Evaluation of the Military Spouse Employment Partnership Program

Report on the Second Stage of Analysis

MAREK N. POSARD, GABRIELLA C. GONZALEZ, LUKE J. MATTHEWS,
KAREN CHRISTIANSON, JAMIE RYAN, SHIRLEY M. ROSS,
IRINEO CABREROS

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Preface

The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for Military Community and Family Policy (MCFP) asked the RAND Corporation National Defense Research Institute for an analysis to help assess its Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) program in supporting the employment of military spouses. The research reported here is part of a larger RAND effort to support the monitoring and evaluation of Military Community and Family Policy's portfolio of Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) programs and initiatives. Other programs in the SECO portfolio include the My Career Advancement Account Program, career counseling services available through the SECO Call Center, and Department of Defense State Liaison Office initiatives to expand unemployment compensation eligibility for trailing military spouses and to secure cross-state endorsements of professional certifications and licenses.

This research should be of interest to policymakers who are responsible for programs or oversight of programs supporting military spouse quality of life, as well as scholars who study military spouse issues and program evaluation.

The research reported here was completed in July 2020 and underwent security review with the sponsor and the Defense Office of Prepublication and Security Review before public release. Further, this report uses data that were collected between 2015 and 2019. Specifically, we completed our analysis of job postings on the MSEP Career Portal and interviews of employer partners in 2016 (for context, in December 2016 there were 337 partners; in December 2020 there were 500 partners), while our survey and interviews of military spouses was analyzed in 2019. Thus, our results based on older data may not necessarily reflect recent MSEP program changes or initiatives.

This research was sponsored by the Office of the DASD for Military Community and Family Policy and conducted within the Forces and Resources Policy Center of the RAND National Security Research Division (NSRD), which operates the National Defense Research Institute (NDRI), a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense intelligence enterprise.

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Summary

Military service places unique demands on service members and their families (U.S. Department of Treasury and U.S. Department of Defense, 2012). In particular, frequent relocations complicate military spouses' career trajectories (Booth, 2003; Booth et al., 2000; Harrell et al., 2004; Lim, Golinelli, and Cho, 2007). There is a growing body of evidence that these frequent moves can have negative effects on the spouses' ability to find employment in occupations of their choosing, earn wages that match their skills, and maintain long-term careers (Burke and Miller, 2016; Cooke and Speirs, 2005; Harrell et al., 2004; Lim and Schulker, 2010; Miller et al., 2018). Previous research has found that, compared with their civilian counterparts, military spouses are more likely to be unemployed (jobless, but actively seeking work) or underemployed (either working part-time involuntarily or having higher levels of education than is required for their jobs) (Lim and Schulker, 2010; Maury and Stone, 2014).

Recognizing the challenges facing military families and military spouses in particular, the White House published a directive in 2011 ordering the Department of Defense to expand the Army Spouse Employment Partnership, which had recruited 52 employer partners since its inception in 2003 to assist military spouses seeking private sector careers, to serve Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force spouses (White House, 2011). It is one of four programs under the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) initiative, which is under the aegis of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness and Force Management's Military Community and Family Policy (MCFP) office. The Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) program was launched on June 29, 2011.[1]

In December 2014, the U.S. Congress mandated the evaluation of the MSEP program as part of the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (Pub. L. 113-291, 2014). Within that law, Congress required the Secretary of Defense to "collect data to evaluate the effectiveness of the Military Spouse Employment Partnership program in addressing underemployment of military spouses; matching military spouses' education and experience to available employment positions; and closing the wage gap between military spouses and their civilian counterparts" (Pub. L. 113-291, 2014: Sec. 568). This work is the second phase of a two-phase study to evaluate data on the MSEP program for MCFP.

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[1] The program is distinct from the Military Spouse Preference program (MSP). The U.S. Congress established the MSP under the Military Family Act of 1985 to provide preference in hiring eligible military spouses for civilian vacancies within the U.S. Department of Defense.

Objectives of the Research

To meet the congressional mandate and complement ongoing efforts to monitor the progress of its SECO programs already underway, the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for MCFP asked the RAND Corporation to accomplish two goals. First, MCFP asked RAND to provide guidance on data and metrics that MCFP should collect to support an evaluation of the MSEP program's effectiveness. Second, it asked RAND to evaluate the extent to which MSEP addresses the unemployment and underemployment among military spouses, assess whether military spouses' level of education and experience match available positions, and identify strategies for closing the wage gap between military spouses and their civilian counterparts.

Findings

This report presents results from the second phase of a two-phase study (Gonzalez et al., 2015). In this second phase, we conducted four types of analyses. First, we conducted a new query of job postings from the MSEP Career Portal to analyze the types of jobs that employers were posting on this portal. Second, we compared the geographic distribution of these jobs to the location of spouses, using location data from Defense Manpower Data Center. Third, we conducted interviews of employers who post these jobs on the portal. Fourth, we fielded a survey of spouses who recently used the MSEP Career Portal. Finally, we interviewed a subsample of these respondents over the phone.

Results showed that the MSEP Career Portal lists a range of jobs, but a limited percentage of them are telecommuting positions. Further, we found more jobs on this portal in the Northeast region of the United States than in other regions, despite the high percentage of spouses who live in these regions. The results from our interviews of some employer partners who post these jobs suggest a need for improvements in communication between key stakeholders, including military spouse applicants, employees, partnering organizations, employers, and MCFP. Results from our survey and phone interviews of military spouses suggest that some were unsatisfied with the quality of job postings.

Given these results, we recommend that MCFP work to increase the number of jobs on the MSEP Career Portal that would be of interest to military spouses within their specific labor markets. To this end, we present five policy recommendations for MCFP: (1) increase targeted outreach to employer partners who offer telecommuting positions of interest to military spouses; (2) increase targeted outreach to employer partners (of interest to military spouses) that have offices in the Midwest, South, and West; (3) improve communication with key stakeholders involved with the military spouse employment search; (4) promote a diverse range of employment-related search engines to military spouses; and (5) increase the number of relevant jobs of interest to military spouses posted on the MSEP Career Portal.

Acknowledgments

Abbreviations

ADSS	Survey of Active Duty Spouses
ASEP	Army Spouse Employment Partnership
D&I	diversity and inclusion
DMDC	Defense Manpower Data Center
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
MCFP	Military Community and Family Policy
MSEP	Military Spouse Employment Partnership
PCS	permanent change of station
POC	point of contact
SECO	Spouse Education and Career Opportunities

1. Introduction

In 2011, the White House directed the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to expand the Army Spouse Employment Partnership (ASEP) for spouses of service members in the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force (Military Spouse Employment Partnership [MSEP], 2014). This expanded program became the current MSEP within the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy (MCFP). In this report, we present results from these data sources to assess the utility of the MSEP Career Portal from the perspective of employers and spouses and from our analysis of the jobs posted on this postal.

This project had two phases. In the first phase, the RAND Corporation National Defense Research Institute collected and analyzed MSEP program data on a subset of partners, job postings, and programs. The first phase described characteristics of MSEP employer partners using data from the MCFP's Partner Directory and the proprietary LexisNexis Company Dossier. Further, this first phase of this project queried data from the MSEP Career Portal to document the extent to which this partnership advertised jobs that align with the backgrounds and interest of military spouses. A key conclusion of the report on this first phase was that the career portal contained jobs that were appropriate for some military spouses' backgrounds, but there was evidence of potential mismatches in some career fields that might limit the portal's effectiveness for other spouses (Gonzalez et al., 2015).

In the second phase of this project (Phase II), we collected additional data to assess the types of jobs that MSEP employer partners offered on their Career Portal, assessed employer partnership engagement, and analyzed military spouses' perspectives on this program's utility and performance. We focused on telecommuting positions because this was an area of interest to MCFP. We carried out these analyses in four ways. First, we queried more data on job postings from the MSEP Career Portal. Second, we interviewed representatives from some of the employers who post jobs on this portal to assess their views on engagement with the MSEP program. Third, we fielded a survey of spouses who used the MSEP Career Portal in the previous six months to ask them about their views of this job search tool. Fourth, we conducted phone interviews with a subset of these spouses after they completed our survey.

Elements of MSEP

Figure 1.1 displays three key features of MSEP, each of which we evaluated in separate chapters of this report.[2] The first is the MSEP Career Portal itself. We focus on the types of jobs

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[2] This report focuses on three key features of MSEP. Other features exist, however. These include in-person and virtual activities that support military spouse employment.

that employers post on this portal and the geographic locations for some of these positions. The second feature is the employer partners who post job openings on the Career Portal. We interviewed representatives from some of these partners to understand their views of this partnership. The third feature is military spouses who are looking for employment opportunities. We administered a survey to some of these spouses and conducted interviewers with a subset of survey respondents.

Figure 1.1. Key Features of the MSEP

MSEP Career Portal   **Employer Partners**   **Military Spouses**

Organization of This Report

This report has seven chapters. This chapter briefly introduces the MSEP program and the Career Portal, which is a focus of this research, and provides background on the two phases of this project. Chapters 2 and 3 analyze data on the types of jobs offered on the MSEP Career Portal. Chapter 4 reviews results from interviews of representatives of MSEP corporate partners who post jobs on this portal. Chapter 5 reviews survey data of spouses who were looking for jobs on the MSEP Career Portal. Chapter 6 presents results from phone interviews of these spouses. Finally, Chapter 7 summarizes our results and offers recommendations that relate to targeted outreach of spouse employers, improving communication with key stakeholders involved with military spouse hiring, and promoting a broader range of online tools besides the MSEP Career Portal for military spouses to use.

2. Evaluation of Job Postings on the MSEP Career Portal

The first feature of MSEP is the Career Portal. This portal is an online database of job listings from employers who joined the MSEP program. In this chapter, we review the characteristics of jobs based on their descriptions as listed on this portal.

During the first phase of this research, we examined data from this portal in 2015. For this second phase, we queried data from this portal that were collected in 2016, analyzed these new data, and then compared our results with what we found in 2015.

This chapter has three parts. First, we review the methods for this second analysis. Second, we examine availability of telecommuting jobs on the Career Portal. Military spouses have an interest in these telecommuting jobs due to the frequency geographic moves by military families. Third, we compare job characteristics from our 2015 and 2016 data queries, with a focus on years of experience and level of education listed within these job posts.[3]

Methods

This section of the report updates data from the Phase I MSEP report (Gonzalez et al., 2015). Thus, it repeats some of the analyses from Gonzalez et al., 2015, but with the 2016 data download from the portal. We also added deeper analysis of telecommuting and education jobs because MCFP identified these as priority areas in recent years. Full details on repeated analysis can be found both in Gonzalez et al., 2015, and in Appendix B of this report.

We estimated the percentage of job ads that mentioned telecommuting through an iterative keyword searching and manual coding process. Our process began with searching in the Job Description field for words that seemed likely to indicate some type of telecommute position. The Job Description field lists most of the descriptive text about the job, including the experience required and the nature of the work. Within this field, we searched for matches to the following terms: *telecommute*, *telework*, *tele-commute*, *tele commute*, *tele work*, *virtual*, *virtual work*, *virtual-work*, *work from home*, *work at home*. This search returned 9,610 job posts (4.5 percent of the total) that contained one of these words. We then manually coded 96 (10 percent) of the postings the search indicated as a telecommute opportunity as either telecommute or not to assess the false positive/true positive rate obtained through this search.

The results from manual coding indicated that 18 of the 96 posts made some affirmation of being telecommute positions. Sometimes this affirmation was merely listing a matched word in a keyword list. For example, a mortgage servicing job listed a detailed paragraph of job requirements and duties but simply stated near the top of the job ad, "This is a remote/work from

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[3] See Appendix A for a discussion of overall level of education using surveys of active-duty military spouses.

home opportunity" without any further details about this aspect of the job. In other cases, the posting would describe the conditions for telecommute work, which sometimes required the applicant to be in the same state as the job location or to come into the office weekly. For example, a health care company offered much more specific information, including that "telecommute is only available for current telecommuters," and then followed with specific office locations that would have different telecommute rules. We accepted all such statements as at least some positive affirmation of telecommute work.

Given these findings, we revised the word list for identifying telecommute jobs. We both removed words that were associated with false positives (e.g., *virtual*) and added words or phrases we saw in the manually coded job posts that were indicative of telecommute work. The resulting word list (*telecommute*, *home based*, *remote work location*, *work from home*, *work at home*, ***Virtual/work from home? ** *Yes**[4]), returned 1,975 job posts with a matching word in the Description field.

Once again, we manually coded the selected posts from the search to assess the false positive/true positive rates. Of the 177 jobs that we coded from this second word-list match, 176 made some affirmation of telecommuting. The only false positive stated,

> "I strive for Honesty (I am an old programmer myself)—you must work in the office. This is not telecommuting (at least mostly in the office)."

Given this process, we are confident that advertised telecommute jobs are rare and equal roughly 1 percent of posted positions in the MSEP Career Portal.

Availability of Telecommute Work Within the MSEP Career Portal

Telecommute work (i.e., work from home) opportunities are an increasing component of certain types of occupations within the American labor market (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). These opportunities are desirable for military spouses because they often create additional flexibility to balance work and family life commitments, and they may be more portable to a next deployment than are positions more tied to a physical office or other work location.

We used the original September 4, 2015, data pull from the Phase I report to develop a set of keywords suitable to assess the occurrence of telecommute work within the Career Portal. We also assessed the telecommute keywords in a second data pull, from August 3, 2016, and found that the telecommute results were essentially unchanged among the job postings in the Career Portal roughly one year later (see the section on Comparison of Job Characteristics from 2015–2016). The data pulls in both years included all jobs that were present in the Career Portal on the

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[4] This particular variant was included because it was the standard way Xerox designated work from home in its job ads. Without including this variant, we would have missed telecommute jobs posted by Xerox, a significant poster of jobs in this sample.

day of the data pull; most posts were made within the two months prior to the date of the data pull.

Telecommute Work in the Careers Web Portal

Our analysis indicates that about 1 percent of job posts on the MSEP Career Portal had some direct affirmation of telecommute potential. Specifically, we find a frequency of 0.9 percent telecommute posts in the first data pull from September 4, 2015, and a frequency of 1.1 percent telecommute posts in the second data pull from August 3, 2016. Because the total number of jobs posted was similar for both data pulls (210,718 for 2015 and 232,770 for 2016), the percentage differences throughout this report reflect roughly comparable absolute differences as well.

Some employers might reserve telecommuting until after an employee has proven to be reliable. There may be a mutual benefit to both employers and job seekers, however, if employers post some mention of telecommuting in cases when the job may be convertible into a role with telecommute options. This is because without such a mention, an employer might not get applications from qualified job seekers who are looking for jobs that eventually could allow telecommuting.

The infrequent occurrence of telecommute work in the portal, combined with the reasonable supposition that many employers offer telecommute work only to established employees, suggest that MCFP may wish to more actively solicit future MSEP partners among employers who already post a high percentage of telecommute jobs on such other jobs sites as Monster or LinkedIn. If an employer already breaks with the general norm by advertising telecommute work on these other sites, then it stands to reason that it would advertise positions similarly on the MSEP Career Portal. This may be one approach by which MSEP can provide more transparently advertised telecommuting opportunities to military spouses.

Analysis of Telecommute by Type of Job

In the Phase I report, the RAND team thematically coded jobs by the type of work advertised (e.g., engineering, sales; see Gonzalez et al., 2015, Figure 4.1). The thematic coding was achieved by a RAND researcher initially reading 919 of the jobs and manually assigning them a job type according to a simplified version of the National Bureau of Labor's job taxonomy. We then trained a machine learning algorithm—specifically, a support vector machine—to replicate the manual assignments across the more than 200,000 jobs in the system. Full details of this method are reported in Gonzalez et al., 2015 (Appendix A).

With the jobs from the 2015 data pull classified by type, we were able to compare how the telecommute designations were patterned by job type in a second data collection from 2016. The telecommute designations come from keywords matched in the Job Description data field, while the job types were assigned based only on words in the Job Title data field. Thus, the words that contribute to telecommute designations were not used directly in the assignment of job type. This means that the patterns we show are not circular results from the process of assigning job types.

Rather, they are empirical patterns of which job types have more telecommute designations within their job ads.

The telecommute jobs we identified through the keywords in Figure 2.1 show logical patterns when compared with the job types that we assigned though a machine-learning algorithm to replicate manually coded judgments (Gonzalez et al., 2015, Appendix A). For example, as compared with the set of all jobs in the Career Portal, telecommute positions show an overrepresentation of Software & Analytics and Healthcare job types and an underrepresentation of Clerical, Hospitality & Food Service, and Transportation & Factory job types (Figure 2.1). Such patterns are to be expected, given the different requirements of these roles.

Figure 2.1. Frequency of Telecommuting Positions Advertised on the MSEP Job Portal
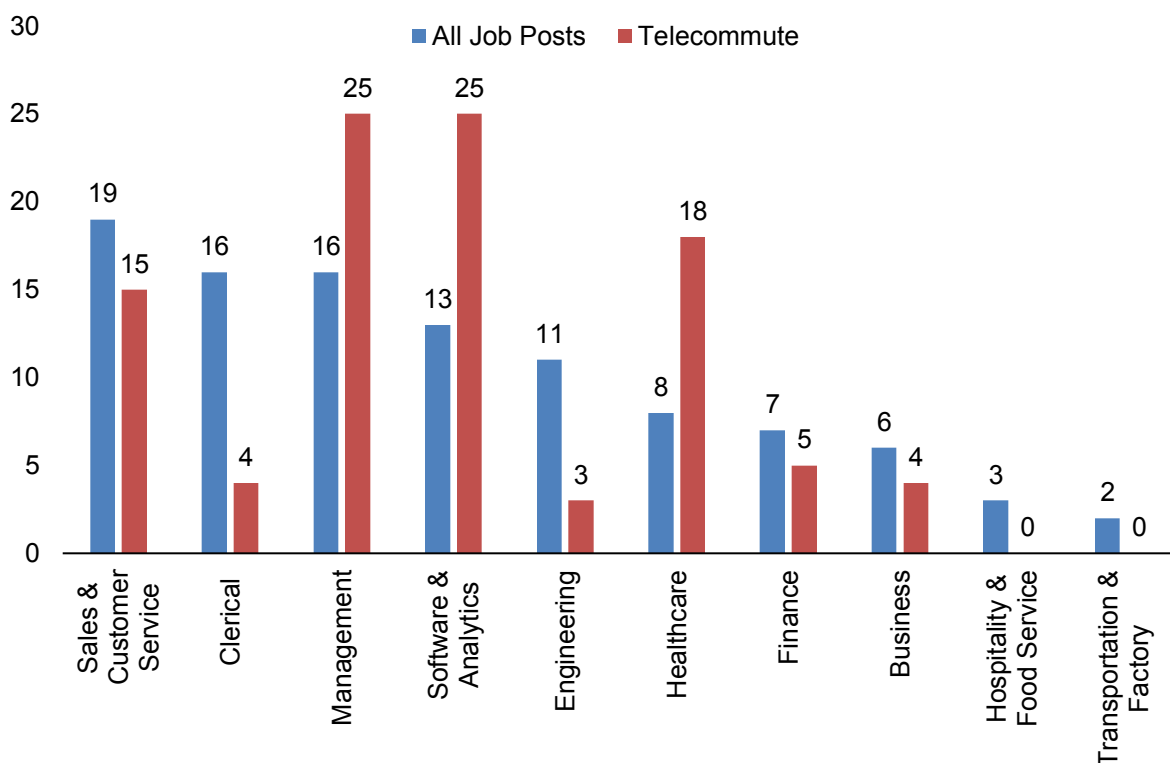
SOURCE: RAND queries of MSEP Career Portal listings, August 3, 2016.

We found similarly logical patterns when we examined whether certain educational degrees were mentioned within telecommute Job Description fields (Figure 2.2). Within telecommute jobs, high school–level education is underrepresented, while master's-level education is overrepresented in comparison to the set of all jobs in the Career Portal. This indicates that telecommute jobs in the Career Portal are geared primarily to more-educated prospective workers. This probably reflects the nature of telecommute work generally, rather than anything unique to telecommute jobs posted by MSEP partners.

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Figure 2.2. Percentage of All Jobs and Telecommuting Jobs Mentioning Education Level on the MSEP Career Portal
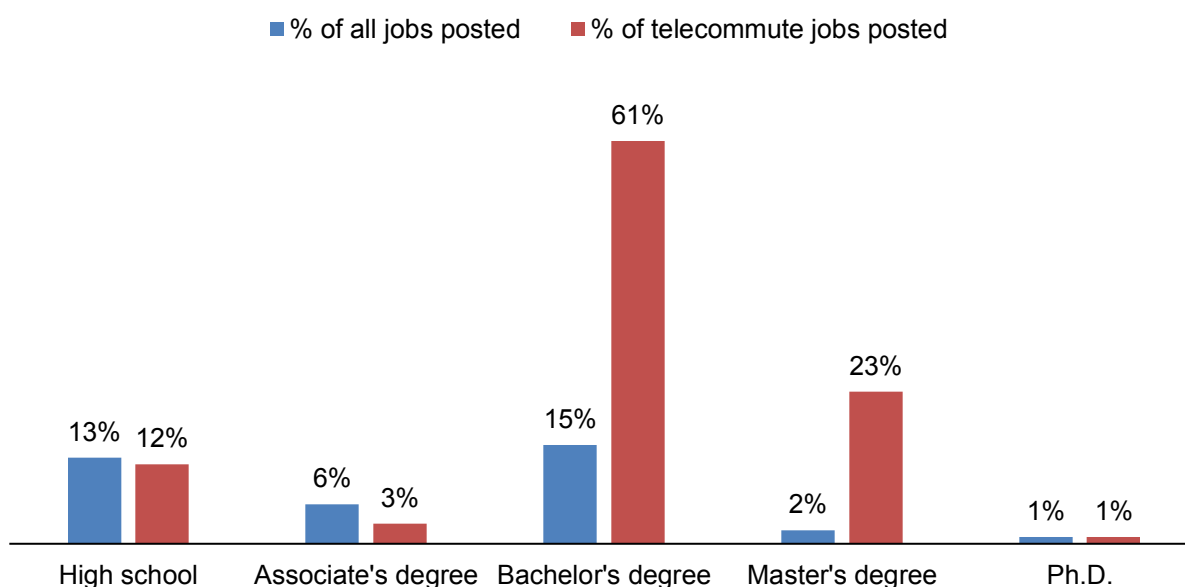
SOURCE: RAND queries of MSEP Career Portal listings, August 3, 2016.

The observation of expected patterns for telecommute jobs with respect to job type and education lends greater confidence that our keyword method for identifying telecommute work is correctly identifying true telecommute positions because these logical correlations occur across separate data fields in the job ads.

Comparison of Job Characteristics from 2015 to 2016

We analyzed a second pull of data from the MSEP Career Portal to assess the stability of the previously reported findings over time. This second data pull included all jobs that were posted in the portal on August 3, 2016, approximately one year after the first data pull on September 4, 2015. A yearlong interval allows substantial opportunity for the data pulls to be relatively independent statistically because many employers would have refreshed their offerings after a year.

We found that the distribution of job posting activity by partners was similar in 2015 and 2016. In 2015, the 20 partners with the greatest number of jobs posted accounted for 71 percent of all the jobs in the Career Portal; in 2016, the top 20 partners accounted for 75 percent of the postings. This distribution means that relatively few individuals make up the majority of activity at any one time. In this specific case, a number of the partners among the top 20 in 2015 were also among the top 20 most active at posting jobs in 2016 (Tables 2.1 and 2.2).

Table 2.1. Top 20 Job Posting Partners on the MSEP Career Portal for 2015 and 2016

2015		2016	
Partner Name	**Frequency of Posts**	**Partner Name**	**Frequency of Posts**
Lowe's	23,472	McDonald's Corporation	45,618
Manpower Inc.	18,816	CVS Health	24,984
Bank of America	9,247	Starbucks	16,638
JPMorgan Chase & Co.	8,693	Michaels Stores Inc.	13,146
Citi	8,343	JPMorgan Chase & Co.	7,910
UnitedHealth Group	8,298	Toys R Us/Babies R Us	7,662
Wells Fargo	7,674	Microsoft	7,322
Hilton Worldwide	6,793	Lowe's	6,995
HCA, Hospital Corporation of America	6,464	UnitedHealth Group	5,371
Leidos	6,232	Bank of America	5,245
Verizon	6,164	Citi	5,164
Microsoft	5,623	Ross Stores, Inc	4,360
AT&T	5,425	Wells Fargo	3,434
Southern Company	4,408	U.S. Bank	3,412
Dell, Inc.	4,328	DaVita Inc.	3,348
U-Haul International	4,099	Volt Workforce Solutions	3,038
DaVita Inc.	3,947	Act 1 Group	2,983
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP	3,859	Manpower Inc.	2,908
Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES)	3,846	24 Hour Fitness	2,899
Computer Sciences Corporation	3,721	Walmart	2,789

SOURCE: RAND queries of MSEP Career Portal listings, September 4, 2015, and August 3, 2016.

Table 2.2. Number of Posts and Rank for Partners Within the Top 20 in Both 2015 and 2016

Partner	2015		2016	
	Rank	Posts	Rank	Posts
Lowe's	1	23,472	8	6,995
Manpower Inc.	2	18,816	18	2,908
Bank of America	3	9,247	10	5,245
JPMorgan Chase & Co.	4	8,693	5	7,910
Citi	5	8,343	11	5,164
UnitedHealth Group	6	8,298	9	5,371
Wells Fargo	7	7,674	13	3,434
Microsoft	12	5,623	7	7,322
DaVita Inc.	17	3,947	15	3,348

SOURCE: RAND queries of MSEP Career Portal listings, September 4, 2015, and August 3, 2016.

There were some changes in the jobs posted in 2016 as compared to 2015. One dramatic difference was that Hospitality & Food Service job types were a major component of the 2016 data pull but were one of the rarer job types in 2015 (Figure 2.3). This is likely because McDonalds and Starbucks were among the top 20 posters of jobs in 2016 but were essentially not present in the 2015 data pull.

