concern, compared to just 3 percent of respondents in the initial 2009 survey.³⁰

DATA AND METHODS

The “Surveying Military Households Project,” sponsored and developed by EdChoice and conducted by Braun Research, Inc., interviewed 600 active-duty military servicemembers and their respective spouses/partners as well as 600 veterans and their respective spouses/partners. The overall sample includes 1,200 interviews that were conducted using a mixed phone-online method from June 23 to July 11, 2017. Braun Research asked all respondents—via online or phone—a series of screener questions to ensure relevance and qualification (see Questionnaire and Topline Results document at edchoice.org/MilitarySurvey). The survey data and results presented here are unweighted.

The margin of sampling error for the overall sample of interviews (N = 1,200) is ± 2.8 percentage points with a 95 percent confidence interval.³¹

This means that, in 95 of every 100 samples drawn using the same method, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 2.8 percentage points away from their true values in the population. We have not made adjustment for potential design effects. The margin of sampling error is ± 4.0 percentage points for both the active-duty sample (N = 600) and veteran sample (N = 600). In addition to sampling error, question wording, ordering, and other practical difficulties when conducting surveys may introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion research.

For more information about our survey specifications and methods, see Appendices 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

SURVEY RESULTS

Organization and Ground Rules

We report response levels for three main groupings of military household respondents: overall sample, active-duty sample, and veteran sample.³² The overall sample consists of all respondents who completed our survey interviews (N = 1,200). The active-duty and veteran respondents are *subsets* of the overall sample (N = 600, each). When we detect statistically significant differences, we also briefly describe those corresponding response levels or margins. Table 2 displays the summary statistics for the overall sample, active-duty sample, and veteran sample.

We have some brief ground rules on our reporting protocol before describing the survey results.³³ Generally, we note for each survey topic the raw response levels for the overall sample on a given question. Several questions had multiple versions, and so we focus on the composite response levels and differences based on the averaging of responses to all versions of the question. We then examine the response differences (i.e. margins) within a given sample or population. If noteworthy, we also discuss the “strongly” held positive or negative

TABLE 2 Survey Summary Statistics

| State | Overall Sample (N = 1,200) % | Active-Duty Sample (N = 600) % | Veteran Sample (N = 600) % |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| STATUS | | | |
| Active-Duty Member | 39.4 | 78.8 | - |
| Veteran | 23.3 | - | 46.5 |
| Active-Duty Spouse | 10.6 | 21.2 | - |
| Veteran Spouse | 26.8 | - | 53.5 |
| MILITARY SERVICE BRANCH | | | |
| Air Force | 20.9% | 24.0 | 17.8 |
| Army | 44.3 | 42.8 | 45.7 |
| Coast Guard | 3.7 | 5.7% | 1.7 |
| Marines | 18.3 | 15.7 | 20.8 |
| Navy | 12.9 | 11.8 | 14.0 |
| LENGTH OF SERVICE (Members, Veterans) | | | |
| ≤ 4 Years | 42.2 | 37.7 | 46.7 |
| 5 to 10 Years | 30.3 | 32.0 | 28.7 |
| 11 to 20 Years | 17.5 | 20.7 | 14.3 |
| ≥ 20 Years | 8.2 | 8.3 | 8.0 |
| GENDER | | | |
| Male | 43.0 | 48.3 | 37.7 |
| Female | 57.0 | 51.7 | 62.3 |
| RACE/ETHNICITY | | | |
| White | 74.4 | 66.5 | 82.3 |
| Hispanic [or Latino] | 12.0 | 17.3 | 6.7 |
| Black [or African American] | 13.2 | 16.5 | 9.8 |
| Native American [or American Indian] | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.2 |
| Asian [or Pacific Islander] | 3.3 | 5.2 | 1.5 |
| Mixed Race | 5.8 | 7.2 | 4.5 |
| Other | 1.1 | 2.0 | 0.2 |
| CENSUS REGION | | | |
| Northeast | 13.6 | 10.0 | 17.2 |
| Midwest | 19.0 | 16.7 | 21.2 |
| South | 45.6 | 49.2 | 42.0 |
| West | 22.0 | 24.2 | 19.7 |
| COMMUNITY TYPE | | | |
| Urban | 25.6 | 29.3 | 21.8 |
| Suburban | 46.5 | 46.5 | 46.5 |
| Small Town/Rural | 27.0 | 22.5 | 31.5 |
| PARENT OF CHILD ≤ 18 in HH? | | | |
| Yes | 50.9 | 62.4 | 39.5 |
| No | 46.3 | 34.2 | 58.3 |
| AGE | | | |
| 18 to 34 | 46.3 | 68.7 | 23.8 |
| 35 to 54 | 29.7 | 27.7 | 31.7 |
| ≥ 55 | 22.2 | 0.8 | 43.5 |
| POLITICAL PARTY ID | | | |
| Democrat | 32.6 | 29.3 | 35.8 |
| Republican | 32.7 | 32.8 | 32.5 |
| Independent | 22.9 | 22.3 | 23.5 |
| Libertarian | 3.3 | 4.2 | 2.3 |
| Other | 2.8 | 2.3 | 3.3 |
| Don't know | 2.6 | 3.8 | 1.3 |
| Prefer not to answer | 3.2 | 5.2 | 1.2 |
| EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT | | | |
| Less than High School | 1.2 | 0.7 | 1.7 |
| High School Graduate, GED | 19.2 | 20.0 | 18.3 |
| Some College/Tech | 37.7 | 36.2 | 39.2 |
| ≥ College Graduate | 41.7 | 42.7 | 40.7 |
| HOUSEHOLD INCOME | | | |
| < \$40,000 | 28.3 | 23.2 | 33.3 |
| \$40,000 to \$79,999 | 42.6 | 45.2 | 40.0 |
| ≥ \$80,000 | 26.2 | 28.8 | 23.5 |

response levels on a question. Sometimes we refer to the difference between strong positive and strong negative responses as the “net intensity” or just intensity.

We briefly report the overall sample’s demographic subgroup comparisons only if findings are statistically significant. Reported subgroup differences are statistically significant with 95 percent confidence. We tend to orient any listing of subgroups’ differences as “more/most likely” or “less/least likely” to respond one way or the other, typically emphasizing a propensity to be more or less likely to give the positive response. Mentions of subgroups with respect to margins and intensities are meant to be suggestive for further exploration and research beyond this project. We do not infer nor mean to imply causality with any of the observations in this report.

We segmented this report’s key findings and charts in three results sections. Military members, veterans, or their spouses offered their views and impressions on the following topics:

PART I. Outlook on the Military Profession and Household Priorities

- the most important types of problems facing military personnel and families
- reasons for leaving the military
- loyalty and commitment toward service time in the military³⁴

PART II. Experiences in K–12 Education and Local Schooling

- number of schools attended by oldest/only child
- awareness about federal Impact Aid funding
- school type experiences other than district schools
- what military parents have done to secure their children’s K–12 education

- how military parents accommodate their children’s K–12 education
- school district ratings regarding military families’ needs

PART III. Views and Attitudes Toward K–12 Education and Choice-Based Policies

- perceived direction of K–12 education in the United States
- preferred school type and why
- views on education savings accounts (ESAs)
- views on school vouchers
- views on tax-credit scholarships

PART I

Outlook on the Military Profession and Household Priorities

Outlook on the Military Profession

At the outset of our survey interviews, we wanted to learn more about respondents' impressions of military service and the profession generally, based on their own personal experience. We have adapted the Net Promoter Score (NPS) as a way to measure loyalty and commitment to the military profession.³⁵

To generate an NPS, a survey poses a single question to a person to determine to what degree she or he would “recommend” a product or organization. The person answering is asked to give a rating on a scale of zero to 10.³⁶

- A “Promoter” is someone who gives a nine or 10. This person shows a high degree of loyalty, commitment, and enthusiasm.
- A “Passive” is someone who answers with a seven or eight. This profile can be described as being satisfied and content, but not someone who would go out of her/his way to boost a brand, product, or organization.
- “Detractors” are those people who responded in the range of zero to six. This group is unhappy and ready to move away from a brand, product, or organization.

The NPS score is the difference when subtracting the proportion of Detractors from the proportion of Promoters. It is essentially an index that ranges from -100 to 100 that organizations often use to measure the willingness of its stakeholders to recommend a product, service, organization, or person to others. NPS can be used as a proxy for gauging a population's overall satisfaction, loyalty, or commitment.

We adapted the standard NPS question for our survey and used the following wording: “On a scale from zero to 10, how likely is it that you would recommend serving in the United States military to a friend or colleague?”

A majority of respondents recommended service in the U.S. military. In our survey's overall sample, there were 675 Promoters (56%), 311 Passives (26%), and 188 Detractors (16%). Our survey generated an NPS of 41 among all military respondents.³⁷ (See Table 3 and Appendix 7.)

Veterans' Reasons for Leaving the Military

Why do veterans say they leave the military? Table 4 on page 19 shows nearly equal proportions (almost one out of five) say either their military service contract ended, family reasons, or medical/injury reasons. Current school parents (26%) are significantly more likely to say spending time with family and other family reasons explain their decision to leave the military. Those serving longer in the military (11 or more years) are much more likely to say “retirement” is the reason, compared to those with fewer years of service.

Critical Issues Facing Military Households

What is the most important problem facing military households that respondents believe should be addressed by the United States federal government? After asking this open-ended question, we coded the responses into general categories. Table 5 on page 19 shows approximately one out of five in the overall sample (21%) said economic issues were a top priority for the household. A slightly smaller proportion of respondents (17%) identified health issues and healthcare as the highest priority. Other general problems mentioned by respondents included inequality/racism (12%), Veteran Care/Veterans Administration (9%), and national security/terrorism issues (7%). Nine percent of all respondents said no problems need to be addressed by the federal government. Open responses mentioning “education” clustered with other issues below 5 percent.³⁸

TABLE 3

Selected Demographics Among Military Households by Net Promoter Score (NPS) Groups, 2017
NPS Groups based on responses to the following question: "On a scale from zero to 10, how likely is it that you would recommend serving in the United States military to a friend or colleague?"

| State | Promoter (9 or 10) % | Passive (7 or 8) % | Detractor (0 to 6) % | NPS Score | N = |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| ALL RESPONDENTS | 56 | 26 | 16 | 41 | 1,200 |
| Active-Duty | 59 | 26 | 14 | 45 | 600 |
| Veteran | 54 | 26 | 18 | 36 | 600 |
| Serving/Served in Military | 61 | 26 | 12 | 49 | 752 |
| Military Spouse | 48 | 26 | 21 | 27 | 448 |
| Current School Parent | 63 | 26 | 11 | 52 | 493 |
| Former School Parent | 57 | 22 | 16 | 41 | 194 |
| Non-Parent | 50 | 27 | 21 | 30 | 361 |
| BRANCH | | | | | |
| Army | 55 | 24 | 18 | 37 | 531 |
| Navy | 55 | 28 | 15 | 40 | 219 |
| Air Force | 59 | 27 | 12 | 46 | 251 |
| Marines | 57 | 27 | 16 | 41 | 155 |
| LENGTH OF SERVICE | | | | | |
| ≤ 4 Years | 51 | 27 | 19 | 32 | 506 |
| 5 to 10 Years | 56 | 26 | 17 | 39 | 364 |
| 11 to 20 Years | 61 | 27 | 10 | 52 | 210 |
| ≥ 20 Years | 79 | 17 | 4 | 75 | 98 |
| GENDER | | | | | |
| Female | 53 | 25 | 19 | 34 | 684 |
| Male | 61 | 28 | 11 | 50 | 516 |
| AGE | | | | | |
| 18 to 34 | 51 | 29 | 19 | 32 | 555 |
| 35 to 54 | 63 | 26 | 10 | 53 | 356 |
| ≥ 55 | 59 | 21 | 15 | 44 | 266 |
| RACE/ETHNICITY | | | | | |
| Asian | 58 | 28 | 13 | 45 | 40 |
| African American/Black | 55 | 23 | 20 | 35 | 158 |
| Latino/Hispanic | 65 | 22 | 12 | 54 | 144 |
| White | 56 | 27 | 15 | 40 | 800 |
| HOUSEHOLD INCOME | | | | | |
| < \$40,000 | 55 | 21 | 22 | 33 | 339 |
| \$40,000 to \$79,999 | 55 | 30 | 13 | 42 | 511 |
| ≥ \$80,000 | 62 | 24 | 13 | 49 | 314 |

Notes: We measure an NPS Score by subtracting the percentage of "Detractor" responses from the percentage of "Promoter" responses. The difference indicates loyalty and commitment within a specific population for the job of state legislator. Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews.

