



## **Survey of Transitioning Service Members: Summary Report**

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## 1. Overview

This survey was made possible by a grant from the North Carolina Military Affairs Commission (NC MAC) Community Grant Program. The project was part of the ongoing effort to enhance the state's position and relationship with Department of Defense military installations in North Carolina.

The survey gathered information on issues of importance to the Department of Defense and to the state of North Carolina. The survey sought to gain clarity into the decisions that transitioning service members make regarding where to reside after exiting the service and to learn what the state and local communities could do better to assist transitioning services members.

More specifically, service members leaving active-duty military service in North Carolina were surveyed to (a) determine where they plan to reside after exiting the service; (b) identify the factors influencing their location decisions, (c) get service member perspectives on the extent to which changes in North Carolina attributes may be likely to change post-service location decisions.

The 2015 NC MAC report on *The Economic Impact of the Military on North Carolina*<sup>1</sup> indicated that in 2014 the 775,000 military veterans in North Carolina received \$8.2 billion in retirement income, disability income, medical care, and educational benefits. Each North Carolina veteran thus averages over \$10,000 per person in retirement, pension, disability income and indirect payments on their behalf—even though most are leaving the service well before retirement age.

The 2015 report estimated that veterans' pensions alone supported 47,000 jobs in the state. The contribution of veterans and their families to local economies is much greater still, as these individuals bring skills valued by many organizations, and these skills enable business growth that in many cases would otherwise not occur. Thus, by better understanding what factors are considered important by veterans in deciding where to live, state and local government agencies will be in a better position to make policy decisions that yield greater regional economic returns through greater veteran presence.

## 2. Study Sites/Locations

The sites/locations for the study included military installations throughout North Carolina.<sup>2</sup>

**Ft. Bragg:** Ft. Bragg is in Cumberland County, North Carolina, which has an approximate population of 335,000. The closest large city to Ft. Bragg is Fayetteville (approximate population 209,000). Ft. Bragg is also the largest employer in the area.

**Seymour Johnson Air Force Base:** Seymour Johnson is in Wayne County, North Carolina, which has an approximate population of 117,000. The closest large city to Seymour Johnson is Goldsboro (approximate population 34,000).

**Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune:** Camp Lejeune is in Onslow County, North Carolina, which has an approximate population of 205,000. The closest city is Jacksonville (approximate population 73,000).

**Marine Corps Air Station New River:** MCAS New River is in Onslow County, North Carolina. The closest city is Jacksonville.

**US Coast Guard Sector North Carolina:** USCG Sector North Carolina is in New Hanover County, North Carolina, which has approximate population of 226,000. The closest city is Wilmington (approximate population 1150,000).

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<sup>1</sup> The Economic Impact of the Military on North Carolina. Joshua Levy, North Carolina Department of Commerce, Labor & Economic Analysis Division (LEAD), 2015. <https://connect.ncdot.gov/resources/BUILD2020-FB/Documents/Economic%20Impact%20of%20the%20Military%20on%20North%20Carolina.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Population figures for the study sites were gathered from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/northcarolina>

**Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point:** MCAS Cherry Point is in Craven County, North Carolina, which has an approximate population of 101,000. The closest city is Havelock (approximate population 17,000).

**US Coast Guard Elizabeth City:** USCG Elizabeth City is in Pasquotank County, North Carolina, which has an approximate population of 41,000. The nearest city in Pasquotank County is Elizabeth City (approximate population 19,000).

### 3. Methodology

The survey was conducted over several months, with the final surveys collected in January 2022. The survey was available to service members that were in required transition classes in preparation of leaving active military service. Participation in the survey was voluntary. Service members took the survey electronically (computer or smartphone) and it took approximately 15 minutes to complete. The goal of this convenience sampling survey was to have as many respondents as possible, and from as many site locations as possible. The survey was confidential and no incentives were provided to participants. The online survey method was selected as online surveying is a cost-efficient and effective method of obtaining data.<sup>3</sup> The target population was active-duty military stationed at North Carolina military installations. The sampling frame was service members that were in the process of transitioning out of military service and were attending a transition class.

### 4. Respondent Demographics

#### **Branch of Service:**

Most respondents selected Army as their branch of service. This observation is not surprising as the survey was first deployed at Fort Bragg, which is the largest installation in the state.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Rank:**

The largest percentage of respondents identified their current rank as being in the E-5 to E-7 range. The next largest percentage was in the E-1 to E-4 range.

#### **Gender:**

Approximately 80% of the respondents were male and 19% were female. While not exact, these results tend to mirror the overall numbers of men and women serving in uniform (in terms of percentages).<sup>5</sup>

#### **Race/Ethnicity:**

60% of the respondents identified as White. Approximately 14% identified as African American/Black. Another 13% identified as Hispanic/Latin American.

#### **Marital Status:**

Approximately 64% indicated they were currently married and 25% indicated they were single and had never been married.

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<sup>3</sup> A Tale of Two Diverse Qualtrics Samples: Information for Online Survey Researchers. Carrie A. Miller, Jeanine P.D. Guidry, Bassam Dahman and Maria D. Thomson. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev* April 1 2020 (29) (4) 731-735; DOI: 10.1158/1055-9965.EPI-19-0846

<sup>4</sup> <https://home.army.mil/bragg/index.php/my-fort-bragg/newcomers>

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Defense; Military OneSource, 2020 2020 Demographics Profile; <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/data-research-and-statistics/military-community-demographics/2020-demographics-profile/>

## 5. Survey Questions

The survey contained 41 questions, including the above referenced demographic questions. The survey is included with this report as an attachment.

## 6. Results/Findings

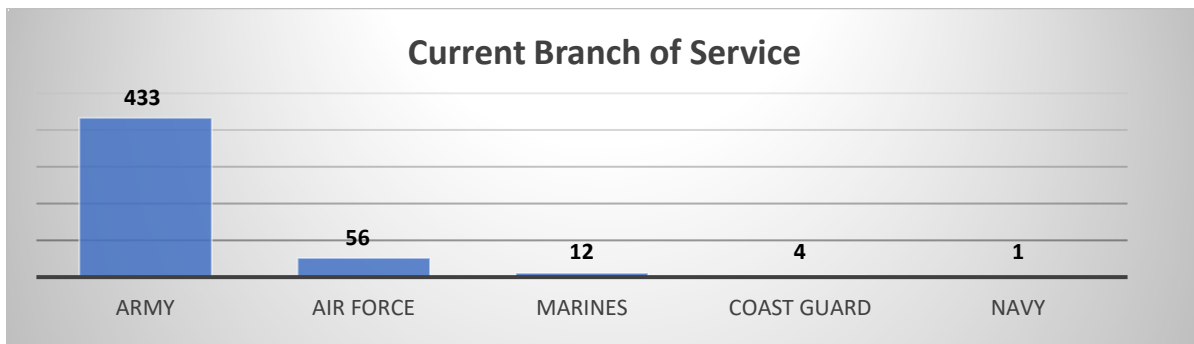
A subset of questions is presented for survey analysis. The first results reviewed include all survey participants. A goal of this survey was to distinguish between those service members that have decided to remain in North Carolina after completing their military service compared to those that have decided to reside in a different state. As such, there is a section of this report that lays out the differences (and similarities) between the two groups (the leave group and the stay group) on multiple questions. Another section is devoted to service member comments and ratings regarding the transition process itself. The results are presented and discussed in descriptive and qualitative terms. This descriptive method of data presentation mirrors that of the U.S. Army Career Engagement Survey.<sup>6</sup> Also, note that the presentation of results does not consistently follow the order in which the questions appeared on the survey. For instance, some of the demographic related questions appeared at the beginning of the survey, while others appeared much later in the actual survey. However, for discussion purposes they are presented together. To avoid confusion, the question numbers have been omitted from the assessment (the complete survey appears as an attachment at the end of this report).

### 6.1. Combined Observations for All Respondents

#### Current Branch of Service

As represented in Chart 1, most of the survey participants were Army (433), followed by Air Force (56), Marines (12), Coast Guard (4), and Navy (1).