Figure 2.3. Percentage of Job Posting by Type of Job on the MSEP Career Portal
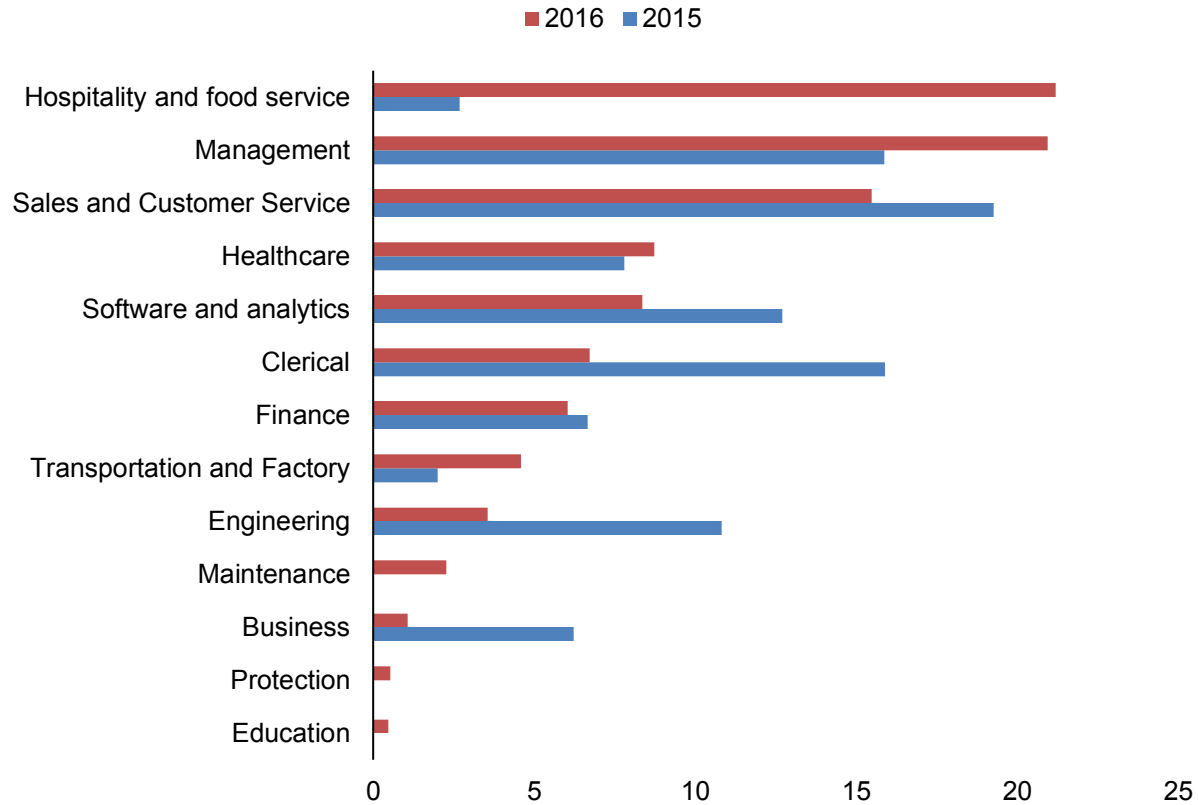
SOURCE: RAND queries of MSEP Career Portal listings September 4, 2015, and August 3, 2016.
NOTE: Job type was inferred through an update of the analytic process from the Phase I report that relied on qualitative coding followed by machine learning (Gonzalez et al., 2015, Appendix B).

The increase in the number of Hospitality & Food Service positions in 2016 as compared to 2015 is a desired change because one goal for MSEP is to provide a suitable number of entry-level positions for military spouses. The findings overall suggest a shift, one potentially broadening, of the represented job types in the MSEP Career Portal. This is a positive affirmation of the ongoing work of MSEP to meet the broad range of jobs sought by military spouses. The program should continue its efforts to identify and enroll high-quality partners and to facilitate their participation in the web portal through posting job opportunities.

Education jobs are one priority area for MSEP because a significant fraction of military spouses have primary education qualifications. For example, 10 percent of active-duty spouses reported that the career field for their most recent employment was education (e.g., teacher, teacher's assistant) on the 2015 Survey of Active Duty Spouses (ADSS) (Defense Manpower Data Center [DMDC], 2015a, p. 138). (For more details, see Appendix A). As in 2015, the 2016 data pull found that less than 1 percent of the jobs posted were in the field of Education.

Many other features of the jobs posted in 2016 were similar to those of jobs posted in 2015. For example, although more jobs in 2015 listed some kind of experience statement, the distribution of experience statements similarly emphasized more junior positions but with a spike at the five-year experience mark (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4. Distribution of Experience Statements from Job Postings on the MSEP Career Portal
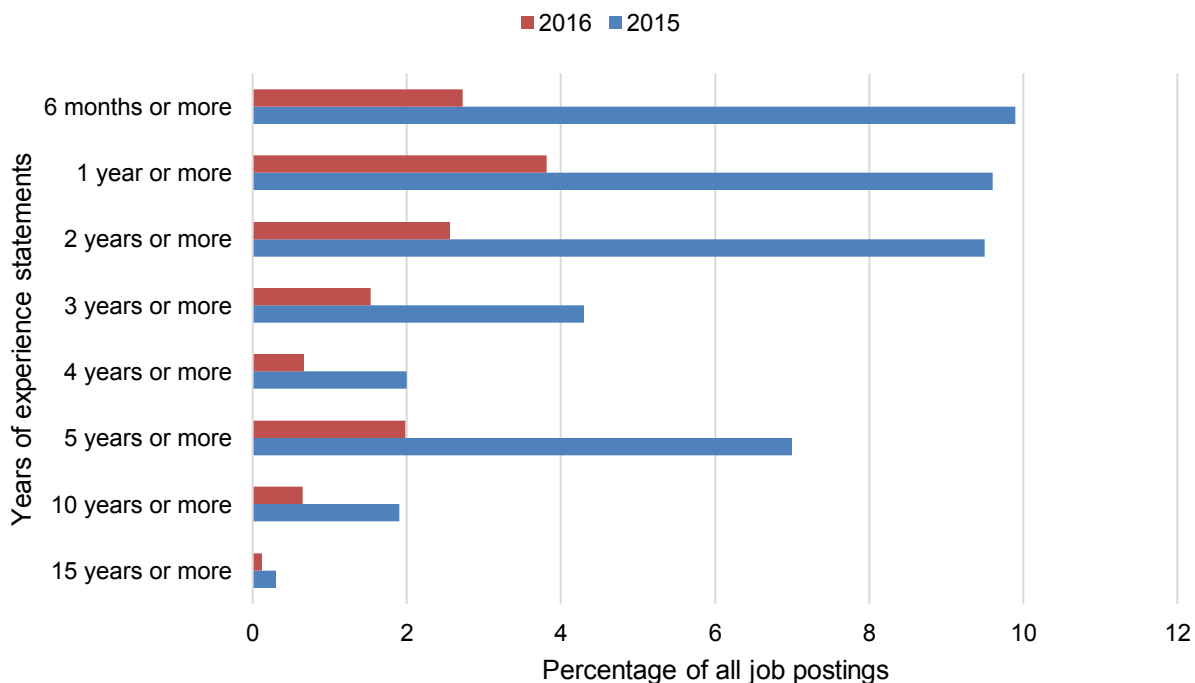
SOURCE: RAND queries of MSEP Career Portal listings September 4, 2015, and August 3, 2016.

Figure 2.5 shows the distributions of education level requested for the jobs posted at the time of the data pulls in 2015 and 2016. Job postings in 2015 and 2016 most often mentioned the need for a bachelor's degree or high school diploma. A notable difference for 2016 was a larger percentage of posts requesting some type of license.

Figure 2.5. Frequency of Educational Degrees Mentioned for 2015 and 2016 in Job Postings on the MSEP Career Portal
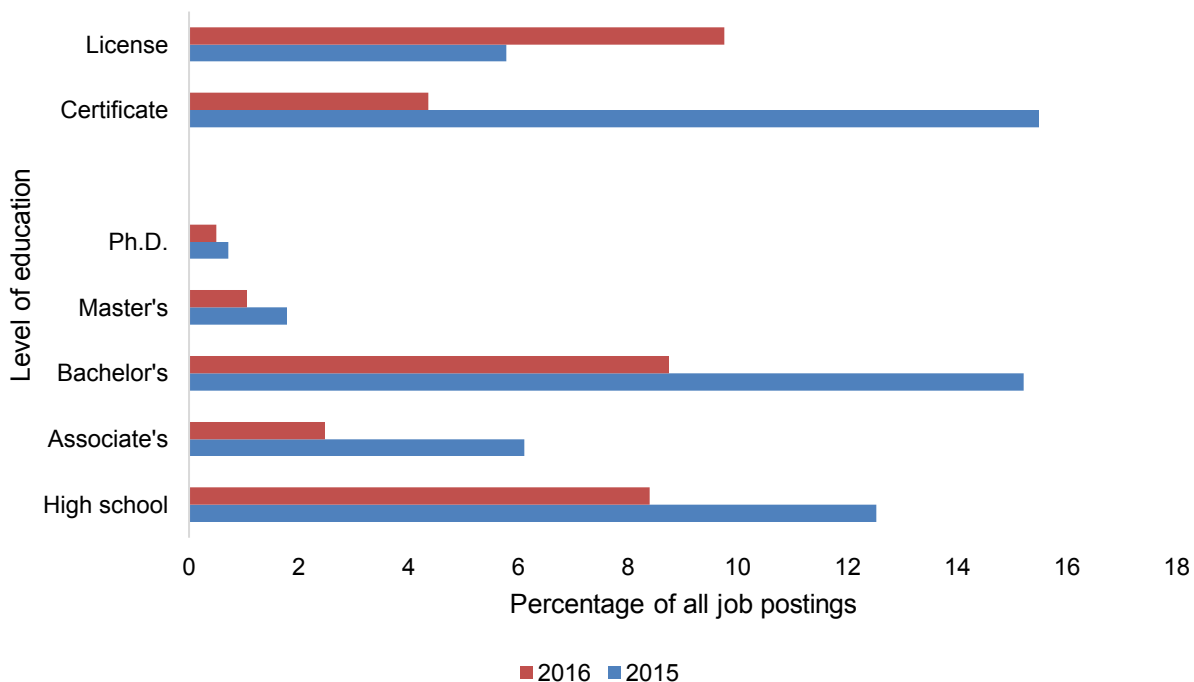
SOURCE: RAND queries of MSEP Career Portal listings September 4, 2015, and August 3, 2016.

It is difficult to make direct comparisons of the match between skills of military spouses and the requirements for jobs posted in the MSEP Career Portal. The difficulty in assessing this match arises partly from data on military spouses being gathered through a representative survey methodology (e.g., ADSS data displayed in Appendix A) versus data presented on the MSEP Career Portal mostly having been mined from free-text entries in which partners included whatever they wanted—partners were not required to list specific criteria for each posting, such as education level, salary, or work experience. Put simply, we used different data sources to assess the characteristics of spouses who need employment versus the types of job postings we queried on the MSEP Career Portal.

As an example, it is hard to know the true percentage of job postings that require a bachelor's degree. In 2015 and 2016, 15 percent and 8 percent of jobs mentioned bachelor's degrees, respectively. This apparent decrease in postcollegiate jobs between the years probably reflects a real change in the kinds of jobs posted rather than an artifact of our analytics because it is

consistent with the observation that two food service employers, McDonalds and Starbucks, were major posters of jobs in 2016 but not in 2015. Both these numbers are lower than the percentage of military spouses with a bachelor's degree (approximately 30 percent), but these percentages likely underestimate the proportion of jobs posted for which a bachelor's degree would be an advantage. Employer partners might not always list a bachelor's degree as a requirement in the free-text job description field, which is what we text-mined to derive percentages. They might list this somewhere later in the application process or might entertain candidates with or without a bachelor's degree and require different levels of prior experience, offer different compensation, etc. While direct comparisons are difficult, we can say that the jobs in the Career Portal demonstrate a substantial diversity of job types, educational levels, and experience requested.

3. Geographic Distribution of Jobs in the MSEP Career Portal

Chapter 3 continues our analysis of the MSEP Career Portal by examining the geographic distribution of some jobs posted on this portal. One unique demand of military service is that personnel and their families typically make frequent geographic moves within the United States and across the world (Segal, 1986). According to DoD, 87.5 percent of personnel (n = 1,138,399) were located in the United States or U.S. territories in 2015 (DoD, 2015).[5] The remaining 12.5 percent of personnel (n = 163,044) were stationed in foreign countries or overseas. In this chapter, we examine the geographic distribution of job opportunities queried from the MSEP career portal compared with where military spouses live.

The U.S. military assigns personnel across most U.S. states and many countries throughout the world. In the United States, more than half of active-duty service members are in six states (California, Virginia, Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida) (DoD, 2018, p. 34). Each of these labor markets has different characteristics, with some having more jobs than others.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the degree to which jobs listed in the MSEP Career Portal are concentrated in particular regions and then determine whether these regions are where spouses reside. First, we discuss the data and methods used for this analysis. Next, we present the results from the analysis, including data visualizations with maps for each U.S. geographic region. Finally, we discuss some implications from this analysis.

Data and Methods

This geographic analysis reveals how many jobs advertised on the MSEP Career Portal were within commuting range of military spouses. We used two sources of data for this analysis. The first source was the 2015 Active Duty Family File compiled by DMDC. This data file listed all spouses of active-duty service members living in ZIP codes within U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico as of April 2015. There were 644,368 spouses in this data file. The second data source consisted of job postings that the research team queried from MSEP's Career Portal in September 2015.

We queried 210,715 jobs, excluding 94,803 of these posts (45 percent) because they were either listed outside the United States or had missing or erroneous data about their location.[6] Thus, this analysis represents only slightly more than half of the jobs posted in the MSEP Career

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[5] These territories include Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Wake Island.

[6] We excluded 8,116 job postings that explicitly stated that they were located outside the United States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (3.9-percent reduction). We then excluded an additional 86,687 postings with incomplete location data (e.g., no country, no ZIP code, and/or erroneous ZIP code listed in the post) (41.1 percent of the sample).

Portal during a single month in 2015. We then concatenated both data sources using the ZIP codes of where spouses lived and ZIP codes for jobs posted in MSEP's Career Portal. We used ZIP codes because these were used in both our data on spouses' residences and in the sample of job postings on the MSEP Career Portal. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average American commuted 18.8 miles from 2006 until 2010 (Rapino and Beckhusen, 2011). We rounded this number to 20 miles and then calculated the ratio of jobs to spouses within a 20-mile radius of each geographic area associated with the ZIP code where a military spouse lived. For example, suppose that there were 100 jobs in MSEP's Career Portal within a 20-mile radius of the ZIP code 20500. And suppose that only five spouses lived in this ZIP code. We would calculate the ratio of jobs to spouses by dividing the total number of jobs near this ZIP code (100) by the number of spouses living in this ZIP code (5) to get a ratio of 20 jobs per spouse in the 20500 ZIP code.

Both data sources have several limitations. First, our sample includes only 55 percent of jobs queried from the MSEP Career Portal because some job posts lacked a ZIP code or had erroneous ZIP codes and could not be matched. Thus, this geographic analysis likely underestimates the total number of jobs near ZIP codes where spouses lived. Second, the ZIP codes in our sample serve only as a proxy for the location of a job. Some employers may post addresses and ZIP codes only for their regional or corporate offices, while others may post this information for the location of the actual job. Third, DMDC's Active Duty Family File represents only a single snapshot of where military spouses lived in April 2015. Most military spouses experience frequent geographic moves. Therefore, it is likely that some military spouses in our sample have moved to a new ZIP code since 2015.

Geographic Analysis

The results are ratios of jobs within a 20-mile radius of the ZIP codes that house military spouses. Figure 3.1 displays the distribution of this variable. It shows that most ZIP codes had some jobs near military spouses. For example, most ZIP codes of spouses (81 percent) had at least one or more listed jobs per spouse within a 20-mile radius of that ZIP code. Sixteen percent of ZIP codes had jobs listed in MSEP's Career Portal but no spouses who lived within 20 miles of that code. Finally, only 3 percent of ZIP codes had a ratio of less than one nearby job per spouse in that ZIP code.

Figure 3.1. Distribution of the Ratio of Jobs to Spouses Within a 20-Mile Radius of Spouses

Advertised Jobs, but no spouses within 20 miles 16%

Less than 1 job per spouse within 20 miles 3%

1 or more jobs per spouse within 20 miles 81%
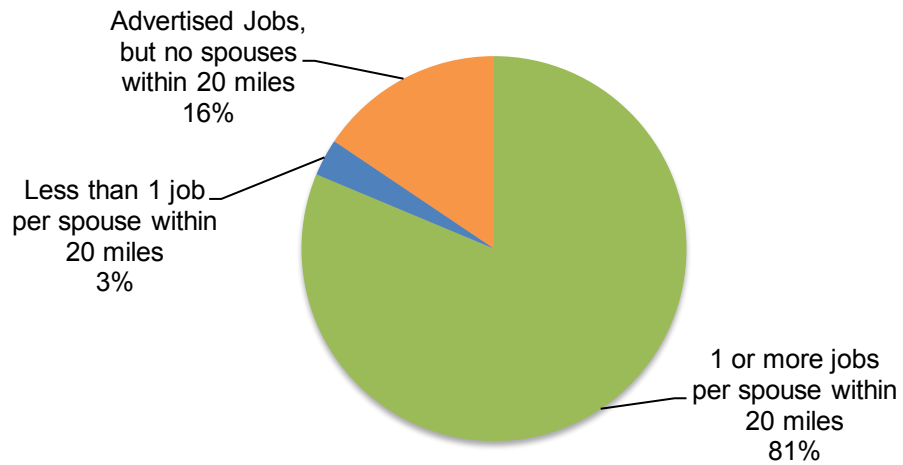
SOURCES: DMDC, 2015a; MSEP, 2015.

Figure 3.2 displays the average ratio of jobs to spouses for ZIP codes within four regions. This figure shows that there is variation across these regions. For example, the average ZIP code in the Northeast had 272.5 jobs per spouse. In contrast, the average ZIP code in the West had 150.7 jobs per spouse, while this ratio was 169.4 jobs per spouse in the Midwest. ZIP codes in the South had the lowest ratios, with an average of 98.7 jobs per spouse.

Figure 3.2. Average Jobs-to-Spouses Ratio for ZIP Codes by Region
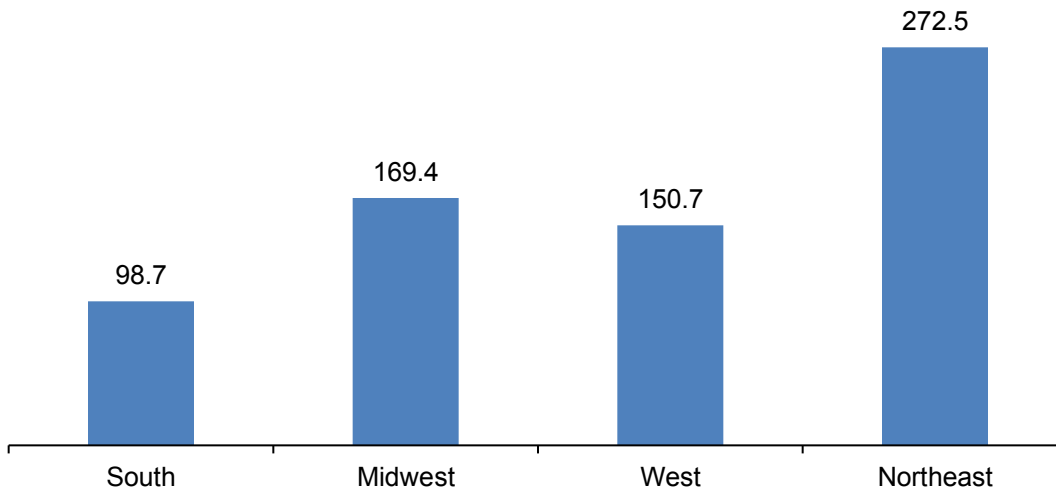
SOURCES: DMDC, 2015a; MSEP, 2015.
NOTE: ZIP codes in Puerto Rico were included in the South region.

Figure 3.3 is a map that displays the ratio of jobs to spouses within 20 miles of a spouse's ZIP code. We first examined the distribution of these ratios and then color-coded them according to three criteria. First, we color-coded ZIP codes in red if spouses lived there but there were no jobs nearby (n = 242 ZIP codes). Second, we divided the distribution of ZIP codes with spouses *and* nearby jobs into quartiles. The lowest quartile was ZIP codes that had between 0.01 and 21 jobs per spouse (n = 5,836 ZIP codes). Figure 3.3 displays these ZIP codes in orange. The median quartile was ZIP codes with 21.1 to 91 jobs per spouse (n = 5,447 ZIP codes). The map displays these in yellow. The highest quartile was ZIP codes with 91.1 or more jobs per spouse (n = 5,557 ZIP codes). We colored these ZIP codes in green. Finally, we color-coded ZIP codes in gray if there were no spouses living inside of them.

Figure 3.3. Number of Jobs per Spouse Within 20 Miles of Spouse's ZIP Code Area

Key

- 🟥 0
- 🟧 0.1–21.0 (5,836)
- 🟨 21.1–91.0 (5,447)
- 🟩 ≥ 91.1 (5,557)
- ⬜ No spouses live in area
- 🔵 Military bases (187)
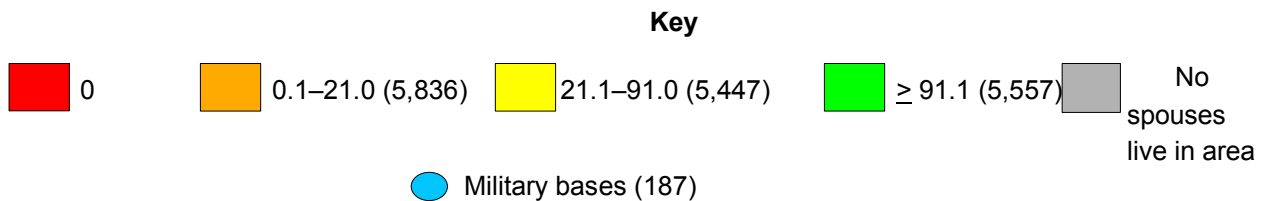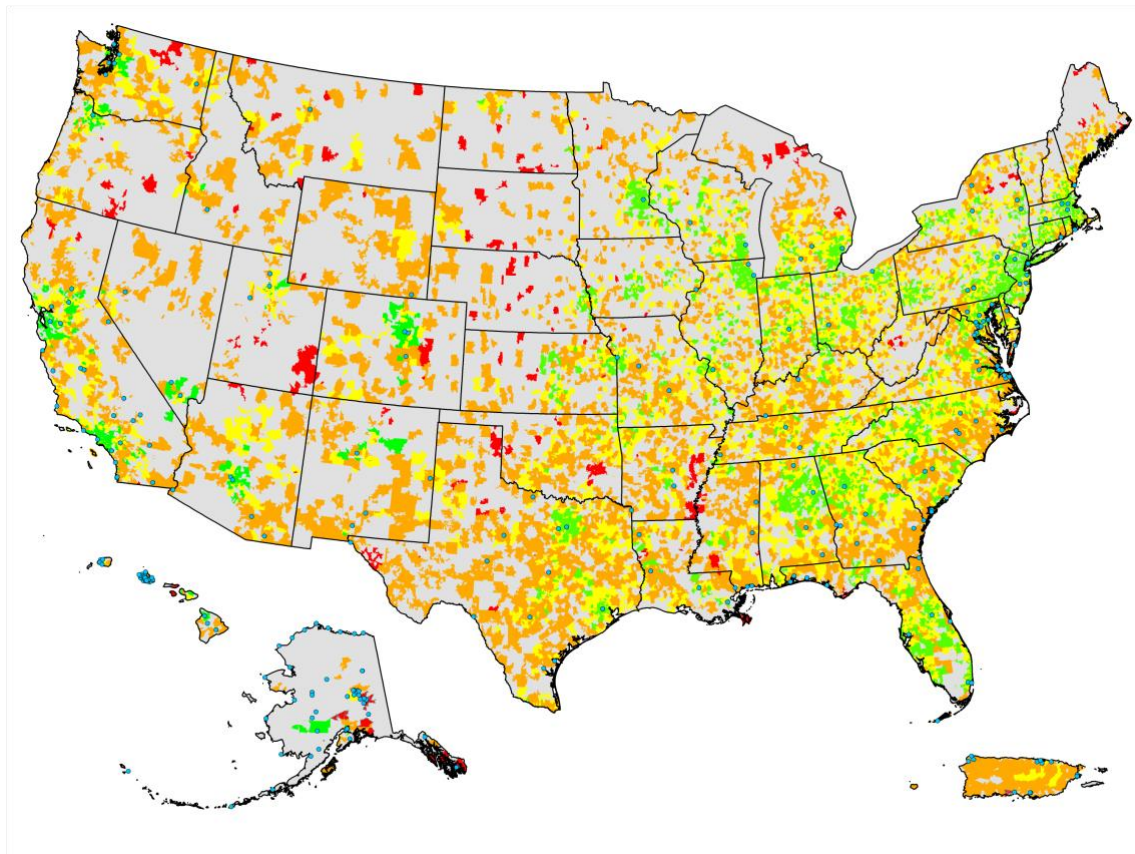
SOURCES: DMDC, 2015a; MSEP, 2015.

Figure 3.4 displays the ratio of jobs to spouses within 20 miles of spouses living in the South. This figure shows that a small number of ZIP codes had no jobs near spouses (n = 89 ZIP codes). Most ZIP codes had between 0.1 and 21 jobs per spouse (n = 2,825 ZIP codes) or between 21.1 and 91 jobs per spouse (n = 2,432 ZIP codes). Further, a sizable number of ZIP codes (n = 1,606 ZIP codes) had 91.1 jobs or more per spouse nearby. Most of the latter ZIP codes were in larger metropolitan areas.