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q1.

TABLE 4

Most Common Reasons for Leaving the Military by Selected Demographics Among Veterans, 2017
One-quarter of veterans who have school-aged children say they leave the military to spend more time with family.

| State | Contract Ended % | Spend Time with Family/ Start Family % | Medical Reasons/ Injury % | Retired | Pursue New Career | Pursue Education | N = |
|--------------------------|------------------|--|---------------------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------|------------|
| ALL VETERANS | 19 | 18 | 18 | 11 | 7 | 6 | 600 |
| Current School Parent | 12 | 26 | 22 | 10 | 7 | 5 | 195 |
| Former School Parent | 25 | 15 | 12 | 12 | 8 | 5 | 173 |
| Non-Parent | 21 | 10 | 16 | 14 | 6 | 9 | 177 |
| LENGTH OF SERVICE | | | | | | | |
| ≤ 4 Years | 23 | 20 | 19 | 1 | 7 | 7 | 280 |
| 5 to 10 Years | 24 | 22 | 16 | 3 | 8 | 6 | 172 |
| 11 to 20 Years | 9 | 14 | 17 | 31 | 8 | 2 | 86 |
| ≥ 20 Years | 6 | 4 | 6 | 63 | 6 | 2 | 48 |

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews.

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q2.

TABLE 5

Top Five Issues Facing Military Households, 2017

Respondents are most likely to say the federal government should address the economic or health issues that are facing them.
(Percentage of All Respondents)

| Issue | % |
|---|----|
| Economic | 21 |
| Health Issues, Healthcare | 17 |
| Inequality, Racism | 12 |
| Veteran Care, Veterans Administration | 9 |
| National Security, Terrorism, War/Peace | 7 |

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q4.

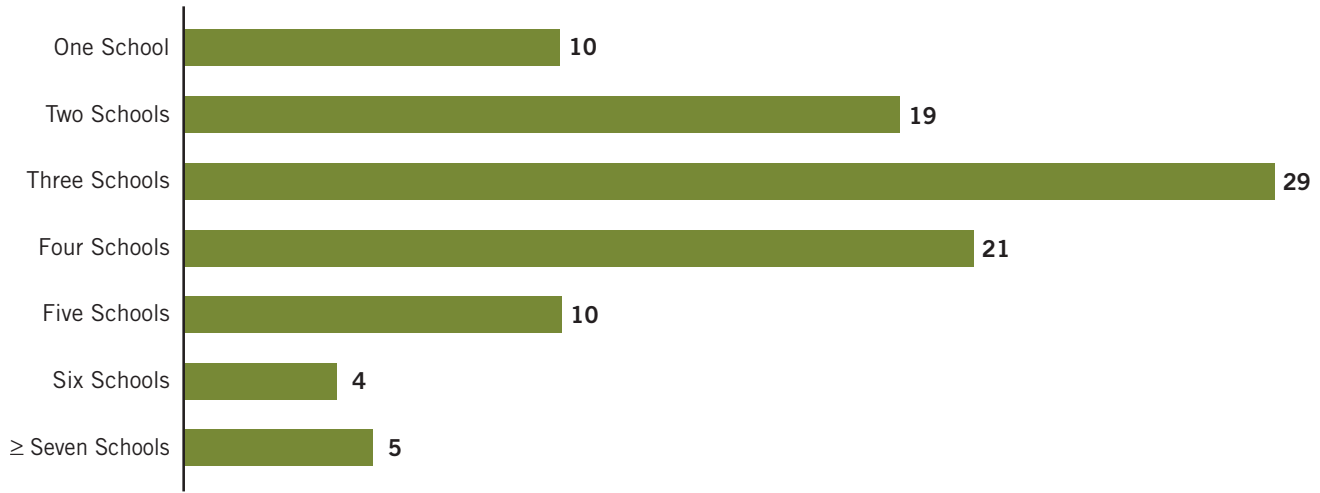
PART II

Experiences in K–12 Education and Local Schooling

FIGURE 1**Number of Schools for Oldest Child in Military Household, 2017**

"Thinking only about your oldest child, in how many different schools did you enroll that child from kindergarten through high school?"

(Percentage of Former School Parents, N = 194)



Note: "Don't Know" and Refusals not shown nor reflected in this chart.

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q9.

Number of Schools Attended by Oldest/Only Child

We focus on the separate military-connected populations of former school parents and current school parents to gain a better understanding of how often military families change K–12 schools and go through subsequent transitions. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the number of school changes for the oldest child in the family.

The median number of schools is three (mean = 3.37). That median is identical to what is reported by the current school parent population in general, and the mean is comparable and statistically similar (mean = 3.20). This finding is dramatically different than reported in the Blue Star Family survey results, and we are unsure why this discrepancy exists. We speculate the populations surveyed are different, and perhaps the self-selection in the Blue Star survey drew much more mobile military respondents. However, a large proportion of military families in our survey have enrolled their oldest child in *at least four different K–12 schools*: 39 percent of former school parents and 31 percent of current school parents.

School Type Enrollments Other Than District Schools

Combining the current and former school parent respondents into a single group allows for interesting observations about schooling experiences and activities to support their children's education. Figure 2 shows substantial proportions of military parents have had experiences—for at least one-half of a school year—with public charter schools (34%), private schools (32%), and homeschooling (22%). Among the observed military subgroups, Latino parents stand out for relatively high levels of choosing different types of school environments.

There are some noteworthy subgroup comparisons for those who have previously enrolled a child in a public charter school:

- Current school parents (42%) are much more likely to have said they enrolled a child in a charter school compared to former school parents (14%).
- A significantly higher proportion of active-duty families (50%) report trying charters compared to veterans (20%).

FIGURE 2**Military Parents' Experiences Other Than Public District Schools for at Least One-Half of a School Year, 2017***(Percentage of Current and Former School Parents, N = 687)*

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q10, Q11, and Q12.

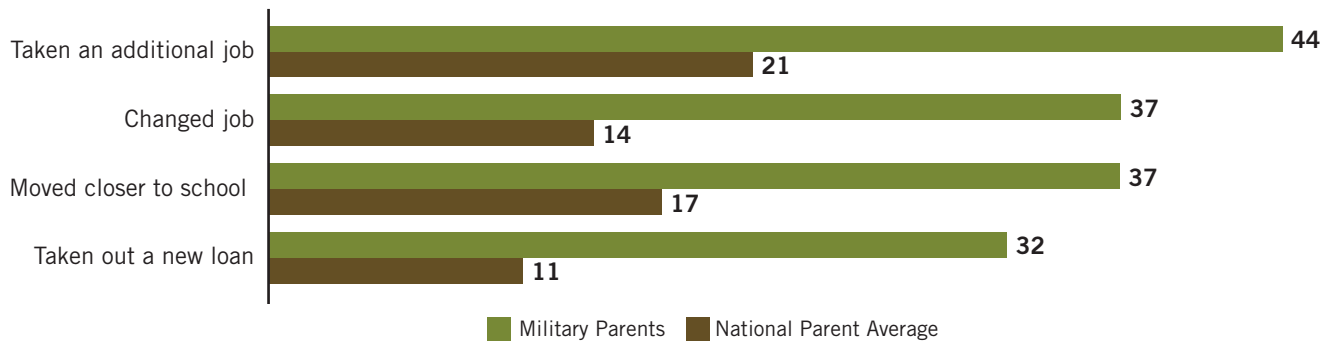
- Those serving/have served in the military (42%) more frequently indicated they have tried a charter school than military spouses (23%).
- Air Force (41%) and Army (34%) families are more likely than Navy families (23%) to have tried a charter school.
- Urbanites (54%) are more likely than suburbanites (29%) and small town-rural families (22%) to have enrolled in a charter school.
- There are age group differences when it comes to charter school experiences: age 18–34 (48%); age 35–54 (37%); age 55 and older (8%).
- Latino parents (55%) and African American parents (45%) are more likely than white parents (28%) to have tried charters.
- High-income earners (40%) are more likely than low-income earners (27%) to have enrolled a child in a charter school.
- Urbanites (44%) are more likely to have enrolled a child in private school than suburbanites (31%) and small town-rural families (20%).
- Younger and middle-aged respondents (34% and 33%, respectively) were significantly more likely than older respondents (24%) to say they have enrolled a child in private school.
- College graduates (37%) are more likely to have tried a private school than respondents who have attained less than a college degree (27%).
- Latino parents (52%) more frequently report trying a private school than African American parents (32%) and white parents (29%).
- High-income earners (44%) are more likely than both middle-income earners (27%) and low-income earners (20%) to have enrolled a child in private school.

Military parents who have enrolled a child in a private school for at least one-half year reveal similar demographic patterns:

- Active-duty families (37%) are more likely than veteran families (26%) to say they have tried a private school for their child.
- Air Force families (41%) have more often enrolled in a private school than Army (30%) and Navy (25%) families.

Demographic subgroup differences are also evident for those parents who have homeschooled a child for at least one-half of a year:

- Current school parents (27%) are more than twice as likely to say they have homeschooled compared to former school parents (11%).
- Active-duty families (32%) are more likely to have homeschooled than veteran families (14%).

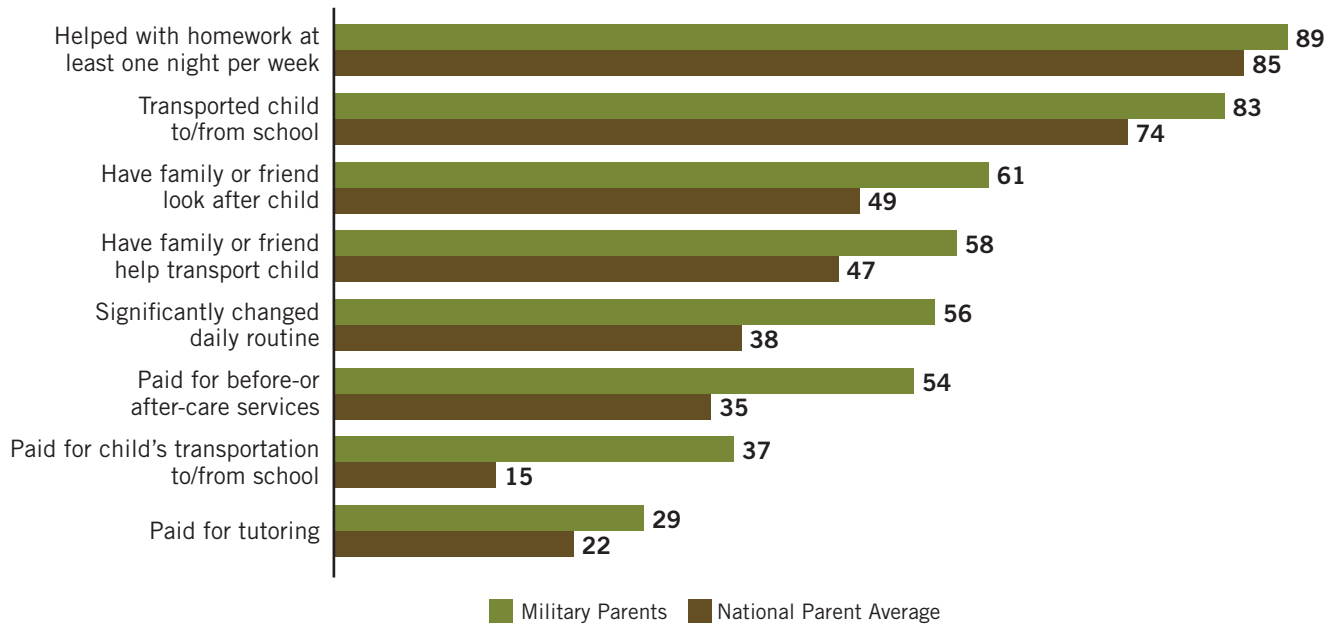
FIGURE 3**What Military Parents Have Done to Secure Their Children's K-12 Education***(Percentage of Current and Former School Parents)*

Notes: Number of Military Parents Responding, N = 687; Number of Parents Responding in EdChoice's 2016 *Schooling in America Survey*, N = 440. Sources: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q13. The "National Parent Average" data are obtained from: EdChoice, 2016 *Schooling in America Survey* (conducted April 30–May 26, 2016), Q25.