Chart 1: Branch of Service



#### Where are You Currently Stationed

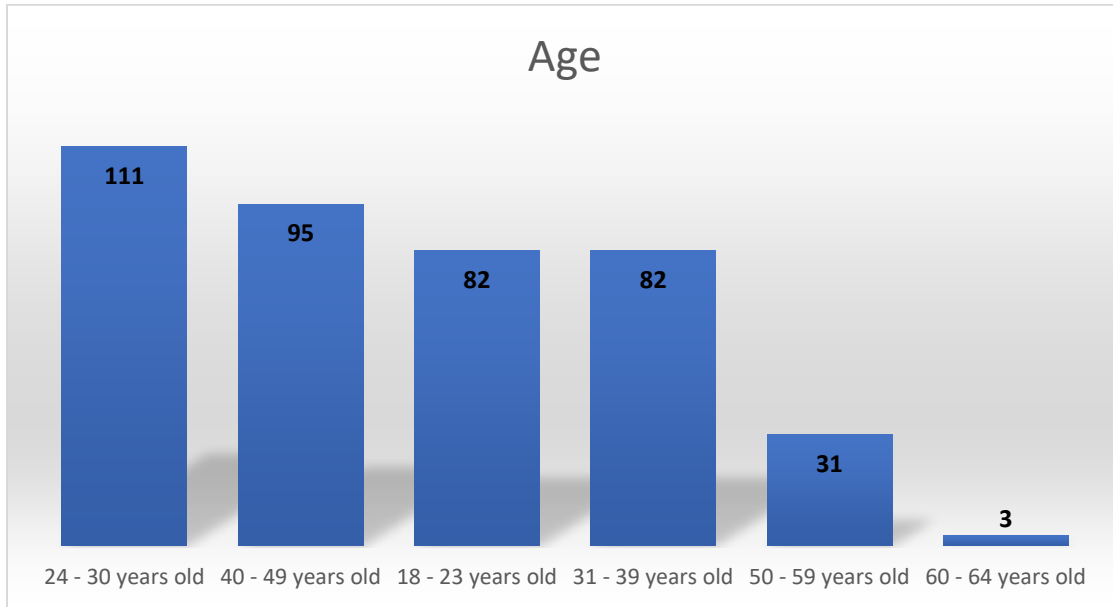
Most respondents (411) indicated Fort Bragg as their current duty station.

#### What is Your Age

The most common age range for respondents was 24 to 30. The second most common age range was 40 to 49, followed by a tie with 18 to 23 and 31 to 39. The full age array is presented below in Chart 2.

<sup>6</sup> Department of the Army Career Engagement Survey, First Annual Report, June 2021; prepared by Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, Headquarters, Department of the Army & People Analytics, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower & Reserve Affairs); Authors: Loryana L. Vie; Maj Eric V, Trivette; and Adam D. Lathrop

Chart 2: Age



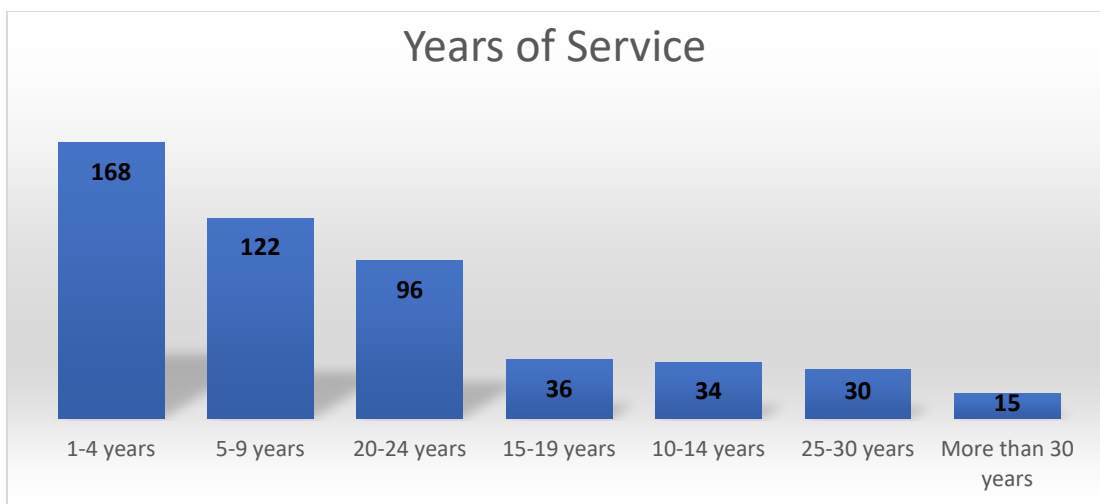
**Current Marital Status**

259 respondents indicated they are married, 101 are single, and 41 divorced. 39 of the married respondents indicated their spouse was also an active-duty service member. 144 (24%) of the married respondents indicated that their spouse prefers they leave the military.

**Total Years of Service**

Displayed in Chart 3, the most common response for years of service was 1 to 4 years (168), followed by 5 to 9 years (122), and 20 to 24 years (96).

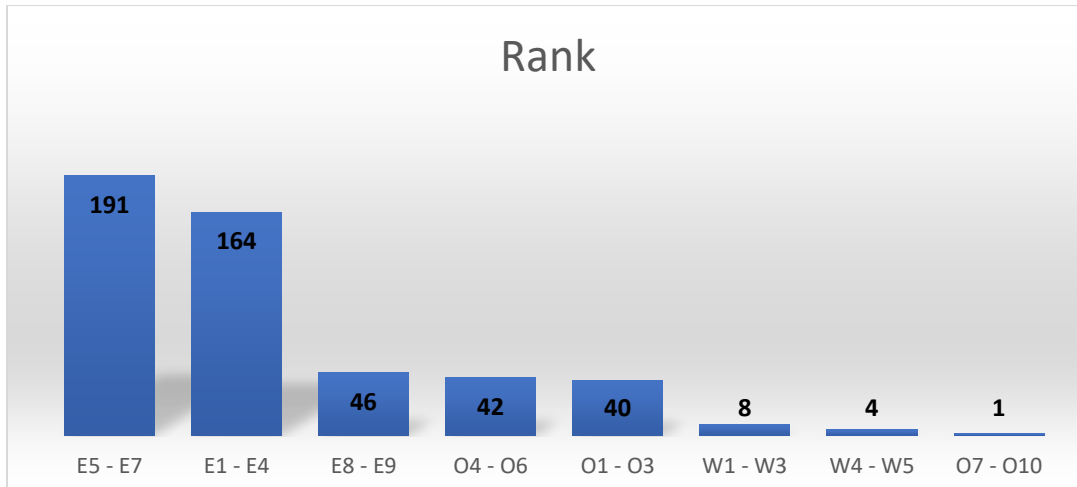
Chart 3: Total Years of Service



### Current Military Rank

Service members were asked to provide their current rank. As seen below in Chart 4, the most common response for rank was E-5 to E7 (191), followed by E-1 to E-4 (164).

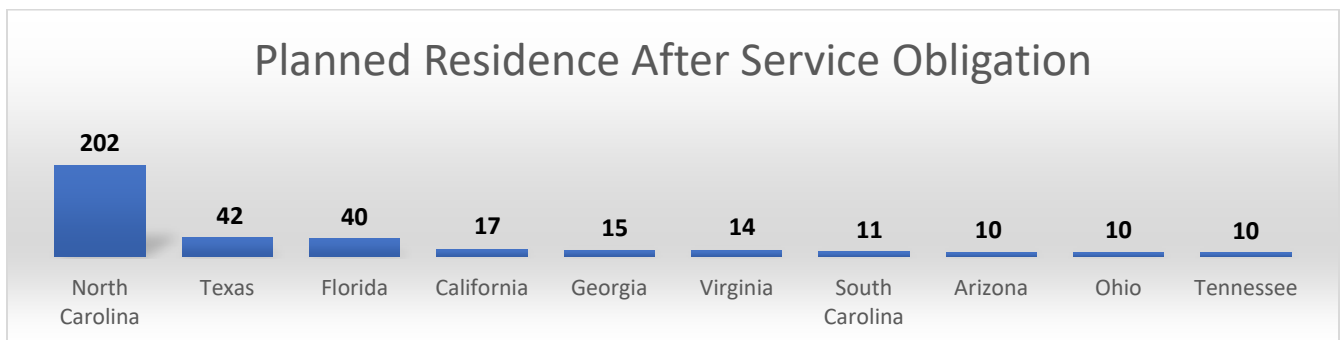
Chart 4: Current Military Rank



### In What State Do You Plan to Live After You End Your Full-time Military Service

This question (represented by Chart 5) was included to help determine how many service members intended to remain in North Carolina after transitioning out of the military. This question is one of the most important for policy makers. This question can assist policy makers in creating military-friendly policies geared toward increasing the number of service members that choose to stay in North Carolina after their service obligation has ended. 498 service members responded to this question. Results show North Carolina as the predominant choice (202 or 40%). This can be interpreted as a positive outcome for North Carolina. The remaining 60% chose from 43 different states (10 service members indicated another country for their future residence, but did not specify a location). The chart displays states selected by 10 or more respondents.