Figure 3.4 Number of Jobs Per Spouse Within 20 Miles of Spouse's ZIP Code Area: South

Key

🟥 0	🟧 0.1–21.0 (2,825)	🟨 21.1–91.0 (2,432)	🟩 ≥ 91.1 (1,606)	⬜ No spouses live in area

🔵 Military bases (89)
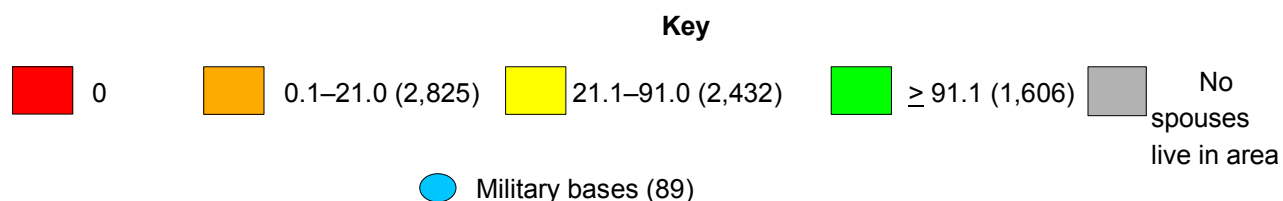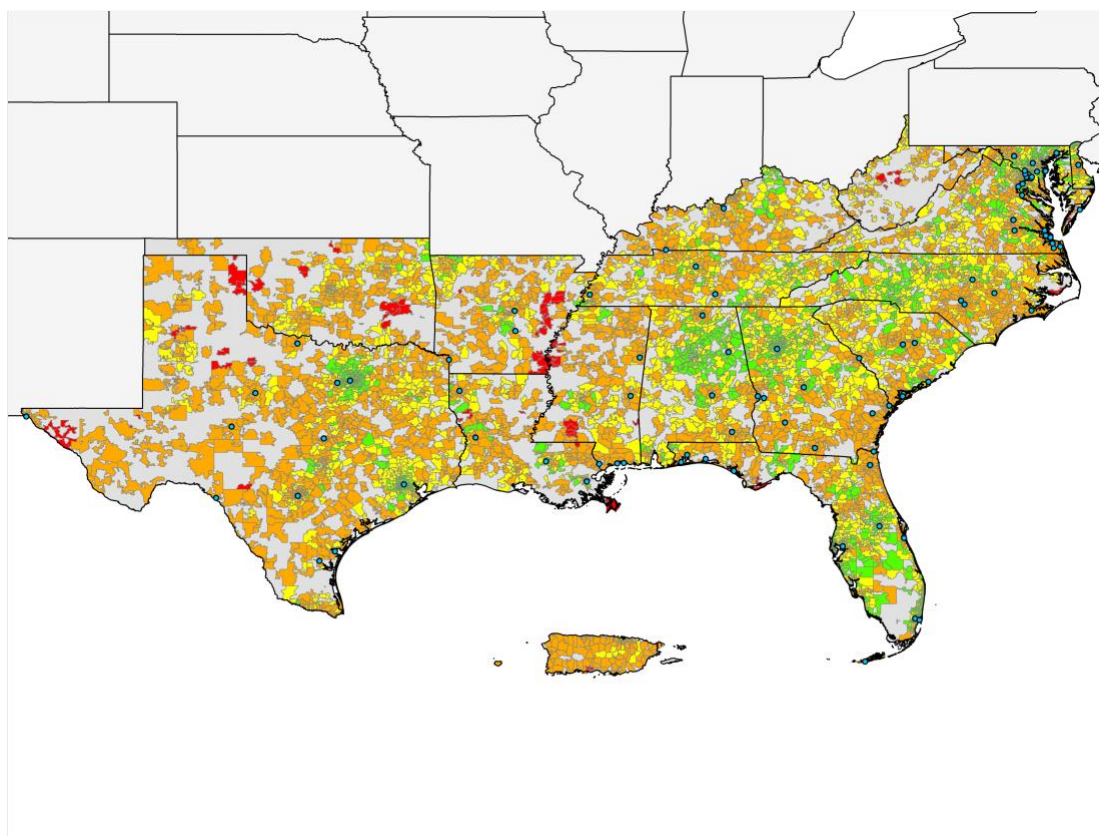
SOURCES: DMDC, 2015a; MSEP, 2015.

Figure 3.5 displays the ratio of jobs to spouse for ZIP codes in the Midwest region. This figure shows that there were few ZIP codes with spouses but no jobs nearby (n = 59 ZIP codes). The distribution of ZIP codes in the Midwest was similar to that found in our national map. For example, 30.9 percent of the ZIP codes with jobs and spouses had between 0.1 and 21 jobs per spouse (n = 1,234), 34 percent of these ZIP codes had between 21.1 and 91 jobs per spouse (n = 1,358), and 36 percent of the ZIP codes had 91.1 or more jobs per spouse (n = 1,395).

Figure 3.5. Number of Jobs per Spouse Within 20 Miles of Spouse's ZIP Code Area: Midwest

Key

🟥 0	🟧 0.1–21.0 (1,234)	🟨 21.1–91.0 (1,358)	🟩 ≥ 91.1 (1,395)	⬜ No spouses live in area

🔵 Military bases (16)
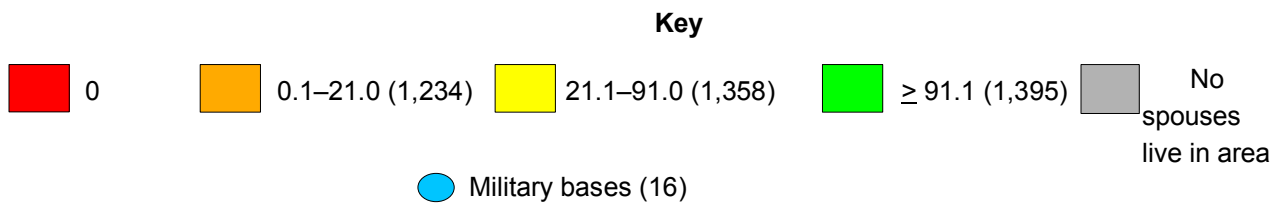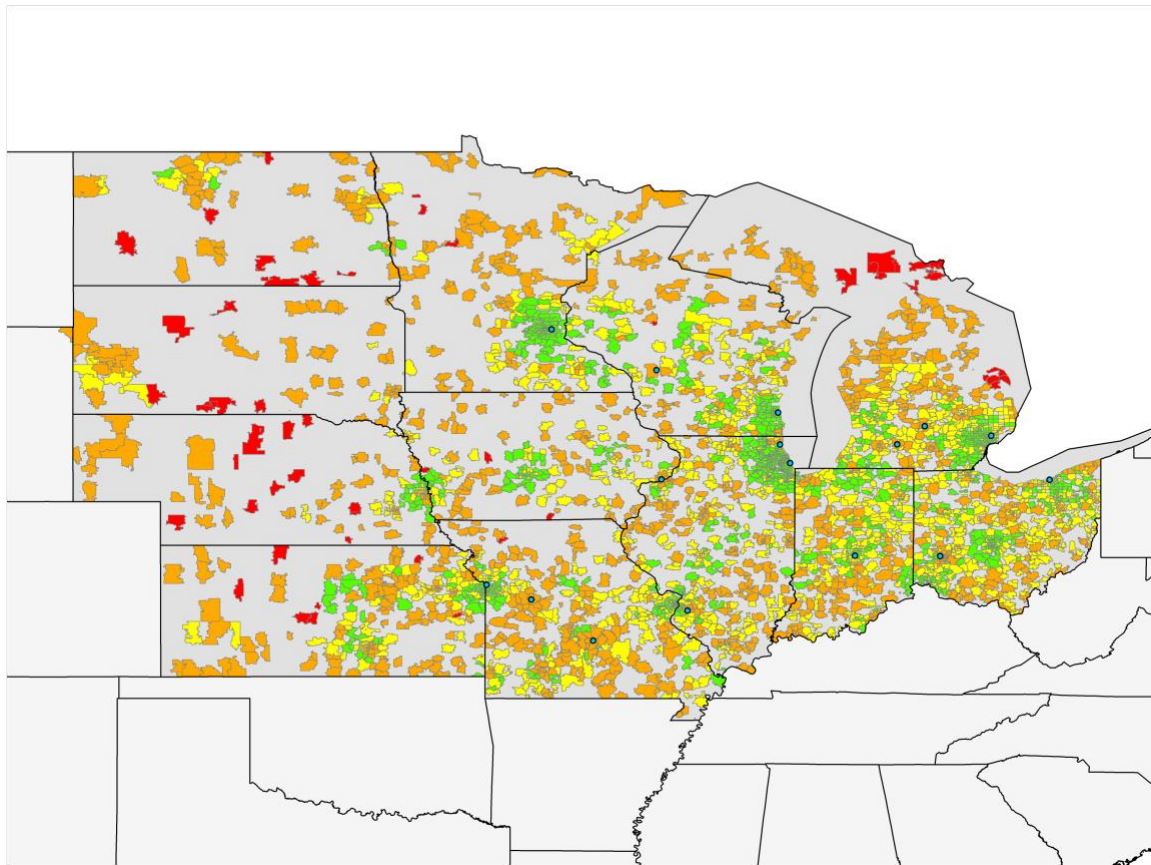
SOURCES: DMDC, 2015a; MSEP, 2015.

Figure 3.6 displays the ratio of jobs to spouse for ZIP codes in the West region. This distribution was skewed toward lower rather than higher job frequencies per spouse. The figure shows that few ZIP codes housed spouses but had no jobs nearby (n = 73 ZIP codes). Most ZIP codes had between 0.1 and 21 jobs per spouse (n = 1,297 ZIP codes). Further, 726 ZIP codes had between 21.1 and 91 jobs per spouse. Finally, 956 ZIP codes had 91.1 or more jobs per spouse.

Figure 3.6. Number of Jobs per Spouse Within 20 Miles of Spouse's ZIP Code Area: West

Key

🔴 0	🟧 0.1–21.0 (1,297)	🟨 21.1–91.0 (726)	🟩 ≥ 91.1 (956)	⬜ No spouses live in area

🔵 Military bases (60)
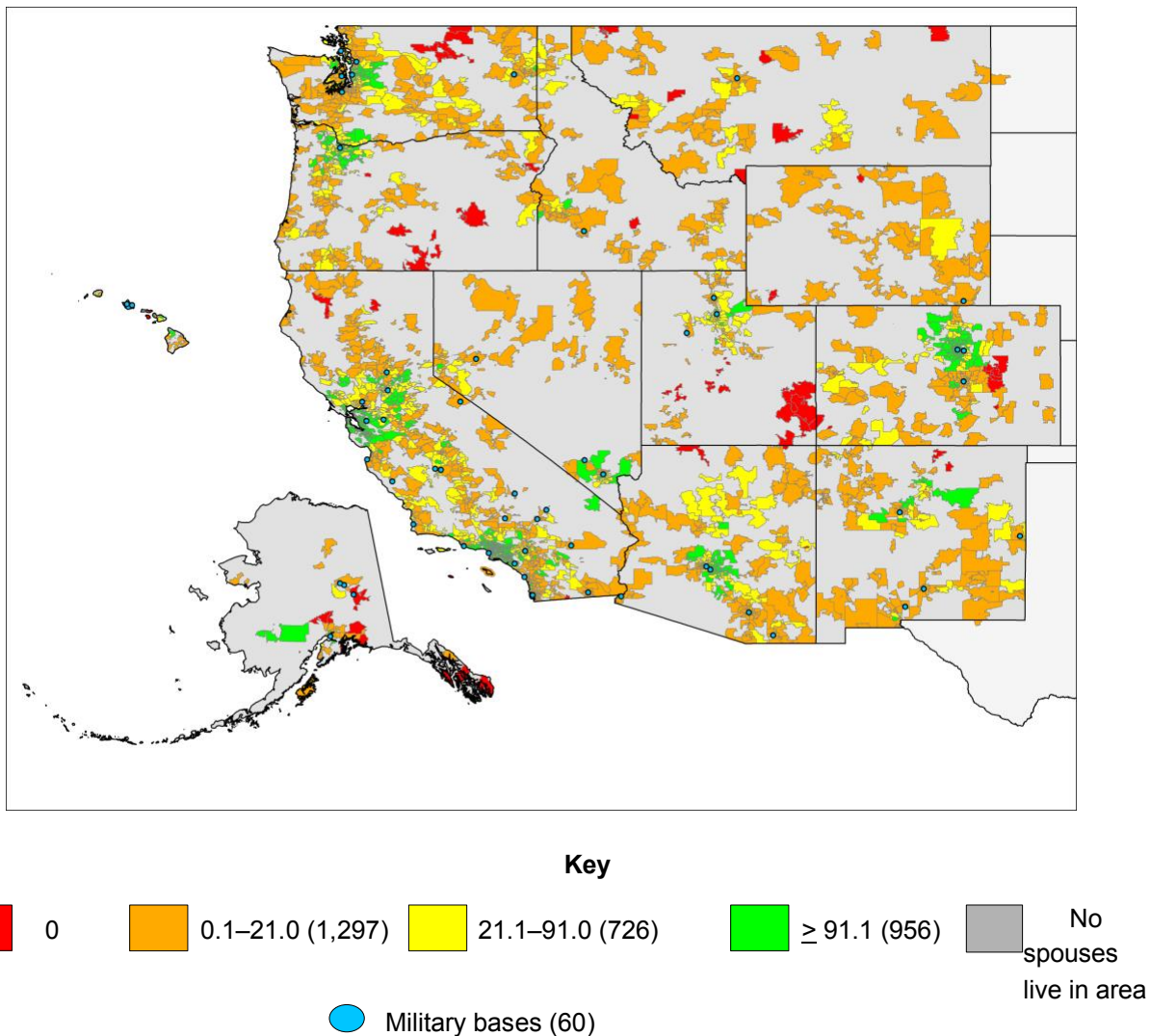
Figure 3.7 displays the number of jobs per spouse for ZIP codes in the Northeast region. The distribution of jobs per spouse for this region was skewed toward more rather than fewer jobs. For example, few ZIP codes (n = 21) in this region had spouses but no jobs nearby. Further, 480 ZIP codes had between 0.1 and 21 jobs near spouses. In addition, 931 ZIP codes had between 21.1 and 91 jobs near spouses. The largest number of ZIP codes in this region had 91.1 or more jobs near spouses (n = 1,600).

Figure 3.7. Number of Jobs per Spouse Within 20 Miles of Spouse's ZIP Code Area: Northeast

Key

🟥 0	🟧 0.1–21.0 (480)	🟨 21.1–91.0 (931)	🟩 ≥ 91.1 (1,600)	No spouses live in area

🔵 Military bases (22)
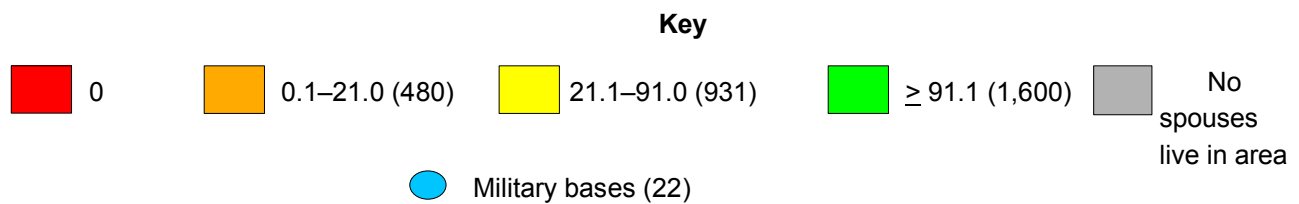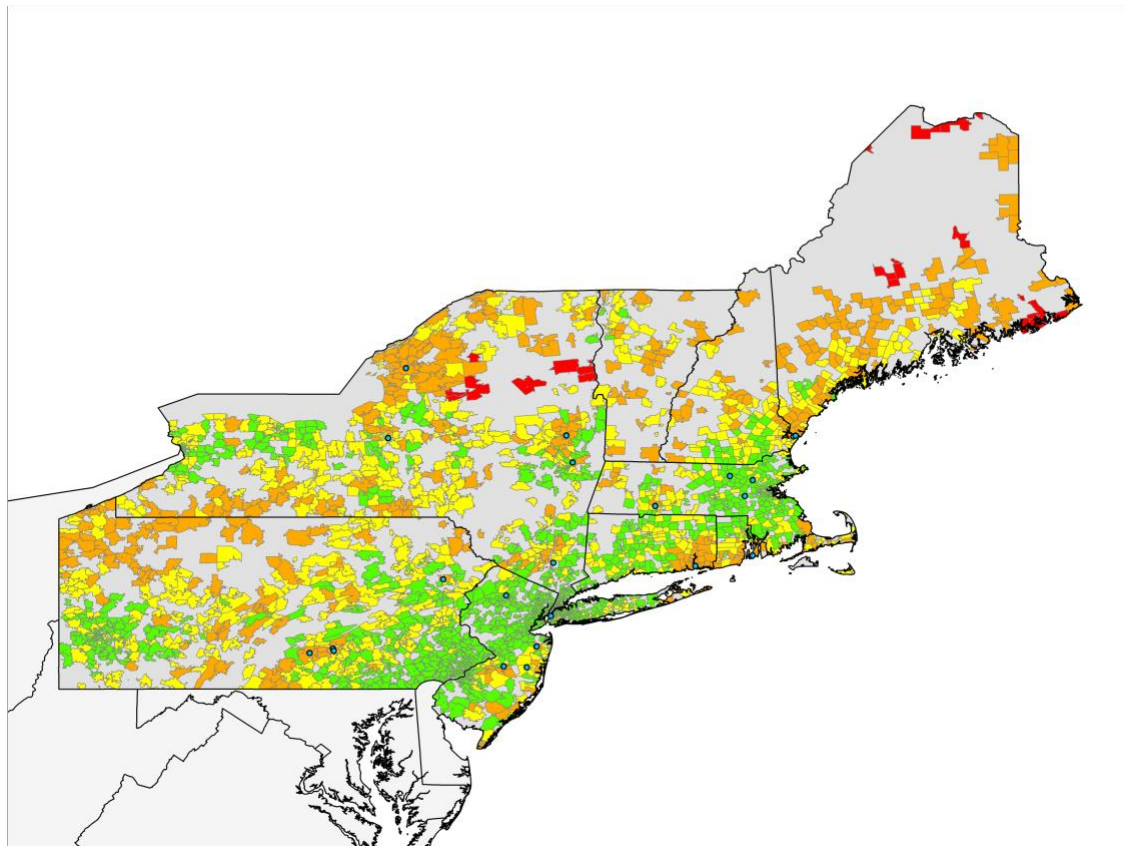
SOURCES: DMDC, 2015a; MSEP, 2015.

Conclusion

In general, we found that there were few ZIP code areas that had spouses but no jobs nearby. We looked at only 55 percent of the job postings on MSEP's Career Portal. Thus, there are probably more jobs available to spouses that we could not examine because some job postings lacked accurate information about the location of the position. Despite this limitation, we found some evidence that suggests that there are mismatches between the number of jobs in a ZIP code and the number of spouses living in the area. For example, the Northeast region had noticeably more jobs for fewer spouses than the South, Midwest, or West region. This finding is not surprising, given the size of labor markets for large cities along the Northeast corridor between

New York and Boston. However, these results highlight a potential need for MSEP to continue broadening the geographic distribution of jobs that its employer partners post on the Career Portal. The labor market characteristics for metro versus nonmetro areas differ, with the former having more job opportunities than the latter (Farrigan, 2019). The results in this chapter suggest a need for continued efforts to ensure that there are opportunities for spouses living in or near installations in rural locales.

4. Employer Partner Perspectives of MSEP

This chapter focuses on a second feature of MSEP: the employer partners who post positions on the MSEP Career Portal. Specifically, we explore MSEP employer partners' experience with MSEP—what they viewed as the key benefits of participation, the major challenges, and the best ways to help improve and increase employment for military spouses. Our findings are based on interviews the RAND team conducted with points of contact (POCs) from 28 MSEP employer partners. First, we summarize the sample included in our interviews. Second, we describe the partner organizations' efforts to recruit, hire, and retain military spouses. Third, we report the key benefits and challenges that employer partners reported experiencing with the MSEP partnership. Fourth, we list suggestions POCs provided to improve MSEP's effectiveness. Finally, we summarize the major findings of our interviews with POCs.

Description of MSEP Employer Partner Sample

As of October 2015, MSEP included 46 organizations that participated in the program as employer partners. Between November 2015 and July 2016, a team of researchers at RAND conducted interviews with POCs at 28 of the organizations participating in MSEP. The organizations included 22 private, mostly for-profit companies (i.e., potential employers), as well as six nonprofit organizations that offered support and services as part of MSEP's Military Spouse Ambassador Network. Figure 4.1 summarizes the breakdown of the types of organizations that agreed to participate in the research.

Figure 4.1. Sample of MSEP Employer Partners That Agreed to Be Interviewed

SOURCE: RAND interviews of employer partners, November 2015 to July 2016.

24
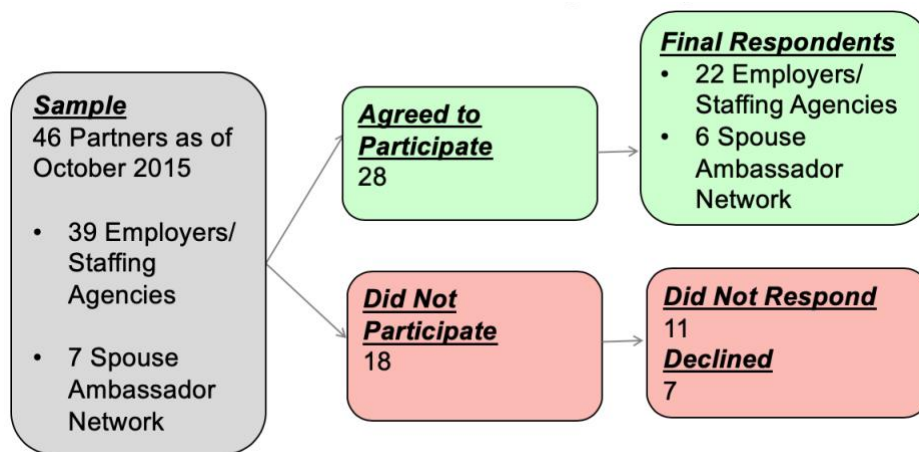
Of the 22 employers, 91 percent reported having more than 2,000 employees. Most are based and operate solely in the United States, though some operate internationally as well. Of the 22 potential employers, four are staffing agencies. Although the four POCs from the staffing agencies shared some information about their respective companies, their comments focused more on their clients (i.e., the companies where they have staffed military spouses). While a couple of MSEP partner organizations are not officially staffing agencies, their POCs did describe some of their job placement and workforce development efforts.

Sample Selection

The research team compiled a list of organizations that demonstrated diversity across certain indicators (e.g., types of employment arrangements and positions offered) and interviewed enough organizations with similar classifications (e.g., industry sector) to see whether patterns would emerge within a classification. To assess differences in employer engagement with MSEP, the RAND team prioritized diversity in terms of extent of engagement in MSEP ("responsiveness"); the team included partners that could be viewed as *responsive* (i.e., they consistently sent hiring reports to MSEP), as well as those that were *nonresponsive* (i.e., they did not send hiring reports to MSEP).

Responsive and *nonresponsive* are fluid terms that fall along a spectrum. Approximately 14 of the 22 companies—close to 64 percent—sent in hiring reports in 2015 but reported estimates as opposed to precise figures or reported hiring *zero* military spouses, even when that was not the case. Some companies that were very actively engaged with MSEP chose not to send in hiring reports because they did not want to report incorrect data. Two companies *never* sent in hiring reports, and none consistently sent in hiring reports with correct numbers. RAND researchers tailored the interviews to these two subgroups. Table 4.1 summarizes the sample of MSEP employers that the RAND team interviewed. Not surprisingly, the responsive organizations were more receptive to participating in interviews than the nonresponsive organizations were.

Table 4.1. MSEP Employer Partner Sample by Responsiveness

Classification	Number of Organizations Contacted for an Interview	Number of Spouses Interviewed	Participation Rate (%)
Responsive	33	24	73
Nonresponsive	13	4	31
Total	46	28	61

SOURCE: RAND interviews of employer partners, November 2015 to July 2016.

Partner Organizations' Points of Contact for MSEP

RAND researchers spoke with a total of 32 people from the 28 organizations that agreed to participate the research. Each person was designated by his or her respective employer to serve as the POC responsible for the relationship with MSEP. Fifty-nine percent of the POCs reported some affiliation with the military (e.g., former active duty, current military spouse),[7] and some reported multiple affiliations. One POC interviewed by the research team is a veteran (interview 4), a military spouse, and a former dependent.

Setting aside the six POCs from the Military Spouse Ambassador Network, we found that the 22 remaining POCs often shared a similar role within their respective organizational structures. The majority of POCs worked within the human resources department of their organization. Eighteen percent of the POCs operated within general human resource and recruiting/talent acquisition departments; another 18 percent operated within human resources, but their role specifically focused on or included diversity recruiting; and 59 percent of the POCs worked within human resources in a role that explicitly focused on or included the military community.[8] Some POCs were responsible for both diversity and military recruiting (interview 10).

A few POCs had roles outside of their organization's human resources department. Less than 5 percent of the POCs were situated within a corporate social responsibility or corporate philanthropy department. A couple of POCs had atypical positions on their respective organizational maps. For example, one company's relationship with MSEP is conducted through its workforce initiatives team (interview 13); at another, it is carried out by the client services team in the operations department (interview 5).

Though the research team did not observe a consistent relationship between a POC's placement within an organizational structure and the organization's interest in and engagement with MSEP, some anecdotes suggest that POC placement may make some difference. One POC explained that at his company (interview 2), the MSEP POC position used to sit within Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) but later shifted into Talent Acquisition, which improved his ability to influence recruiters to uphold the company's commitment to MSEP. He explained,

> The good news about Talent Acquisition owning this is the recruiters work for me or one of my peers, and if I say, you got to go do this, guess what—you got to go do this, because they work for me. When it was part of D&I, it was an influencing thing (interview 2).

Another POC stated that at his or her company, engagement with MSEP really took off when the POC role became a full-time position as opposed to an add-on task for somebody in human resources (interview 6).

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[7] The question did not come up in every interview, so the actual proportion may be higher.

[8] In this context, *military community* refers to veterans, retiring service members, and military spouses and their family members.