- Those serving/have served in the military (26%) more frequently said their family has tried to homeschool a child compared to military spouses (17%).
- Once again, Air Force families (34%) are more likely than other service branch families to have tried to homeschool a child (21% Marines; 20% Army; 15% Navy).
- Military families in the South (26%) have homeschooled more often than parents in the West (17%).
- Urbanites (32%) are more likely to have homeschooled than small town-rural families (20%) and suburbanites (18%).
- Younger and middle-aged respondents (29% and 24%, respectively) are more likely than older parents (11%) to indicate they have homeschooled a child.
- College graduates (37%) are more likely to have tried a private school than respondents who have attained less than a college degree (27%).
- Latino parents (42%) are roughly twice as likely to report homeschooling a child, compared to African American parents (23%) and white parents (20%).
- High-income earners (29%) are more likely than both middle-income earners (20%) and low-income earners (18%) to have homeschooled at some point.
- Republicans (28%) have been more inclined to homeschool than Democrats (21%) and Independents (19%).

How Military Parents Secure Their Children's Education

We asked military parents what sacrifices they have made to secure a good education for their children, and their reported activity levels consistently surpass what we observed of current and former school parents in our 2016 national survey of the general public.³⁹ Figure 3 shows more than twice the number of military parents (44%) report taking an additional job compared to the one out of five parents (21%) in the general public. Military parents (37%) also are much more likely to change jobs than American parents generally (14%). Military families (37%) are twice as likely (17%) to say they have moved to be closer to their child's school than the national average. Nearly one-third of military parents (32%) said they have taken out a new loan, which is, again, a substantially higher level of activity than what we observed among American parents previously (11%).

FIGURE 4**What Military Parents Have Done to Accommodate Their Children’s K–12 Education***(Percentage of Current and Former School Parents)*

Notes: Number of Military Parents Responding, N = 687; Number of Parents Responding in EdChoice’s 2016 *Schooling in America Survey*, N = 440. Sources: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q14. The “National Parent Average” data are obtained from EdChoice, 2016 *Schooling in America Survey* (conducted April 30–May 26, 2016), Q26.

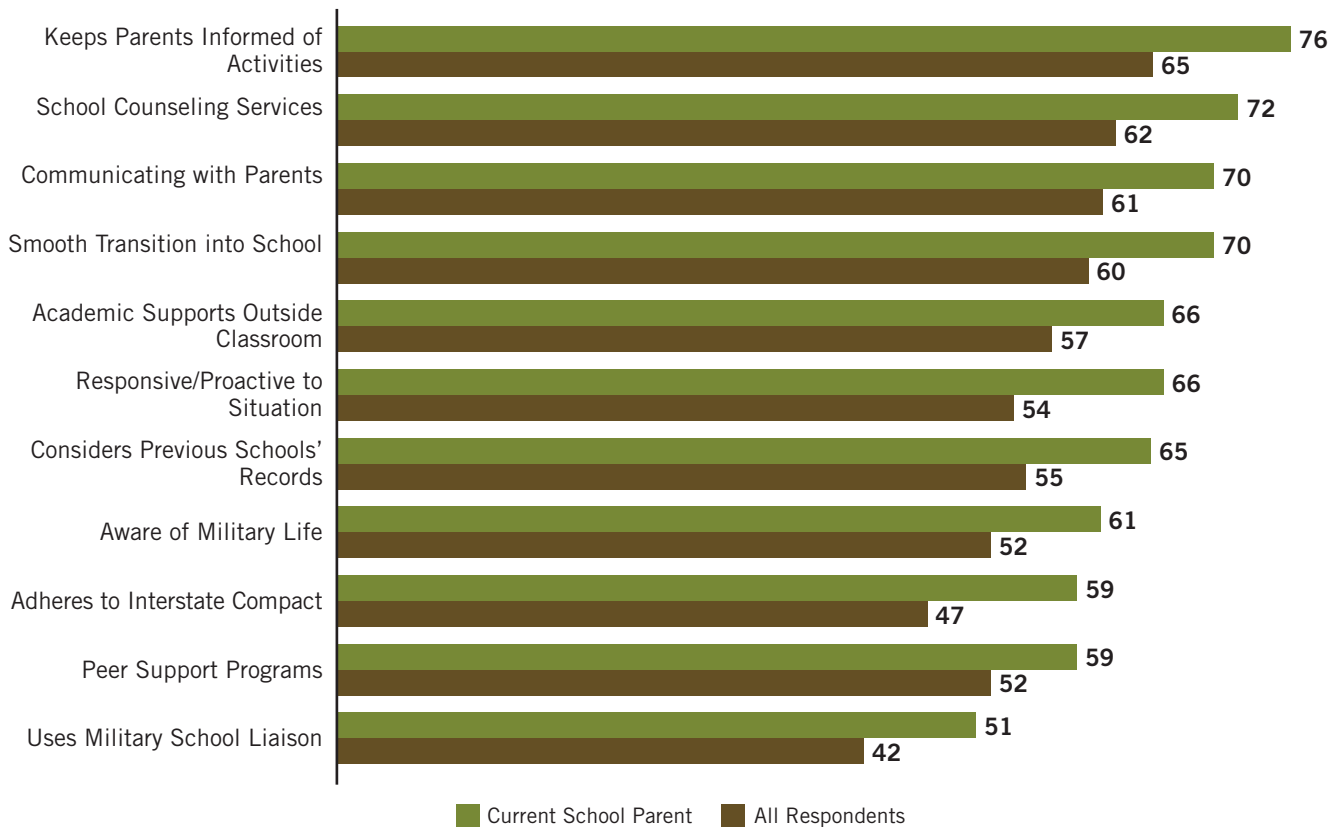
How Military Parents Accommodate Their Children’s Education

Based on a range of indicators, military families are proactively supporting their children’s education and at higher levels than the national current/former school parent average. As shown in Figure 4, several differences stand out. Military parents are much more likely than the national average to say they have paid for transportation for at least four months of a school year (37% vs. 15%, respectively). The spread between those two populations is 22 points. Military families (54%) are also much more likely than the national average (35%) to say they have paid for before- or after-care services (difference = 19 points). A majority (56%) of respondents said they have “significantly changed their routine,” which is 18 points higher than the national average (38%). Other areas of military parent involvement show smaller, but still substantial, differences compared to the

national average: have had a family member/friend transport a child, have had a family member/friend look after a child, have herself/himself transported a child for schooling reasons.

Rating Local School Districts

We asked respondents to gauge the effectiveness and performance of their local public school districts when it comes to serving families, and in some cases, on some military-family specific subjects. Generally speaking, Figure 5 on page 25 shows school districts fare well when considering the overall sample (including non-parents) or only current school parents. There is a remarkably consistent pattern and gap that shows current school parents are more positive—by about 10 percentage points—than the overall average. School districts get the highest ratings for keeping parents informed about school activities, providing school counseling services, communicating with parents, and helping for a smooth transition to school. Districts get

FIGURE 5**Military Households' Positive Ratings of Local School Districts***(Percentage of Current School Parents and All Respondents Saying "Excellent" or "Good")*

Sources: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q7.

relatively lower ratings for those items that are more specific to the needs of military families, such as: awareness of military life, adhering to “Interstate Compact,” and using the “Military School Liaison.” Respondents were more likely to give “don’t know” responses to these items, which could explain some of the depressed frequencies. Nevertheless, parents are significantly more likely to be positive about school district communications and services.

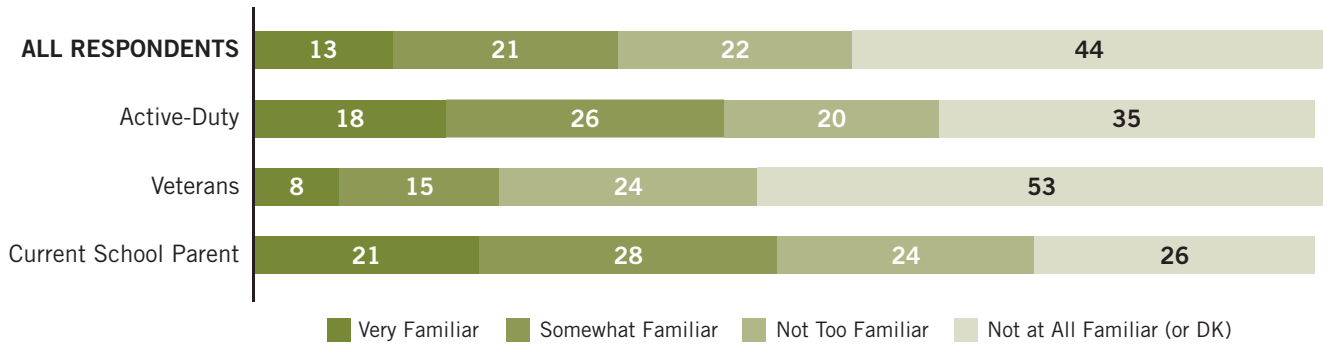
Awareness About Federal “Impact Aid” Funding

Figure 6 depicts a lack of awareness of the federal Impact Aid program. Just one out of three respondents (33%) said they were familiar with federal Impact Aid funding for public school

districts with large concentrations of military-connected students. The demographic most likely to be familiar with Impact Aid funding is current school parents (49%), but half of that population still says they are unfamiliar with the program.

Demographic differences arise on this question:

- Active-duty households are much more likely to be familiar than veterans (43% vs. 23%, respectively).
- Those who serve in the military longer are more familiar than those serving four years or less.
- Urbanites (44%) are more familiar with Impact Aid funding than suburbanites (32%) and small town-rural residents (25%).

FIGURE 6**Military Household Familiarity with Federal "Impact Aid" for School Districts, 2017***(Percentage of All Respondents and Corresponding Subgroups)*

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q8.

- Democrats (42%) are 10 points more likely to know about Impact Aid than Republicans (32%) or Independents (31%).
- Those who are serving/have served (38%) are more familiar than military spouses (26%).
- Current school parents (49%) are much more likely to be familiar than former school parents (17%) or non-parents (22%).
- Younger and middle-aged respondents have higher levels of familiarity than older respondents (40%, 39%, and 12%, respectively).
- College graduates are 16 points more likely to know about Impact Aid than respondents that have less than a college degree.
- Latinos (48%) and African Americans (43%) are more likely than whites (29%) to say they are “very” or “somewhat” familiar.
- High-income earners (42%) and middle-income earners (37%) report higher levels of familiarity than low-income earners (20%).

PART III

Views and Attitudes Toward K–12 Education and Choice-Based Policies

Perceived Direction of K–12 Education

EdChoice’s annual national surveys have consistently found Americans to be pessimistic about the trajectory of K–12 education in the country.⁴⁰ Likewise, our survey’s military respondents view the direction of K–12 education in a negative light. As shown in Table 6, they are much more likely to think K–12 education has gotten off on the “wrong track” (51%) compared to the proportion saying it is heading in the “right direction” (34%). The margin is -17 points.

On balance, we observe negative attitudes across most observed military demographics. Some key differences stand out when making comparisons within certain demographic categories:

- Active-duty members (40%) are significantly more positive about K–12 education than veterans (27%).
- Urbanites (44%) are more likely to say “right direction” than those living in suburbs (30%) or small town/rural areas (30%).

- Those who are serving/have served in the military are more positive than military spouses (28%).
- Parents of school-aged children (43%) said “right direction” more frequently than non-parents (29%) or those parents whose children are past high school (22%).
- Younger respondents (40%) are nearly twice as likely to give positive answers compared with older respondents (22%) and are significantly more positive than middle-aged respondents (33%).
- African-Americans/Black respondents (44%) tend to view the direction of K–12 education more positively than white respondents (32%).
- High-income households (41%) were more likely to say “right direction” than either low-income or middle-income households (32% each).

TABLE 6

Military Household Views on the Direction of K–12 Education, 2017

Military respondents, especially veterans, are pessimistic about the current direction of K–12 education.

| | Right Direction % | Wrong Track % | Margin (net) | N = |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| ALL RESPONDENTS | 34 | 51 | -18 | 1,200 |
| Active-Duty | 40 | 47 | -7 | 600 |
| Veteran | 27 | 56 | -29 | 600 |
| Serving/Served in Military | 37 | 49 | -12 | 752 |
| Military Spouse | 28 | 56 | -29 | 448 |
| Current School Parent | 43 | 50 | -8 | 493 |
| Former School Parent | 22 | 53 | -31 | 194 |
| Non-Parent | 29 | 53 | -24 | 361 |

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. Margins are calculated using percentages to the nearest tenth.

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q5.