Chart 5: Planned Residence





**A Closer Look at Residence After Transitioning from Military Service**

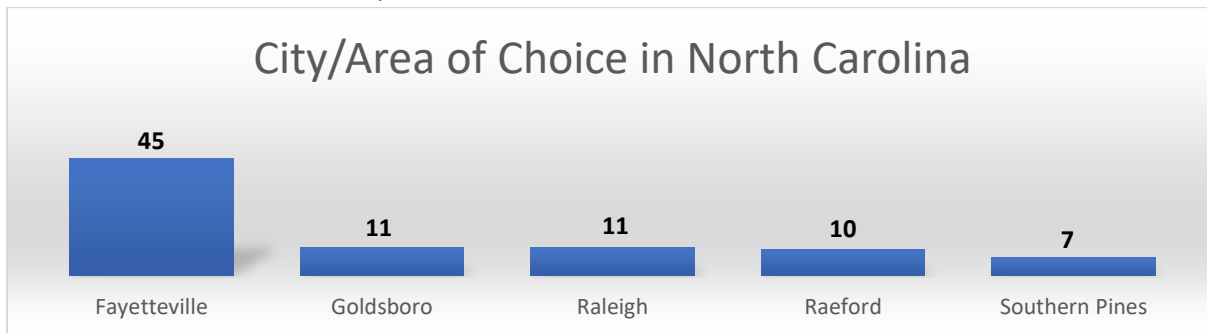
When looking at preferred residence closer, states that neighbor North Carolina were not necessarily in close consideration. Instead, we see that after North Carolina, the 2 other most favored states were Texas and Florida. Both Texas and Florida do not have state income taxes which may speak to their popularity.

When considering neighboring/nearby states, Georgia and Virginia tax military retirement pay, South Carolina levies a partial tax, and Tennessee has no state income tax as well. It should also be noted that 196 respondents (39%) lived in their selected state prior to starting their military career.

**If You Plan to Live in North Carolina After Leaving Military Service, Please Indicate the City/Towns Within the State That You Are Considering, Listing the Most Likely Choices First**

For individuals that would stay in North Carolina, the predominant city/area of first choice was Fayetteville, followed by Goldsboro, Raleigh, Raeford, and Southern Pines. The top locations are presented in Chart 6 below. Collectively, service members selected approximately 60 locations in the state for as a future residence.

Chart 6: North Carolina City of First Choice



**In Deciding Where to Live After Completing Your Full-Time Military Service, Please Indicate Which of the Factors Were Among the Top 3 Most Important and Which Other Factors May Have Been Important, But Were Not Among the Top 3**

Service members were presented with a list of 24 factors and asked to decide if each individual factor was among the top 3 factors in deciding where to live, or if the factor was important but not a top 3 factor (for a complete list of the factors please see survey question 17). Of the 24 factors, three stand out as receiving greater than 50% support for being a top 3 factor and are represented below in Table 1.

Table 1: Top 3 Factors

Factor	Top 3	Important But Not Top 3	Total
Availability of multiple employment opportunities that fit my goals	185	145	330
Great housing values---Attractive housing and neighborhoods at affordable costs	161	152	313
General cost of living	187	138	325

### Retiring and Preferred Residence

Table 2 provides cross tabulation results for retiring service members by those choosing to remain in North Carolina. 163 service members indicated they were retiring. Eighty-nine retiring service member selected North Carolina as their residence, while 74 indicated they would live elsewhere.

Table 2: Retiring and Staying in North Carolina

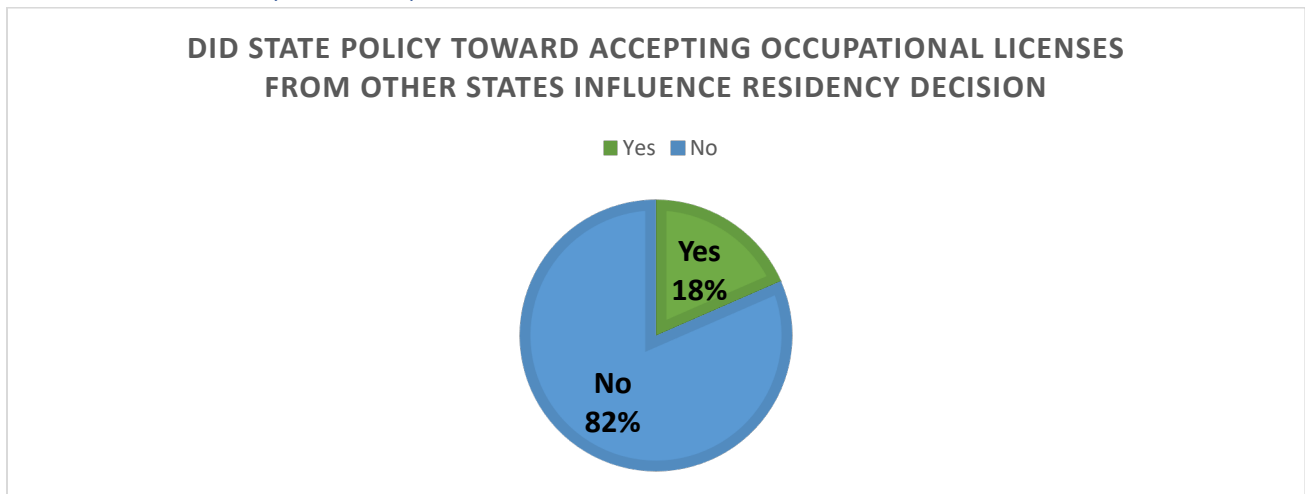
# of Respondents	Retiring	Other Separation	Total
Reside in NC	89	112	201
Not reside in NC	74	221	292
Total	163	333	493

% of Respondents	Retiring	Other Separation	Total
Reside in NC	55%	34%	41%
Not reside in NC	45%	66%	59%
Total	100%	100%	100%

### In Deciding Where to Live, Did North Carolina's Policy Toward Accepting Professional Occupational Licenses Granted in Other States Play a Role with Respect to Licenses You or Your Spouse Previously Earned

411 respondents answered this question. As shown in Chart 7, most respondents indicated the state's policy did not impact their residency decision. While the state has made moves to make the accepting of certain out of state licenses easier, there is still no "Universal License Recognition."<sup>7</sup> For the current survey, the occupational license issue does not appear to be a major concern in terms of influencing service members to remain in North Carolina after separating from active service.

Chart 7: State Policy on Occupational Licenses



<sup>7</sup> See Senate Bill 545, Universal Licensure Recognition Act, April 6, 2021

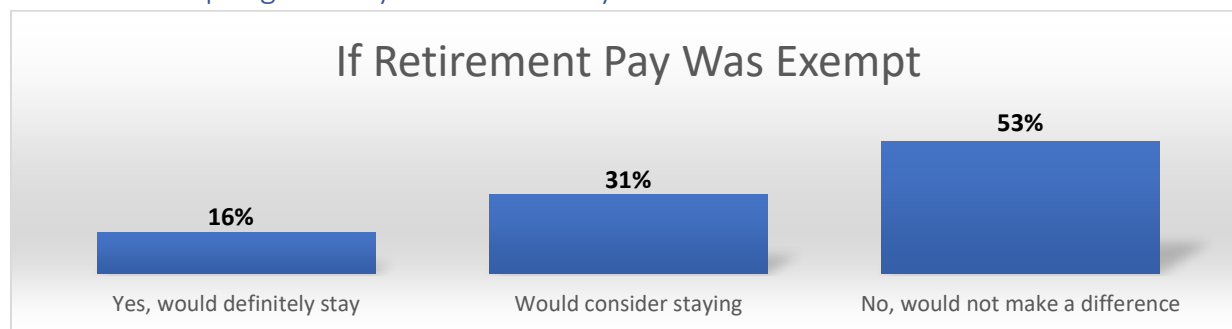
## The North Carolina Legislature is Considering a Bill That Would Exempt Military Retirement Pay from State Income Tax. Would Such an Exemption Cause You to Reconsider Staying in North Carolina

When this survey began a central issue was whether the state's taxing of military retirement pay influenced service member's decisions to remain in North Carolina post service obligation. However, before the conclusion of the survey, state lawmakers changed the North Carolina law to allow for an exemption of retirement pay from state taxes.