Partner Organizations' Impetus for Joining MSEP

Many POCs mentioned that a prior military affiliation led them to their work with MSEP. Twenty-seven percent stated that they had previously worked with ASEP. Some POCs explained that their organization had already been working with veterans and/or active members of the armed forces prior to joining MSEP and that expanding their focus to include military spouses felt like a natural progression (interviews 7, 11, and 19). Some POCs stated that their organizations (18 percent) joined MSEP after having learned about the initiative by word of mouth, which suggests that existing employer partners are evangelists of the program (interviews 5, 8, and 14). Finally, when asked about the impetus for their organizations' involvement in MSEP, none of the POCs mentioned outreach from MCFP or MSEP.

Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention Practices of Partner Organizations

This section summarizes partner organizations' efforts to recruit, hire, and retain military spouses. While many POCs described a desire to support military spouse employment, few described specific policies that aim to prioritize military spouses.

Recruitment Practices of Hiring Organizations

POCs described their efforts to recruit military spouses—some had recruitment initiatives tailored to military spouses—and a couple of factors that impeded their ability to recruit military spouses. One factor that impedes recruitment of military spouses is that MSEP partner organizations often have decentralized recruitment teams. This makes it difficult to ensure that the regional hiring teams uphold their companies' commitment to MSEP. Another factor is that most organizations do not track whether an applicant is a military spouse.

Some POCs Reported Targeted Recruiting of Military Spouses for Specific Roles

At least four organizations described specific roles and recruitment initiatives targeting military spouses (interviews 5, 6, 8, and 13). The POC from a health care company mentioned that it was exploring a work-from-home initiative that would prioritize hiring military spouses and caregivers of wounded warriors to help fulfill the company's increased need for customer service representatives during the health insurance open enrollment period (interview 13).

The POC from another health care company discussed the company's targeted effort to recruit military spouses for medical coding and medical billing jobs that could be work-from-home positions (interview 8). The POC from a financial institution planned to focus on high-volume roles (i.e., several openings for the same position at the same time) and wanted to prioritize sharing these positions with military spouses instead of sharing one-off positions (interview 16). Similarly, the POC from a staffing organization mentioned being in talks with MSEP to connect military spouses with substitute teaching positions at schools next to ten

military bases. Nearly a quarter of the POCs described current or imminent plans for the targeted recruiting of military spouses for specific positions.

Decentralized Hiring Practices Make It Difficult to Uphold the Commitment to MSEP

Many of the employer partners who participated in interviews are large organizations with both regional and centralized recruitment teams. The recruitment and hiring processes at approximately half (55 percent) of the companies were regional, with some aspects centralized. Nine percent of the organizations participating in the research had entirely centralized recruitment and hiring processes. Therefore, the research team wanted to learn how POCs disseminate information to their different regional teams, and how effective their respective approaches have been; in other words, are regional teams upholding the organization's commitment to hiring military spouses?

A few POCs affirmed that their regional and local hiring teams upheld their respective companies' commitments to MSEP. Others acknowledged that their regional and local hiring teams *knew* about MSEP and its purpose but were not necessarily actively engaged in MSEP. As the POC from a retailer explained, "There is autonomy at the local level but also a framework" (interview 9).

Some companies' organizational design impedes the dissemination of information. For example, one nonprofit organization consists of 164 independent entities with separate leadership teams and hiring processes. Consequently, the organization's POCs acknowledged a limited ability to disseminate information and secure their recruiters' buy-in and cooperation. Similarly, one POC who led recruitment of veterans and military spouses on behalf of all 84 distinct lines of business at his company acknowledged the limits of his influence on final hiring decisions (interview 12). Though he was able to disseminate information about MSEP to all those lines of business from his centralized position, the final hiring decisions are made regionally, if not locally, and those making the decisions might or might not take MSEP into consideration.[9]

Military Spouses Often Are Not Tracked as Applicants During Recruitment Process

Most POCs (68 percent) reported that their organizations elect not to identify military spouses during the recruitment process or track them through the application process. Some POCs (36 percent) described this decision as rooted in fear of legal action stemming from allegations of discrimination, though some explained that it simply is not a priority for them to gather that information.[10] Though some POCs choose not to identify military spouses to protect

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[9] In interview 9, a POC offered a similar sentiment, acknowledging that efforts undertaken by her small team at the central corporate office do not necessarily trickle down to local offices.

[10] POCs often depend on local or regional recruiters as their front line when it comes to identifying military spouses. A couple acknowledged that front-line recruiters may choose to explicitly ask the question when interviewing applicants but are not required to do so, reinforcing the difficulties most companies already face when it comes to reporting reliable data on military spouse hiring.

company interests, the POC from a financial institution explained that military spouses are neither identified nor tracked among its applicants to protect the *spouses* from potential discrimination by local or regional recruiters (interview 11).

Though many POCs stated that their organizations do not explicitly ask whether an applicant is a military spouse, 33 percent described proxy data points that they gather during the recruitment and hiring processes to help them identify military spouses. A couple of POCs mentioned that their companies' online application forms ask how the applicant heard about the job opening; MSEP is one of the options listed in the drop-down menu (interviews 17 and 20).[11] One POC's organization had developed specific URLs leading to its application portal that were marketed specifically to military spouses so that the portal could distinguish military spouse applicants from others (interview 18).[12] Another POC set up a new email address and inbox specifically to receive resumes and applications from military spouses.[13]

Some POCs depend on local or regional recruiters as their primary point person with applicants. Twenty-seven percent explained that in these more localized recruitment and interview processes, recruiters *may* ask whether somebody is a military spouse, but they do not have to, and military spouses *may* choose to self-identify, but they are not required to do so. Consequently, the data that organizations have on military spouse hiring may be inconsistent and incomplete. Moreover, although some companies do offer applicants the opportunity to self-identify as military spouses, POCs acknowledged that there is underreporting (interviews 10, 13, 16, and 17).[14] Some stated that spouses, even when given the opportunity, choose not to self-identify out of fear of discrimination in the hiring process. However, one POC argued otherwise, blaming underreporting on spouses' haste rather than fear (interview 17).

Hiring Practices of Partner Organizations

Once an employee is hired, most partner companies do track whether this employee is a military spouse. However, only one partner company stated that it consistently sends accurate MSEP hiring reports. We describe the context of these practices in detail below.

Most Employer Partners Do Track Military Spouses Once They Are Hired

Though many organizations choose not to identify or track military spouses among their applicants, many *do* gather this information if and when the applicants are hired as employees.

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[11] The analysis presented here is drawn from discussions with employer partners who joined MSEP's cohort for 2015 or earlier years, not the 2016 cohort. However, the RAND team had an opportunity to meet with some employer partners from the cohort for 2016 and heard similar commitments and comments from the new POCs.

[12] However, the POC was not clear regarding whether or how this measure works.

[13] This POC was from an MSEP employer partner in the 2016 cohort of new employer partners. This MSEP partner was not included in our interviews nor in our formal analysis.

[14] In interview 24, the POC suggested that there is underreporting even by those who have already been hired (as opposed to just those in the application and recruitment process).

Sixty-four percent of companies included in this analysis offer employees the opportunity to self-identify as military spouses after they have been hired. Some organizations have military interest groups or military spouse support groups, and military spouses may be incentivized to self-identify to tap into those internal networks and support systems (interviews 2, 12, 19, and 22).[15]

MSEP Hiring Reports Sent by POCs Are Often Incomplete or Inaccurate

When asked about MSEP hiring reports that are expected to be completed by MSEP employer partners, most POCs (20 of 22) said that they either never send them or that they always send them. Most also reported that when they did send the hiring reports, the reports were often incomplete or inaccurate (15 of 22). Only one POC reported consistently sending in hiring reports with accurate numbers (interview 16). Figure 4.2 summarizes POCs' responses to the question "Do you send hiring reports to MSEP?" The most common practices seem to be sending in reports sometimes, not always, and filling in zeros or estimated numbers when they do. Given how few companies identify and track military spouses and the legal concerns some POCs mentioned, this is unsurprising.

Figure 4.2. Frequency of Employer Partners' Self-Reported MSEP Hiring Report Status
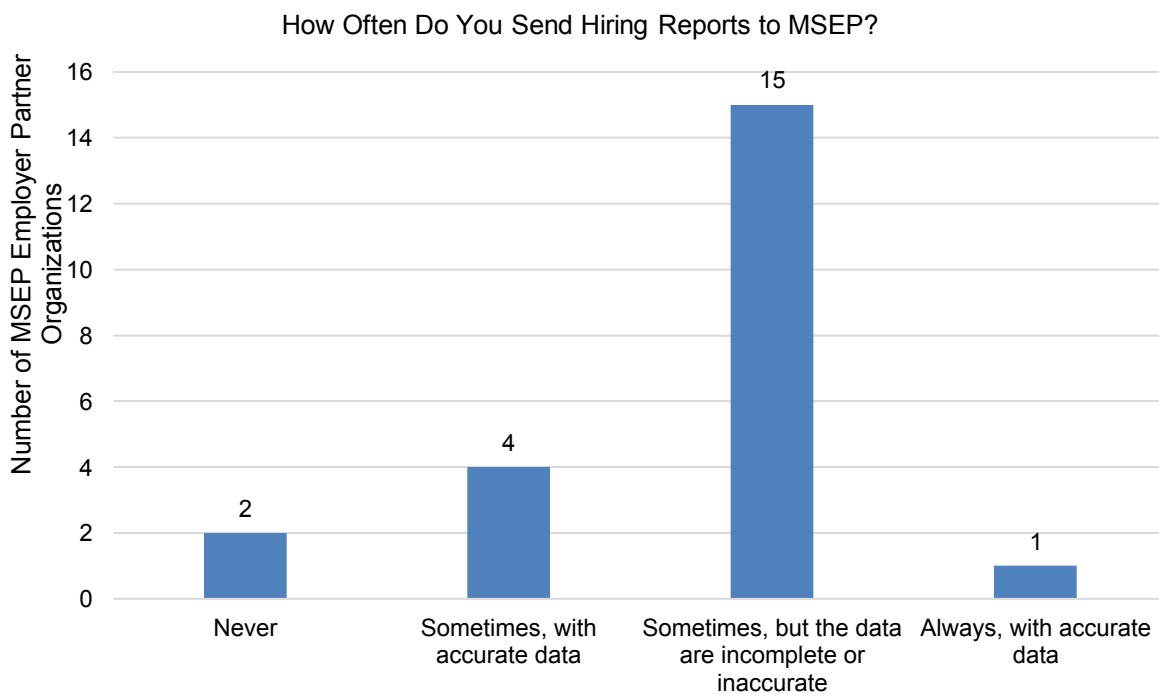
SOURCE: RAND interviews of employer partners, November 2015 to July 2016.

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[15] In interview 19, the POC explained that he had created the military spouse employee group at the company, a group of more than 20 people who meet once a month.

Retaining Military Spouses in Partner Organizations

During interviews with RAND researchers, the POCs described different work arrangements they offer to help military spouses find and retain employment. While most POCs stated that their companies did not track military spouses' requests for transfer, many expressed a willingness to retain military spouses when they were relocated. Below is a detailed description of what these POCs told us.

MSEP Employer Partners Offered a Variety of Employment Opportunities

A significant majority of the companies (82 percent) offer a variety of employment arrangements, including but not limited to full-time, part-time, internship, and temporary positions.[16] One POC described her company's interest in apprenticeships and externships as flexible arrangements that would afford military spouses training opportunities and would help the company develop a pipeline of talent.

Given that permanent change of station (PCS) orders are a distinct challenge in the context of military spouse employment, the RAND team deliberately asked questions about telecommuting or remote work opportunities offered. At least 17 of the company POCs (77 percent) reported offering telecommuting arrangements, and some POCs mentioned specific requirements for those arrangements (e.g., in-person training, additional personality assessments, retention of position for specific period of time before transitioning, home office that meets certain specifications)[17] (interview 4). Ultimately, though, approval for telecommuting is contingent on the employee's role and seems to be at the discretion of his or her hiring manager (interview 10).[18]

POCs at three companies that permit telecommuting specifically mentioned hiring employees for their call centers (interviews 11, 25, and 27), sometimes referring to these workers as teleworkers. The POC from a staffing organization that operates call centers for Fortune 500 companies mentioned that it had placed 600 military spouses into call center jobs in 2014 alone (interview 6). The relationship between being a teleworker and having permission to telecommute is not exactly clear. The jobs posting data and MSEP Partner Directory appear to use these terms interchangeably. It is possible that some teleworkers are required to work at the actual call center as opposed to working from home.

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[16] Additional types of employment offered include temporary jobs, temporary-to-hire jobs, seasonal positions, and contract work.

[17] For example, such specifications might dictate internet speed or a secure space with a door that can be locked.

[18] Some positions do not qualify for telecommuting (e.g., positions in retail, maintenance, food service). Other positions, though, are more likely to be approved for telecommuting (e.g., Medicare case management, certain roles in human resources).

Most MSEP Employer POCs State That They Support, but Do Not Track, Military Spouse Retention and Relocation

Few organizations gathered information on how military spouses fare once they have been hired. Even organizations that identify and track military spouses among their applicants do not seem to track data such as retention rates or even relocation requests once military spouses become employees.[19]

Though none of the POCs tracked military spouses' requests for transfers, almost all (91 percent) conveyed a willingness to support the retention and relocation of military spouses facing PCS orders; one POC went so far as to mention that they "guarantee" the transfer (interview 24). Another POC explained, "We offer careers, not jobs," underscoring her company's flexibility and commitment to retaining military spouses (interview 17). One POC (interview 2), a military spouse who had recently gone through the process of requesting a transfer, self-identified as an example of the company's interest in the retention and relocation of military spouses. Another explained that if it wasn't possible to transfer and retain a particular military spouse facing PCS, the POC would personally reach out to contacts at other companies to help the military spouse find a new position (interview 8).

Though some of the employer partners offered jobs that would be more transferable (e.g., a retail position at a big-box store with several locations), some offered jobs that would be more difficult to transfer (e.g., health care positions that require state-specific licenses); these employers were less likely to approve such requests. Though a formal mechanism or process for these requests for transfers may exist at some of these companies, most do not seem to have one. Rather, as one POC described it (interview 16), the approach is informal "personal advocacy" (i.e., a phone call to the recruiter or hiring manager for the region where the military spouse is relocating). "With hundreds of positions that are low-touch to fill, a little extra exposure can go a long way. . . . They still have to compete, but we seek to increase their exposure to ensure they can compete effectively," this POC explained. Many POCs described similarly informal but potentially valuable efforts to help military spouses requesting transfers (interview 4).

Partner Organizations' Primary Benefits and Challenges with MSEP

This section discusses the key challenges and benefits of the MSEP partnership for the 28 partner organizations that participated in interviews.

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[19] However, a POC from a partner company where military spouses have the opportunity to self-identify after they are hired suggested that military spouses and veterans exhibit higher retention rates than other employees (interview 14).

Key Benefits

The RAND team noticed some consistency in how POCs described the key benefits of the MSEP initiative. Almost all the advantages identified by the POCs fell within one of these five classifications:

- access to a large pool of applicants and potential employees
- access to fellow partner organizations and stakeholders (i.e., networking)
- positive attention and reputational benefits (i.e., branding)
- credibility/legitimacy and trust with military community
- expansion of conversation about hiring from veterans only to include military spouses too.

The number of partner organizations that experienced benefits in each of these five categories is summarized in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3. Key Benefits of MSEP Participation for Partner Organizations
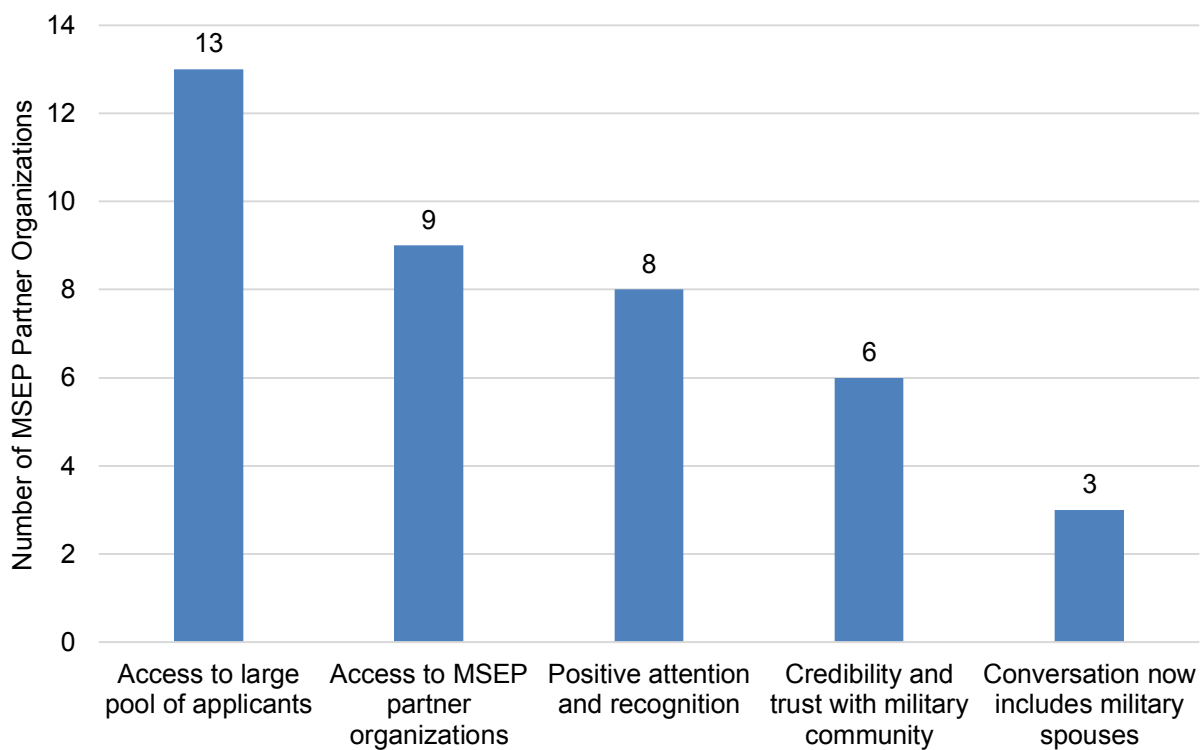
SOURCE: RAND interviews of employer partners, November 2015 to July 2016.

Access to large pool of applicants: Gaining access to a wider pool of potential employees was the most frequently mentioned benefit among MSEP's partner companies.

Networking: By joining MSEP, partner organizations gain access to a long list of other companies and stakeholder organizations that are committed to supporting military spouses, a

benefit that many of them highlighted. Several companies and organizations in the Ambassador Network also voiced appreciation for the opportunity to connect with fellow stakeholders and share information (e.g., interview 3). Though some view the network as a platform for sharing best practices and experiences in the context of hiring military spouses, there are some who see business value in the network as well.

Reputational benefits, including credibility with the military community: Certain partner companies seemed genuinely interested in increasing military spouse *hires* or, at the very least, increasing their number of military spouse *applicants*. Some, however, seemed more interested in having an affiliation with MSEP as a stamp of approval, with reputational benefits. The benefit of developing trust and credibility with the military community, and the generally positive recognition they receive, kept some partners engaged in the MSEP initiative.

Changing the conversation: A few POCs praised MSEP for shining a spotlight on military spouses (interviews 13 and 17), a population that is often overlooked despite the attention paid to soldiers and veterans. Some view MSEP as the driving force behind military spouses' growing willingness to self-identify in employment-related situations, despite concerns of discrimination by employers. "If MSEP hadn't changed the conversation, America wouldn't be listening," explained one POC (interview 17).

Key Challenges

The RAND team noticed some consistency across different organizations when it came to describing the key challenges they face in their engagement with MSEP. Almost all of the key challenges fell within one of these five classifications:

- issues with technology (e.g., the MSEP jobs portal, frequency of required password changes)
- limited public recognition and visibility of MSEP
- contradictions and complications in public policies affecting MSEP and its stakeholders[20]
- issues with Zeiders (the contractor that serves as account managers) (e.g., turnover rate, performance, professionalism) (interview 28)
- volume of requirements of and demands on partner organizations (i.e., too many boxes to check off).

Although one POC from within the Spouse Ambassador Network stated, "the challenges are miniscule compared to the benefits" (interview 28), these challenges likely impede the success of the MSEP initiative overall. The number of partner organizations that experienced challenges in each of these five categories is summarized in Figure 4.4.

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[20] Though government wants the private sector to prioritize military spouse employment, companies may face legal ramifications for doing so.

Figure 4.4. Key Challenges Encountered with MSEP Partnership
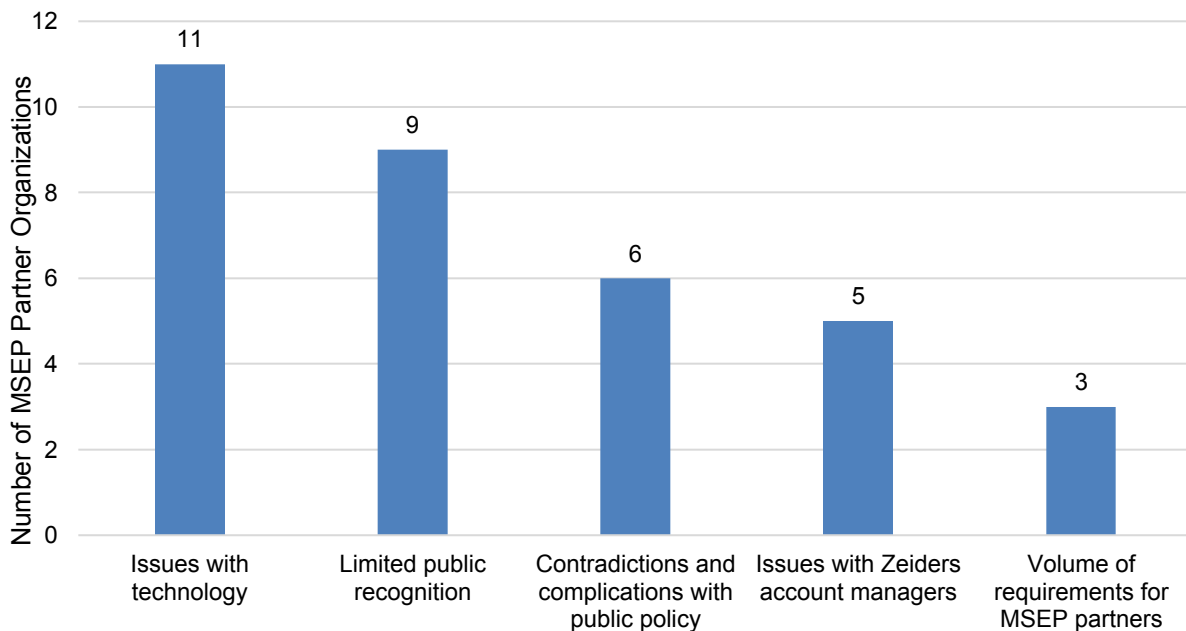
SOURCE: RAND interviews of employer partners, November 2015 to July 2016.

Issues with technology: Issues with technology proved to be the most frequently cited challenge (interviews 9, 19, 20, 27). Common complaints included difficulties with the MSEP jobs portal and the frequency of required password changes. One POC described issues with the MSEP portal as "prohibitive" and had taken to reporting hiring data to MSEP via the "Contact Us" option as opposed to taking the appropriate steps on the portal (interview 1). Another POC, citing technical issues with the portal as well, reported hiring data to MSEP via email (interview 20). Problems with the technological tools of MSEP—the jobs portal in particular—were voiced not just by the employers but by the organizations in the Ambassador Network as well (interviews 3, 15, and 26).

Limited public recognition: At least nine POCs (32 percent) argued that MSEP's effectiveness is constrained by limited public awareness of the initiative. Some of the POCs—including one who is a military spouse and another who is a veteran—had never even heard of MSEP prior to joining their current employers (interviews 7 and 27).

Contradictions and complications with public policies: The conflict between governmental initiatives that aim to serve and support military spouses (e.g., MSEP) and public policies that deter companies from even identifying military spouses is one that many POCs contend with. In contrast with veterans, military spouses are not a protected class, so they are not explicitly protected by existing antidiscrimination laws, nor are they a minority population that companies can easily identify or prioritize in the hiring process. One POC explained that it is hard to move

the needle if you do not know where the needle is (interview 2). Though partner organizations joined MSEP to connect military spouses with more opportunities and jobs, some feel as if their hands are tied (interviews 2 and 17).

Issues with account managers: Though many reported having positive and productive relationships with their Zeiders account managers (e.g., interviews 2, 7, 12, 19, and 20)[21]—with particular praise for the account managers who are military spouses themselves—multiple POCs shared dissatisfaction with the high turnover rate among the account managers (interviews 5 and 6). One POC admitted not knowing the name of their company's current account manager because there had been so much turnover (interview 13). A couple of POCs felt that their account managers were ineffective and inexperienced, with a POC from the Ambassador Network suggesting that account managers are often good at "regurgitating information, not at connecting the dots" (interview 21).[22] One POC felt that the account managers were stretched too thin across too many different regions and partner companies, all with different needs.

Volume of requirements: At least three POCs found the requirements for participation in MSEP (e.g., monthly telephone calls) to be excessive and not particularly time-efficient or even useful (interviews 19 and 27). Some POCs suggested streamlining and improving MSEP's requirements and processes. One POC stated simply, "Making the partnership as easy as possible is going to keep companies wanting to partner with MSEP" (interview 27).

Suggestions to Strengthen MSEP from Partner Organizations

We found that partner companies see benefits in working with MSEP. The responses were overwhelmingly positive when POCs were asked whether their organizations were likely to remain engaged with MSEP. As one POC said (interview 16), "It's a no-brainer—a referral source that does not cost anything."[23] However, to increase satisfaction among the partner companies, and to improve the effectiveness of the MSEP initiative overall, there are some options MCFP may wish to consider.

Create a deeper collaboration between MSEP and partners. Many partners would like to see MSEP's leadership take a more active role in the implementation of the program, rather than simply overseeing and tracking partners' efforts. One POC proposed a training session at which MSEP would train the recruiters and hiring managers at his or her company on how to hire military spouses and how to create employment arrangements that would serve their distinct needs (interview 12). Another POC stated that the communication between MSEP and the

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[21] Some POCs indicated that they had particularly rewarding relationships with account managers who were military spouses themselves (e.g., interview 19).