School Type Preferences

When asked for a preferred school type, nearly equal shares of military respondents said they would choose a regular public school (34%) or a private school (33%) as a first option for their child. One out of six respondents (17%) would select a public charter school. Smaller proportions would either choose to homeschool their child (6%) or enroll in a virtual school (4%). (See Table 7.)

Those private preferences signal a stark disconnect with military families' actual school enrollment patterns in the United States. Figure 7 illustrates a profound reality check. About 80 percent of military-connected students attend public district schools across the country. It is estimated that just about 7 percent of the country's active-military-connected students are homeschooled.⁴¹

How do response frequencies look if we only consider military parents of school-aged children? The numbers barely shift for all school types. Compared to the overall sample, roughly the same proportions of parents would choose a regular public school (35%) and private school (33%). A

significantly higher proportion preferred a public charter school (20%). The same response pattern holds up for those selecting home school (7%) and virtual school (4%).

In a follow-up question, it is interesting to note that for four of the five school types respondents in our survey prioritized "personalized attention/individual attention/one-on-one/class size" above all else as a top reason for selecting a type of school. (See Table 8.) Respondents preferring regular public schools would most frequently say some aspect of "socialization" was a key reason for making their choice.

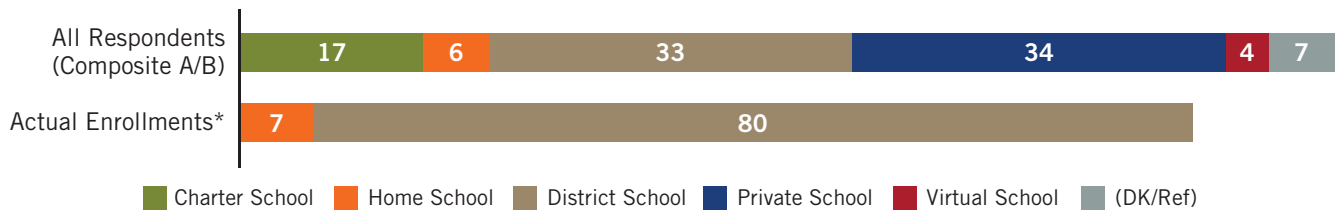
TABLE 7

Military Household Preferences for School Types: Composite Results, 2017
Composite Averages Based on Two Question Versions with Corresponding Split-Sample Responses

| | Charter School % | Home School % | Private School % | District School % | Virtual School % | N = |
|----------------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
| ALL RESPONDENTS | 17 | 6 | 33 | 34 | 4 | 1,200 |
| Active-Duty | 18 | 6 | 32 | 36 | 4 | 600 |
| Veteran | 16 | 7 | 34 | 31 | 3 | 600 |
| Serving/Served in Military | 17 | 6 | 31 | 34 | 4 | 752 |
| Military Spouse | 17 | 7 | 36 | 32 | 3 | 448 |
| Current School Parent | 20 | 7 | 33 | 35 | 4 | 493 |
| Former School Parent | 12 | 6 | 38 | 33 | 1 | 194 |
| Non-Parent | 18 | 6 | 30 | 34 | 3 | 361 |

Notes: The "composite" percentages in this chart reflect a weighted average of the split samples' responses to two slightly different versions of this question (15A/B). Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews.

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q15A and Q15B.

FIGURE 7**Comparing Military Household Preferences for School Types with Actual Enrollments***(Percentage of All Respondents)*

* We do not have enrollment data for military-connected students in public charter schools or private schools.

Notes: The percentages in this chart reflect a composite that averages split samples' responses to two slightly different versions of this question (15A/B). Responses within parentheses were volunteered: "DK" means "Don't Know." "Ref" means "Refusal."

Sources: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q15A and Q15B. For enrollment data sources, see U.S Department of Defense Education Activity, All About DoDEA Educational Partnership [web page], accessed October 4, 2017, retrieved from <http://www.dodea.edu/Partnership/about.cfm>; Arianna Prothero (April 2016), Growing Number of Military Families Opt for Home School, [Blog post], retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/growing-number-of-military-families-opt-for-home-school>

TABLE 8**Top Three Reasons for Choosing a Specific School Type Among Military Households, 2017**

| | % | Reason |
|---------------------------|-----|--|
| Charter School (N = 203) | 20% | Personalized / Individual Attention / Class Size |
| | 17% | Quality Academics / Education |
| | 13% | More Control |
| Home School (N = 76) | 26% | Personalized / Individual Attention / Class Size |
| | 19% | Safety / Control Environment |
| | 15% | Quality Academic / Education |
| Private School (N = 395) | 27% | Personalized / Individual Attention / Class Size |
| | 23% | Quality Academics / Education |
| | 14% | Religion / Moral Education |
| District School (N = 402) | 17% | Socialization |
| | 10% | Quality Academics / Education |
| | 9% | Diversity |
| Virtual School (N = 44) | 23% | Personalized / Individual Attention / Class Size |
| | 10% | Less Distractions / Bullying |
| | 7% | Quality Academics / Education |

Notes: All percentages reflect the count of coded open-end responses divided by the total number of unweighted interviews. Unweighted N's are provided so the reader can roughly assess the reliability of reported percentages.

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q16.

Views on Education Savings Accounts (ESAs)

Military respondents were almost five-times more likely to say they supported ESAs than opposed them after being given a description (72% favor vs. 15% oppose).⁴² The margin (+57 points) is very large. The difference between strongly held positive and negative views is +25 points. (See Table 9 on page 33.)

We asked a pair of questions about ESAs. The first question asked for an opinion without offering any description. On this baseline question, 51 percent of respondents said they favored ESAs and 10 percent said they opposed the idea. In the follow-up question, respondents were given a description for an ESA. With this basic context, support shot upward by 21 points (72%), and opposition increased five points to 15 percent. Table 10 and Figure 8 depict the opinion movement from the baseline item to the descriptive item. The proportion of “don’t know” or “no answer” responses also shrank by 26 points (39% to 13%).

Nearly all subgroups within the overall sample increased their positive responses by 15 to 25 points when progressing from baseline item to description item. The subgroups that had the highest proportions either having no opinion or saying “don’t know” to the baseline item were: seniors (51%), parents having children older than high school age (51%), and low-income earners (49%). All observed military household demographics are supportive of ESAs. Subgroup differences—even though levels are high across the board—are also visible on the description item:

- Active-duty households (75%) are more likely than veterans (69%) to favor the survey’s provided definition of ESA.
- Self-identified urbanites (76%) and suburbanites (73%) support ESAs at higher levels than small town-rural respondents (67%).

- Current school parents (78%) are more likely than former school parents (63%) and non-parents (70%) to favor such a reform .
- Younger respondents (74%) and middle-aged respondents (75%) said they support ESAs more frequently than older respondents (64%).
- Latinos (79%) register higher support than white respondents (71%).
- Middle-income earners (75%) are more inclined to support ESAs than low-income earners (69%).

In a follow-up question, the most common reasons for supporting ESAs are essentially a tie between “access to better academic environment” (30%) and “more freedom and flexibility for parents” (28%) and “access to schools having better academics” (26%). (See Figure 9 on page 34.) We also asked a similar follow-up to those military respondents who opposed ESAs. As shown in Figure 10 on page 34, by far the most common reason for opposing ESAs is the belief they “divert funding away from public schools” (40%).

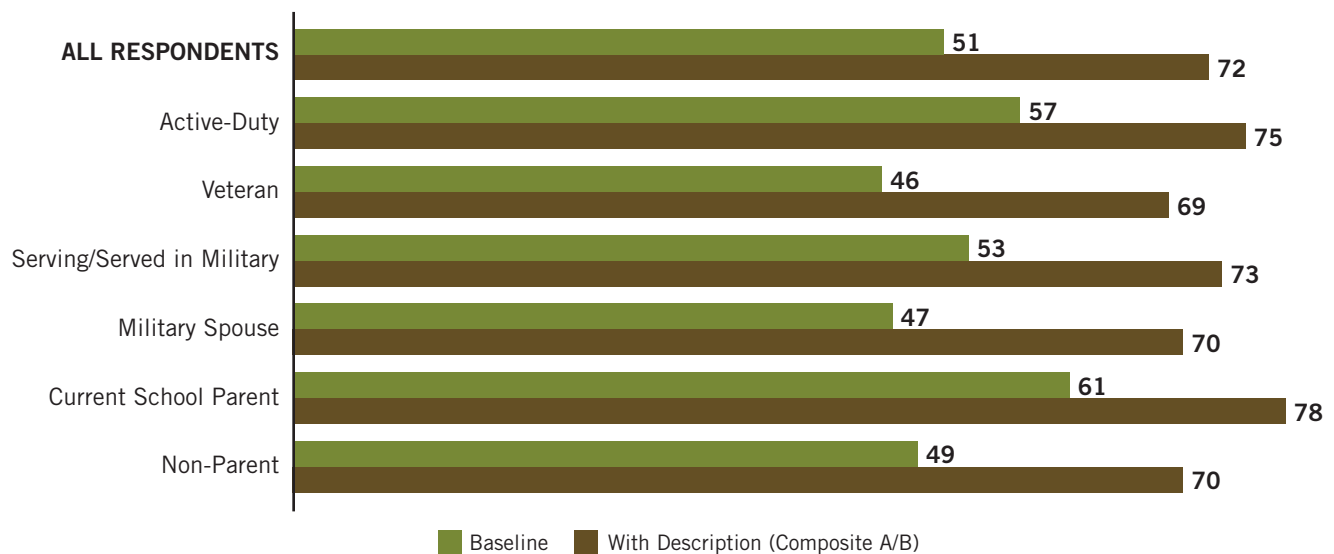
Military households broadly support a hypothetical federal proposal to create education savings accounts for military-connected students. Nearly three out of four respondents (71%) said they support a federal education savings account program if proposed by Congress, and 15 percent said they would oppose such a plan. The margin is +56 points. Overall, respondents were more likely to have an intensely favorable view toward the proposed ESAs (33% “strongly favor” vs. 5% “strongly oppose”). (See Figure 11 on page 35.) Policy support spans across all observed demographics. Margins are large in magnitude and positive, ranging from +45 points (length of service \geq 20 years) to +62 points (Marine households and Latinos).

TABLE 9**Military Household Views on Education Savings Accounts: Composite/Descriptive Results, 2017***Military members and their spouses overwhelmingly support ESAs, by a nearly five-to-one ratio.**Composite Averages Based on Two Question Versions with Corresponding Subsample Responses*

| | Favor % | Oppose % | Margin (net) | Intensity (strong net) | N = |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| ALL RESPONDENTS | 72 | 15 | 57 | 25 | 1,200 |
| Active Duty | 75 | 15 | 61 | 29 | 600 |
| Veteran | 69 | 15 | 54 | 21 | 600 |
| Serving/Served in Military | 73 | 14 | 59 | 29 | 752 |
| Military Spouse | 70 | 16 | 54 | 19 | 448 |
| Current School Parent | 78 | 14 | 64 | 32 | 493 |
| Former School Parent | 63 | 18 | 45 | 15 | 194 |
| Non-Parent | 70 | 16 | 54 | 22 | 361 |

Notes: The percentages in this chart reflect composites that average the split samples' responses to two slightly different versions of this question (18A/B). Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. Margins and intensities are calculated using percentages to the nearest tenth.

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q18A and 18B.

FIGURE 8**Military Household Support for Education Savings Accounts, 2017***(Percentage of All Respondents and Corresponding Subgroups Saying "Strongly Favor" or "Somewhat Favor")*

Notes: The percentages in this chart reflect composites that average the split samples' responses to two slightly different versions of this question (18A/B).

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q17, Q18A, and Q18B.