With that said, for the data collected prior to and just after the new law was passed, 232 respondents answered the question of whether a state tax exemption would influence their residency decisions (see Chart 8 below). These were respondents that indicated they would be residing in another state after completing their service. 38 respondents (approximately 16%) indicated they would definitely stay in North Carolina if the pay was exempt from state taxes. Another 73 (31%) indicated they would consider staying. And finally, 121 (53%) indicated it would not make a difference.

Despite the passing of the new law, policy makers may still find use for this information on related decision-making choices. Since the passing of the new law, it would be interesting to know how many (if any) of the respondents that answered they would leave, would alter their residency decision and actually remain in the state.

Chart 8: Exempting Military Retirement Pay from State Income Taxes



### Impact of Retirement Pay Tax Exemption by Rank

When looking at the impact of the tax exemption by rank, for those that would definitely stay, the most common rank was E-5 to E-7, followed by E-8 to E-9. In terms of the exemption not making a difference, the leading rank was E-1 to E-4. These results were not unexpected when looking at who answered this question – most of the respondents for this question are in the E-1 to E-7 range, with many of those not retiring, so it is not unexpected that the tax exemption is not of a primary concern.

### Impact of Retirement Pay Tax Exemption for Retiring Service Members

Sixty-four (64) respondents that answered this question indicated they were retiring. Of that group, 19 (30%) indicated they would definitely stay and another 26 (40%) they would consider staying.

### Impact of Retirement Pay Tax Exemption for Those With 20 or More Years of Service

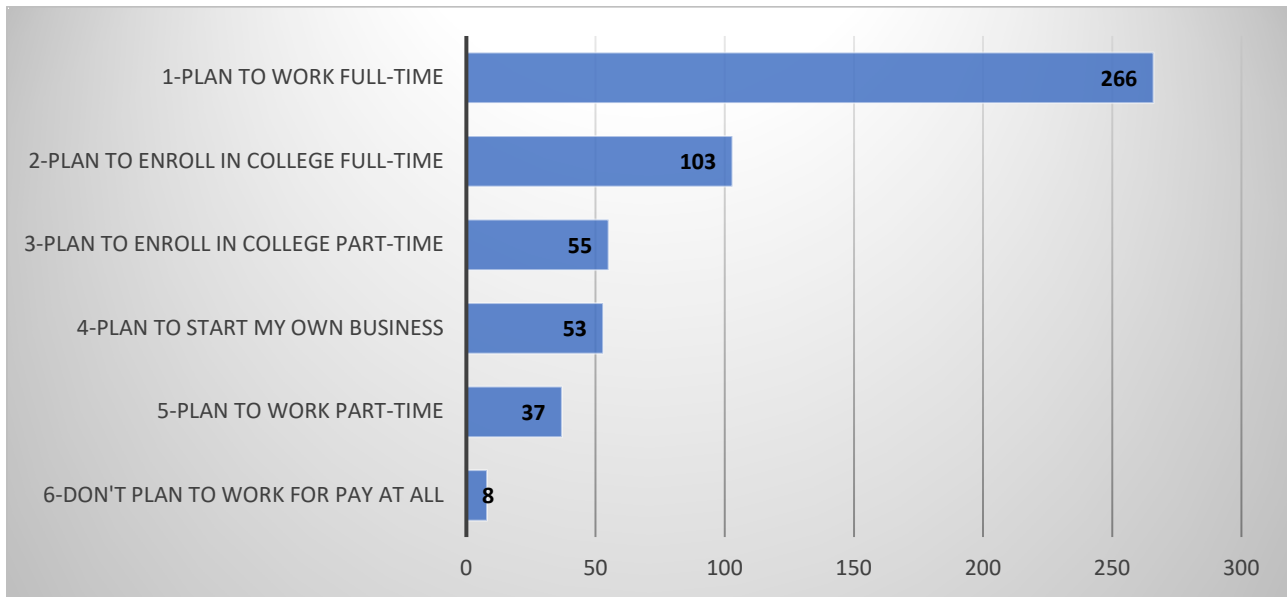
A total of 54 respondents indicated they had 20 or more years of service. 17 (31%) said they would definitely stay if retirement pay was tax exempt and another 23 (43%) indicated they would consider staying.

### Please Indicate Any Plans You Currently Have to Pursue Work or Higher Education within 1 to 1.5 Years After You Leave Full-time Military Service

Service members were asked a series of questions about their plans after completing military

service, including if they had plans to: work full-time, work part-time, start their own business, not work for pay, enroll in college full-time, enroll in college part-time. Two selections stand out: working full-time and attending college full-time. As shown in Chart 9, 266 (44%) service members plan to work full-time and 103 (36%) plan to enroll in college as a full-time student. Importantly, while not noted in the accompanying chart, 116 service members planning to work full-time indicated they would be staying in North Carolina.

Chart 9: Plans within 1 to 1.5 years after leaving military service



### Have You Already Secured Employment

397 respondents answered this question. As shown in Table 3, ninety-eight (25%) indicated they had already secured employment for their post military careers. Thirty-seven of those with secured employment also indicated they would be staying in North Carolina (roughly 38%). This result poses both challenge and opportunity. The challenge lies in developing ways assist service members in finding employment before departing from active service. This concern was expressed by the respondents in the question asking what the state and communities could do better to assist service members (discussed later). The opportunity is that by increasing the availability of jobs in North Carolina, there is also opportunity to increase the number of service members that would elect to remain in the state. As previously noted, the presence of military veterans in the state is a significant financial gain for North Carolina.

Table 3: Already Secured Employment

# of Respondents	Already Secured Employment	Not Secured Employment	Total
<b>Reside in NC</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>Not reside in NC</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>395</b>

% of Respondents	Already Secured Employment	Not Secured Employment	Total
<b>Reside in NC</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Not reside in NC</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

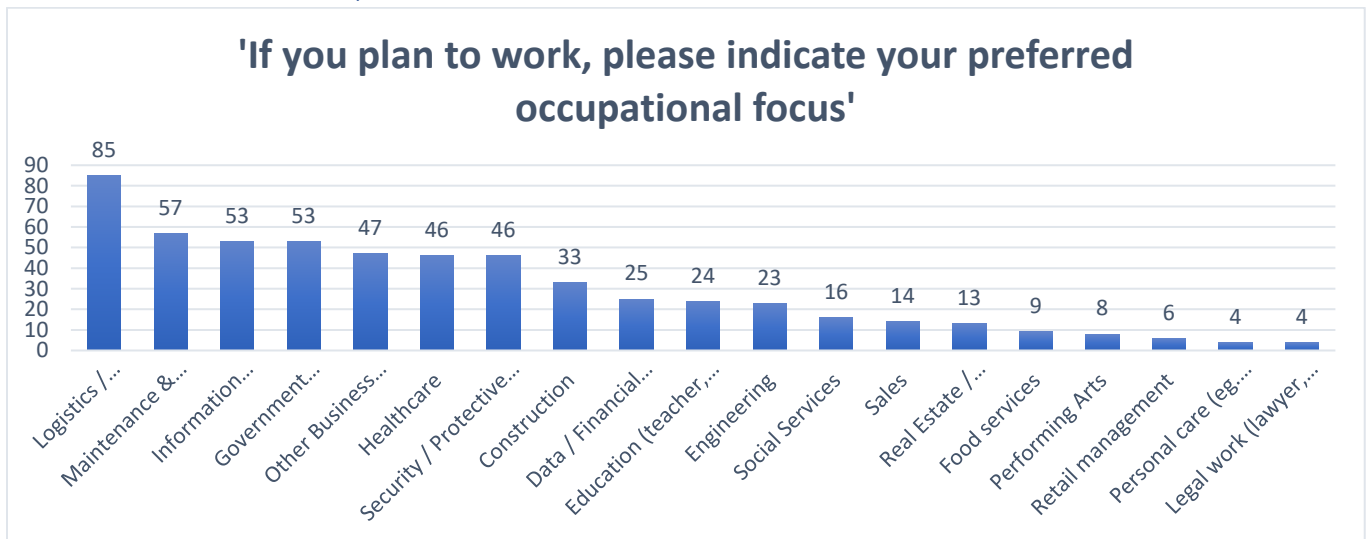
**If You Have Secured a Job, Please Indicate Job Title**

Service members provided a variety of responses for the job titles, including 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher; airframe and powerplant technician; assistant fleet manager; civil engineer; cyber security analyst; family nurse practitioner; FBI agent; laboratory technician; orthopedic physician assistant; production supervisor; project manager; security professional; social media manager; software engineer; teacher’s assistant; VA health care admin.

