

The following report describes the sample from the 2023 Military Teen Experience Survey (MTES). You can learn more about the survey rationale and method and measures here. www.militaryfamily.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-MTES-Introduction-and-Methods.pdf

For the third year in a row, we partnered with Bloom: Empowering the Military Teen (Bloom) to get a snapshot of the experiences of America's military teens. The MTES was fielded for a three-week period, opening February 1st and closing February 21st. We heard from almost 2,000 military-connected teens and young adults (n = 1,858) from families in all branches of the uniformed services.

Sample Overview

A majority of our respondents were teens aged 13-18 (n = 1,021) and we had 837 young adult respondents aged 19-24. On average, teens were around 16 years old, while young adults were around 21.

We chose to expand our age range to include young adults because they have recent experience with military family life.

This was a voluntary survey with the only requirement being a military-connected individual aged 13-24. Because this is a convenience sample, our sample may not be fully representative of the greater military teen population. However, this data still offers important insight into the experiences of today's military teens. Many respondents heard about the survey through their parent or guardian (30%) or NMFA social media (22%), while 17% heard about it through Bloom. The remainder (31%) of respondents learned about the survey from friends, school, or other social media content.

Gender	Sexual Orientation	Race and Ethnicity
More boys (49%) responded than girls (47%). 2.1% identified as gender variant or gender non-conforming, 0.3% as transgender girl/woman and 1.2% as transgender boy/man.	A majority of respondents identified as heterosexual (84%). Nearly 13% identified as LGBT. According to the CDC, nearly a quarter of youth identify as LGBT.	Most respondents identified as White (79%), followed by Black (9%), bi- or multiracial (5%), Asian (4%), American Indian or Native Alaskan (1%), Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (1%). Nearly 20% of respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino. Primarily, respondents identified as non-Hispanic or Latino (80%). This sample was representative of the wider military demographic.

Connection to Military Life

The majority of respondents (69%) reported their parent or guardian is serving on active duty status. Of the remaining respondents, 6% come from families serving in the National Guard or Reserves, and 6% have a veteran parent/guardian. Retired service members, either after 20 years of service or medically retired, comprised 16% of parents/guardians, and 1% (n = 20) of respondents are the child of a fallen service member. Additionally, nearly half (44%) of respondents come from dual military families (i.e., both parents are currently serving, or previously serving). Nearly a quarter (22%) of respondents have a second parent that is no longer serving (i.e., retired or served less than 20 years). Approximately 1% of our young adult respondents are currently serving in the military.

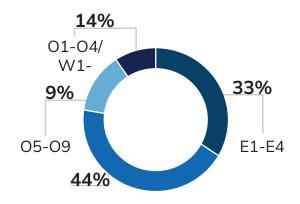
Service Member Demographics

Respondents' service member parents or guardians were fairly spread across the branches and roughly <u>representative</u> of the military population.





Most (78%) respondents indicated their parent or guardian was enlisted, while officers comprised the minority 22%. This is fairly representative of the U.S. military, as enlisted personnel make up approximately 82% of the force, and the remaining 18% are officers.



E5-E9

A stunning majority (77%) of respondents come from families with a wounded, ill, or injured service member.

Invisible wounds (i.e., PTSD or traumatic brain injury; 46%) are much more prevalent than visible wounds (i.e., bodily injury or illness; 18%), though 13% reported their service member had both invisible and visible wounds. Learn more about these Hidden Helpers here.

www.militaryfamily.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-MTES-Hidden-Helpers.pdf

Most respondents had experienced at least two deployments with the average being close to three. On average, respondents reported experiencing nearly four permanent changes of station or military-related moves. Respondents have attended an average of five schools since kindergarten due to military moves.



Our Military Youth in Their Own Words

To close our survey we asked: What's one thing you want people to know about being in a military family? Here's what our military-connected youth had to say:

- The biggest takeaway I have about this is the importance of being able to accept bad things. You need to be mentally strong in this life, and while it's much easier now than it was in the past, it is by no means easy. You will leave friends. You will leave family. Many even leave the country that their parent swore to protect. It's very important to accept that. It's also very varied in terms of experiences. For some families, it will be awful. For others, it will be amazing.
 - -13 year old son of an Air Force officer
- It's not a choice to be in it or not, so try to love it as much as you can.
 - -16 year old son of an Army service member
- I will say that it's a beautiful experience If you willingly choose every day to make it one. It's not easy by any means, always having to pick up and leave, losing friends etc. But your family will be your best friends, nurture those relationships. Moving around a lot affected my ability to be all in to anything. I struggle with commitment because the fear of them just leaving. I want everyone to know that it's okay to love and be all in and not to let that fear ruin really good things. MAKE friends NURTURE friends and be grateful.
 - -16 year old son of an Air Force service member
- Being in a military family is not easy. However if done right it can build some pretty strong resilient people. Military brats are pretty bad ass with everything they go through, from moving to deployments. We miss out on important family events sometimes and have shed many tears, but we still pick up and carry on because we know you just have to jump in with both feet and start again. I'm fortunate enough to not have too many money struggles and if there were some serious ones, I'm lucky not to remember. However there are still brats out there who are struggling and need help. Sometimes a new move can send a teen down a wrong path (a support group is probably needed), but through all these crummy moments we still carry on with our lives and become the best versions of ourselves thanks to the military pushing us to be better.
 - -17 year old daughter of a Navy officer



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