

Fewer Veterans are Recommending Military Service

A 2021 questionnaire shows veterans and families in recent years are less likely to recommend joining the military, citing food insecurity, insufficient pay and a lack of trust in military leadership as a few reasons for the 'troubling drop'

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A report released in July says troops, veterans and their families in 2021 were less likely to recommend military service than in 2019. While most respondents still encouraged military service, the percentage dropped noticeably over the two-year interval.

The Military Family Advisory Network, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing help to military families, fielded answers from an online survey from Oct. 4 to Dec. 15, 2021. Some 8,638 people participated, and respondents came from all 50 states — as well as Washington, D.C. — two U.S. territories and 22 countries.

The results show that about 63 percent of active-duty troops, veterans and family respondents said they would recommend military life to someone considering it, according to the Military Family Advisory Network. It was a steep decline from the previous survey.

“This statistic represents a troubling drop from the 74.5 percent of respondents who recommended military life to someone considering it in response to the 2019 survey,” the report stated.

Most who participated were spouses (43.8 percent), followed by active-duty troops (13.9 percent). Of those who took the survey, almost 58 percent were between the ages of 25 and 39. About three-fourths of the respondents were women.

Here are the reasons why fewer veterans and families are recommending military service, according to the report.

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- **NOT FAMILY FRIENDLY:** Study participants felt that the military caused stress on families. They expressed that military service is hard on “marriages, family relationships, and relationships with children.” This was the No. 1 reason for not recommending military service.
- **NOT ENOUGH PAY:** Respondents believed the military’s pay is too low, “especially considering” the difficulty and stress of the job. This has led to food insecurity among military families. Pay also was considered too low due to the rising cost of living.
- **‘UNHAPPY’ WITH LEADERSHIP:** The study reported that participants complained about military leadership. Results of the questionnaire stated that they felt as if some leaders are “bad, corrupt, abusive and controlling.” There also were accusations of corruption and frequent abuses by commands, as well as the perception that troops are “less than human” or “just a number.”
- **BENEFITS NOT WORTH IT:** Questionnaire respondents believe that benefits, such as military-funded health care, are not worth the challenges of military service.
- **NO STABILITY:** Respondents also would not recommend “military life” due to the frequent deployments and moves.

Based on the findings, the Military Family Advisory Network recommended that the military:

- Conduct additional research on military family well-being.
- Increase the availability of health care appointments.
- Increase the availability of child care.
- Correct the housing allowance calculation to decrease the housing burden experienced by military families.
- Reduce barriers for military families to save money due to insufficient pay and increased cost of living.

“These findings paint a clear picture,” the Military Family Advisory Network’s report stated. “Such striking findings are the most impactful when they are used to create actionable solutions.”

This article is featured in the 2022 November/December issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Dave Spiva](#), associate editor for VFW magazine.