**If You Plan to Work, Please Indicate Your Preferred Occupational Focus**

The chart below details the fields/areas of employment that service members indicated were the most preferred. The most desired are in the areas of logistics/operational management and maintenance & repair.

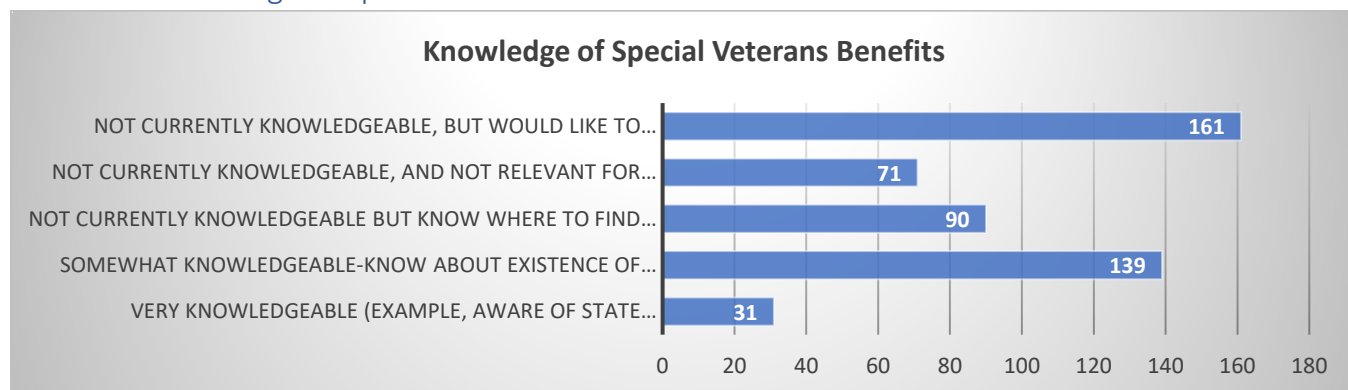
Chart 10: Preferred Occupational Focus



**How Knowledgeable Do You Feel About Special Benefits Currently Available to North Carolina Veterans**

Examples of benefits includes state employment preferences and state scholarships for children of veterans. Chart 11 below shows that there were 493 responses to this question. Just over 6% indicated they were very knowledgeable about special benefits available to North Carolina veterans. 28% indicated they were somewhat knowledgeable. 14% of the respondents indicated they were not knowledgeable and that it did not matter as they were not considering staying in North Carolina.

Chart 11: Knowledge of Special Veterans Benefits



**Do You Have Children That Live with You at Least Part of the Year**

We asked service members if they had children in any of 5 age categories. The categories include Newborn to PreK age range; Kindergarten to 5th grade; 6th to 8th grade; 9th to 12th grade; and College-age (up to age 26). The children live with the service members at least part of the year. 89 service members have children in the Newborn to PreK age range. 77 have children in the kindergarten to 5th grade age grouping. 52 have children in the 6th to 8th grade range. 57 have children in the 9th to 12th grade age range. And finally, 70 service members report having college age dependents.

**What Could the State or Local Communities Do to Better Help You and Your Family Meet Your Goals for Life After the Military**

This gets directly to the heart of what policy makers and community leaders can do in their efforts to keep service members in North Carolina. Service members provided written responses to this open-ended question. Over 150 respondents provided an answer. Table 4 represents a sampling of the of the input and suggestions from the service members. Several service members noted exempting retirement pay from state taxes as being important. Others expressed concern for mental health issues. Another area of importance to service members was gaining easier access to home loans. Still others indicated a preference for cash incentives in lieu of tax breaks. Some of the comments were pointed and direct.

Table 4: What Could State or Local Communities Do to Better Help You & Your Family

What could the state or local communities do to better help you and your family meet your goals for life after the military?
Stop taxing our retirement income that is already mediocre. No retired enlisted can live off retirement. A robust career transition program with local government for those who feel comfortable remaining government employees. Many military MOS (jobs) can be translated into the civilian sector or into other government agencies especially the administrative jobs.
Find job or find school for my spouse
Find ways to attract more high paying jobs. Get rid of the state income tax. Retirement and disability pay should be tax except. No property tax for disabled veterans and gold star families. Teachers and law enforcement should be paid more. Politicians should take a pay cut.
Better public transportation, more bike lanes, more crosswalks, more community garden areas, etc.
Additional internship opportunities and an employment outreach program
Stop the state tax, the ridiculous vehicle tax every year (this is a huge reason I don't want to live here - you are penalized for having a reliable car. It's not worth the hassle. Also the restrictions on Nurse Practitioners are unreasonable and the health of the residents could be much improved - especially in the poor communities with better acceptance of the FNP professional license.

More low cost family activities
Nothing it is fairly adequate compared to most other state transition program. I am only leaving the state because of personal reasons.
Allow Service members to clear while still living in family housing and not leaving us with having to pay a month's rent out of pocket to move out of said housing so we can final out and go to work at a new job
better job opportunities for service members before retiring as they could find out who is retiring and match them with those open jobs in the state/area.
Plenty is being already, thanks.

## 6.2. Descriptive Side-by-side Comparison: Stay vs Leave

### Descriptive Side-by-side Comparison: Staying in North Carolina vs Leaving North Carolina

When comparing the two groups (stay vs leave) on several key variables, some similarities and some differences emerge. The two groups consist of 202 service members that indicated they would stay in North Carolina and 296 that indicated they would leave for another state. As shown in Table 5, for total years of service, for those staying, the largest percentage is for 20-24 years of service; for those leaving it is the 1-4 years category. The most common rank for those staying is E5-E7; for those leaving the most common rank is E1-E4. The most common age for those staying is 40-49; for those leaving it is the 24-30 age group. Not unexpectedly, white males were both most likely to stay and most likely to leave, as they are the largest group in the survey. Married service members were also most likely to stay and most likely to leave (this result is also not unexpected as married service members are overrepresented in both the stay and leave groups). Similarly, service member stationed in North Carolina for 3-6 years were most likely to stay and most likely to leave. The most common reason for transitioning from service for those staying is retirement. Conversely, the most common reason for those leaving was end of obligation. This descriptive demographic analysis indicates the dominant profile of service members staying in North Carolina is older, higher in rank, with more years of service. The dominant profile for those leaving North Carolina is younger, lower in rank, with fewer total years of service.

Table 5: Demographic Comparison Between Those Staying and Those Leaving N.C.

Variable	Stay in North Carolina	<i>n</i>	%	Leave North Carolina	<i>n</i>	%
Total years of service	20-24 years	51	25.4	1-4 years	131	44.4
Current Military Rank	E5 - E7	85	42.3	E1 - E4	121	41.4
Age	40 - 49 years old	52	30.6	24 - 30 years old	71	30.6
Gender	Male	128	75.7	Male	188	81.7
Race/Ethnicity	Caucasian / White	104	61.5	Caucasian / White	139	60.2
Marital Status	Married	125	73.5	Married	133	57.1
# Years Stationed in North Carolina	3 - 6 years	95	47.0	3 - 6 years	156.0	52.9
Highest level of education	Some college, but no degree	51	31.3	Some college, but no degree	60	27.1
Why Are You Transitioning Out of the Service	Retirement	89	44.3	End of obligation	153	51.9

As previously noted, the overall top 3 factors that make preferred location for residence after service obligation standout were: Availability of multiple employment opportunities; Great housing values; and General cost of living. These factors are the only 3 factors that received 50% or more support from the collective group. Table 6 represents a comparison of the top 3 overall factors plus 4 additional factors across the stay and leave groups. The first factor comparison is, High likelihood of working at one specific job already identified. Over 50% of the stay group ranked this as a top 3 factor, compared to only 45% of the leave group. The next factor is, Availability of multiple employment opportunities. Over 50% of both the stay group and leave group ranked this as a top 3 factor. Exemption of military retirement pay from state taxes was rated as a top 3 factor by 45% of the stay group, and only 40% of the leave group. Relatedly, less than 50% of both the stay and leave group rated the Exemption of military disability income from state taxes as a top 3 factor. The next factor is Employment opportunities for spouse. This factor was rated as a top 3 factor for the stay group but not by the leave group. The Presence of extended family members in the state was not a top 3 factor for the stay group. However, 54% of the leave group rated it as a top 3 factor. Great housing values was rated a top 3 factor by the stay group, but only 46% of the leave group rated it top 3. The General cost of living was rated a top 3 factor by both the stay and leave groups.