TABLE 10

Military Household Views on Education Savings Accounts: Baseline vs. Descriptive Versions, 2017
Baseline, Composite, and Two Question Versions with Corresponding Subsample Responses

| | Favor % | Oppose % | Margin (net) | Intensity (strong net) | N = |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| BASELINE | 51 | 10 | 41 | 16 | 1,200 |
| WITH DESCRIPTION | | | | | |
| COMPOSITE A/B | 72 | 15 | 57 | 25 | 1,200 |
| Version A | 68 | 18 | 50 | 21 | 600 |
| Version B | 76 | 11 | 65 | 30 | 600 |

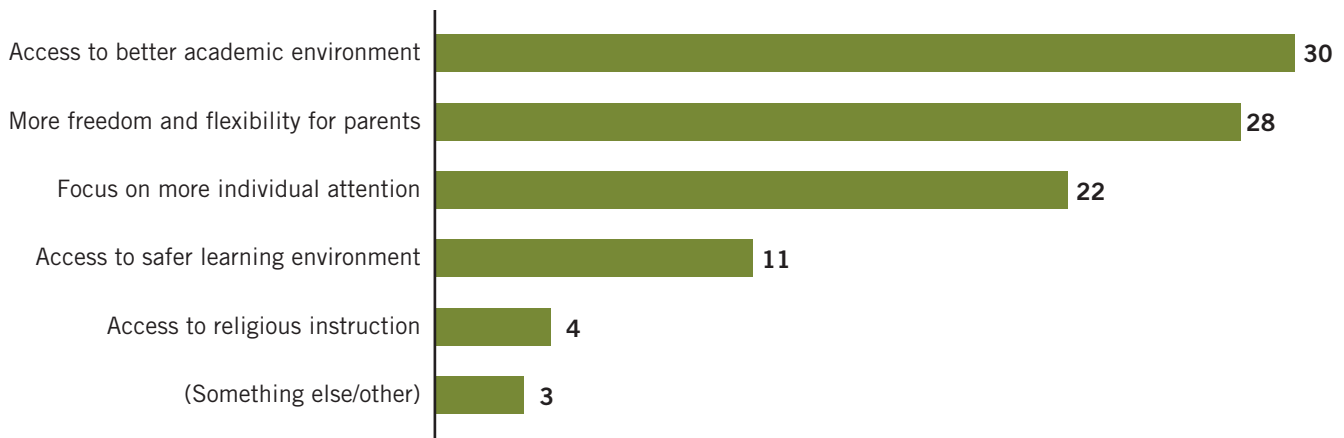
Notes: The "composite" percentages in this chart reflect the unweighted average of the subsamples' responses to two slightly different versions of this question (18A/B). Margins and intensities are calculated using percentages to the nearest tenth.

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military*, (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q17, Q18A, and Q18B.

FIGURE 9

Military Household Reasons for Supporting Education Savings Accounts, 2017

(Percentage of All "Strongly/Somewhat Favor" Responses from Previous Question Subsample, N = 864)



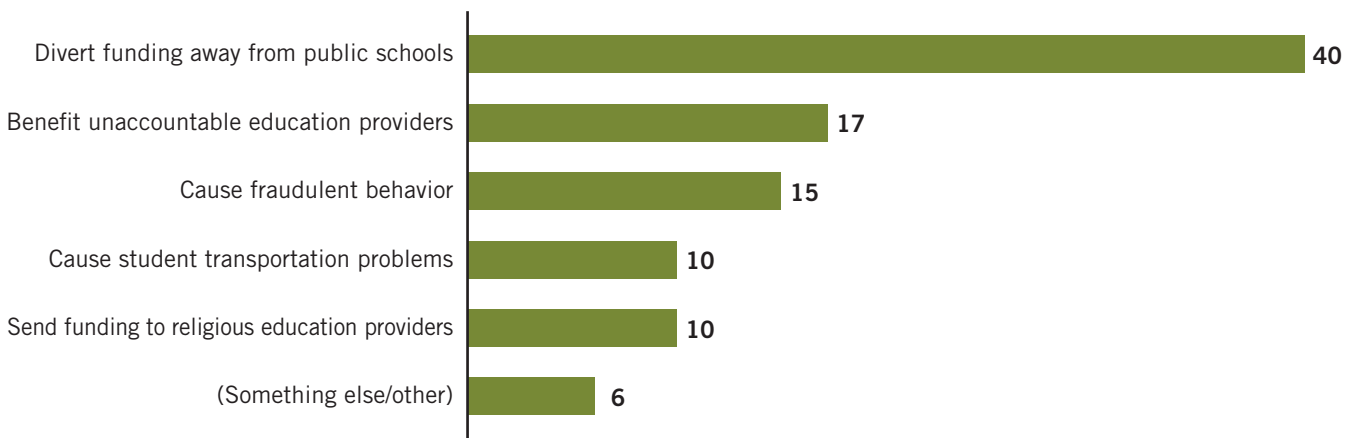
Notes: Responses within parentheses were volunteered. "Don't Know" and Refusals not shown nor reflected in this chart.

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q19A.

FIGURE 10

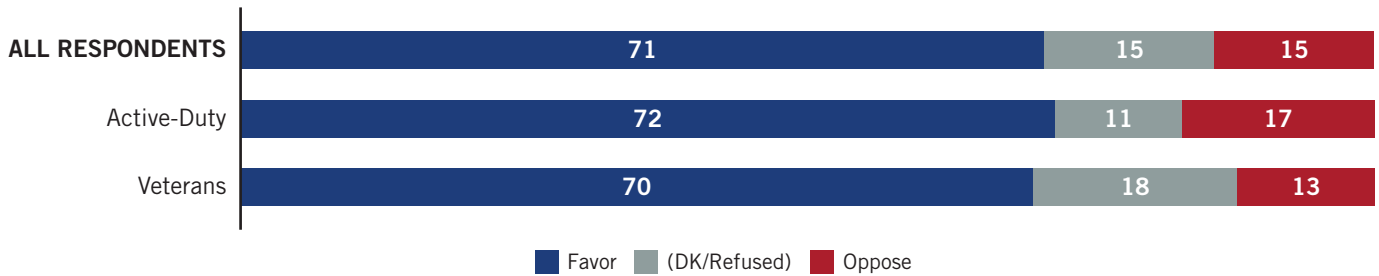
Military Household Reasons for Opposing Education Savings Accounts, 2017

(Percentage of All "Strongly/Somewhat Oppose" Responses from Previous Question Subsample, N = 176)



Notes: Responses within parentheses were volunteered. "Don't Know" and Refusals not shown nor reflected in this chart.

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q19B.

FIGURE 11**Military Household Views If Congress Considers a Proposal to Establish Education Savings Accounts, 2017***(Percentage of All Respondents / Active-Duty / Veterans)*

Note: Responses within parentheses were volunteered.

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q20.

Views on School Vouchers

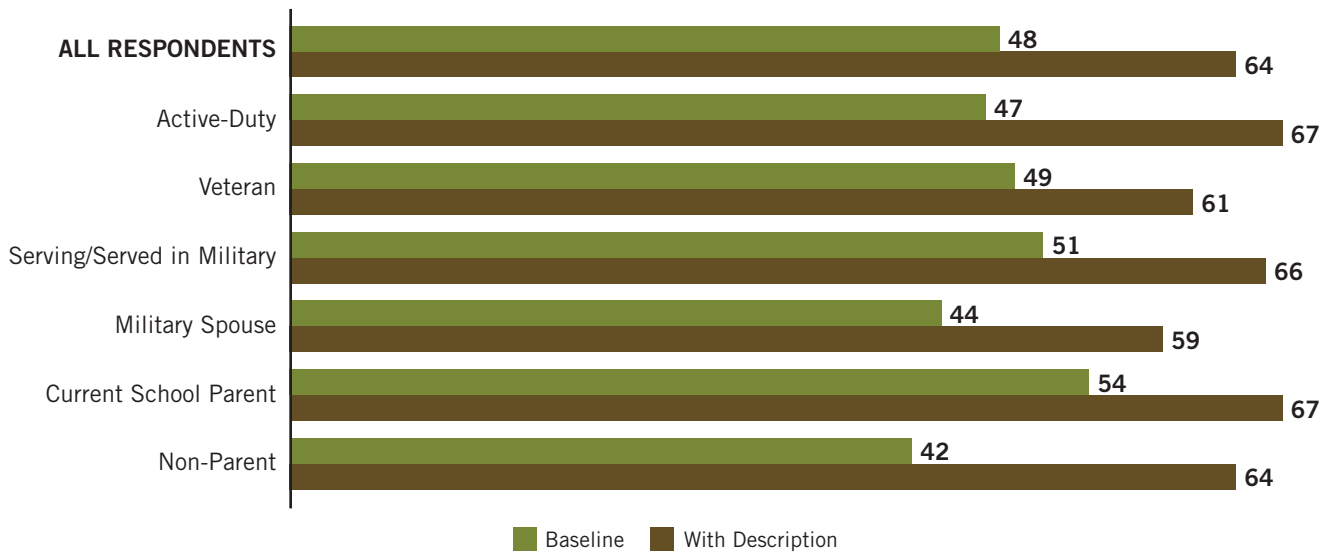
Nearly two out of three military households (64%) said they support school vouchers, compared with 27 percent who said they oppose such an educational choice system. The margin of support is +37 points. Military respondents were much more likely to express an intensely favorable view toward school vouchers by +16 points (28% “strongly favor” vs. 12% “strongly oppose”).

Similar to the pair of ESA questions, our interviewers asked baseline and follow-up description questions about school vouchers. In the first question, we asked respondents for their views on school vouchers without a definition or any other context: 48 percent said they favored vouchers; 23 percent said they opposed such a policy. The follow-up question with a basic description for a school voucher system had a positive effect. Support moved upward by 15 points (64%), while opposition increased only four points to 27 percent. (See Figure 12.)

We estimate 29 percent of military households were initially unfamiliar with school vouchers. The proportion of “don’t know” or “no answer” responses shrunk by 21 points (29% to 9%) when we compared the baseline and description items. Non-parents and respondents that have a high school degree or less (38%) were the most likely subgroups to say they “have never heard of school vouchers,” “don’t know,” or “no answer.”

All observed demographics register majorities of support for school vouchers, although we do see some significant differences between demographic subgroups. Table 11 shows results for selected demographics. We did not see any meaningful support differences across three household income ranges (64% for each).

- Active-duty households (67%) are more likely to favor school vouchers than veteran households (61%).
- Like ESAs, urbanites (68%) are more supportive of vouchers than small town-rural residents (58%).
- Those who are serving/have served in the military (66%) are more likely to support school vouchers than military spouses (59%).
- Current school parents (67%) are more supportive than former school parents (58%).
- Younger respondents (66%) are more likely to support vouchers than seniors (59%).
- African-American/Black respondents (70%) are relatively more likely to say they support school vouchers compared to white respondents (62%).

FIGURE 12**Military Household Support for School Vouchers, 2017***(Percentage of All Respondents and Corresponding Subgroups Saying "Strongly Favor" or "Somewhat Favor")*

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q21, and Q22.

TABLE 11**Military Household Views on School Vouchers: Descriptive Results, 2017***Those who are serving or have served in the military are twice as likely to support school vouchers than oppose them.*

| | Favor % | Oppose % | Margin (net) | Intensity (strong net) | N = |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| ALL RESPONDENTS | 64 | 27 | 36 | 16 | 1,200 |
| Active-Duty | 67 | 26 | 41 | 19 | 600 |
| Veteran | 61 | 29 | 32 | 13 | 600 |
| Serving/Served in Military | 66 | 25 | 42 | 23 | 752 |
| Military Spouse | 59 | 32 | 28 | 10 | 448 |
| Current School Parent | 67 | 26 | 41 | 18 | 493 |
| Former School Parent | 58 | 33 | 25 | 14 | 194 |
| Non-Parent | 64 | 27 | 37 | 14 | 361 |

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. Margins and intensities are calculated using percentages to the nearest tenth.

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q22.

Views on Tax-Credit Scholarships

Military respondents clearly support the concept of a tax-credit scholarship program. Given a policy definition, a solid majority (63%) say they support such a program, whereas 23 percent say they oppose tax-credit scholarships. The margin is +40 percentage points. Military households are almost three times as likely to express intensely positive responses toward tax-credit scholarships (24% “strongly favor” vs. 9% “strongly oppose”). (See Table 12.)

Subgroup differences were more elusive on the tax-credit scholarship question. Only two significant differences emerged. Urban respondents (67%) were more likely to support the reform idea than small town-rural respondents (58%). Current school parents were more favorable than former school parents (59%) or non-parents (62%). The response margins within subgroups are consistently large and positive like we observed for other choice-based policies. The largest margins were among: Marine households (+52 points), Black/African-American respondents (+48 points), and current school parents (+47 points). Subgroups that had the lowest margins were: seniors (+36 points), Latinos (+37 points), and high-income earners (+37 points).