[22] Additionally, in interview 3, the POCs described a disconnect between account managers and DoD and MCFP, again making it difficult for MSEP to reach its full potential.

[23] The POC in interview 20 shared a similar sentiment.

employers should entail more than just checking off boxes on monthly calls and reporting hiring data and should extend to a more in-depth and more impact-oriented conversation.[24]

Facilitate greater communication and exchange of best practices among partners. The request made by POCs for greater communication and engagement did not refer just to vertical communication (i.e., with MSEP and MCFP) but to horizontal communication (i.e., with other companies) as well. Many POCs advocated a more interactive environment that would allow for companies to have greater access to each other and to other stakeholders (e.g., government agencies) for networking and sharing best practices (interviews 10, 11, 12, and 18). The nonprofit organizations in the Ambassador Network shared similar requests for greater access to each other and more opportunities to exchange information and success stories (interviews 15 and 28).

Increase communication between MSEP and potential partners. Some POCs stated that MCFP should do more to draw attention to the importance of hiring military spouses and the value proposition of partnering with MSEP (interviews 13 and 19). One POC pointed out, "There needs to be more education about hiring military spouses and what that truly looks like." The same POC recommended drawing on successful marketing efforts that had been undertaken to promote veteran hiring, specifically mentioning Walmart and its well-publicized hiring targets for veterans, and refitting them for military spouses. A couple of POCs recommended creating marketing materials along these lines that could be distributed to potential new partners for MSEP (interviews 11 and 13).

Improve communication with military spouses. At least nine POCs (32 percent) recommended more communication and engagement between MSEP and military spouses, noting that additional face time would increase MSEP's visibility and effectiveness overall. Multiple POCs advocated a strategic communication plan for MSEP that would include more activity on social media (interviews 13, 17, and 27).[25] One POC pointed out that a more active social media presence could help MSEP connect with millennial spouses in particular.

Some POCs suggested more direct communication between the POCs and military contacts (e.g., relevant on-site service providers in addition to spouses), as opposed to communication facilitated by MSEP (interviews 4, 9, 16, and 19). One POC explained that having a middleman—the Zeiders account manager—makes it difficult for them to share time-sensitive opportunities and openings with military spouses quickly (interview 16). This POC stated a desire for personnel from the military installations to bypass MSEP and make direct contact when they know of a military spouse applying for a specific position at the company (interview

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[24] In interview 1, the POC suggested asking questions such as, what position was the person hired for—was it more senior or junior than the last job? Is it the right job? Is the income sufficient for their needs? How is the job affecting their quality of life?

[25] Without specifically suggesting social media, the POC in interview 26 recommended putting together promotional materials that would highlight the success stories and experiences of military spouses who had benefited from MSEP.

16). Another POC shared a similar concern, mentioning, "I don't view MSEP as a middleman; I view them as a partner, but when we start putting several layers between the military spouse and [our company], then that's where it gets a little tricky" (interview 9). Offering a potential solution, one POC advocated for MSEP to create more online discussion forums for military spouses to engage directly with prospective employers (interview 22).

Improve partners' internal messaging to military spouse employees. Some companies expressed a desire to do more outreach to military spouses who are already their employees. One POC mentioned that their company is willing to transfer military spouses facing PCS orders but acknowledged that most spouses never request a transfer because they are most likely unaware of the company's flexibility and its commitment to military spouse employment (interview 9). Accordingly, a POC from the Ambassador Network mentioned that spouses often have to be taught that they can ask to work remotely and that they have permission to ask for flexible arrangements when they are facing PCS orders, as most of them are not aware of these options (interview 26). Military spouses who are already employed by MSEP's partner companies may be more willing to come forward and self-identify if they are aware of the potential support and services that their employers would extend to them as a result.

Zeiders account managers. Multiple POCs voiced grievances about a lack of professionalism and insufficient experience among their Zeiders account managers, with some suggesting that the account managers were overextended as well. Offering a potential solution, one POC suggested allowing account managers to specialize and focus on specific *types* of stakeholders (e.g., military spouses, military installations, staffing agencies partnering with MSEP) (interview 6), reasoning that working with a set of stakeholders who have similar needs could improve an account manager's understanding and performance.

Support policies that expand interstate licensing arrangements. Multiple POCs—from employers and from the Ambassador Network alike—pointed to state-by-state licensing processes as one of the key barriers to military spouse employment (interviews 5, 8, and 26). One POC from a staffing agency mentioned that 75 percent of the employees it places are required to have some sort of license or specific credential for their role (interview 5). As a solution, a number of POCs proposed that licenses in certain industries be recognized nationally instead of allowing each state to have its own set of licenses and required credentials for a given job.

One POC from a health care company proposed creating a national registry for employees working in the industries that require state-specific licenses (interview 8). A POC from the Ambassador Network noted the importance of tracking numbers and using compelling data to demonstrate the employment consequences of the current state-by-state setup, since without data, government support and legislative change are less likely (interview 23). Efforts are underway to expand interstate licensing arrangements (e.g., Nurse Licensure Compact in more than 25 states).

Include military spouses and MSEP at orientation. One POC suggested that MCFP formally integrate MSEP into the orientation process and official paperwork for newly arrived soldiers

and families.[26] Additionally, a petition could ensure that the military spouses are actually included in the orientation meetings when they arrive at a new installation.[27] This would increase MSEP's visibility and military spouses' familiarity with—and use of—MSEP services.

Increase flexibility in hiring practices. One POC suggested that improved flexibility among employers, particularly government contractors, in their hiring processes could make it easier for veterans and military spouses to be hired (interview 22). This is because veterans and military spouses often have fewer years of professional experience than their nonmilitary counterparts or have gaps on their résumés.

Expand the scope of MSEP. Though MSEP is primarily focused on hiring military spouses, the program—and military spouses themselves—may benefit from engaging partner organizations to focus on more than just hiring. Particularly under current circumstances, in which many companies remain reluctant to explicitly prioritize military spouses in their hiring processes, MSEP may want to ask companies to support military spouses in a different way. Some POCs mentioned coaching military spouses for job interviews (interviews 2 and 15). Another POC mentioned creating a financial literacy program for military spouses (interview 12). A POC from the Ambassador Network suggested that instead of looking for companies that would be willing to hire military spouses, MSEP should work with military spouses on entrepreneurship (i.e., self-employment) and should make a deliberate effort to help military spouses learn more about this alternative approach to employment.[28] The POCs interfacing with MSEP are likely to have many more ideas like these, though their execution would require cooperation and input from MCFP.

Summary

We interviewed POCs from 28 MSEP partner organizations to better understand their experiences with MSEP—what they liked about it, what they did not like, and how they believed the program could be improved. Partner organizations appreciated that MSEP provides them with access to a large pool of applicants and like-minded companies. However, they expressed frustration with technical difficulties using the MSEP job portal and a lack of public awareness of the program. To improve the effectiveness of the program, POCs made numerous suggestions, many of which focused on increasing communication between partners, MSEP, military spouse applicants, military spouse employees, potential partner organizations, and existing partner organizations.

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[26] "When you come to new bases . . . having MSEP as part of that process is almost a must" (interview 27).

[27] This is not currently the case.

[28] In interview 23, the POC argued that the narrative surrounding military spouse employment has to be changed to include self-employment. This POC wanted MSEP to talk to spouses about becoming entrepreneurs and about where to begin to pursue the goal of self-employment.

5. Survey of MSEP Career Portal Users

This chapter focuses on the third feature of MSEP: the experiences of military spouses. RAND researchers designed and fielded a survey of military spouses who had recently been registered users of the MSEP Career Portal. This survey asked these spouses about their demographic background, perceptions on the usability of this portal, experiences with their job search, and perceptions of their current job (if currently employed). In general, we found that spouses reported a positive view of the portal itself but were less satisfied with the job postings within this portal. We begin with a review of the methods for this survey, discuss spouse perceptions of the Career Portal and their perceptions of job postings on this portal, and close with spouse perceptions of the portal's usefulness.

Methods

The RAND team administered this survey between October 16, 2019, and December 15, 2019, to 4,436 spouses who had registered for the MSEP Career Portal in the previous six months, as reported by MCFP. The survey was voluntary, and the RAND team did not offer incentives to the spouses it invited to complete the instrument. The researchers and MCFP sent a total of four notifications to spouses to take this online survey.

Table 5.1 displays the response rate for this survey. Of the 4,435 spouses that we invited to complete this survey, 15.8 percent did so. This survey routed 148 spouses (3.3 percent) out of the instrument after the first question because they reported that they were currently not married to a service member. The overall response rate for eligible spouses who fully or partially completed this survey was 12.5 percent, which is lower than the 17-percent response rate for the Office of People Analytics 2017 ADSS, which was open for two more months than this survey (Dorvil, 2017). Appendix C describes the unweighted versus weighted demographic characteristics of our sample. Table C.1 in this appendix shows minor differences between these columns. Given the limitations with our weights described in Appendix C, we report only unweighted results but confirmed that the pattern of these findings was similar when we also used weights.

Table 5.1. Survey Response Rate

|	Frequency	Percentage
Invited spouses	4,435	
Full completers	374	8.4
Partial completers	181	4.1
Total full and partial completers	555	12.5
Ineligible spouses	148	3.3

SOURCE: RAND survey of MSEP users, October 16 to December 15, 2019.
NOTE: Unweighted statistics reported.

Perceptions of the Career Portal

The survey asked spouses how often they used the MSEP Career Portal. Specifically, one question asked, "In the past six months, how often have you visited the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) Job Search feature?" Spouses could report that they never used it, used it once or twice, monthly, once a week, more than once a week, or daily. Figure 5.1 displays the unweighted distribution of responses. This figure shows that 17 percent of spouses reported that they had never used the job search feature despite registering for the portal because it was a requirement to be included in the original population of interest. Further, 46.8 percent of spouses reported that they had used the job search feature only once or twice in the previous six months.

Figure 5.1. Self-Reported Frequency of Use of the MSEP Job Search
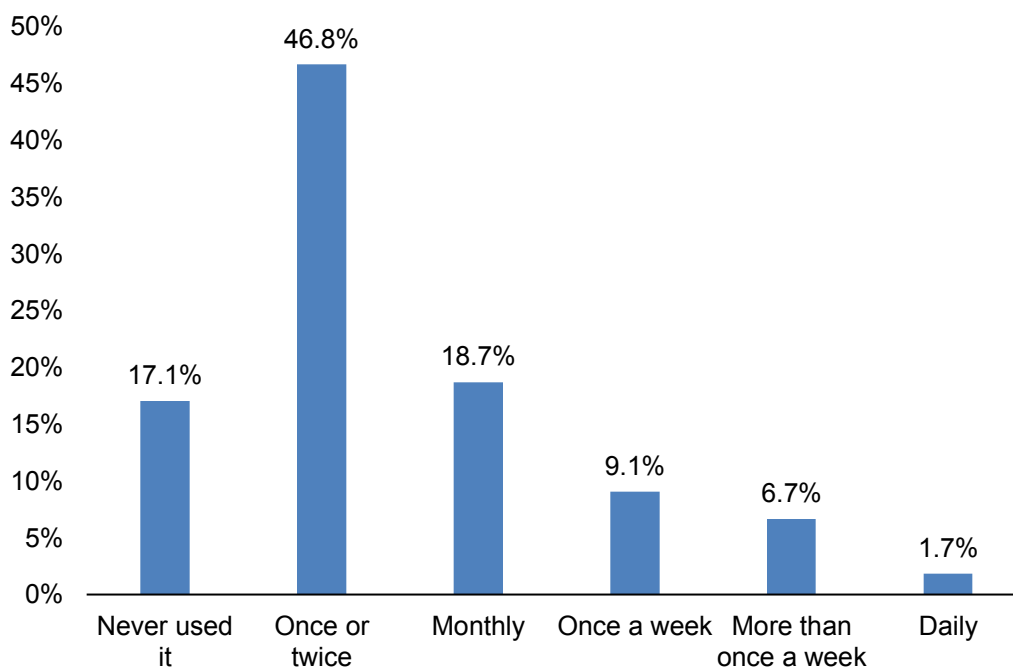
Figure 5.2 displays the distribution of responses to a question on the survey that asked spouses, "In your most recent job search, when did you first use the MSEP Job Search feature?" Spouses could select answers showing that they had started to use this feature at the beginning of the search, after one to three months of searching, after three to six months of searching, or more than six months after starting the search. The results in Figure 5.2 show that most spouses (78.6 percent) reported that they started using the Career Portal at the beginning of their job search or within the first three months of this search. This figure also shows that 16.3 percent of spouses started using the portal after searching for a job elsewhere for more than six months.

Figure 5.2. When Did Spouses First Use the MSEP Job Search Feature?
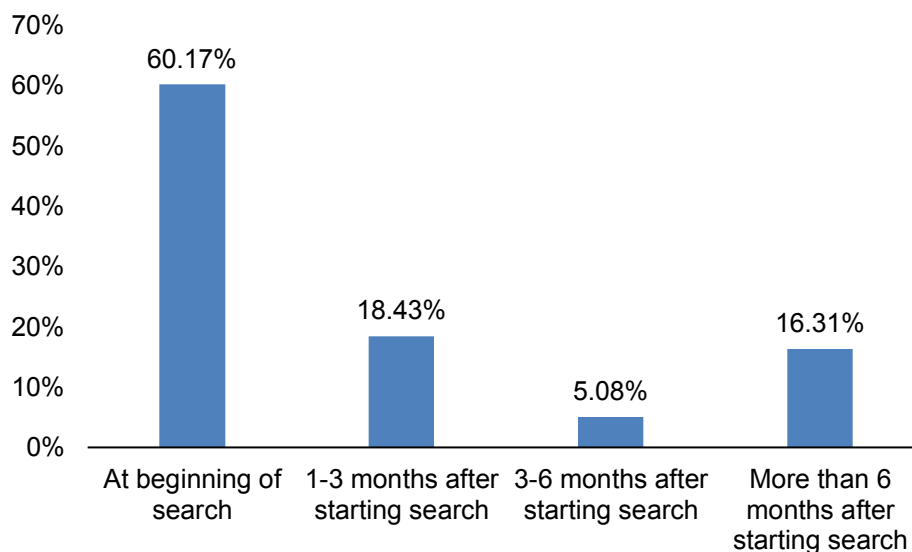
Table 5.2 displays the percentage of spouses who reported that they "sometimes" or "almost always" used a list of key features on the MSEP Career Portal. The question asked spouses, "In the past 6 months, how often did you use the following elements of the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) job search feature on the MySECO website?" This table shows that the most often used features are location searches (86.1 percent), keyword or job title searches (83.3 percent), and refined searches by job type (74.7 percent) or industry (73.4 percent).

Table 5.2. Percentage of Spouses Reporting Sometimes or Almost Always Using Features on the MSEP Career Portal

Feature	Percentage
Search by location	86.1
Search by keyword or job title	83.3
Refine search by job type	74.7
Refine search by industry	73.4
Refine search by MSEP employer partner	55.5
Allow MSEP employer partners to search for your résumé	52.7
Save jobs and/or companies	49.2
Use "hot jobs" search	45.3
Build a résumé on the portal	39.9

SOURCE: RAND survey of MSEP users, October 16 to December 15, 2019.
NOTE: Unweighted statistics reported. Total sample size was n = 415 to 425.

Another set of questions asked spouses to rate how easy or difficult it was for them to use the features of this Career Portal. The question asked, "How easy were the features to use?" with the following answer choices: very easy to use, easy to use, difficult to use, very difficult to use. Figure 5.3 shows the distribution of these responses, with about 60 percent or more of spouses in our sample reporting that these features were either very easy to use or easy to use.

Figure 5.3. Spouse-Reported MSEP Job Portal Features' Ease of Use
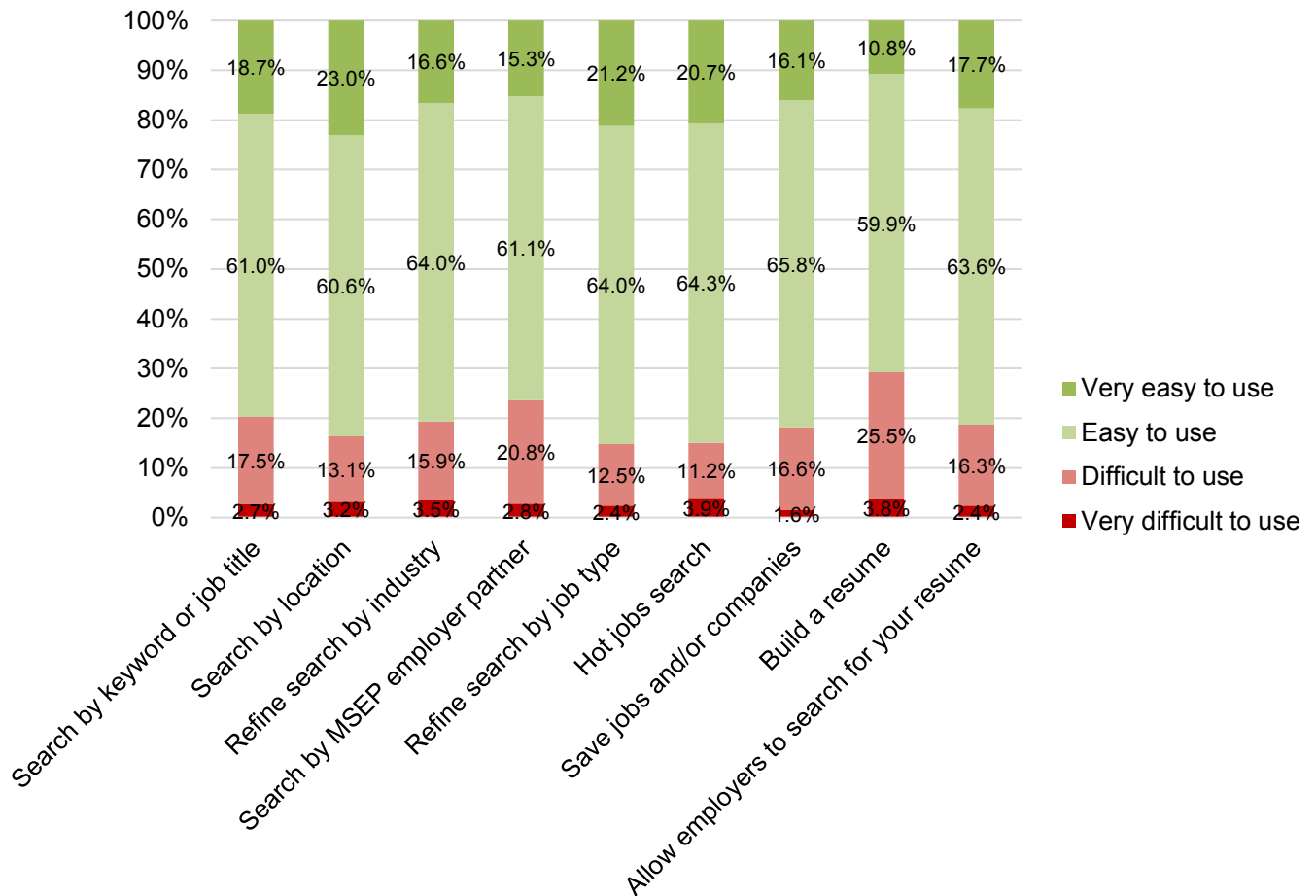
SOURCE: RAND survey of MSEP users, October 16 to December 15, 2019.
NOTE: Unweighted statistics reported.

In general, the survey results suggest that a majority of spouses did not have major problems with the ease of use of the MSEP Career Portal, with the most popular features being the search by location and search by keyword functions. However, a sizable percentage of these spouses (63.7 percent) reported using this portal only once or twice or not using it all after registering for it. The next section reviews findings that suggest why spouses did not report using the MSEP Career Portal more frequently.

Perceptions of Job Postings on the Career Portal

A frequent concern that spouses reported within this survey was the limited number of relevant job postings on the MSEP Career Portal. Figure 5.4 shows the distribution of responses by spouses to two questions about job postings on this portal. For both of these questions, the survey began by stating: "Thinking about your most recent visit to the MSEP Job Search feature

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in which you did a job search . . . ." One question asked, "How many relevant job postings did you find that were available near you?" Figure 5.4 shows that 83.3 percent of spouses found either zero or one to three relevant jobs near them. The second question asked about relevant telework jobs, which are typically in demand by spouses, given their frequency of geographic moves. This question asked, "How many relevant job postings did you find that offered telework opportunities?" Figure 5.4 shows that 93.5 percent of spouses reported finding three or fewer relevant telework jobs.

Figure 5.4. Self-Reported Relevant Number of Job Postings
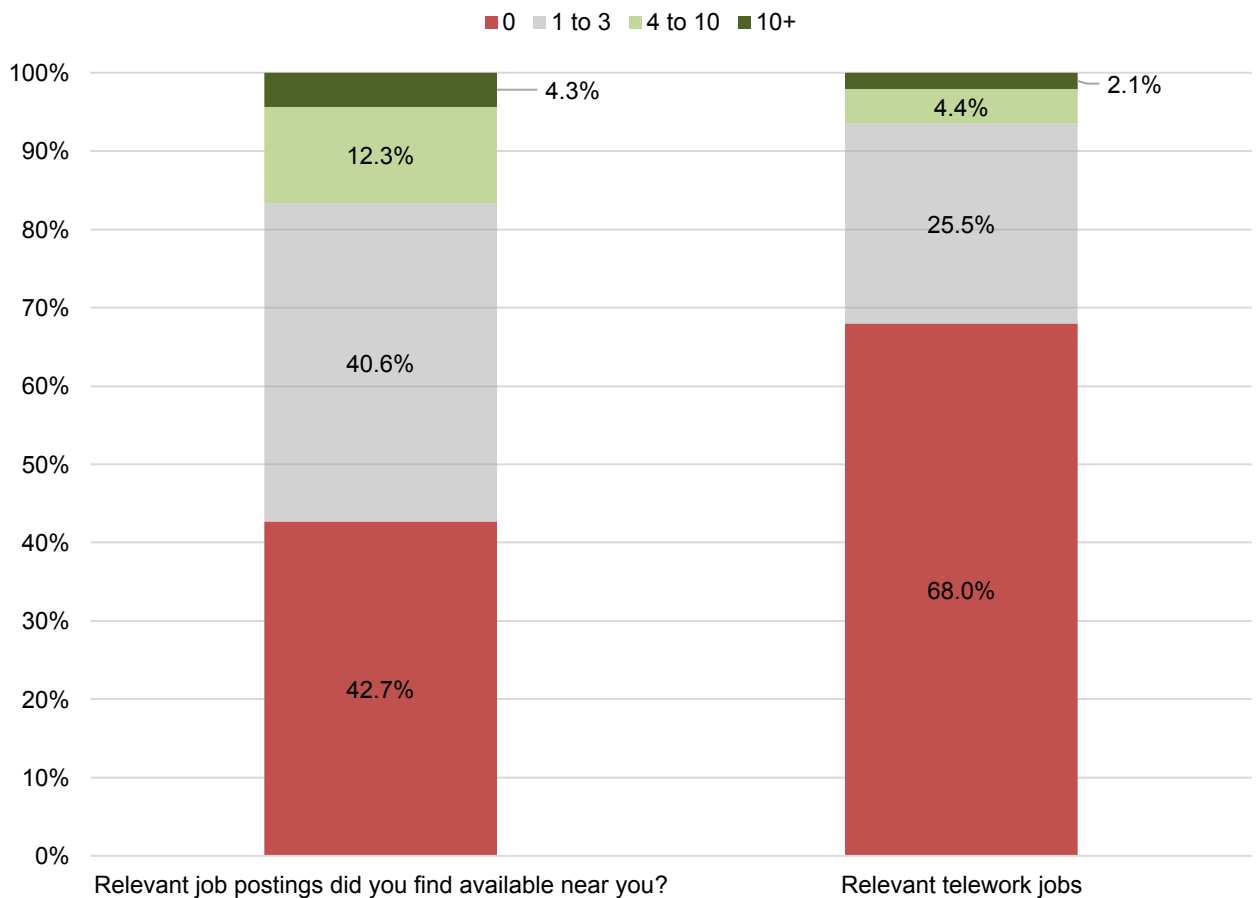
SOURCE: RAND survey of MSEP users, October 16 to December 15, 2019.
NOTE: Total sample size was n = 438 for the question on jobs near the respondent and n = 431 for relevant telework jobs. Unweighted statistics reported.

The survey also asked spouses to rate the three most recent job postings they found on the MSEP Career Portal. This question asked, "How would you rate the 3 most recent job postings you found?" It then listed various features for job postings #1, #2, and #3, including hours, pay, benefits, and flexibility. Figure 5.5 shows the distribution of spouse responses. Between 16 and

17 percent of spouses reported that hours for job postings were bad or very bad. Further, between 22 and 26 percent of spouses rated the pay as bad or very bad, while between 13 and 14 percent of spouses reported that benefits were either bad or very bad. Finally, Figure 5.5 shows that between 21 and 25 percent of spouses reported the flexibility of jobs posted as bad or very bad.