Table 6: Comparison of Factors That Make Desired Residence Standout

Variable	Category	Stay <i>n</i>	Stay %	Leave <i>n</i>	Leave %
High Likelihood of Working at One Specific Job Already Identified	Top Factor That Really Makes My Preferred Location Stand Out from Others	58	50.4	79	45.1
	Important Factor For Me to Consider--But not top 3	57	49.6	96	54.9
Availability of Multiple Employment Opportunities that Fit My Goals	Top Factor That Really Makes My Preferred Location Stand Out from Others	84	62.7	102	51.3
	Important Factor For Me to Consider--But not top 3	50	37.3	97	48.7
Exemption of military retirement pay from state taxes	Top Factor That Really Makes My Preferred Location Stand Out from Others	52	44.8	74	40
	Important Factor For Me to Consider--But not top 3	64	55.2	111	60
Exemption of military disability income from state taxes	Top Factor That Really Makes My Preferred Location Stand Out from Others	53	46.1	73	39.2
	Important Factor For Me to Consider--But not top 3	62	53.9	113	60.8
Employment Opportunities for Spouse	Top Factor That Really Makes My Preferred Location Stand Out from Others	63	53.8	78	43.3
	Important Factor For Me to Consider--But not top 3	54	46.2	102	56.7
Presence of extended family members in the state	Top Factor That Really Makes My Preferred Location Stand Out from Others	38	35.5	103	54.2
	Important Factor For Me to Consider--But not top 3	69	64.5	87	45.8
General cost of living	Top Factor That Really Makes My Preferred Location Stand Out from Others	81	62.3	108	54.5
	Important Factor For Me to Consider--But not top 3	49	37.7	90	45.5



Table 7 represents the question regarding the issue of North Carolina’s policies toward accepting professional occupational licenses from other states. The overwhelming majority of both the stay and leave groups indicated it was not an important issue in determining where to reside upon leaving active service.

Table 7: Comparison of the Impact of State’s Professional Occupational Licensing Policy on Desired Residence Decision

Variable	Response	Stay <i>n</i>	Stay %	Leave <i>n</i>	Leave %
Professional occupational licenses granted in other states	Yes	39	23.2	33	13.8
	No	129	76.8	207	86.3
	Total	168	100	240	100

Table 8 represents the question regarding plans to pursue work or education within 1 to 1.5 years of leaving the service. Over 50% of both the stay and leave groups plan to work full-time. The next highest ranked category for both the stay and leave group are for plans to enroll in college full-time.

Table 8: Comparing Plans for Work/Education in the next 1 to 1.5 Years

Variable	Category	Stay <i>n</i> =202	Stay %	Leave <i>n</i> =296	Leave %
Plans 1 to 1.5 years after leaving service	Plan to work full-time	116	57.4	149	50.3
	Plan to work part-time	13	6.4	24	8.1
	Plan to start my own business	27	13.4	25	8.4
	Don't plan to work for pay at all	3	1.5	5	1.7
	Plan to enroll in college full-time	37	18.3	66	22.3
	Plan to enroll in college part-time	21	10.4	34	11.5
	Other (please explain)	6	3.0	8	2.7
	Don't know	7	3.5	6	2.0

Table 9 looks at the four most desired occupational areas for employment after leaving the service, there is some commonality and some difference between the stay and leave groups. The most desired occupational focus for employment after transitioning from the service for both the stay and leave groups was in Logistics/Operational Management. This mirrors the overall rating referenced earlier in this report. Maintenance & Repair occupations was also rated among the top four areas for

both the stay and leave groups as well.

Table 9: Comparison of Preferred Occupational Focus

Variable	Category	Stay n=202	Stay %	Leave n=296	Leave %
If you plan to work, indicate preferred occupational focus	Logistics / Operational Management	41	20.3	44	14.9
	Other Business Management	17	8.4	30	10.1
	Security / Protective Services	16	7.9	30	10.1
	Government Administration	27	13.4	25	8.4
	Maintenance & Repair	27	13.4	30	10.1
	Information technology	29	14.4	24	8.1

Table 10 compares the question of whether the service member has already secured employment. 22% of the stay group and 27% of the leave group reported having already secured employment.

Table 10: Comparison of Service Members with Secured Post-Service Employment

Variable	Category	Stay n	Stay %	Leave n	Leave %
Have you already secured employment?	Yes	37	21.9	61	26.5
	No	132	78.1	169	73.5
	Total	169	100	230	100

Table 11 addresses the questions of whether the spouses of married service members were also active-duty service members; and if the service member was married, what their spouse thought about them leaving active duty. 14% of the stay group and 16% of the leave group indicated that their spouse was also active duty. Married service members were also asked how their spouse felt regarding the service member leaving the military. Over 50% of both the stay and leave groups indicated that their spouse prefer that they leave the military.

Table 11: Comparisons of Active-Duty Spouse & Spouse Preference for Service Member to Leave Military

Variable	Category	Stay n	Stay %	Leave n	Leave %
Is spouse also an active-duty service member?	Yes	17	13.7	21	16.3
	No	107	86.3	108	83.7
	Total	124	100	129	100
How does your spouse feel about you leaving the military	Prefers that I leave military service	70	56.5	74	58.3
	Prefers that I stay in the military	6	4.8	7	5.5
	Doesn't matter to spouse--either staying in the military or leaving is fine	48	38.7	46	36.2
	Total	124	100	127	100

With respect to having children in the Newborn to 12<sup>th</sup> grade ranges, as shown in Table 12, there are more service members in the stay group for each of the 4 categories compared to the leave group. Not unexpectedly, service members in the stay group also report having more children in each category as well. Similarly, more members of the stay group report having college-age children and they also report having more college-age children overall compared to the leave group.

Table 12: Comparisons of Service Members with School & College-age Children

Variable	Category	Stay		Leave	
		service members n=202	total number of children	service members n=296	total number of children
To assist in making sure the appropriate planning is made for schools, please indicate how many children under age 18 live with you at least part of the year in the following age categories	Newborn to Pre-K	46	66	43	51
	Kindergarten to 5th Grade	42	60	35	50
	6th - 8th Grade	28	34	24	27
	9th - 12th Grade	35	41	22	27
	Total	151	201	124	155
How many college-age dependents do you have (up to 26 years old)	Category	service members n=202	total number of children	service members n=296	total number of children
	College-age dependents	41	61	29	51

In reference to whether the service member was a caregiver to another adult (i.e., an aging parent or grandparent), members of both the stay and leave group indicated they were not (95% of the stay group and 92% of the leave group). For the question regarding their financial futures, 31% of the stay group and 25% of the leave group reported having financial concerns about their future after transitioning from military service. These two questions are represented by Table 13.

Table 13: Comparisons of Caregiver Role and Financial Concerns

Variable	Response	Stay <i>n</i>	Stay %	Leave <i>n</i>	Leave %
Caregiver for other adults	Yes	8	4.9	17	7.9
	No	155	95.1	197	92.1
	Total	163	100	214	100
Financial concerns about the future?	Yes	51	31.1	55	24.9
	No	113	68.9	166	75.1
	Total	164	100	221	100

### 6.3. Improvements to and Rating of the Transition Process

#### Please Describe Any Suggestions for Improvement You Might Have for the Military Transition Process

Over 125 respondents answered this question. Table 14 contains a sampling of the written responses of the participating service members. Some of the suggestions for improvement dealt with having a more streamlined process; having a single checklist that is easy to follow; time off to do everything; and some just felt overwhelmed by the entire separation process.