TABLE 12 Military Household Views on Tax-Credit Scholarships: Descriptive Results, 2017
Nearly two out of three active-duty households support tax-credit scholarships.

| | Favor % | Oppose % | Margin (net) | Intensity (strong net) | N = |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| ALL RESPONDENTS | 64 | 23 | 40 | 15 | 1,200 |
| Active-Duty | 64 | 23 | 42 | 17 | 600 |
| Veteran | 62 | 23 | 39 | 13 | 600 |
| Serving/Served in Military | 65 | 22 | 43 | 18 | 752 |
| Military Spouse | 60 | 24 | 36 | 11 | 448 |
| Current School Parent | 69 | 22 | 47 | 17 | 493 |
| Former School Parent | 59 | 24 | 35 | 15 | 194 |
| Non-Parent | 62 | 22 | 39 | 14 | 361 |

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. Margins and intensities are calculated using percentages to the nearest tenth.

Source: EdChoice, *Surveying the Military* (conducted June 23–July 11, 2017), Q23.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

DISCUSSION

Surveying military families about their perspectives on current developments in K–12 education and on their profession is meaningful for several reasons.

First, the quality of life while serving in the military can have significant implications for military readiness, retention, and recruitment. Getting a sense of the challenges and choices our military members and their families are facing—particularly on schooling matters—can give us a better sense of how policy affects our military families. Supporting active-duty military and their loved ones at home allows them to focus on their crucial task of national defense both at home and abroad.

Second, as far as we can tell, no other survey has asked military servicemembers, veterans, and their spouses about their perspectives on educational choice policies specifically. Though military families are a small proportion of the total population, they are a significant presence in many districts across the country and they have unique educational challenges. Their perspectives should be valuable for policymakers as they deliberate about the federal role, the federal Impact Aid program, or bolstering state-level education programs. This project has grouped survey questions into three topical areas. This section will revisit each area to discuss the topline empirical findings and to attempt to interpret some of the data in light of larger policy questions.

Overall, military households report that the most critical issues they face are economic, with a smaller proportion identifying healthcare issues as a top priority. When asked why they left the military, veterans cited the end of their military service contract, family reasons, and medical/injury reasons all in nearly equal proportions. However, veterans who are current school parents were much more likely to say that family reasons or the desire to spend more time with family prompted their departure from the military.

How Do Military Families View Their Experiences in K–12 Education and Local District Schooling?

Two things stand out immediately when examining military families' experiences with local schooling and K–12 education in general: the amount of experimentation with types of schooling and the frequencies of the sacrifices on the part of military parents for the sake of their children's education.

Based on their survey responses, military families are resourceful and go to great lengths to provide their children a good education. Substantial percentages of military parents report trying—for a least half a school year—public charter schools, private schools, and homeschooling. Military parents also report a wide range of significant activities to secure their children's education. More than half say they have significantly changed their routines. And non-trivial proportions say they moved closer to their child's school, took out new loans, or took on additional jobs. In all of these areas, they report higher frequencies of making these commitments than parents in the general population.

Survey responses make it clear that military parents are committed to securing an excellent education for their children, and they are actively engaged in searching for educational environments that fit their children's needs. This highly motivated community faces unique challenges, and about half of the country's military-connected students do not have access to choice-based educational programs like ESAs, school vouchers, or tax-credit scholarships. Current military school parents are consistently positive in their ratings of local school district responsiveness and services. That said, their reported schooling activities and commitments combined with high levels of support for school choice policies suggest that *military parents would take full advantage of new educational choice programs* if federal and/or state policymakers were to promote and implement them.

What Are Military Respondents' Views and Attitudes Toward K–12 Education and Educational Choice-Based Policies?

Like the majority of Americans, military households currently have negative views of K–12 education. Just more than half of respondents said it is on the “wrong track” compared to one-third that thinks education is moving in the “right direction.” These results match our expectations based on the results of EdChoice’s past national surveys.

Military households are open to both public district schools. Participation in a public institution like the military may make them slightly more interested in other public institutions like local district schools. It is also possible that military families want their children to experience what they may perceive as a more diverse community associated with public schooling to help mitigate the isolation children can experience due to frequent school transitions.

Military households also support educational choice policies by wide margins across the board. While margins of support for school vouchers (+37) and tax-credit scholarships (+40) were large, the widest margin of support was for education savings accounts at +57 points. Whether for ESAs or school vouchers, we observed that providing a general policy description increased positive responses by 15 to 20 percentage points. Expanding awareness and understanding of choice-based education policies leads to broadening support.

In follow up questions, military respondents in our survey said “access to better academic environment,” “more freedom and flexibility for parents,” and “access to schools having better academics” as their primary reasons for supporting ESAs. Those priorities make sense based on what we know about the military population. Military families move more than most families, and transition from public school to public school located near bases.⁴⁴ This creates difficulties

for families in terms of curricular continuity, differences in quality of education, and a lack of parental control in the whole process. We know that military families already homeschool at much higher rates than the general population, and it makes sense that the customization and flexibility of an ESA option would be highly appealing.

EdChoice’s other national and state surveys have shown that the majority of Americans favor choice policies in general, so these results match expectations. What is surprising is the magnitude and intensity of support in comparison to the general population. These results seem to suggest a strong desire for better access to these types of programs, and based on what we know about the military population, most families do not currently have access to school choice programs that operate in the states. Strong support for a federal proposal to create education savings accounts for military-connected students should be of particular interest to Congress and the current administration.

CONCLUSION

This survey of military households provides a snapshot in time that can serve as a guide for policymakers to affect the wellbeing of service-members, veterans, and their families. Results and findings may provide a spark for energetic public dialogue about the status quo and potential changes in federal policymaking.

First, the average military household is overwhelmingly supportive of ESAs and other educational choice mechanisms. They clearly support ESAs, even more than the general public based on EdChoice’s annual national survey. The margins of support for ESAs, school vouchers, and tax-credit scholarships are very large. What does that mean for policymakers? The United States Congress could be in a prime position to reform decades-old educational policies that grew out of World War II and the Cold War in a way that promotes personalization and puts families in control of their students’ educational options.

Second, military parents are going above and beyond the national average when it comes to supporting their children's K–12 educational experiences. Reported parent activities and accommodations suggest military families represent a population that would utilize the customizing capabilities of ESAs. Compared to the national parent average in EdChoice's 2016 national survey, military parents are much more likely to report taking an additional job, changing jobs, saying they have moved to be closer to their child's school, or taking out a new loan for educational purpose. They also are more likely than the national average to have paid for student transportation and before- or after-care services. Military parents also are more likely to say they have "significantly changed their routine" in order to accommodate their children's education. Military families are clearly making sacrifices and going to great lengths to help give their kids a good education. These activities point to real challenges for families in terms of time and resources, and federal reform could amplify those positive supports even further.

Third, majorities of military parents give positive ratings to their local public school districts when it comes to serving families and, in some cases, on some military-family specific subjects. Current school parents are more likely than former school parents and non-parents to say school districts do a good job keeping parents informed about school activities, providing school counseling services, communicating with parents, and helping for a smooth transition to school. However, parents were more likely to give negative ratings and "don't know" responses for those questions more relevant to the needs of military families, such as: awareness of military life; adhering to "Interstate Compact;" and using the "Military School Liaison." On average, school district ratings were positive across all indicators. However, at least one-quarter of current school parents gave "fair" or "poor" ratings to districts on 10 out of 11 school district indicators; at least 30 percent reported those ratings on five out of 11 indicators.

America's military service members, past and present, are a uniquely positioned constituency for federal policymaking in K–12 education. Since the 1940s, policymakers have enacted laws to ensure that military families can access at least a basic public school education either directly on bases or in nearby public school districts. Times have changed. Military families now are effectively zoned to public school districts and federal dollars are allocated to institutions. What if some portion of those funds are directly allocated to military-connected school parents, who already are proactive in the way they support their children's education? Perhaps ESAs can provide the vehicle to amplify military parents' involvement and further personalize the education of military-connected students whose lives require mobility and flexibility.

The military community's evolving needs and priorities, recent decentralizing K–12 policies, and emerging choice-based funding mechanisms together signal the need to better understand the educational circumstances of military-connected students and families. Our survey findings imply policy influencers and policymakers may be uniquely positioned at this point in time to satisfy military families' preferences for personalized student learning and greater access to options in K–12 education. There also is an opportunity to give real schooling power to military families, who have already sacrificed so much for their country and—as reported in this survey—for the education and wellbeing of their children.

APPENDIX 1

Survey Project & Profile

Title: Surveying Military Households Project

Survey Funder and Developer: EdChoice

Survey Data Collection and Quality Control: Braun Research, Inc. (BRI)

Interview Dates: June 23 to July 11, 2017

Interview Method: Mixed Mode
Online for Active-Duty Military Households
Live Phone for Veteran Households (53% Cell Phone | 47% Landline)

Interview Length: Online: 11 minutes | Phone: 15 minutes

Language(s): English

Sample Frames: Active-Duty Military Households, U.S. Domestic Veteran Households, U.S. Domestic

Sampling Methods: Non-Probability-based for Online
Dual Frame, Probability-based, Random Digit Dial (RDD) for Phone

Margins of Error: Overall Sample (N = 1,200): $\pm 2.8\%$
Active-Duty Households (N = 600): $\pm 4.0\%$
Veteran Households (N = 600): $\pm 4.0\%$

Response Rates (AAPOR RR3): Active-Duty Households = 6.8%
Veteran Households = 2.2%

Weighting?: No

Oversampling?: No

Project Contacts: Paul DiPerna, paul@edchoice.org
Lindsey Burke, Lindsey.Burke@heritage.org
Anne Ryland, Anne.Ryland@heritage.org

The authors are responsible for overall survey design; question wording and ordering; this report's analysis, charts, and writing; and any unintentional errors or misrepresentations.

EdChoice is the survey's sponsor and sole funder.

APPENDIX 2

Additional Information About Survey Methods

Online Interviews

Braun Research programmed and hosted the web-based survey for active-duty households (members or their respective spouses/partners). Fulcrum assisted with recruitment and providing the panel sample.¹ Panel administrators initially contacted 13,751 persons from June 23 to July 11, 2017. Those initial contacts were randomly selected from the opt-in non-probability online pool of panelists; 6,463 persons clicked into the survey and 4,878 persons terminated as disqualified. Appendix 3 displays the online sample dispositions and response rate.

Contact Procedures

Contacts with potential respondents generally function differently than by other modes like phone or mail. Braun Research creates and develops the survey instrument and gives it a title. For this project, the online panel connector (Fulcrum) takes that survey and, via a link, reaches out to its partners—who are online panel suppliers—to offer opportunities to participate. These online panel partners decide whether to participate and offer to their panelists based on their panel composition, survey topic and screening questions. The panel companies present these opportunities, generally in the form of an online dashboard or mobile app. The platform serves as a direct-to-consumer model: the link is created, sent out, and the panelist clicks on the survey if he/she wants to participate. Rather than sending email invitations to initiate contacts, most online panel companies use a dashboard-type platform and process, whereby panelists visit these dashboards (or apps) to see the latest survey offerings.

Phone Interviews

Braun Research's live callers conducted all interviews with veteran households via computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) using a survey instrument developed and scripted by the authors. For the phone portion of this project, 49,605 total phone calls were made by landline phone [23,775] and cell phone [25,830]. Of these calls 10,243 [4,559 landline; 5,684 cell] were unusable phone numbers (disconnected, fax, busy, or non-answers, etc.); 15,689 [7,098 landline; 8,591 cell] phone numbers were usable but not eligible for this survey; and 28,644 phone numbers were usable numbers but eligibility unknown (including callbacks, refusals and voicemail). Forty-three people [16 landline; 27 cell] did not complete the survey. Appendix 4 shows the phone sample dispositions and response rates.

Phone Sample Design

Braun Research acquired representative samples of veteran households (either veterans or their respective spouses/partners) that have access to either a landline or cell phone. Survey Sampling International, LLC (SSI) provided both cell phone and landline samples according to Braun Research specifications.

SSI starts with a database of all listed telephone numbers, updated on a four- to six-week rolling basis, 25 percent of the listings at a time. All active blocks—contiguous groups of 100 phone numbers for which more

¹For more information about Fulcrum, see: Lucid, Fulcrum [web page], retrieved from <https://luc.id/fulcrum>

APPENDIX 2

Continued

than one residential number is listed—are added to this database. Blocks and exchanges that include only listed business numbers are excluded.

Numbers for the landline sample were drawn with equal probabilities from active blocks (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained three or more residential directory listings. The cell phone sample was not list-assisted, but was drawn through a systematic sampling from dedicated wireless 100-blocks and shared service 100-blocks with no directory-listed landline numbers.

Contact Procedures

Live telephone interviews were conducted from June 23 to July 11, 2017. Braun Research callers made as many as eight attempts to contact every sampled phone number. The sample was released for interviewing in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger sample. Using replicates to control the release of sample ensures that complete call procedures are followed for the entire sample. Calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chance of making contact with potential respondents. Each phone number received at least one daytime call.