Figure 5.5. Self-Reported Evaluation of Job Postings
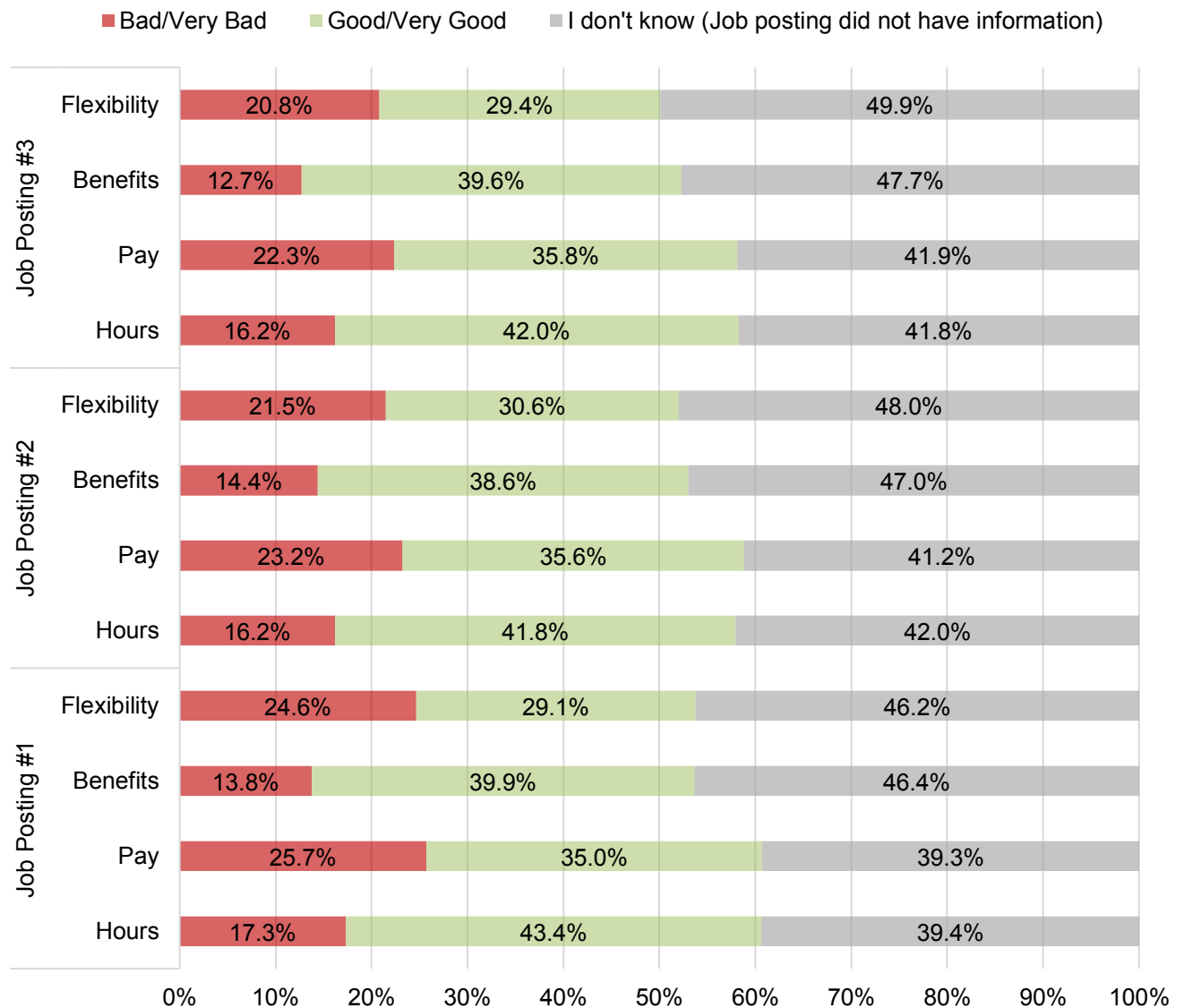
SOURCE: RAND survey of MSEP users, October 16 to December 15, 2019.
NOTE: Unweighted statistics reported.

Figure 5.5 also shows that a sizable percentage of spouses selected "I don't know (Job posting did not have information)." For each feature of each job, between 39 and 50 percent of respondents reported that they did not know how they would rate that feature. There are two

ways to interpret these percentages. First, spouses may not have recalled whether the last three features of jobs had this information and selected "I don't know"—or some of these job postings may have lacked this information.

Perceptions of the Portal's Usefulness

An important concern with the Career Portal is the number of spouses reporting that they got an interview or secured employment for a job that they found on this portal. For example, one question on the survey asked spouses, "Did you obtain any interviews based on jobs you found through the MSEP Job Search feature?" Seventeen spouses who responded to this question answered "yes," representing 4.3 percent of the sample who responded to this question (n = 396 spouses). The survey asked these 17 spouses to estimate how many interviews they got from jobs on the MSEP Job Search feature.[29] Ten of them reported getting an interview for one job, six of them reporting getting two or more interviews, and one spouse reported zero.[30]

Figure 5.6 shows the distribution of spouses reporting whether they found employment because of their job search. Specifically, the survey asked spouses, "Did you ultimately find a job as a result of your job search?" Spouses could choose one of the following four answers:

- Yes, and I encountered this job only on the MSEP Job Search feature.
- Yes, but I encountered this job on the MSEP Job Search feature and through different resources (for example, on other job search websites or through personal connections).
- Yes, and I don't know if the job was only on the MSEP Job Search feature or not.
- No, the job I finally secured was not on the MSEP Job Search feature.
- No, I did not secure a job.

According to Figure 5.6, only 1 percent of spouses reported securing a job that they knew was only on the Career Portal, while another 1.5 percent reported that they had secured a job that was on the portal and another resource. This figure shows that 37.5 percent of spouses were not sure whether the job that they had secured was on this portal. Another 57.7 percent reported that the job they found was not on the MSEP Career Portal. In our sample, 2.3 percent of spouses reported that they did not secure a job. Thus, most spouses who are finding jobs appear to be using alternative sources.

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[29] We used the term *Job Search feature* in the survey to refer to search features on the MSEP Career Portal.

[30] The spouse who answered "yes" to the question about obtaining an interview but then reported not having any interviews may reflect response bias in that she or he may have mistakenly given the incorrect answer to one of these two questions.

Figure 5.6. Percentage of Spouses Self-Reporting That They Found a Job on the MSEP Career Portal
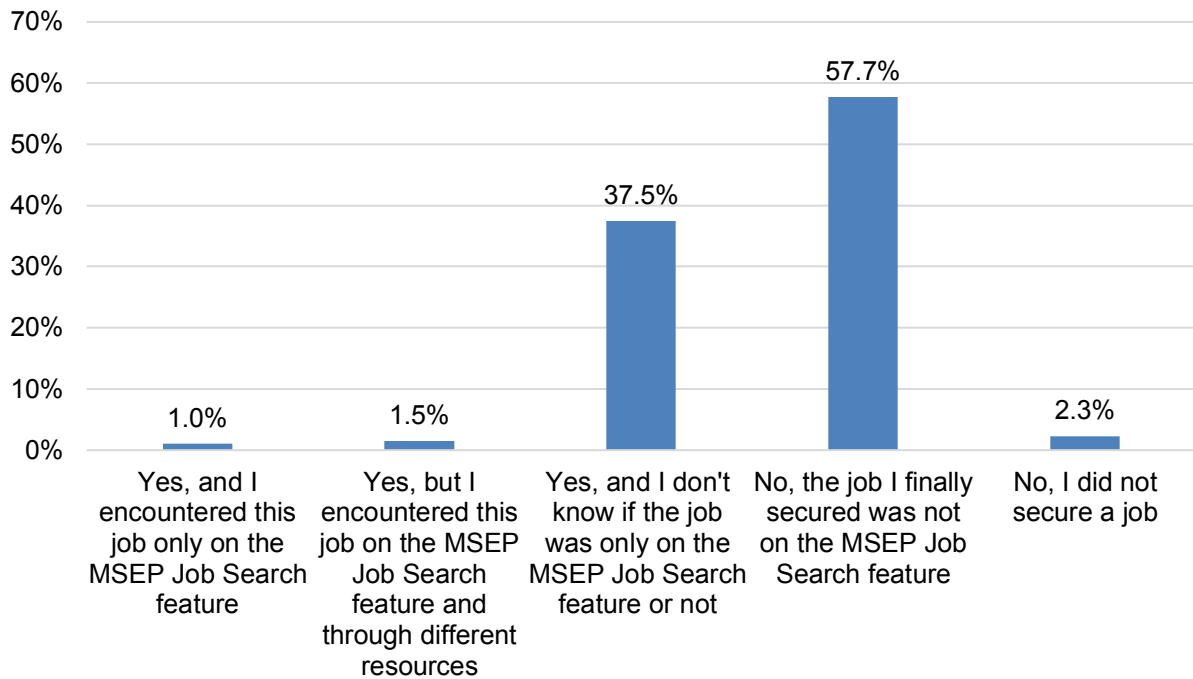
SOURCE: RAND survey of MSEP users, October 16 to December 15, 2019.
NOTE: Total sample size was n = 395. Unweighted statistics reported.

Table 5.3 displays the pattern of responses to two sets of questions from this survey. The first asked spouses, "In the past 6 months, which employment resources have you used? Please check all that apply," and it then lists a number of military (e.g., Military OneSource) and nonmilitary resources (e.g., USAjobs.com). Depending on responses to this question, the survey then asked spouses a follow-up question: "How useful did you find each of these resources in your job search?" The survey would then display the resources each spouse selected and ask them to rate each using a three-point scale of "very useful," "useful," or "not at all useful." Table 5.3 displays the percentage and frequency of spouses who reported utilizing each resource. This table also shows the percentage and frequency of spouses who reported that the resource they used was either useful or very useful.

The rows that are highlighted in green are resources that 100 or more spouses reported using in the previous six months. Unsurprisingly, the resources that spouses reported using the most were the ones that they also perceived as useful. There are at least three takeaways from the results in Table 5.3. First, the resources that spouses reported using the most were nonmilitary job search portals such as USAjobs.com or Monster.com, with 85.9 percent of spouses who used such websites reporting that they were useful for them. Second, most spouses who used the Military OneSource and MySECO (Spouse Education and Career Opportunities) websites

reported that they were useful to them. Yet, less than 50 percent of spouses reported using these resources. Third, personal connections (e.g., friends, acquaintances, or family) are useful for spouses looking for employment, yet only 28 percent reported utilizing these resources.

Table 5.3. Self-Reported Utilization of Job Support Resources and Perceptions of Usefulness

	Utilization Rate		Perceived Usefulness	
	Used (%)	N	Useful or Very Useful (%)	N
The websites USAjobs.com, Monster.com, or other job search portal	64.52	251	85.9	214
Military OneSource website	40.87	159	77.9	123
MySECO website: online resources	38.82	151	75.2	112
Personal connections: family, friends, or acquaintances (for example, acting as a referral or sending spouse's résumé to their company's human resources department)	27.51	107	87.9	94
Phone call with SECO career coach	27.25	106	78.1	82
My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA)	23.91	93	82.6	76
Personal connections with family, friends, or acquaintances to help prepare for job search	23.14	90	91.1	82
Military spouses employment support service	22.62	88	69.3	61
In-person job fair	17.74	69	71.7	48
Staffing or employment agency	15.17	59	77.2	44
Other nonmilitary employment resources	12.85	50	78.0	39
Virtual or online job fair	11.57	45	65.9	29
Hiring Our Heroes events	10.80	42	78.1	32
Nonprofit organization that supports military spouses and families	10.28	40	89.8	35
Online chat with SECO career counselor	9.77	38	81.6	31
MSEP virtual or online job fair	9.25	36	52.8	19
Other military employment resources	7.46	29	50.0	14

SOURCE: RAND survey of MSEP users, October 16 to December 15, 2019.
NOTE: Unweighted statistics reported.

Summary

The results of this survey show that more than half of spouses (63.9 percent) reported using the MSEP Career Portal once or twice or never at all (despite registering to sign up). Most of the spouses in our sample (i.e., more than 70 percent) reported searching for jobs by location, keyword or job title, job type, or industry on this portal. They reported that they found relevant jobs or telework jobs near them.

In general, spouses reported a positive view of the user experience of the portal itself but were less satisfied with the quality of job postings on this portal. For example, between 10 and

25 percent of spouses reported that characteristics of the previous three jobs they found on this portal were bad or very bad, while between 40 and 50 percent reported that they did not know these characteristics (possibly due to a lack of information within the posting). Overall, only 1 percent of spouses reported finding a job that was listed only on the MSEP career portal. When asked about other resources, spouses reported the highest utilization rates for such nonmilitary websites as USAjobs.com and Monster.com and generally found these sites useful. These results suggest that the MSEP Career Portal may serve as a supplemental rather than primary tool for some spouses during their job search process.

6. Interviews of MSEP Career Portal Users

This chapter further explores the experiences of military spouses who use the MSEP Career Portal. Specifically, we interviewed ten spouses about their experience with MSEP—what they liked, what they did not like, and what they believed would be most helpful in their search for employment. Though spouses varied in the types of jobs they were using the MSEP Career Portal to search for, themes emerged in what they did and did not like about their experience with this portal. After describing the process of selecting the spouses and analyzing the interviews, we explain our three major findings: (1) Military spouses appreciate that the MSEP Career Portal is tailored to them, (2) all of the military spouses in our sample reported not finding jobs using the MSEP Career Portal, and (3) military spouses in our sample described multiple technical difficulties with the MSEP job search feature.

Recruitment of Military Spouses and Analysis of Interviews

The RAND team selected spouses from a list of all spouses who took our survey and self-reported that they would be willing to have a follow-up conversation with us about MSEP. Interviews occurred in November and December 2019. To ensure that we spoke with spouses with a variety of experiences with the MSEP Career Portal, we categorized spouses by the frequency with which they reported that they had used the MSEP Career Portal (i.e., never used it, used it once or twice, used it monthly, used it once a week, used it more than once a week) and randomly selected spouses from each group to contact for an interview. Each interview was conducted by two research team members—a facilitator and a notetaker—and lasted approximately 30 minutes. We interviewed two spouses from each level of use: nine wives and one husband, and we tallied the results in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. Sample of Military Spouses for Interviews

Frequency of MSEP Portal Use (Self-Reported by Spouse	Number of Spouses Willing to Be Interviewed	Number of Spouses Contacted for an Interview	Number of Spouses Interviewed
Never	11	5	2
Once or twice	23	2	2
Once a week	15	4	2
More than once a week	10	3	2
Monthly	17	5	2
Total	77	19	10

NOTE: Those who indicated that they had never used MSEP in the survey had logged in to MSEP at least once, as this was a criterion for being invited to participate in the survey.

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After all interviews were completed, a member of the research team coded these notes for key concepts (e.g., challenges of using MSEP, helpful features of MSEP) and illustrative quotes. We then identified themes through common experiences from the spouses with whom we spoke. Three findings emerged, which are presented in the following sections.

Military Spouses Appreciate the MSEP Job Search and Its Supporting Features

Military spouses to whom we spoke appreciated that MSEP is designed to specifically support military spouses with employment. Half of the military spouses with whom we spoke liked that MSEP identifies employers who are committed to hiring military spouses. The frequent moves of military families are often disruptive to spouses' careers, and some employers are wary when they do not observe longer stints of employment on a resume. Given this added struggle that military spouses face, spouses stated that it was helpful to have military-friendly employers identified through MSEP. One spouse shared,

> I like that it's military-friendly employers or rather employers that say they're military-friendly. That's a struggle. Someone might look at your résumé and figure that you'll just leave in a few years, so having a military-friendly employer is good, and that's why I used this search, because I need a military-friendly employer who understands that I might move.

Three spouses noted that other job resources on the MySECO site were helpful during their job search, including the résumé-building tool, the skill finder tests, and an article on networking. Spouses liked that different résumé templates were available on the résumé-builder and that it allowed them to store all their résumé information in one spot. For example, one spouse who used the skill-finder tests told us, "They're kind of helpful, if you're looking to figure out what you're best at or what jobs to look for. I think some are pretty accurate for me, what I enjoy and do not enjoy, what jobs would be good for me." Another spouse who read a networking article on MySECO found it to be useful and later landed a job using her networking skills.

While spouses appreciated that MSEP exists, most described challenges with using the job search feature and were eager to provide suggestions on how to make it more effective. One spouse commented, "I appreciate that MSEP exists, and I like that you're doing this study. I want MSEP to make it easier to apply and easier to recruit."

Military Spouses in Our Sample Reported Not Finding Jobs Using MSEP

None of the spouses we talked to in our sample stated that MSEP had helped them find a job. Of the ten spouses we interviewed, seven were employed and had found their current jobs through other search portals or networking. Of the three who were still searching for a job, only one believed that MSEP might help. This spouse explained:

> I feel like the MSEP will be a good tool to find another job, but it depends on
> what's being advertised on there and what I'm looking for. If there aren't remote
> jobs listed, I can't use that resource to find jobs.

Most spouses (n = 7) in our sample told us that they had a difficult time finding any jobs to apply to through MSEP. Some spouses noted that the number of postings for a certain geographic area was low—one spouse told us about a search that turned up no jobs posted at all on MSEP for a community the couple were scheduled to move to. Others reported that job postings existed but did not match the types of jobs they were looking for (e.g., administration, higher education). Some spouses noted that they were overqualified for most positions—"I was looking for a midcareer job with six to ten years of experience . . . most of the jobs I found were entry-level and didn't require a degree"—while others recalled having trouble locating entry-level jobs.

Two spouses noted that when they did find job postings on MSEP that initially looked promising, the positions, upon further review, did not seem accessible to military spouses. One spouse recalled finding midcareer positions posted in Europe but was skeptical that the positions were truly open to military spouses:

> I know that they say that the jobs posted on the portal are from MSEP partners,
> but how do I know that they are legit? How do I know that if I apply to these jobs
> that I have a chance of getting it? For example, one of the places that I thought
> we might be moving to was Europe, and there were a lot of opportunities listed
> there with big companies like Microsoft. I was thinking these are jobs in Europe,
> and I know that they say that they want to hire military spouses, but would they
> actually hire a military spouse with all of the visas requirement, or are they
> actually looking for someone local?

> You click on the job posting and you go to the actual company website and see
> things about speaking the local language—that makes me wonder why it was
> posted, since 98 percent of the spouses likely wouldn't speak the language.

Another spouse stated that many entry-level military-base jobs posted on MSEP give preference to individuals with prior experience, which makes it difficult for military spouses to land the jobs. This spouse was interested in applying for a job painting naval ships but stated that these jobs usually went to retired military members. The spouse was frustrated at being passed over for this type of entry-level job and expressed a desire for more postings that offer on-the-job training.

Several spouses (n = 3) attempted to search for telework opportunities but were unable to find any. One spouse attempted to search for telework positions during the interview but was able to find only three postings:

> I knew I was going to a place with fewer opportunities, so I was interested in
> teleworking. But it's not easy to find telework jobs. I finally figured out that I
> could mark employers that telework, but I couldn't identify which jobs were
> telework. I could only tell that that employer had telework opportunities.

On the main page where it says "Find a job," you can keyword search and location search. And you can refine search by industry, and there's a telework function that you can click, but when I used that, it brought up three jobs for the whole country. I feel like that can't be right. So the refined search can be improved.

Adding more jobs and employers to the MSEP portal was the most common recommendation spouses made to us. Specifically, spouses were interested in more postings for entry-level positions that do not require experience or offer on-the-job training, as well as more postings for telework jobs and jobs in certain career fields (e.g., information technology, social sciences).

Military Spouses Described Technical Difficulties with MSEP Job Search

Seven spouses in our limited sample told us about encountering technical difficulties when using the MSEP job feature. The most common difficulty they mentioned was determining whether a job was still available. Four spouses reported seeing job postings that appeared to be recently posted, but when they went to apply for the job, the position was already filled. One spouse explained,

My biggest problem is the date thing. I try to look for jobs by date, because I figure new jobs are less likely to be filled. What I run into, looking at MSEP, is that they all look like they're posted that day. And I could look at it tomorrow, and it will say it was posted today. And it's odd because I don't trust how long it's been there. I don't want to waste my time applying and it being a month-old job listing.

Several spouses (n = 3) also told us about being frustrated by the inability to return to their search once they had clicked on a specific job posting. They noted that each time they attempted to return to their search it was lost, and they were required to initiate their search again. One spouse stated,

My biggest pet peeve is that I couldn't right-click on a job posting and open it in a new tab. I had to click on it and then go back and run the search again. It would never save the search results where I was. That was frustrating.

Two spouses expressed frustration with technical glitches with the MSEP Career Portal. These spouses were able to use the job search feature but would find themselves automatically logged out when they attempted to apply for a job. One spouse shared,

It doesn't work very well. It's not user-friendly. It logs you out randomly when you're in the middle of something on there, and then it tells me I have to be logged in, when I thought I was already logged in. Also, the pages don't load, or take a long time to load.

Another spouse who experienced trouble staying logged in reached out to technical support from MSEP and was advised to search for jobs through MSEP but apply for them on a different portal, such as Monster or Indeed. Half of the spouses we spoke to reported using such sites as Monster and Indeed with better success.

Two spouses (n = 2) were frustrated by the portal's security requirements. One spouse mentioned that some positions required a Common Access Card (CAC), which is available only to spouses who live on installations, making it difficult for spouses who are not on base to apply for jobs. Another spouse found the "forgot my password" process to be so onerous as to render MSEP unusable:

> I found those jobs, and I was in the middle of moving, and all of my login info was written in a book in a box that was already moved to our next location. So, I found jobs that I wanted to apply for, but I couldn't because I couldn't log in, and the "forgot my login" process was so frustrating I just didn't do it. And when I did log in and look at those jobs and navigating to those pages was so difficult. So, I gave up for a month or two.

Some difficulties were unique to individual spouses. Spouses described frustration with filtering results, attempting to search through the map feature, and using the MSEP Career Portal with certain internet browsers. One spouse stated that when she attempted to filter by ZIP code, the results that appeared were all out of state:

> I don't feel like it's very effective or useful. They finally loaded, and it's all doctor jobs that aren't in my area. For example, I put in my ZIP code and hit search, and something in MO, SD, CO, NY, WA are popping up [not appropriate area]. They're all in-person positions.

Another spouse recalled that MSEP had a useful map search feature but was not sure how to locate it:

> There used to be, and I don't know if it's still there, a really easy map function that was nice . . . don't know what changed, but it's not as easy to use. Just finding the job search itself, once I got to that, I got really frustrated because I just wanted a map and I couldn't find it. A few years ago, I remember it being very obvious how to find the map.

While most spouses we interviewed told us that they experienced technical difficulties when searching on MSEP, many spouses reported that the search feature worked properly but did not produce any jobs that they were interested in applying for. One spouse reported, "The functionality was fine. The search worked fine, but it didn't have any relevant results."

Summary

We interviewed ten military spouses to better understand their experiences with MSEP—what they liked about it, what they did not, and what would be helpful for them as they seek employment. The spouses varied both by the amount of time they spent using the MSEP job search feature and by the types and locations of jobs they were searching for. However, these spouses largely agreed on three things concerning their experience with MSEP. First, military spouses in our sample appreciated that the MSEP Career Portal exists and is focused specifically on helping military spouses find employment. Second, military spouses in our sample have not found employment through MSEP—only a few described finding job postings that they would

apply for. Finally, most military spouses in our sample described encountering a variety of technical difficulties when using the MSEP job search feature.

7. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

This report presents results from the second phase of a two-phase study that evaluated the MSEP program (Gonzalez et al., 2015). In this second phase, we analyzed job postings on the MSEP Career Portal, interviewed representatives from some of the employer partners that post jobs on this portal, surveyed spouses who had recently used this portal, and then interviewed a limited number of these respondents about their experiences with MSEP. We focused on telecommuting jobs because this was an area of interest to MCFP.

The analysis of job postings showed that a range of positions are advertised on this portal, yet only a small percentage of jobs mentioned telecommuting. Further, our geographic analysis suggests some mismatch, in that more jobs on this portal were in the Northeast region of the United States versus other regions that are home to large numbers of military spouses. Our interviews from representatives of employer partners found that communication was a key concern from them. Specifically, several employers expressed a need for increasing communication between partners, MSEP, military spouse applicants, military spouse employees, potential partner organizations, and existing partner organizations. Further, some POCs from MSEP partner organizations also described experiencing technical difficulties with the portal.

Results from our survey of recent spouses who enrolled in the MSEP Career Portal highlight limitations with this portal. Specifically, more than half of spouses in our sample reported using this portal once or twice or never at all. While spouses in our sample did report a positive view of the portal itself, there was some evidence that spouses were less satisfied with the quality of job postings. Overall, only 1 percent of spouses in our sample reported finding a job that was listed only on this portal. The spouses in our interview sample reported similar concerns, with none of them reporting that they had found a job on this portal. These spouses appreciated that this portal exists, but only a few of the interviewees said that they saw relevant jobs, and several described technical difficulties with this portal.

Recommendations for MCFP

Overall, we recommend that MCFP focus more on the quality of jobs listed on the MSEP Career Portal that would be of most interest to military spouses within their specific labor markets. Based on our results, we have identified five recommendations for MCFP to improve the MSEP program, with particular emphasis on the key feature of this program—the MSEP Career Portal. As discussed in the first chapter of this report, we focused on three features of MSEP: (1) the MSEP Career Portal, (2) employer partners who post jobs on this portal, and (3) the military spouses who use this portal. Below are recommendations that relate to each feature and, in some cases, may overlap with other features.

MSEP Career Portal

Our analysis of the MSEP Career Portal focused on the types of jobs posted and the geographic locations of these positions. We recommend targeted outreach to increase positions that allow spouses to telecommute, as well as positions in offices located in different regions of the United States:

> **Recommendation 1: Increase targeted outreach to employer partners who offer telecommuting positions of interest to military spouses.** Military families are often required to make frequent geographic moves (i.e., PCS). These moves may become an employment barrier to military spouses, particularly for those whose employer lacks an office at their next assigned installation. Recent advances in technology may present new opportunities for these spouses to work from home, unshackling them from the physical workplace. We recommend that MCFP conduct targeted outreach to current—and future—employer partners that are increasing their share of teleworkers. This outreach should involve explaining the unique benefits of military spouses to their workforce, as well as the unique benefits of telework for military spouses.

> **Recommendation 2: Increase targeted outreach to employer partners of interest to military spouses with offices in the Midwest, South, and West.** We found some evidence of geographic variation in the location of jobs, with the largest numbers found in the Northeast region. This finding is unsurprising, given the large metropolitan areas in this region (i.e., Boston, New York, and Philadelphia). Unfortunately, most military installations in the United States are not located in these metropolitan areas. While MCFP and the military spouses it serves must work within difficult labor markets, we recommend that MCFP conduct targeted outreach to employers with offices in geographic areas where high numbers of spouses tend to reside. We hypothesize that this expansion would be most successful if these employers would create employment opportunities that military spouses could not find outside of the MSEP Career Portal.