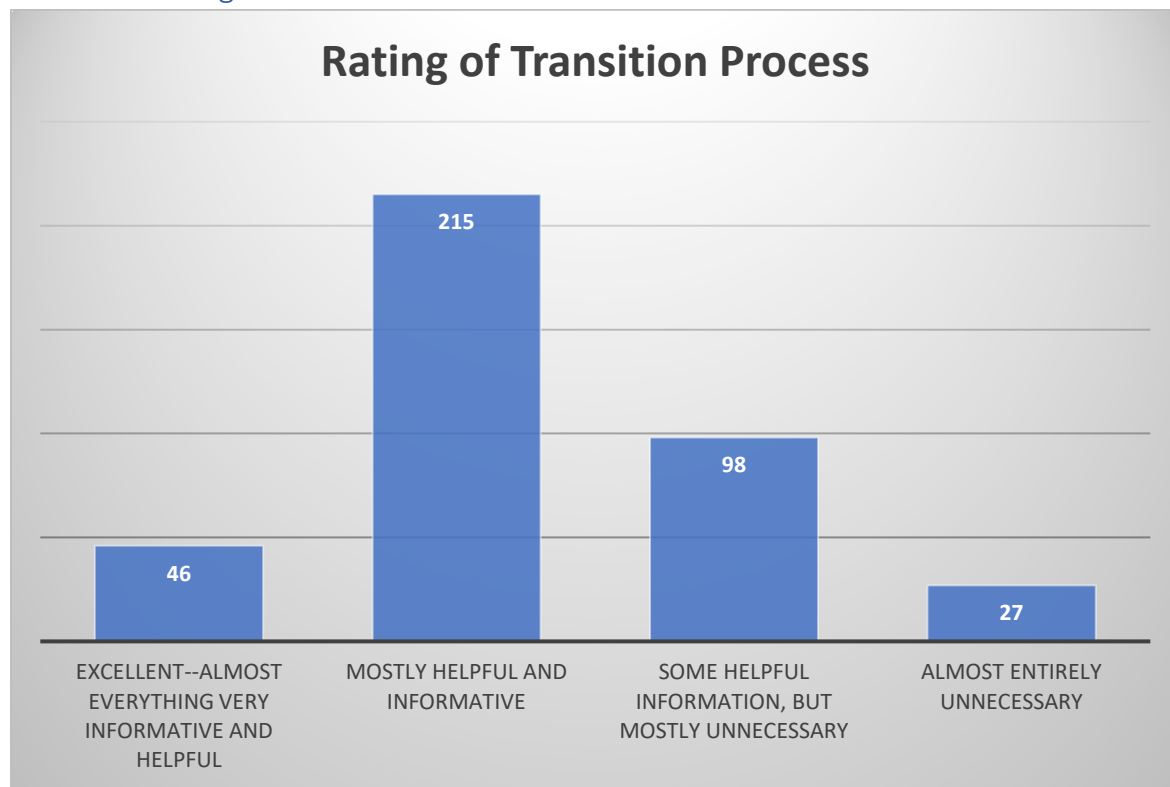
Table 14: Improvements to Transition Process

Transition courses should be more accessible at an earlier time. Fort Bragg policy says you have to wait until 180 days from ETS to enroll in Transition courses. It should be available up to 365 days out.
The military transition process should have the same emphasis as any other program in the military. Senior leadership should attend TAP classes along with all the other briefings so they can have a better understanding of the process, some of them are in denial.
Hire more people to work for the Transition offices so appointment and class scheduling is prompt and people are there when you need them
very unprofessional and unsatisfactory. civilian didn't make sure that we were all equipped on what changes we will face after military. i.e. state taxes, health/dental insurance, and life insurance.
I feel like currently the program is too much information all at once and I don't get to take in all the information because it is overwhelming too much.
The SOF community does a great job at transitioning their soldiers. DoD could learn from several of those organizations. The Honor Foundation, Elite Meet, The Commit Foundation or Special Operations Transition Assistance.
The classes created more stress about completing them than they did help. Especially with covid, it was difficult getting ahold of people on phones or IT assistance.
So many workshops full of information but nothing that actually helps you assemble a retirement packet or know where/how to get assistance in preparing your medical records for the final physical or VA evaluation.
Installation needs a "one-stop" shop for retiring Servicemembers. SFL-TAP, RSO, VA seem only sort of linked in with each other.
Better guidance overall, a lot of the information I found out about transitioning out was from other soldiers that were already in the process, not even from the Army itself. The Army gives you bits and pieces but a lot of it you're left on your own to figure out, and then treated like you should've known what to do all along.
I think a day seminar/webinar should be included within the SFL-TAP program. Not just an overview, but provide information about VSOs and groups for transitioning Veterans to join in LinkedIn. LinkedIn and those groups like Vets2Industry and 50Strong were a game changer for my transition.
I think the military's transition process is underwhelming and not helpful compared to the amazing help offered from private industry and non-profits. I recommend cutting more from the Army's program (as much as legally possible or changing those laws) and privatizing transition programs.
It's too late; make TAPs training classes a mandatory thing one year after service. People can't take advantage of the information when it's provided in the last 6 months of their service. Most people don't fully appreciate TAPs because they can't really fully make use of the information when they're leaving. It's helpful but I think the masses would benefit if it was forced upon them earlier.
I understand the situation with covid however, I would have much rather attended the transition classes in person vs online or zoom meetings.
More information on how to start the process.

#### How Would You Rate the Military Transition Process So Far?

Chart 12 contains the service members ratings of the transition process. 12% (46) rated the process as: Excellent--almost everything very informative and helpful. 56% (215) rated the process as: Mostly helpful and informative. 25% (98) rated the process as: Some helpful information, but mostly unnecessary. 7% (27) rated the process as: Almost entirely unnecessary.

Chart 12: Rating of Transition Process



## 7. Summary Conclusions

This survey provides insight into why service members decide to remain in North Carolina or leave for another state upon completion of service obligation. The survey reveals that 40% of the service members responding to the survey planned to remain in North Carolina. 25% of the service members have already secured employment and 38% of the group with secured employment are remaining in North Carolina. The most desired types of jobs were in logistics/operational management, maintenance and repair, information technology, and government administration.

Three important factors stand out in the decision-making process: 1. the availability of multiple employment opportunities that fit the goals of the service member; 2. great housing values / attractive housing and neighborhoods at affordable costs; and 3. the general cost of living. While there was a wide variety of responses, service members also provided insight into what the state and local communities could do better. Many suggestions centered on lowering taxes or providing assistance with finding employment for the service member or the service member's spouse. In terms of which service members are staying and which are leaving, this report finds a basic profile for those that are leaving to be those service members that are younger, of lower rank, have fewer total years of service, and are at the end of their service obligation. Conversely, those that have chosen to remain in North Carolina are those that are older, of a higher rank, have more total years of service, and have reached retirement.

## Attachment: Survey Questions

Q1: Greetings from the North Carolina Military Affairs Commission. The state of North Carolina would like to know how we can best meet the needs of our military community. To help us accomplish this, we ask that you complete this "transitioning military survey"

- 1: Agree to provide my anonymous input for the NC Dept of Military and Veterans Affairs
- 2: Prefer not to provide input

Q2: First we are going to ask a few questions about your military service. Please select the options which best fit you. Current branch of service

- 1: Army; 2: Marines; 3: Air Force; 4: Navy; 5: Coast Guard; 6: Space Force

Q3: Current Service Status - Selected Choice

- 1: Active Duty; 2: Reserves (full-time); 3: National Guard (full-time); 4: Other

Q4: What is your occupational specialty code (example: MOS for Army and Marines, AFSC for Air Force, NOS for Navy)

Q5: Total years of service

- 1: 1-4 years; 2: 5-9 years; 3: 10-14 years; 4: 15-19 years; 5: 20-24 years; 6: 25-30 years;
- 7: More than 30 years

Q6: Current Military Rank

- 1: E1 - E4; 2: E5 - E7; 3: E8 - E9; 4: W1 - W3; 5: W4 - W5; 6: O1 - O3; 7: O4 - O6; 8: O7 - O10

Q7: Where are you currently stationed? - Selected Choice

- 1: U.S. Army Fort Bragg; 2: Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune; 3: Seymour Johnson Air Force Base
- 4: Marine Corps Air Station New River; 5: USCG Base Elizabeth City; 7: Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point; 8: United States Coast Guard Sector North Carolina; 9: Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point; 10: Pope Army Air Field; 11: 145th Airlift Wing Charlotte; 12: 108th Training Command Charlotte; 13: North Carolina National Guard; 14: Army Research Office; 15: Other

Q8: For how many years have you been stationed in North Carolina? (including prior tours of duty in NC if applicable)

- 1: Less than 1 year; 2: 1 - 2 years; 3: 3 - 6 years; 4: 7 - 10 years; 5: 11 - 20 years; 6: 21 or more years

Q9: Why are you transitioning out of the service? - Selected Choice

- 1: End of obligation; 2: Retirement; 3: Medical reason; 4: Other (please explain)

Q10: In what year do you expect to depart from your full-time military service? - Selected Choice

- 1: 2021; 2: 2022; 3: 2023; 4: Other (please indicate year)

Q11: In what month do you expect to depart from full-time military service?