The Hagan-Collier Method guided respondent selection. Respondents in the landline sample were chosen by asking for the youngest adult male who is now at home. If the youngest male was not home, then the next step would be to request an interview with the youngest female at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, as long as that person was an adult 18 years of age or older.

Response rates have been declining for surveys and polls since the 1990s. Generally, running a survey over a longer period of time will boost response rates to some degree. Affirming prior research, Pew Research recently published a report that concluded a lower response rate is not a reliable indicator for bias or skewing of survey results.ⁱⁱ

Weighting Considerations

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to compensate for sample designs and patterns of non-response that may bias results. We did not weight the data for this study for two reasons: (1) there are no applicable statistics for the confluence of screening requirements; and (2) while we have regional statistics, we noticed that the representativeness of completed interviews adequately fit within the margin of error on region for both active-duty and veteran households.

ⁱⁱScott Keeter, Nick Hatley, Courtney Kennedy, and Arnold Lau (2017, May 15), What Low Response Rates Mean for Telephone Surveys, retrieved from Pew Research Center website: <http://www.pewresearch.org/2017/05/15/what-low-response-rates-mean-for-telephone-surveys>; Robert M. Groves and Emilia Peytcheva (2008), The Impact of Nonresponse Rates on Nonresponse Bias: A Meta-Analysis, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 72(2), pp. 167–189, <http://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfn011>

APPENDIX 3

Active-Duty Sample Dispositions and Response Rates (Online)

| Active-Duty Sample Interview Dispositions (Online) | |
|--|--------------|
| DESCRIPTION | TOTAL |
| Full Completes | 600 |
| Email Bouncebacks | 600 |
| Emails Unopened After Reminders | 752 |
| Terminated Early/Breakoffs | 448 |
| Screened Out/Disqualified | 493 |
| Refusals | 194 |
| Total Contacts | 361 |
| RESPONSE RATE | 6.8% |
| COOPERATION RATE | 37.9% |
| REFUSAL RATE | 4.9% |

APPENDIX 4

Veteran Sample Dispositions and Response Rates (Phone)

| Veteran Sample Call Dispositions | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------|------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| SUMMARY | | | DETAIL | | |
| | Landline | Cell Phone | | Landline | Cell Phone |
| Total | 23,775 | 25,830 | Disconnected | 1,789 | 2,292 |
| Released | 23,775 | 25,830 | Fax | 19 | 0 |
| Unreleased | 0 | 0 | Government/Business | 87 | 99 |
| Est. Response | 2.1% | 2.4% | Cell Phone | 0 | - |
| | | | Landline | - | 0 |
| | | | Unusable | 1,895 | 2,391 |
| | | | No Answer | 2,517 | 3,097 |
| | | | Busy | 147 | 196 |
| | | | Usability Unknown | 2,664 | 3,293 |
| | | | Complete | 282 | 318 |
| | | | Break-Off | 16 | 27 |
| | | | Usable/Eligible | 298 | 345 |
| | | | Refused | 1,083 | 1,313 |
| | | | Language Barrier | 95 | 113 |
| | | | Voice Mail | 7,159 | 6,979 |
| | | | Call Back-Retry | 5,792 | 5,658 |
| | | | Strong Refusal | 193 | 221 |
| | | | Privacy Manager | 15 | 23 |
| | | | Usable/Eligible Unknown | 14,337 | 14,307 |
| | | | Under 18 | 7,098 | 8,591 |
| | | | Usable/Ineligible | 7,098 | 8,591 |
| | | | RESPONSE RATE | 2.1% | 2.4% |
| | | | COOPERATION RATE | 85.1% | 85.1% |
| | | | REFUSAL RATE | 10.5% | 13.3% |

APPENDIX 5

Phone Call Introduction Text for Interviews

Cell Phone

Hello, my name is _____. I am calling from BR Interviewing to conduct a survey of adults who are either in the military or who have spouses or partners serving in the military.

I am not selling anything and will not be asking for money. All of your answers will be kept strictly confidential.

Please know these calls are randomly monitored for quality and training purposes.

If you are driving or doing anything that requires your full attention, I will need to call you back.

Landline

Hello, my name is _____. I am calling from BR Interviewing to conduct a survey of adults who are either in the military or who have spouses or partners serving in the military.

I am not selling anything and will not be asking for money. All of your answers will be kept strictly confidential.

Please know these calls are randomly monitored for quality and training purposes.

I'd like to ask a few questions of the youngest male age 18 years or older who is now at home?

[IF NO]

May I ask a few questions of the youngest female age 18 years or older who is now at home?

APPENDIX 6

Screens for Online and Phone Surveys

S1. Have you EVER served or do you NOW SERVE in ACTIVE DUTY in ANY of the United States Armed Forces? This does not include the Reserves or the National Guard, [DO NOT READ]

- 1) Yes, currently on active duty
- 2) Yes, I am a Veteran who has served active duty in the past
- 3) No, but my spouse currently serves active duty
- 4) No, but my spouse has served active duty in the past
- 5) No, served in the Reserves or National Guard but I have been deployed at least one time [Thank, and terminate]
- 6) No, training for Reserves or National Guard only [Thank, and terminate]
- 7) No one in this house has ever served in the military [Thank, and terminate]
- 8) (Refused) [Thank, and terminate]

S2. In which branch of the United States military?

- 1) Air Force
- 2) Army
- 3) Coast Guard
- 4) Navy
- 5) Marines
- 6) (Refused) [Thank, and terminate]

S3. In what STATE do you currently live? [OPEN END. RECORD.]

- 1) [Record U.S. State]
- 2) Outside of USA [Thank, and terminate]
- 3) (Refused) [Thank, and terminate]

APPENDIX 7

Military Households' Net Promoter Score Results and Comparisons

At the outset of our survey interviews, we wanted to learn more about respondents' impressions of military service and the profession generally, based on their own personal experience. We have adapted the Net Promoter Score (NPS) as a way to measure loyalty and commitment to the military profession.

To generate an NPS, a survey poses a single question to a person to determine to what degree she or he would "recommend" a product or organization. The person answering is asked to give a rating on a scale of zero to 10.

- A "Promoter" is someone who gives a nine or 10. This person shows a high degree of loyalty, commitment, and enthusiasm.
- A "Passive" is someone who answers with a seven or eight. This profile can be described as being satisfied and content, but not someone who would go out of her/his way to boost a brand, product, or organization.
- "Detractors" are those people who responded in the range of zero to six. This group is unhappy and ready to move away from a brand, product, or organization.

The NPS is the difference when subtracting the proportion of Detractors from the proportion of Promoters. It is essentially an index that ranges from -100 to 100 that organizations often use to measure the willingness of its stakeholders to recommend a product, service, organization, or person to others. NPS can be used as a proxy for gauging a population's overall satisfaction, loyalty, or commitment.

Tim Legerstee developed and validated an Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) based on the NPS method. The purpose of this adaptation was to assess employee loyalty to a given organization.ⁱ Because eNPS measures employee attitudes in the workplace, this variant on NPS probably comes even closer to what we are hoping to measure about the military profession. We are not trying to measure loyalty or commitment to a brand or product. Rather, we want to better understand how active-duty members, veterans, and their spouses connect to the military profession and way of life.

Adapting the NPS and eNPS approach is appealing because it is straight-forward and potentially actionable. If comparisons between Promoters, Passives, and Detractors show statistically significant differences, then there may be implications for those who are currently committed to being part of a military household and those who are passive or disillusioned. To what extent should the United States military or federal government try to increase professional loyalty among current military service members, veterans, or "military life" for their spouses? Competition for public resources may present trade-offs for policymakers.

ⁱLegerstee concludes in his paper: "In short, it was found that the eNPS, the question whether or not employees of an organization would recommend their workplace, mostly is a measure of affective commitment, but also is akin to person-organization fit and intention to leave. So in organizations that have a higher eNPS, employees have a feeling that they affectively belong to an organization, that their values and beliefs are in accordance with the culture and values of the organization and are less likely to leave. To raise the eNPS, the most important thing that employers can do is to raise the work atmosphere, because employees who laugh more and show more collegiality towards each other, tend to recommend their employer sooner. Adequate leadership, a strong vision and ambition and relieving workload are all useful tools for raising this score too. Raising the eNPS means that employees fit better in the organization, are more affectively committed and would sooner recommend their workplace so that the organization is a more attractive one to work for." See Tim Legerstee (2013), *Asking Employees "The Ultimate Question": Developing the Employee Promoter Score* (Master's thesis), p. 18, retrieved from <https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/17875/Article-Employee-Promoter-Score-FINAL.pdf>

APPENDIX 7

Continued

We adapted the standard NPS question for our survey and used the following wording: “On a scale from zero to 10, how likely is it that you would recommend serving in the United States military to a friend or colleague?”

A majority of respondents recommended service in the U.S. military. In our survey’s overall sample, there were 675 Promoters (56%), 311 Passives (26%), and 188 Detractors (16%). Our survey generated an NPS of 41 among all military respondents.

There are major differences between some demographic subgroups when considering NPS profiles. On most demographic breakouts, the Promoter averages tend to cluster around 55 to 60 percent.

- Both active-duty households and veteran households are much more likely to be Promoters (59% and 54%, respectively), and there is a slight difference in NPS scores (active-duty, NPS = 45; veteran, NPS = 36).
- Those who are serving/have served in the military are more likely to be Promoters than military spouses (61% vs. 48%, respectively). There is a 22-point gap between NPS scores (serving/served in military, NPS = 49; military spouse, NPS = 27).
- Among service branches the widest NPS gap occurs between Air Force (NPS = 46) and Army (NPS = 37) households.
- As it might be expected, military respondents who describe longer service in the military are much more likely to be Promoters and have a higher NPS. The NPS range spans a low of 32 (51% Promoters among ≤ four years’ service) to a high NPS of 75 (79% Promoters among ≥ 20 years’ service). That gap of 43 points reflects the widest range for any observed demographic category.
- We observe gender differences on this item. Either in military service or as a spouse, males are more likely to be Promoters than females (61% vs. 53%, respectively), and the NPS gap is 16 points (male, NPS = 50; female, NPS = 34).
- Nearly two out of three Latinos (65%) were Promoters, higher than other race/ethnic subgroups. The NPS gap between Latinos (NPS = 54) and African Americans (NPS = 35) is 19 points.
- High-income households (62%) are more likely to be Promoters compared to low-income and middle-income households (55% each). The NPS gap is 16 points between high-income (NPS = 49) and low-income (NPS = 33) households.
- Age groups differ too. Respondents who are middle-aged are six times as likely to be Promoters (63%) as Detractors (10%), and they register an NPS score of 53, significantly higher than younger respondents (NPS = 32).
- Current school parents are more likely to be Promoters than non-parents (63% vs. 50%, respectively), and the NPS gap between those subgroups is 22 points.

APPENDIX 7

Continued

Active-duty service members, veterans, and their spouses are positive about the military and show enthusiasm and loyalty for the profession and way of life. Responding to our adaptation of the NPS question, 56 percent of respondents were Promoters—rating the profession at a nine or 10, and our survey produced an overall NPS score of 41 based on the overall sample.

This is good news for our military leaders and for the nation. It also corresponds well with the intensely mission-driven attitude cultivated within the military and with a collective sense that military service is a noble and important thing. The high proportion of Promoters and a high NPS score suggest serving in the military is indeed viewed as a vocation, not simply a career.

Though respondents are positive on average, military leaders and policymakers can still work to reduce the number of military service members or spouses who are relatively unsatisfied or unhappy (16% are Detractors), show relative ambivalence (26% are Passives) or choose to leave due to stressors on their family life, particularly in the area of education (one out of five veterans). Given the documented sacrifices and activities military families make to accommodate their children's education, a concerted effort to support military families through greater educational access, flexibility, and choice could go a long way toward improving their quality of life and job satisfaction.

- Based on NPS scores, Promoters of the military profession are more likely to support ESAs than Detractors, either responding to the baseline question (56% vs. 35%, respectively) or the composite-descriptive question (77% vs. 63%, respectively).
- Promoters of the military profession are more likely to support vouchers than Detractors, either responding to the baseline question (53% vs. 31%, respectively) or the descriptive question (67% vs. 52%, respectively).

NOTES

¹ Throughout this report, we use the terms “servicemembers” and “active-duty” interchangeably.