Employer Partners

We also interviewed representatives from some employer partners that post jobs on the MSEP Career Portal. The results from these interviews suggest that there are opportunities to improve communication with these stakeholders:

> **Recommendation 3: Improve communication with key stakeholders involved with the military spouse employment search.** Several employer partner representatives expressed a need to improve communications between employers, the MSEP program, military spouses, and other stakeholders. During some interviews, these representatives raised concerns regarding contractors serving as MSEP account managers for these employer partners. We recommend that MCFP continue to assess the performance of these contractors and hold more events that build a community of stakeholders focused on increasing employment of military spouses (e.g., monthly calls with MSEP employer partners or targeted outreach to recruit additional partners).

Military Spouses

The last feature of MSEP that we examined was the experience of military spouses who use the MSEP Career Portal. We assessed these experiences using a survey of military spouses followed by interviews with some of the respondents. Some spouses expressed limitations with this portal. In response, we recommend that MSEP promote a diverse range of employment-related search engines while continuing to increase the number of relevant jobs posted on its own portal within key labor markets of interest to military spouses:

> **Recommendation 4: Promote a diverse range of employment-related search engines to military spouses.** Only 1 percent of spouses whom we surveyed told us that they found a job that they believed was only on the MSEP Career Portal. The tools that spouses reported as most useful were alternative online employment-related resources (e.g., articles on how to use networking to find a job, skills tests). We recommend that MCFP promote a wider range of these online tools to maximize the likelihood that military spouses find employment. For many of these spouses, the MSEP Career Portal may serve as a supplemental resource that would best serve them in conjunction with other portals, including USAJobs.com, Monster.com, Indeed.com, or LinkedIn.

> **Recommendation 5: Increase the number of jobs of interest to military spouses that are posted on the MSEP Career Portal.** Many of the spouses that we interviewed told us that they had a challenging experience finding relevant jobs on the MSEP Career Portal. None of them told us of having successfully found a job on this portal. We recommend that MCFP identify and select labor markets where there is a strong demand for positions by spouses and target employers in these markets to build a large number of high-quality job postings. Unemployment and underemployment of military spouses is a unique challenge, and MCFP will not be able to fill its portal with jobs for all spouses who demand them. By focusing on specific labor markets, MCFP could maximize the number of spouses who find desirable employment that fits their skills and preferences.

A Note on the COVID-19 Pandemic

We finished data collection for this report before the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic became widespread within the United States. To date, there are limited data on the impact of this pandemic on the U.S. labor market and even fewer data on these impacts for military spouses. For example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics recently announced its plan to include a question about telework related to this pandemic on its household survey (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020).

There is, however, some early evidence that loss of employment disproportionately affected jobs that could not be done via telework. Some estimate that 90 percent of those unemployed during the early stages of this COVID-19 pandemic were in positions that could not be done remotely (Kochhar and Passel, 2020). We do not know whether telework opportunities will grow after this pandemic subsides. If these opportunities do increase, there may be more telework jobs for military spouses in the future. Further, there is some initial evidence that telework positions

are more secure than nontelework jobs should this current pandemic exist for some time—or if another pandemic emerges in the future. We recommend future research to fully understand the impacts of this pandemic on the employment experiences of military spouses.

Military spouse employment is a ubiquitous problem, requiring a multipronged approach. The MSEP Career Portal is one tool in DoD's toolkit, but it is not the only one. Our recommendations focus on ways to improve the effectiveness of this tool and expand access to related tools for spouses in search of quality jobs.

Appendix A. Education Background of Military Spouses

This appendix analyzes data from the 2015 ADSS. The first phase of this report reviewed the 2012 version of the ADSS (Gonzalez et al., 2015). In this second phase, we compared these 2012 results with the 2015 ADSS results.

While members of the military community represent a microcosm of American society, they are not demographically representative of U.S. civilian society (Segal and Segal, 2004). For example, research finds that African Americans and Hispanics are more likely to serve than whites. Young adults and men are disproportionately represented in the military versus civilian society. Further, young adults in the military are significantly more likely to get married than their civilian counterparts (Hogan and Seifert, 2010). Put simply, service members and their spouses are a unique subgroup, so it is difficult to compare their employment experiences with those of their civilian counterparts.

Table A.1 displays the education level of military spouses by age category, using data from the 2012 and 2015 ADSSs. The distributions in 2012 and 2015 are similar. In 2012, 31 percent of spouses under 26 years of age reported having one or more years of college. In 2015, this percentage was 30. In 2012, between 29 and 31 percent of spouses in their 30s or older reported having a bachelor's degree. In 2015, these percentages ranged from 30 percent to 33 percent. Results from the 2012 and 2015 ADSSs thus suggest minor difference in the self-reported levels of educational attainment by spouses in these surveys.

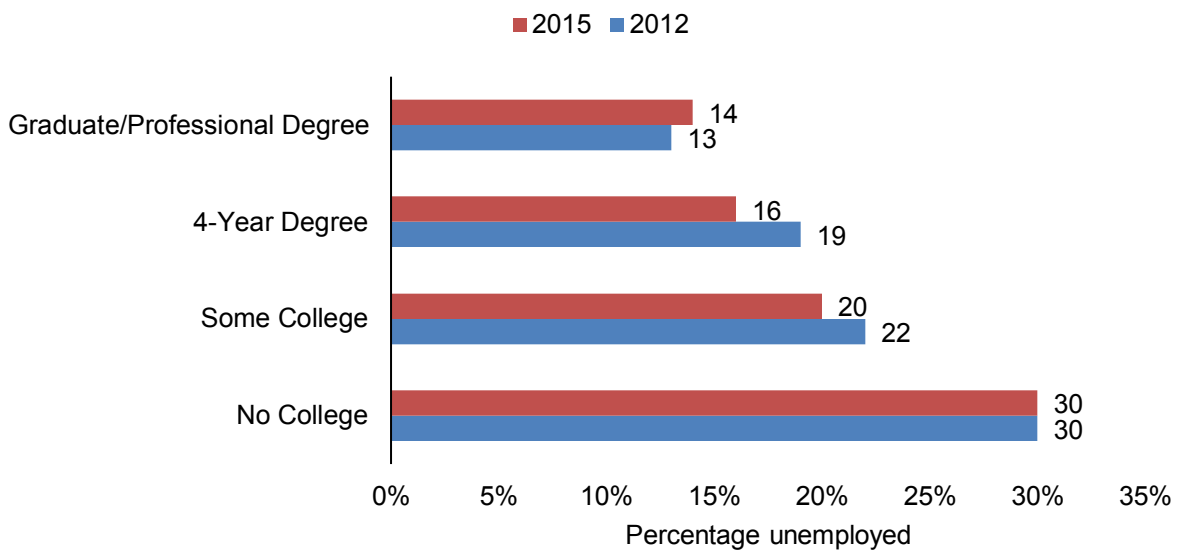**Table A.1. Self-Reported Education Level of Military Spouses, Percentage by Age Group, in 2012 and 2015**

	12 Years or Less	High School Graduate	Vocational or Technical Diploma	Some College, but Less Than 1 Year	1 or More Years of College	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral or Professional Degree
2012 ADSS									
Younger than 26	2	17	—	18	31	13	16	2	0
26 to 30	1	9	—	11	24	16	28	9	1
31 to 35	1	8	—	9	18	17	31	13	2
36 to 40	1	8	—	10	18	17	29	15	3
40+	2	9	—	8	17	14	29	18	3
2015 ADSS									
Younger than 26	1	17	5	17	30	12	15	1	0
26 to 30	1	8	5	8	19	15	33	9	2
31 to 35	1	7	5	6	16	15	30	18	3
36 to 40	1	7	5	5	15	16	30	18	3
40+	1	8	4	6	13	11	33	20	4

SOURCES: DMDC, 2013; DMDC, 2015b.
NOTE: The 2012 ADSS did not include "Vocational or technical diploma" as an answer choice for spouses.

Figure A.1 displays the self-reported percentages of unemployed spouses, by their level of education, using the 2012 and 2015 ADSS data. This figure shows similar percentages between these two years. For example, 30 percent of spouses reported that they were unemployed on the 2012 and 2015 ADSS. In 2012, 22 percent of spouses who attended but did not graduate from college reported that they were unemployed. In 2015, 20 percent of spouses said they were unemployed. Finally, 19 percent of spouses with a four-year degree and 13 percent with a graduate or professional degree reported being unemployed in 2012. According to the 2015 ADSS, these percentages were 16 and 14, respectively.

Figure A.1. Percentage of Military Spouses Reportedly Unemployed, by Education Level, 2015 and 2012

SOURCES: DMDC, 2013; DMDC, 2015b.

Figure A.2 displays the percentages of military spouses who self-reported that they were employed in their career fields, by level of education. This figure shows that results from the 2012 and 2015 ADSSs are similar. In 2012, 46 percent of spouses with no college degree reported that they were employed in a career field within their area of education or training. In 2015, this was true for 48 percent of spouses who took the survey. In 2012, 48 percent of spouses with some college were working in a relevant career field, versus 50 percent of spouses in 2015.

Figure 3.2 also shows that 58 percent of spouses with a four-year degree who participated in the 2012 ADSS were working in a relevant career field. In 2015, 54 percent of college-graduate spouses who took the ADSS reported working in a relevant career field. Finally, 78 percent of spouses with a graduate or professional degree reported working in a relevant career field on the 2012 ADSS, compared with 75 percent of spouses with a graduate or professional degree on the 2015 ADSS.

Figure A.2. Percentage of Military Spouses Employed in Their Career Field, by Education Level, in 2012 and 2015

Graduate/Professional Degree
 - 2015: 75%
 - 2012: 78%

4-Year Degree
 - 2015: 54%
 - 2012: 58%

Some College
 - 2015: 50%
 - 2012: 48%

No College
 - 2015: 48%
 - 2012: 46%
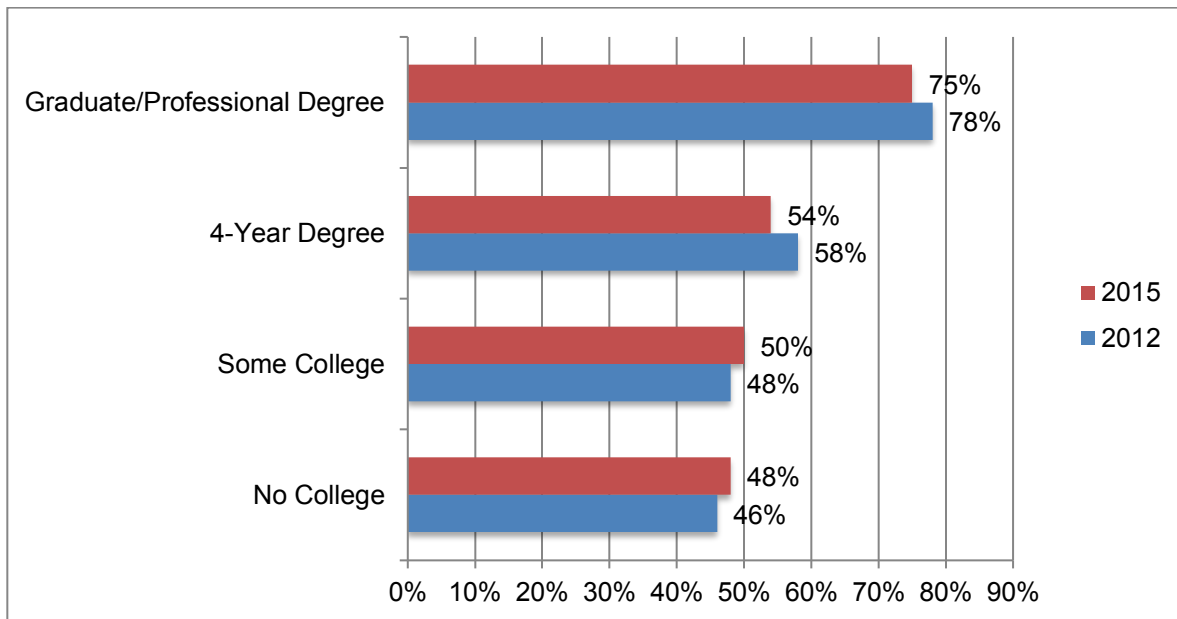
SOURCES: DMDC, 2013; DMDC, 2015b.

Conclusion

We found similar patterns of responses by spouses in DMDC's 2012 and 2015 ADSSs. Most spouses reported that they had some college, an associate degree, or a bachelor's degree. Unsurprisingly, self-reported unemployment rates were lower for spouses with more, rather than less, education. Spouses were also more likely to report that they were employed in their career field if they had more, rather than less, education.

Appendix B. Methods for Job Posting Analysis

Assessment of the educational requirements and job types in the second data query from August 3, 2016, essentially replicated the methods applied to the first data pull from September 4, 2015, that were described in Gonzalez et al., 2015 (Appendix B). The only substantial difference in the analysis was that the machine learning algorithm from the first study needed to be retrained on the new data set. We first applied the already trained algorithm, a support vector machine, to the new data pull. We then compared, for 500 random job posts, the job types predicted by the algorithm to those assigned by the same human coder that had manually classified the job posts for the Phase I report. The results indicated only 49 percent agreement between the machine algorithm and the human coder. These differences arose because approximately half of the jobs posted on the web portal in the second data pull were posted by different partners than in the first data pull—as evidenced by only nine of the top 20 posting partners being the same in the first and second data pulls (see Table 2.1 in Chapter 2), and 71 to 75 percent of the job posts were provided by the top 20 most active partners in the 2015 and 2016 data pulls, respectively.

This poor performance of the already trained machine algorithm required retraining the algorithm on the manually coded random 500 job posts. The only difference in the analysis was that we allowed the algorithm to train on some job types not included in the prior analysis, such as Protection and Education, because the manual coding indicated that these were slightly more frequent in the second data pull. We also applied tenfold cross-validation to assess model performance, as opposed to the method from Gonzalez et al., 2015, that split the data randomly in half and then trained the model on one half of the data while testing its performance on the other half. This single split into training and testing data can produce somewhat less reliable estimates of model performance because it does not account for random variation present in the split of the data such that some splits might, by chance, exhibit somewhat better or worse performance. The tenfold cross-validation method accounts for this random variation by first splitting the data set into ten evenly divided sets of 90-percent training data and 10-percent testing data. The 10-percent test data are mutually exclusive across the 10 "folds," such that none of the testing data overlap. This enabled us to calculate the average of the model performance across the ten exclusive sets of test data.

The results indicated that the model achieved 71-percent agreement between the manual coding and the algorithm predictions across all job types, which compared favorably with the 68-percent accuracy across all job types that we estimated for the algorithm trained in the Phase I report. We therefore accepted this trained algorithm and applied it to the remaining full August 3, 2016, data set of 232,770 job posts to produce the update on job type findings that is included in this report.

Appendix C. Description of Survey Weight Computations

This appendix describes the weights that we designed for our survey of military spouses. One concern in making population-level conclusions from this survey is the low response rate (approximately 8 percent). If nonrespondents differ substantially from respondents, then unadjusted estimates may exhibit nonresponse bias. One method to correct for nonresponse bias is propensity score adjustment. For an individual i, the propensity score π_i is defined as the probability that individual i will respond to the survey. When π_i is known for all respondents, an unbiased estimate of the mean of a response variable Y is given by the following equation:

$$\overline{y} = \frac{\sum_{i \in \mathcal{R}} \frac{1}{\pi_i} y_i}{\sum_{i \in \mathcal{R}} \frac{1}{\pi_i}}$$

Here, $\mathcal{R} = \{i : \text{individual } i \text{ responded to the survey}\}$.

While this approach allows one to compute an estimate of a population mean using only the results from respondents, the propensity scores π_i are not observed and therefore must be estimated from data. When covariates $\mathbf{X}$ are observed for both respondents and nonrespondents, one can model π_i using logistic regression. In particular, one assumes:

$$\text{logit}(\pi_i) = \beta_0 + \boldsymbol{\beta} \mathbf{X}_i$$

In this survey, we included geographic region and age as covariates in $\mathbf{X}$.[31] After specifying this model, estimates of $\hat{\pi}_i$ are obtained from standard statistical software. These estimates $\hat{\pi}_i$ are then substituted for π_i in the equation for $\overline{y}$ above. There are several limitations to this approach. First, misspecifying the propensity score model may result in inaccurate propensity score estimates, which in turn may result in inaccurate population estimates based on $\overline{y}$. It is unlikely that geography and age alone determine propensity scores. For instance, education level, which is not included in our model, is a well-known predictor of survey response. We were, however, provided with a limited set of individual-level covariates with which to model propensity scores. An implicit assumption in this approach is that a responding individual is representative of a nonresponding individual with the same covariates $\mathbf{X}$. This assumption is not directly testable but is required for this approach. This assumption is also more acceptable when a rich set of covariates $\mathbf{X}$ are available.

---

[31] MCFP provided the research team with data on the state of residence and age of spouses for the entire population frame of this survey.

Table C.1 shows that the median age of spouses was 31.6, with 15.65 percent identifying as Hispanic and 67.72 identifying as white. On average, spouses in our sample reported that they had about two children. All spouses in our sample reported that they were married to a service member; otherwise, they were ineligible to continue this instrument. Table C.1 also shows that these descriptive statistics were similar to those used for the weighted sample. This table shows that most spouses reported having completed some college or holding a bachelor's degree or higher. The pattern of this distribution was also similar after applying our sampling weights.

Table C.1. Weighted and Unweighted Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	Unweighted	Weighted
Age	31.6 (7.6)	29.50 (6.91)
Hispanic	15.65%	16.23%
White	67.72%	67.50%
Number of dependents under 21	2.1 (1.0)	2.07 (0.96)
Education		
High school diploma, GED, or less	4.22%	5.02%
Some college	22.16%	24.03%
Associate degree	10.29%	10.96%
Bachelor's degree	36.41%	37.22%
Professional degree or higher	26.91%	22.78%
Household income ($)		
Less than 20,000	5.36%	6.96%
20,001 to 40,000	22.52%	25.55%
40,001 to 60,000	20.11%	21.64%
60,001 to 80,000	19.57%	19.03%
80,001 to 100,000	15.82%	13.44%
More than 100,001	16.62%	13.38%
Spouse's rank		
E1–E4	24.23%	30.58%
E5–E6	35.80%	36.34%
E7–E9	15.01%	11.61%
W1–W5	1.27%	1.09%
O1–O3	13.74%	13.58%
O4 or higher	9.04%	6.09%
Do not know	0.90%	0.70%
Region		
Northeast	6.85%	5.12%
Midwest	6.85%	6.92%
South	52.61%	56.34%

	West	25.23%	26.80%
	Overseas	8.47%	4.81%
N		555	555

Table C.1 shows that about 48 percent of spouses reported an income of $60,000 or less, with this percentage increasing to 54.2 percent after application of sampling weights. Seventy-five percent of respondents reported that their spouse was enlisted versus 78.5 percent with weights. Further, 22.8 percent of our sample reported that they were married to an officer versus 19.7 percent with weights. The percentage of respondents reporting that their spouses were warrant officers was 1.27 percent.[32] Finally, Table C.1 shows that a majority of spouses came from the South (52.61 percent) and West (25.23 percent) regions.[33] The weighted and unweighted regional distributions were similar, except for those respondents categorized as living overseas (which includes foreign locations and U.S. protectorates such as Guam and Puerto Rico), for whom the unweighted sample was 8.5 percent of the sample versus 4.8 percent after using weights.

---

[32] The survey did not list warrant officers as a category in the first two weeks of the survey. We corrected this error but note that our survey may have underestimated the number of spouses of warrant officers.

[33] We used the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of regions (U.S. Census Bureau, undated).

Appendix D. Survey Instrument

This appendix displays the complete survey instrument that we administered between October 16, 2019, and December 15, 2019, to a sample of 4,436 spouses who registered for the MSEP Career Portal in the past six months, as reported by MCFP.

ND3607SRG Mil Spouse Employment

[introduction]

Thank you for agreeing to take this survey exploring your impressions of the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) Job Search features on the MySECO web site!

This survey should only take 15 minutes to complete. This survey will close on December 15, 2019.

Your responses will be confidential: No one outside the RAND research team will see your individual responses. RAND will merge your survey responses with MSEP job search feature usage data using random ID numbers, not with your personal information. RAND will destroy records of your individual responses after completion of this research. The information you provide will be aggregated with other respondents and included in our briefings and reports to the Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) office.

Your participation is voluntary: if you prefer not to answer a question, or if you want to end the survey for any reason—you may do so. Whether or not you participated will not be communicated to the MC&FP office.

Click Next to Begin the Survey

q1 - A1

Are you currently married to a service member?

Yes (1)
No (2)

CONDITION

f('q1') =='2'

true | false
Question SET1()

end1

Thank you for your time. You do not need to complete the rest of the survey.

END

Condition f('q1') =='2'
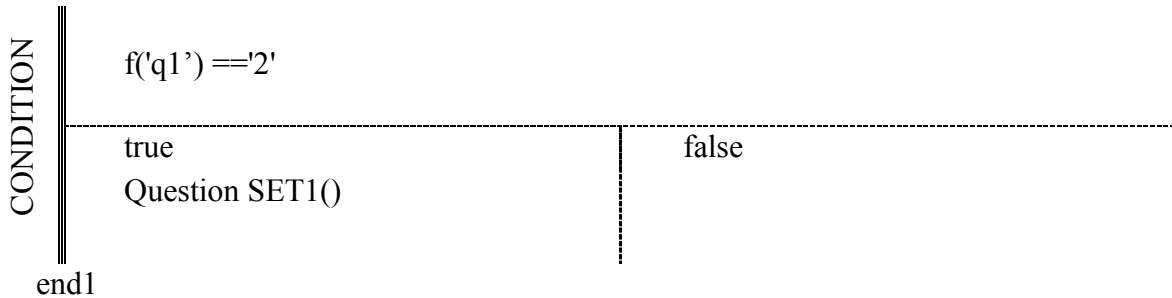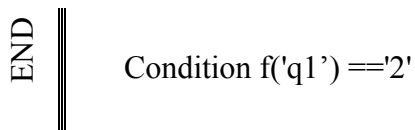
q2
[Not required]
How old are you?
17 (17)
18 (18)
19 (19)
20 (20)
21 (21)
22 (22)
23 (23)
24 (24)
25 (25)
26 (26)
27 (27)

28 (28)

29 (29)

30 (30)

31 (31)

32 (32)

33 (33)

34 (34)

35 (35)

36 (36)

37 (37)

38 (38)

39 (39)

40 (40)

41 (41)

42 (42)

43 (43)

44 (44)

45 (45)

46 (46)

47 (47)

48 (48)

49 (49)

50 (50)

51 (51)

52 (52)

53 (53)

54 (54)

55 (55)

56 (56)

57 (57)

58 (58)

59 (59)

60 (60)

61 (61)

62 (62)

63 (63)

64 (64)

65 (65)

66 (66)

67 (67)
68 (68)
69 (69)
70 (70)
71 (71)
72 (72)
73 (73)
74 (74)
75 (75)
76 (76)
77 (77)
78 (78)
79 (79)
80 (80)

CONDITION

f('q2') =='17'

true
Question Copy of SET1()

false

end2

Thank you for your time. You do not need to complete the rest of the survey.

END

Condition f('q2') =='17'
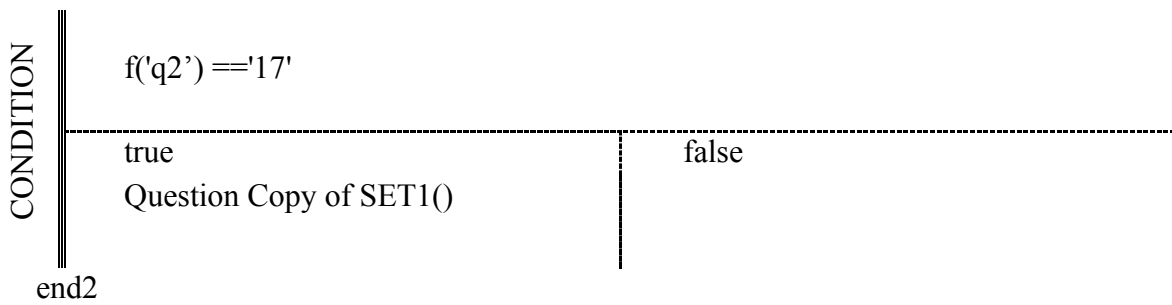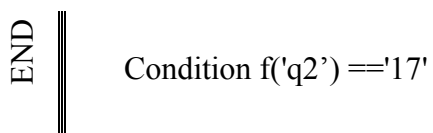
q3
[Not required]

What is your service member's rank?

E1–E4 (1)
E5–E6 (2)
E7–E9 (3)

W1–W5 (7)
O1–O3 (4)
O4 or higher (5)
I don't know (6)

q4
[Open Text ◆ Numeric ◆ Not required ◆ Lower limit type=Greater or Equal ◆ Upper limit type=Smaller or Equal ◆ Total Digits=3]

How long have you been a military spouse?

  (1)   _____   Years (1)

q5
[Not required]

Are you currently serving on Active Duty or in Guard or Reserve?

Yes, Active Duty (1)
Yes, Guard or Reserve Component (2)
No (3)

CONDITION

f('q5') =='1'

true	false
Question Copy of SET1()	

end3

Thank you for your time. You do not need to complete the rest of the survey.

END

Condition f('q5') =='1'

f('q5') =='2'

true	false
Question ()	

q5a -
[Not required]

In which branch of the military did you serve?

Air Force (1)
Army (2)
Navy (3)
Marine Corps (4)
Coast Guard (5)

q5b
[Not required]

Approximately how many years have you served, or did you serve, in that branch?

1 (1)
2 (2)
3 (3)
4 (4)
5 (5)
6 (6)
7 (7)
8 (8)
9 (9)
10 (10)
11 (11)
12 (12)
13 (13)
14 (14)
15 (15)

16 (16)
17 (17)
18 (18)
19 (19)
20 (20)
21 (21)
22 (22)
23 (23)
24 (24)
25 (25)
26 (26)
27 (27)
28 (28)
29 (29)
30 (30)
31 (31)
32 (32)
33 (33)
34 (34)
35 (35)
36 (36)
37 (37)
38 (38)
39 (39)
40 (40)

END Condition f('q5') =='2'

q6
[Not required]

Please select the state or country where you are currently living.