- 1: January; 2: February; 3: March; 4: April; 5: May; 6: June; 7: July; 8: August; 9: September;
- 10: October; 11: November; 12: December

Q12: Next we are going to ask a few questions about what you plan to do after you leave the service. In what state do you plan to live after you end your full-time military service? - Selected Choice

- 1: North Carolina; 2: Alabama; 3: Alaska; 4: Arizona; 5: Arkansas; 6: California; 7: Colorado;
- 8: Connecticut; 9: Delaware; 10: Florida; 11: Georgia; 12: Hawaii; 13: Idaho; 14: Illinois;
- 15: Indiana; 16: Iowa; 17: Kansas; 18: Kentucky; 19: Louisiana; 20: Maine; 21: Maryland;
- 22: Massachusetts; 23: Michigan; 24: Minnesota; 25: Mississippi; 26: Missouri;
- 27: Montana; 28: Nebraska; 29: Nevada; 30: New Jersey; 31: New Mexico; 32: New York;
- 33: New Hampshire; 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: Another country

Q13: Did you live in that state prior to starting your military service?

- 1: Yes, 2: No

Q14: How knowledgeable do you feel about special benefits currently available to North Carolina veterans?

- 1: Very knowledgeable (example, aware of state employment preferences, state scholarships available for children of veterans, etc.)
- 2: Somewhat knowledgeable-know about existence of state benefits offered in NC, but don't know the details
- 3: Not currently knowledgeable but know where to find information if needed
- 4: Not currently knowledgeable, and not relevant for me because I am not considering staying in NC after departing military service
- 5: Not currently knowledgeable, but would like to know more about state benefits offered in NC to military veterans and their families

Q15\_1: If you plan to live in North Carolina after leaving military service, please indicate the city/towns within the state that you are considering, listing the most likely choices first –

- Most likely NC location; NC Location option 2; NC Location option 3

Q16: The North Carolina legislature is considering a bill that would exempt military retirement pay from state income tax. Would such an exemption cause you to reconsider staying in North Carolina?

- 1: Yes, would definitely stay; 2: Would consider staying; 3: No, would not make a difference

Q17\_1 In deciding where to live after completing your full-time military service, please indicate which of the factors below were among the top 3 most important and which other factors may have been important, but were not among the top 3.

- 1: Top 3 Factors That Really Make My Preferred Location Stand Out from Others
- 2: Important Factors For Me to Consider a Given Location after Military Service--But not top 3
  - High likelihood of working at one specific job opportunity already identified
  - Availability of multiple employment opportunities that fit my goals
  - College education opportunities that best fit my goals
  - State scholarships available for my dependents
  - Exemption of military retirement pay from state income taxes
  - Exemption of military disability income from state income taxes
  - Employment opportunities for spouse
  - Presence of extended family members in the state

- Regional recreational opportunities
- Weather
- Great housing values – Attractive housing and neighborhoods at affordable costs
- Quality of Public K-12 Education
- Childcare quality, availability, and affordability
- General cost of living
- Access to Military Bases for Exchange/Commissary
- Access to VA Medical Facilities
- Access to good quality private medical services
- Regional cultural amenities (such as professional sports, performing arts, museums, etc)
- Local property tax exemptions
- Welcome environment for people of all races and backgrounds
- Minimal or no hassles with professional licensure issues
- In-State College Tuition Rates for Me
- In-State College Tuition Rates for my spouse or dependents
- Other (please explain)

Q18 In deciding where to live, did North Carolina's policy toward accepting professional occupational licenses granted in other states play a role with respect to licenses you or you spouse previously earned?  
1: Yes; 2: No

Q19 If the state's policy toward professional licenses did play a role, was this for your occupational license, your spouse's or both?  
1: My occupational license; 2: My spouse's occupational license; 3: Both

Q20 Please describe which occupational licenses were relevant for your decision about where to live.

Q21\_1 Please indicate any plans you currently have to pursue work or higher education within 1 to 1.5 years after you leave full-time military service (choose all that apply) - Selected Choice  
1: Plan to work full-time; 1: Plan to work part-time; 1: Plan to start my own business;  
1: Don't plan to work for pay at all; 1: Plan to enroll in college full-time;  
1: Plan to enroll in college part-time; 1: Other (please explain); 1: Don't know

Q22\_1 If you plan to work, please indicate your preferred occupational focus (Choose all that apply) - Selected Choice  
Data / Financial Analysis; Logistics / Operational Management; Real Estate / Financial Mgt;  
Retail management; Other Business Management; Healthcare; Construction;  
Education (teacher, professor, administrator); Social Services; Engineering;  
Security / Protective Services; Government Administration; Maintenance & Repair; Sales;  
Information technology; Food services; Personal care (eg. barber, beautician);  
Legal work (lawyer, paralegal support); Performing Arts; Other (please explain)

Q23 Have you already secured employment?  
1: Yes; 2: No

Q24 If you have secured a job, please indicate job title

Q25 If you have secured a job, please indicate name of business or organization at which you will be



working.

Q26 If you plan to pursue further college education, please indicate type of degree or credential - Selected Choice

- 1: Associate's; 2: Bachelor's; 3: Master's; 4: PhD; 5: Graduate Certificate;
- 6: Professional License; 7: Other (if other, please indicate type of higher education);
- 8: Professional Certification

Q27 Next we will ask a few final demographic questions so that we will know how best to design policies that meet the needs of all of our veterans.

What is your age?

- 1: 18 - 23 years old; 2: 24 - 30 years old; 3: 31 - 39 years old; 4: 40 - 49 years old;
- 5: 50 - 59 years old; 6: 60 - 64 years old; 7: 65 years old +

Q28 What is your gender?

- 1: Male; 2: Female; 3: Prefer not to say

Q29 Which Race/Ethnicity do you identify with? - Selected Choice

- 1: African-American / Black; 2: Asian; 3: Caucasian / White; 4: Hispanic /Latin American;
- 5: Multi-racial; 6: Native American / Alaskan Native; 7: Pacific Islander; 8: Other

Q30 Current Marital Status - Selected Choice

- 1: Married; 2: Single, never married; 3: Divorced, not currently married;
- 4: Widowed, not currently married; 5: Other (please explain)

Q31 If married, is your spouse also an active duty service member?

- 1: Yes; 2: No

Q32 How does your spouse feel about your departure from full-time military service?

- 1: Prefers that I leave military service; 2: Prefers that I stay in the military;
- 3: Doesn't matter to spouse--either staying in the military or leaving is fine

Q33 If you are a dual military family, what is the military rank or DOD civilian grade of your spouse?

Q34\_1 To assist in making sure the appropriate planning is made for schools, please indicate how many children under age 18 live with you at least part of the year in the following age categories – Newborn to Pre-K; Kindergarten to 5th Grade; 6th - 8th Grade; 9th - 12th Grade

Q35 How many college-age dependents do you have (up to 26 years old)--please select from the dropdown list below:

- 1: None; 2: 1; 3: 2; 4: 3; 5: 4 or more

Q36 Are you caregiver for any other adults (such as elderly parents, disabled adult children)?

- 1: Yes; 2: No

Q37 What is the highest level of education you have attained so far?

- 1: High School; 2: Some college, but no degree; 3: Associate's Degree;

4: Bachelor's Degree; 5: Master's Degree; 6: Professional Certification;  
7: PhD

Q38 Do you have any significant financial concerns about the future?  
1: Yes; 2: No

Q39 If you would like to describe your financial concerns to help policy makers know how better to assist going forward, please explain your concern further here:

Q40 What could the state or local communities do to better help you and your family meet your goals for life after the military?

Q41 How would you rate the military transition process so far?  
1: Excellent--almost everything very informative and helpful; 2: Mostly helpful and informative;  
3: Some helpful information, but mostly unnecessary; 4: Almost entirely unnecessary

Q42 Please describe any suggestions for improvement you might have for the military transition process.