² P. D. Harms, Dina V. Krasikova, Adam J. Vanhove, Mitchel N. Herian, and Paul B. Lester (2013), Stress and Emotional Well-Being in Military Organizations, in Pamela L. Perrewé, and Christopher C. Rosen (Series Eds.), *Research in Occupational Stress and Well-being: Vol. 11. The Role of Emotion and Emotion Regulation in Job Stress and Well Being* (pp.103–132), [http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3555\(2013\)0000011008](http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3555(2013)0000011008)

³ Jim Cowen and Marcus S. Lingenfelter (2017, February 27), The Stealth Factor in Military Readiness [Blog post], retrieved from <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/education/321321-the-stealth-factor-in-military-readiness>

⁴ The student count estimate only considers students using school vouchers, ESAs, and tax-credit scholarships, not use of individual tax credits or tax deductions. EdChoice, School Choice in America [web page], last modified September 8, 2017, retrieved from <http://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/school-choice-in-america>. For complete program profiles and descriptions, see EdChoice, *The ABCs of School Choice: The Comprehensive Guide to Every Private School Choice Program in America* (2017 ed.), retrieved from <http://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-ABCs-of-School-Choice-1.pdf>

⁵ EdChoice, America’s School Choice Programs by Dates Enacted and Launched [web page], last modified September 8, 2017, retrieved from <http://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/enacted-and-launched-table>

⁶ Impact Aid funding serves a dual purpose: 1) to support the education of federally connected children, and 2) to compensate local areas for lost tax revenue due to a federal presence

⁷ James Talent (2010), *A Constitutional Basis for Defense* (Memo No. AR 10-06), retrieved from Heritage Foundation website: <http://www.heritage.org/defense/report/constitutional-basis-defense>

⁸ U.S. Department of Education (2017), *Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Summary and Background Information*, retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget17/summary/17summary.pdf>

⁹ Kristy N. Kamarck (2015), *DOD Domestic School System: Background and Issues* (CRS IF10335), retrieved from Federation of American Scientists website: <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/IF10335.pdf>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ National Association for Federally Impacted Schools, *History of Impact Aid*, last modified November 19, 2015,

retrieved from http://media.wix.com/ugd/423d5a_9b3d63c52c254039ab3d70fb3e96bd3d.pdf

¹² U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity, About DoDEA: A History [web page], accessed October 4, 2017, retrieved from <http://www.dodea.edu/aboutDoDEA/history.cfm>

¹³ See note 9

¹⁴ Doug Mesecar and Don Soifer (2017), *Better Serving Those Who Serve: Improving the Educational Opportunities of Military-Connected Students*, retrieved from Collaborative for Student Success website: <http://forstudentsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Lexington-Institute-Military-Report.pdf>

¹⁵ Arianna Prothero (2016, April 14), Growing Number of Military Families Opt for Home School [Blog post], retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/growing-number-of-military-families-opt-for-home-school>

¹⁶ National Center for Education Statistics, Table 206.10. Number and Percentage of Homeschooled Students Ages 5 through 17 with a Grade Equivalent of Kindergarten through 12th Grade, by Selected Child, Parent, and Household Characteristics: 2003, 2007, and 2012 [web page], last modified November 2014, retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_206.10.asp

¹⁷ Military Child Education Coalition (2012), *A Policy Leader’s Guide to Military Children*, retrieved from http://www.militarychild.org/public/upload/images/BR_Legislative_Guide_2012_Smaller.pdf

¹⁸ Molly Clever and David R. Segal (2013), The Demographics of Military Children and Families, *The Future of Children*, 23(2), pp. 13–39, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23595618>

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Education (2017), *Impact Aid: Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Request*, retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget17/justifications/b-impactaid.pdf>

²⁰ See note 3

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Amy R. Drummet, Marilyn Coleman, and Susan Cable (2003), Military Families Under Stress: Implications for Family Life Education, *Family Relations*, 52(3), pp. 279–287, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3700279>

²⁴ Fifty-eight percent said dissatisfaction was not a significant factor. See Collaborative for Student Success, *Educating Military-Connected Students: What Does It Mean for Military Readiness?* [web page], last modified February 2, 2017, retrieved from <http://forstudentsuccess.org/educating->

military-connected-students-what-does-it-mean-for-military-readiness

²⁵ Blue Star Families (2016), *2016 Military Family Lifestyle Survey: Comprehensive Report*, retrieved from <http://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ComprehensiveReport-33.pdf>

²⁶ Blue Star Families (2015), *2015 Military Family Lifestyle Survey: Comprehensive Report*, retrieved from http://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/bsf_2015_comprehensive_report.pdf

²⁷ See note 16

²⁸ See note 26

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.; Stephanie Himel-Nelson (2009), *2009 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Results* [SlideShare slides], retrieved from <https://www.slideshare.net/BlueStarFamilies/blue-star-families-survey-results>

³¹ The survey's margin of error is the largest 95 percent Confidence Interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample – the one around 50 percent. The margins of error for the active-duty sample and the veteran sample are both 4.0 percent. This means that in 95 of every 100 samples drawn using the same method, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 4.0 percentage points away from their true values in the population. In addition to sampling error, question wording, ordering, and other practical difficulties when conducting surveys may introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion research.

³² EdChoice (2017), Questionnaire and Topline Results, retrieved from <http://www.edchoice.org/MilitarySurvey>. The Questionnaire and Topline Results document allows the reader to follow the survey interview by question as well as item wording and ordering.

³³ For terminology: We use the label “current school parents” to refer to those respondents who said they have one or more children in preschool through high school. We use the label “former school parents” for respondents who said their children are past high school age. We use the label “non-parents” for respondents without children. For terms regarding age groups: “younger” reflect military respondents who are age 18 to 34; “middle-age” are 35 to 54; and “seniors” are 55 and older. Labels pertaining to income groups go as follows: “low-income earners” < \$40,000; “middle-income earners” ≥ \$40,000 and < \$80,000; “high-income earners” ≥ \$80,000.

³⁴ We adapt the Net Promoter Score (NPS) method to measure how military members and spouses would recommend the profession to others. Military household responses fall under three NPS classifications: Promoters, Passives, and Detractors. A broader background and description of the NPS method is

described in Paul DiPerna (2016), *Surveying State Legislators: Views on K–12 Education, Choice-Based Policies, and the Profession*, retrieved from EdChoice website: <http://www.edchoice.org/research/surveying-state-legislators>

³⁵ Frederick F. Reichheld (2003), The One Number You Need to Grow, *Harvard Business Review*, 81(12), pp. 46–54, retrieved from <http://hbr.org/2003/12/the-one-number-you-need-to-grow>. The original purpose of computing NPS was to measure loyalty and attempt to predict growth. Reichheld's work has shown NPS correlates with customer and revenue growth. Though there has been research that criticized the extent to which NPS can be a predictor and whether or not it is superior to other loyalty and growth measures. NPS has been validated by empirical research as a measure of customer loyalty, and some versions of NPS are commonly used today by many organizations in the private and nonprofit sectors. See Timothy L. Keiningham, Bruce Coolil, Tor Waillin Andreassen, and Lerzan Aksoy (2007), A Longitudinal Examination of Net Promoter and Firm Revenue Growth, *Journal of Marketing*, 71(3), pp. 39–51, <http://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.71.3.39>

³⁶ Medallia, Net Promoter Score Definition [web page], accessed September 10, 2016, retrieved from <http://www.medallia.com/net-promoter-score>. SurveyMonkey provides useful articles that show how Net Promoter Score can be calculated and weighs the pro's and con's of using the method. See SurveyMonkey, Net Promoter® Score Calculation [web page], accessed August 31, 2016, retrieved from <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/net-promoter-score-calculation>; SurveyMonkey, NPS Pros and Cons: Why Use NPS? [web page], accessed August 31, 2016, retrieved from <http://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/nps-pros-cons-why-use-nps>

³⁷ In 2016 we conducted a similar NPS analysis of state legislators. That population also registered the same NPS score of 41. See Paul DiPerna (2016), *Surveying State Legislators: Views on K–12 Education, Choice-Based Policies, and the Profession*, retrieved from EdChoice website: <http://www.edchoice.org/research/surveying-state-legislators>

³⁸ We are not surprised active-duty and veteran households consider education the “most” important problem. It is our speculation that households may find education and schooling a challenge or problem, but not one the federal government should address above the economic or healthcare reasons, per wording of the question.

³⁹ Paul DiPerna and Andrew D. Catt (2016), *2016 Schooling in America Survey: Public Opinion on K–12 Education and School Choice* (Polling Paper 28), retrieved from EdChoice website: http://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2016-10_SIA-Poll-Update.pdf

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ We do not have enrollment data for military-connected students in public charter schools or private schools. See note 15; U.S Department of Defense Education Activity, All About DoDEA Educational Partnership [web page], accessed October

4, 2017, retrieved from <http://www.dodea.edu/Partnership/about.cfm>

⁴² Unless otherwise noted, the results in this section reflect the composite average of split-sample responses to 18A and 18B.

⁴³ See note 40

⁴⁴ See note 14

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Paul DiPerna is vice president of Research and Innovation for EdChoice. He joined the organization in 2006. Paul's research interests include surveys and polling on K-12 education and school choice reforms. He oversees the research projects either produced or commissioned by the organization. EdChoice has published more than 90 reports, papers, and briefs during his tenure leading the research program. Paul has traveled to 31 states for his work. He presents survey research findings and discusses school choice politics and policies with audiences, including public officials, policy professionals, academics, and advocates. Paul's professional memberships and activities include participation in the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) and Association for Education Finance and Policy (AEFP). Previously, Paul served as the assistant director for the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution. He was a research analyst for the first five issues of the *Brown Center Report on American Education* (2000-2004). He also managed and coordinated the activities of the National Working Commission on Choice in K-12 Education (2001-2005). A native of Pittsburgh, Paul earned an M.A. in political science from the University of Illinois (2000) and B.A. from the University of Dayton (1996). Paul currently lives in Zionsville, Indiana, with his wife and two daughters.



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ABOUT THE SURVEY ORGANIZATION

Braun Research, Inc. (BRI)

The Braun Research network of companies, founded in 1995, combined employ 34 full-time and more than 210 part-time employees engaged in data collection via telephone, and internet for various survey research firms, government and advertising agencies, local community organizations, local and national business groups, foundations, universities and academic entities, as well as religious organizations. In 22 years Braun Research has conducted more than 10,000 research projects by telephone, internet, and mail worldwide.

Nationally-known research firms have hired Braun Research, including the Gallup Organization, the Pew Research Center, the Eagleton Poll, Mathematica Policy Research, and the Washington Post. Braun Research has worked for the New Jersey Department of Health and Human Services, as well as other government agencies including the United States Departments of the Treasury and Defense and the Center for Disease Control.

The work we accomplish for other research firms requires us to perform all work up to standards required by the various research organizations where we enjoy membership and, in some cases, participate actively. Paul Braun is recognized as a leader in the field by colleagues who asked him to serve on these committees. He is a member of the MRA/CMOR committees on response rate improvement and in launching a seal of quality for the industry. He has served as President of the New Jersey Chapter of AAPOR, and he is currently a member of the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC) in North America.

Braun Research is a well-respected firm employing techniques and standards approved by various survey research associations and other affiliations including those with whom Braun is an active member, including AAPOR (The American Association for Public Opinion Research) and MRA/CMOR (Market Research Association/Council on Marketing and Opinion Research) and CASRO (Council on American Survey Research Organizations).

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EdChoice is committed to research that adheres to high scientific standards, and matters of methodology and transparency are taken seriously at all levels of our organization. We are dedicated to providing high-quality information in a transparent and efficient manner.

The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) welcomed EdChoice to its AAPOR Transparency Initiative (TI) in September of 2015. The TI is designed to acknowledge those organizations that pledge to practice transparency in their reporting of survey-based research findings and abide by AAPOR's disclosure standards as stated in the Code of Professional Ethics and Practices.

All individuals have opinions, and many organizations (like our own) have specific missions or philosophical orientations. Scientific methods, if used correctly and followed closely in well-designed studies, should neutralize these opinions and orientations. Research rules and methods minimize bias. We believe rigorous procedural rules of science prevent a researcher's motives, and an organization's particular orientation, from pre-determining results.

If research adheres to proper scientific and methodological standards, its findings can be relied upon no matter who has conducted it. If rules and methods are neither specified nor followed, then the biases of the researcher or an organization may become relevant, because a lack of rigor opens the door for those biases to affect the results.

The authors welcome any and all questions related to methods and findings.

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