Outside of the U.S. and its territories (1)
Alabama (2)
Alaska (3)
Arizona (4)

Arkansas (5)

California (6)

Colorado (7)

Connecticut (8)

Delaware (9)

Florida (10)

Georgia (11)

Hawaii (12)

Idaho (13)

Illinois (14)

Indiana (15)

Iowa (16)

Kansas (17)

Kentucky (18)

Louisiana (19)

Maine (20)

Maryland (21)

Massachusetts (22)

Michigan (23)

Minnesota (24)

Mississippi (25)

Missouri (26)

Montana (27)

Nebraska (28)

Nevada (29)

New Hampshire (30)

New Jersey (31)

New Mexico (32)

New York (33)

North Carolina (34)

North Dakota (35)

Ohio (36)

Oklahoma (37)

Oregon (38)

Pennsylvania (39)

Rhode Island (40)

South Carolina (41)

South Dakota (42)

Tennessee (43)

Texas (44)
Utah (45)
Vermont (46)
Virginia (47)
Washington (48)
West Virginia (49)
Wisconsin (50)
Wyoming (51)
District of Columbia (Washington DC) (52)
American Samoa (53)
Guam (54)
Northern Mariana Islands (55)
Puerto Rico (56)
U.S. Virgin Islands (57)

CONDITION

true	false
Question q6_other ()	
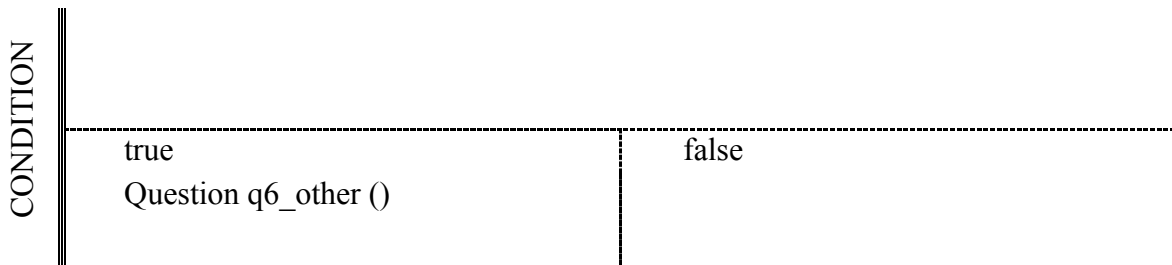
q6_other
[Not required]
Where Outside of the U.S. and its territories (Specify):

END

Condition

q6a
[Not required]

Which of the following best describes where you live?

Military housing, on base (1)
Military housing, off base (2)
Civilian housing (3)

q6b
[Not required]

Is your home in an urban, suburban, or rural area?

Urban (1)
Suburban (2)
Rural (3)

q7
[Not required]
Is your spouse currently living in the same household?
Yes, my spouse and I currently live in same household (1)
No, my spouse is deployed overseas or stationed elsewhere (2)
No, my spouse and I live in separate households for other reasons (3)

q8
[Open Text ◆ Numeric ◆ Not required ◆ Lower limit type=Greater or Equal ◆ Upper limit type=Smaller or Equal ◆ Total Digits=3]
How many moves have you made with the military?

(1) _____

CONDITION

f('q8') ['1']!=0 && f('q8')['1'].to Boolean()

| true | false |
| Question () | |

q8a
[Not required]

78
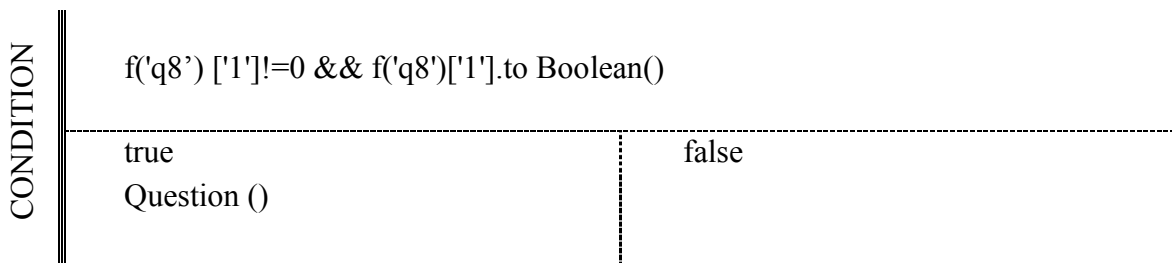
Were any of your military moves to international locations?

Yes, international locations (1)

No, no international locations (2)

q8b

[Open Text ◆ Numeric ◆ Not required ◆ Lower limit type=Greater or Equal ◆ Upper limit type=Smaller or Equal ◆ Total Digits=3]

How many months and years ago was your last move?

Months (1)   _____

and (3)   _____

              _____

Years (2)   _____

END   Condition f('q8') ['1']!=0 && f('q8')['1'].toBoolean()

q9

[Not required]

The Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) is a program run by the Department of Defense (DoD) to reduce unemployment and underemployment experienced by military spouses. The primary function of the MSEP Job Search features available on MySECO is to connect military spouses to employers that want to hire them. This is accomplished by listing MSEP partner employment opportunities for spouses to search.

In the past six months, how often have you visited the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) Job Search feature?

Never used it (1)

Once or twice (2)

Monthly (3)

Once a week (4)

More than once a week (5)

Daily (6)

f('q9')! ='1'

- -

true | false

Question ()

q10
[Not required]

Have you opted to allow employers to search for your resume?

Yes (1)

No: I've never heard of this option (2)

No: I have heard of it, but don't understand what it is (3)

No: I have heard of it, but I do not have a resume ready (4)

No: I have heard of it, but I do not see the value (5)

q11
[Not required]

In the past 6 months, how often did you use the following elements of the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) job search feature on the MySECO website?

	Never (1)	Sometimes (2)	Almost Always (3)
Search by keyword or job title (1)	☐	☐	☐
Search by location (2)	☐	☐	☐
Refine your search by industry (3)	☐	☐	☐
Refine your search by MSEP employer partner (4)	☐	☐	☐
Refine your search by job type (e.g., full-time, part-time) (5)	☐	☐	☐
Use "hot jobs" search (6)	☐	☐	☐
Save jobs and/or companies (7)	☐	☐	☐
Build a resume on the portal (8)	☐	☐	☐
Allow MSEP employer partners to search for your resume (9)	☐	☐	☐

f('q11')['1']!='1' || f('q11')['2']!='1' || f('q11')['3']!='1' || f('q11')['4']!='1' || f('q11')['5']!='1' || f('q11')['6']!='1' || f('q11')['7']!='1' || f('q11')['8']!='1' || f('q11')['9']!='1'

true	false
Question s2()	

q12
[Not required]

How easy were the features to use?

	Very Easy to Use (1)	Easy to Use (2)	Difficult to use (3)	Very difficult to use (4)
Search by keyword or job title (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Search by location (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Refine your search by industry (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Refine your search by MSEP employer partner (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Refine your search by job type (e.g., full-time, part-time) (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use "hot jobs" search (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Save jobs and/or companies (7)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Build a resume on the portal (8)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Allow MSEP employer partners to search for your resume (9)	☐	☐	☐	☐

END
Condition f('q11')['1']!='1' || f('q11')['2']!='1' || f('q11')['3']!='1' || f('q11')['4']!='1' || f('q11')['5']!='1' || f('q11')['6']!='1' || f('q11')['7']!='1' || f('q11')['8']!='1' || f('q11')['9']!='1'

END
Condition f('q9')!='1'

q13
[Not required]

In the past 6 months, have you visited any of the following social media pages?

	Never Used It (1)	Once or Twice (2)	Monthly (3)	Once a Week (4)	More than Once a Week (5)	Daily (6)
SECO Instagram (@DoDMilSpouse) (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SECO Twitter (@DoDMilSpouse) (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SECO Facebook (@DoDMilSpouse) (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Military One Source Twitter (@military1Source) (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

q14

[Not required]

Are you a member of the LinkedIn MSEP Spouse Group?

Yes (1)

No (2)

CONDITION

f('q14')=='1'

true
Question q15()

false

q15

[Not required]

In the last 6 months, have you used the LinkedIn MSEP Spouse Group?

Never used it (1)
Once or twice (2)
Monthly (3)
Once a week (4)
More than once a week (5)
Daily (6)

Condition f('q14')=='1'

q16
[Not required]

Thinking about your most recent job search, when did you first use the MSEP Job Search feature of MySECO?

I started using the MSEP Job Search feature:

At the beginning of my job search (1)
1–3 months after starting a job search (2)
3–6 months after starting a job search (3)
Greater than 6 months after starting a job search (4)

q17
[Not required]
At the time you first started using the MSEP Job Search feature were you employed?

Yes (1)
No (2)

q17a
[Not required]

Were any of the following true at the time you first started using the MSEP Job Search feature?

Please check all that apply:

I was in school (1)
I was employed part-time, earning wages (2)
I was employed full-time, earning wages (3)
I was not employed (4)
I was moving or had just moved to a new home (5)

q18
[Not required]

Compared to other job search web sites you have used; how easy would you say the MSEP Job Search feature is to use?

Among the most difficult to use (1)
Slightly more difficult than average (2)
Average ease of use (3)
Slightly easier to use than most (4)
One of the easiest to use job websites (5)
I don't know (I haven't used any other job search web site) (6)

q19
[Not required]

How often was the information in the MSEP Job Search feature out of date?

I almost never encountered out of date information (1)
Sometimes information was out of date (2)
Most of the time the information was out of date (3)

q20
[Not required]

For the next set of questions, we'd like to know how useful the MSEP Job Search feature of the MySECO website has been for your job search. We ask about "relevant" jobs. A "relevant" job is one that best fits your current circumstances and meets your current employment needs.

Thinking about your most recent visit to the MSEP Job Search feature in which you did a job search . . .

About how long did you need to spend before finding relevant jobs?

Less than 10 minutes (1)
10–30 minutes (2)

31–60 minutes (3)
More than an hour (4)
I never found a relevant job that fit my needs (5)

q21
[Not required]

Thinking about your most recent visit to the MSEP Job Search feature in which you did a job search . . .

How many relevant job postings did you find that were available near you?

0 (1)
1–3 (2)
4–10 (3)
10+ (4)

q22
[Not required]

Thinking about your most recent visit to the MSEP Job Search feature in which you did a job search . . .

How many relevant job postings did you find that offered telework opportunities?

0 (1)
1–3 (2)
4–10 (3)
10+ (4)

q23
[Not required]

Thinking about your most recent visit to the MSEP Job Search feature in which you did a job search . . .

How often did you find relevant job postings in the general salary range you were looking for?

Almost never (1)
Sometimes (2)
Most were in my desired salary range (3)

q24
[Not required]

How would you rate the 3 most recent job postings you found?

	Very Bad (1)	Bad (2)	Good (3)	Very Good (4)	I don't know (job posting did not have information about this) (5)
Job Posting #1 (16)					
Hours (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pay (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Benefits (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Flexibility (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Job Posting #2 (17)					
Hours (7)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pay (8)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Benefits (9)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Flexibility (10)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Job Posting #3 (18)					
Hours (12)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pay (13)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Benefits (14)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Flexibility (15)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

q25
[Not required]

Did you obtain any interviews based on jobs you found through the MSEP Job Search feature?
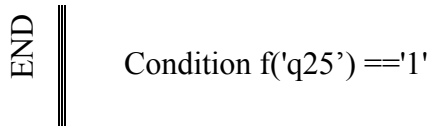
Yes (1)
No (2)
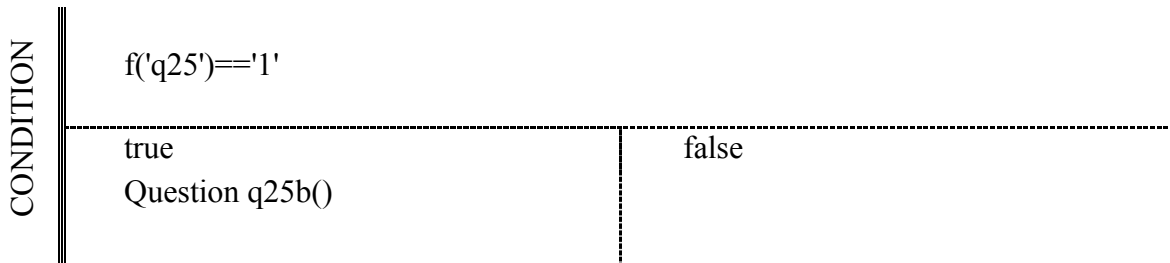
q25b
[Open Text ◆ Numeric ◆ Not required ◆ Lower limit type=GreaterOrEqual ◆ Upper limit type=SmallerOrEqual ◆ Total Digits=3]

About how many interviews did you obtain based on jobs you found through the MSEP Job Search feature?

(1)   _____

q26
[Not required]

Did you ultimately find a job as a result of your job search?

Yes, and I encountered this job only on the MSEP Job Search feature (1)
Yes, but I encountered this job on the MSEP Job Search feature and through different resources (for example, on other job search websites or through personal connections) (2)
Yes, and I don't know if the job was only on the MSEP Job Search feature or not (5)
No, the job I finally secured was not on the MSEP Job Search feature (3)
No, I did not secure a job (4)

q27

We now would like to know more about resources outside of the MSEP Job Search feature on the MySECO website that you use.

In the past 6 months, which employment resources have you used? Please check all that apply

Military Resources (99)
Phone call with SECO career coach (1)
Online chat with SECO career coach (2)
MySECO web site: On-line resources (3)
My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) scholarship (4)
Military spouse's employment support services at your spouse's installation (5)
Military OneSource web site (6)
MSEP virtual or online job fair (7)
Other: (Do not enter Personally Identifiable Information) (8) _____ [Other]
Non-Military Resources (98)
In-person job fair (9)
Virtual or online job fair (10)
The website "USAjobs.com," "Monster.com" or other job search portal (11)
Hiring our Heroes events (12)
Non-profit organization that supports military spouses and families, for example: The Air Force Association, The Association of the United States Army, The Military Officers Association of America, The Navy League of the United States, The U.S Chamber of Commerce Foundation, The Military Spouse Mentor Program, Hiring our Heroes Military Spouse Professional Network, The Military Spouse Corporation Career Network, The Military Spouse JD Network, The Rosie Network, Blue Star Families, Easter Seals Veteran Staffing Network, The National Military Family Association, The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (13)
Staffing or employment agency (14)
Personal connections with family, friends, or acquaintances to help prepare for job search (for example, reviewing your resume or completing a job application) (15)
Personal connections with family, friends, or acquaintances to find a job (for example, acting as a referral or sending your resume to their company's Human Resources) (16)
Other: (Do not enter Personally Identifiable Information) (17) _____ [Other]

CONDITION	f('q27').to Boolean ()	
	true	false
	Question s2()	

q28

[Not required]

How useful did you find each of these resources in your job search?

	Very useful (1)	Useful (2)	Not at all useful (3)
Military Resources (99)			
Phone call with SECO career coach (1)	☐	☐	☐
Online chat with SECO career coach (2)	☐	☐	☐
MySECO web site: On-line resources (3)	☐	☐	☐
My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) scholarship (4)	☐	☐	☐
Military spouse's employment support services at your spouse's installation (5)	☐	☐	☐
Military OneSource web site (6)	☐	☐	☐
MSEP virtual or online job fair (7)	☐	☐	☐
^f("q27_8_other") ^ (8)	☐	☐	☐
Non-Military Resources (98)			
In-person job fair (9)	☐	☐	☐
Virtual or online job fair (10)	☐	☐	☐
The website "USAjobs.com," "Monster.com" or other job search portal (11)	☐	☐	☐
Hiring our Heroes events (12)	☐	☐	☐
Non-profit organization that supports military spouses and families, for example: The Air Force Association, The Association of the United States Army, The Military Officers Association of America, The Navy League of the United States, The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, The Military Spouse Mentor Program, Hiring our Heroes Military Spouse Professional Network, The Military Spouse Corporation Career Network, The Military Spouse JD Network, The Rosie Network, Blue Star Families, Easter Seals Veteran Staffing Network, The National Military Family Association, The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (13)	☐	☐	☐
Staffing or employment agency (14)	☐	☐	☐
Personal connections with family, friends, or acquaintances to help prepare for job search (for example, reviewing your resume or completing a job application) (15)	☐	☐	☐
Personal connections with family, friends, or acquaintances to find a job (for example, acting as a referral or sending your resume to their company's Human Resources) (16)	☐	☐	☐

	Very useful (1)	Useful (2)	Not at all useful (3)
^f("q27_17_other")^ (17)	☐	☐	☐

END ‖ Condition f('q27').to Boolean ()

q29
[Not required]

We'd like to know a little bit more about your employment status.

Are you currently engaged in paid employment?

Yes, I work for myself/own my own business (1)
Yes, I work for someone else (2)
No (3)

CONDITION ‖ f('q29')! ='3'

true	false
Question ()	

q30
[Not required]
In which occupation do you work?
Accounting (1)
Architecture (2)
Art and Design (3)
Building and Grounds Maintenance (4)
Business and Financial (5)
Community and Social Services (6)
Computer and Information Technology (7)
Construction and Extraction (8)
Education and Training (9)

Engineering (10)

Entertainment (11)

Farming, Fishing, Forestry (12)

Food Preparation and Serving (13)

Healthcare (14)

Installation, Maintenance, and Repair (15)

Legal (16)

Library Science (17)

Life, Physical, and Social Science (18)

Management (19)

Mathematics (20)

Media and Communication (21)

Military (22)

Office and Administrative Support (23)

Personal Care and Service (24)

Production (25)

Protective Services (26)

Sales (27)

Sports (28)

Transportation and Material Moving (29)

Other: (Do not enter Personally Identifiable Information) (30)

q30_other
[Not required]

q31
[Not required]

Do you work full time or part time?

Full time (1)

Part time (2)

q32
[Not required]

Are you satisfied with the number of hours each week you work?

No: I am part-time, but would prefer full-time (1)
No: I am full-time, but would prefer part-time (2)
Yes (3)

q33
[Not required]

Do you ever work from home or do some other kind of remote work/telework?

Yes (1)
No (2)

q34
[Not required]
Does your current employer offer telework opportunities?
Yes: but I am not eligible to work from home (1)
Yes: I am eligible, but I choose not to work from home (2)
Yes: I am eligible and choose to work from home when I can (3)
No (4)

q35
[Not required]

How satisfied are you with your current job?

Very unsatisfied (1)
Unsatisfied (2)
Satisfied (3)
Very satisfied (4)

f('q35'). any('1','2')

| true | false |
| Question q36() | |

q36

What are the main factors that reduce your satisfaction with your current job? Please check all that apply.

Too little pay (1)

Too few hours of work (2)

Too many hours of work (3)

The days and times are not flexible or don't align with my family's schedule (4)

Too far from home (5)

Doesn't align well with my previous work experience (6)

Doesn't align well with my education-level, expertise or training (7)

Doesn't align well with my professional or career goals (8)

Lacks job security (9)

No or poor benefits (10)

Other: (Do not enter Personally Identifiable Information) (11)_____ [Other]

Condition f('q35').any('1','2')

f('q35').any('3','4')

| true | false |
| Question q37() | |

q37

What are the main factors that make you so satisfied with your current job? Please check all that apply.

Pay is good or sufficient (1)

The number of hours per week is right for me (2)

I have a flexible schedule (3)

Location is close to home (4)

Aligns well with my previous work experience (5)

Aligns well with my education-level, expertise or training (6)

Aligns well with my professional career goals (7)

Provides job security (8)

Benefits are good (9)

Fills my time/gives me something to do (10)

Other: (Do not enter Personally Identifiable Information) (11) _____ [Other]

END ‖ Condition f('q35'). any('3','4')

q38
[Not required]

If you wanted to, do you believe you would be able to stay employed with your current employer or transfer within this organization in your next military move?

Yes (1)

No (2)

END ‖ Condition f('q29')!='3'

q39
[Not required]

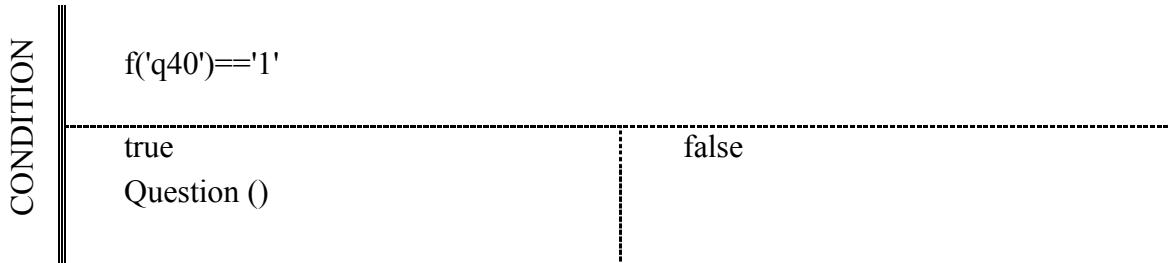Are you currently engaged in an unpaid internship or volunteer work?

Yes (1)

No (2)

q40
[Not required]

In the last four weeks, have you actively searched for employment?

Yes (1)
No (2)

CONDITION

f('q40')=='1'

true	false
Question ()	

q41
[Not required]
In what type of occupation are you looking for work?

Accounting (1)
Architecture (2)
Art and Design (3)
Building and Grounds Maintenance (4)
Business and Financial (5)
Community and Social Services (6)
Computer and Information Technology (7)
Construction and Extraction (8)
Education and Training (9)
Engineering (10)
Entertainment (11)
Farming, Fishing, Forestry (12)
Food Preparation and Serving (13)
Healthcare (14)
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair (15)
Legal (16)
Library Science (17)
Life, Physical, and Social Science (18)
Management (19)
Mathematics (20)
Media and Communication (21)
Military (22)

Office and Administrative Support (23)
Personal Care and Service (24)
Production (25)
Protective Services (26)
Sales (27)
Sports (28)
Transportation and Material Moving (29)
Other: (Do not enter Personally Identifiable Information) (30)

q41_other
[Not required]

---

q42
[Not required]

Are you looking for entry-level work, or do you already have some experience in this field?

Entry level (1)
I have relevant experience (2)

q43
[Not required]
If you are currently employed, what is the main reason you are looking for a new employer?

Not currently employed (1)
My job doesn't offer the hours, pay or benefits I need (2)
My job doesn't match my skills, interests or experience (3)
My job isn't flexible enough to be compatible with family obligations (4)
My job is going away, through downsizing or a business closing (5)
I am moving (6)
I am unsatisfied with my job for other reasons please explain: (Do not enter Personally Identifiable Information) (7)_____ [Other]

Condition f('q40')=='1'

q44

[Not required]

Do any children under the age of 21, including step-children and/or foster children, depend on you [and/or your spouse] for their financial support?

Yes (1)
No (2)

f('q44')=='1'

true	false
Question q44a()	

q44a

[Open Text ◆ Numeric ◆ Not required ◆ Lower limit=0 ◆ Lower limit type=GreaterOrEqual ◆ Upper limit=15 ◆ Upper limit type=SmallerOrEqual]

How many dependent children do you have in each age range?

Under 2 years: (1)   _____
2–5 years: (2)   _____
6–13 years: (3)   _____
14–21 years: (4)   _____

f('q44a')['1']!=0 || f('q44a')['2']!=0 || f('q44a')['3']!=0 || f('q44a')['4']!=0

true	false
Question q44b()	

q44b

[Open Text ◆ Numeric ◆ Not required ◆ Lower limit=0 ◆ Lower limit type=GreaterOrEqual ◆ Upper limit=15 ◆ Upper limit type=SmallerOrEqual]

How many of your dependent children live with you at least half the time?

Under 2 years: (1)   _____

2–5 years: (2)   _____

6–13 years: (3)   _____

14–21 years: (4)   _____

END ‖ Condition f('q44a')['1']!=0 || f('q44a')['2']!=0 || f('q44a')['3']!=0 || f('q44a')['4']!=0

END ‖ Condition f('q44')=='1'

q45

[Not required]

What is your highest level of education?

Less than high school degree (1)

High school degree or GED (2)

Some college (3)

Associate degree (4)

Bachelor's degree (5)

Professional degree (e.g., M.A., J.D., M.D.) or higher (e.g., Ph.D.) (6)

q46

[Not required]

Do you have any professional or occupational certifications?

Yes (1)

No (2)

q46a

[Not required]

Commercial driver's license (CDL) (1)

Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification (2)

Other: (3)_____ [Other]

q47
[Not required]

What is your spouse's highest level of education?

Less than high school degree (1)
High school degree or GED (2)
Some college (3)
Associate degree (4)
Bachelor's degree (5)
Professional degree (e.g., M.A., J.D., M.D.) or higher (e.g., Ph.D.) (6)

q48
[Not required]

Are you Hispanic/Latino?

No, not Hispanic/Latino (1)
Yes, Hispanic/Latino (2)

q49
[Not required]

What is your race? Mark one or more races to indicate what you consider yourself to be. Please check all that apply.

White (1)
Black or African American (2)
American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
Asian (e.g., Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, or Vietnamese) (4)
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (e.g., Samoan, Guamanian, or Chamorro) (5)
Other: (Do not enter Personally Identifiable Information) (6)_____ [Other]

q50
[Not required]

In 2018, about how much was your family's total yearly household income (before taxes)?

Less than $20,000 (1)
Between $20,001 and $40,000 (2)
Between $40,001 and $60,000 (3)
Between $60,001 and $80,000 (4)
Between $80,001 and $100,000 (5)
More than $100,001 (6)
email1 -
[Open Text ◆ Not required]
Thank you for taking your time to complete this survey!
Please hit 'SUBMIT'!

Do you want to tell us more?

To be contacted for a confidential follow up 30 minute conversation about your experiences with MSEP, your job search, and employment experiences as a military spouse, please enter your email address or phone number in the boxes below. If you do not wish to be contacted, simply leave these fields blank.
Please hit SUBMIT to send us your answers

Email address: (1) _____

phone
[Open Text ◆ Numeric ◆ Not required ◆ Lower limit type=GreaterOrEqual ◆ Upper limit type=SmallerOrEqual ◆ Total Digits=15 ◆ Columns=30]

Phone Number: (1) _____

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