



CONTINUING TO SERVE

Preparing Veterans to Transition into Service
Organizations

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Introduction

The Department of Defense (DoD) mandates every servicemember leaving the military participates in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). In 2019, lawmakers changed the program to exclude any “encouragement of consideration of post-separation public and community service.”¹

This exclusion is to the detriment of servicemembers as well as to non-profits and charities (“service organizations”). Servicemembers have proven their desire to serve others and value meaning in their work, while service organizations need dedicated people who know how to work on and manage complex problems with limited resources.

Any pairing of service-oriented veterans with service organizations would benefit not only the individual and the organization but society as well. For these reasons, this project seeks to understand the motivations and desires of transitioning service members (TSMs) through an online survey and review of government studies. It then uses that insight to design a program to fill the gaps left by the Transition Assistance Program to prepare veterans with the skills, materials, connections, and opportunities they need to continue to serve in service organizations.

Background

The United States Department of Defense is mandated by law to ensure every servicemember transitioning out of the US Armed Forces attends the Transition Assistance Program prior to the completion of their service. The course describes itself as an “outcome-based program that bolsters opportunities, services, and training for TSMs to meet [their] post-military goals.”² In practice, TAP focuses primarily on placing TSMs into further education, vocational training, or employment – with no programming around identifying, preparing for, or assuming roles within public service, non-profit/charitable organizations, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), collectively “service organizations (SOs)”. This survey, data analysis, and strategic plan hopes to:

- Compare the opinions and outcomes of recent TSMs with the stated goals of TAP
- Identify TSM’s motivations for and obstacles to seeking work with a service organization
- Develop at the conceptual level a program for preparing TSMs to assume roles in a service organization
- Produce a framework for partnering with relevant organizations to evaluate and pilot the program

¹ John S. McCain national defense authorization act for Fiscal Year 2019: Conference report to accompany H.R. 5515 § (n.d.). (HR5515)

² “DoD TAP.” *About DoD TAP*. Accessed Feb 10, 2022. www.dodtap.mil/about_DoDTAP.html.

Overview

With the passage of H.R.5515, the John S McCain National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, the Trump administration substantially amended TAP for the first time since the Obama administration revamped the program in 2011. Among other changes, Section 553 of that bill - “Repeal of program on encouragement of post-separation public and community service” – ended any formal mention of post-service employment with any “public service or community service organization.”³ Instead, the program shifted to focus solely on the following four outcomes:

“Whether the member intends, after separation, retirement, or discharge to
(i) seek employment;
(ii) enroll in a program of higher education;
(iii) enroll in a program of vocational training; or
(iv) become an entrepreneur.”⁴
[*formatting mine*]

Any mention of community or public service so removed, TAP - by law - is to focus on preparing TSMs directly for employment in the private sector, going into business for themselves, or procuring skills for one or both of those purposes. 85% of respondents to my survey expressed interest in better understanding their career options and 68% want to learn more about service organizations.⁵ Additionally, 93% of respondents would *strongly* recommend TSMs participate in a transition program outside of TAP.⁶ It is clear then, that:

- **TAP deliberately and purposefully does not expose TSMs to options in public and/or community service** (service organizations)
- The **large majority of TSMs**, despite having participated in TAP, are **interested in better understanding their options** for post-service life
- The **majority of TSMs are interested in better understanding service organizations** and 71% are interested in “continuing to serve in some way”⁷
- The **overwhelming majority of TSMs are willing and able to supplement their transition education** with a program or programs outside of DoD-mandated TAP
- A **program dedicated to educating TSMs on opportunities with service organizations** and preparing them to assume those positions **would benefit TSMs and the community**

³ HR 5515 - 137

⁴ *ibid* - 134

⁵ San Diego Survey Q3.1

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ San Diego Survey Q2.1

According to an article in the Harvard Business Review, non-profit organizations are struggling to find people with resilience, adaptability, empathy, and a “dedication to accomplishing goals.”⁸ By removing any mention of public service following transition, Congress is depriving public and community service organizations access to a valuable pipeline of service-oriented men and women trained and experienced in these intangibles. These types of people could be a huge benefit to service organizations and to their work. Only half of survey respondents indicated feeling strongly that high pay would be important to them.⁹ This suggests that even local, smaller SOs could benefit immensely from experienced military veterans while the TSM would likewise benefit from engaging in meaningful post-service activities.

This project begins with a review of data both collected internally for this purpose as well as reports produced and published by the U.S. Government. The data will provide insight into TSM motivations while in the process of separating, whether and to what extent TAPS is effective at meeting its objectives, and how those objectives serve to contribute to TSM success. Next, it lays out what gaps exist between the TAP curriculum and preparing TSMs for roles with service organizations. Finally, it identifies how we might develop and implement a program to facilitate that connection through awareness, training, and strategic partnerships. The end goal is a self-contained product that shows the desirability, opportunity, and feasibility of assisting TSMs in continuing to serve.

Research and Data Review

To understand the efficacy of TAP in achieving its stated goals and the motivations of TSMs as they leave the service, I rely on an internally administered quantitative survey as well as research commissioned and published by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Internal Survey

The internal survey (San Diego Survey) took the form of an online quantitative survey (Appendix I of a sample of transitioning veterans who had recently participated in TAP. To assemble this sample, I reached out to two local third-party (non-DoD) programs in the San Diego area, The Honor Foundation (THF) and Hiring our Heroes (HoH).



- The Honor Foundation is a transition program designed specifically for veterans of US Special Operations Forces (SOF) and focuses on “knowledge need[ed] to navigate

⁸ “Is a Nonprofit Job Right for You?” Harvard Business Review, October 11, 2021. <https://hbr.org/2021/05/is-a-nonprofit-job-right-for-you>.

⁹ San Diego Survey Q2.1

transition” through introspection, practical skills, group work, and personal coaching.¹⁰



- Hiring Our Heroes is run by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and places TSMs with partner for-profit companies over a period of three months while they are still on active duty. In addition to this internship, the program features weekly facilitated workshops that focus on practical skills, transition counseling, and group mentorship.¹¹

I used purposive sampling by selecting and meeting with these two groups between November and December 2021, giving them a brief description of my project, and providing them a link to the online survey. Overall, I met with approximately 60 TSMs, with 47 responding (**n=47**), for a 79% response rate.

- I deliberately and non-randomly chose TSMs currently enrolled in a non-DoD transition program but who had already completed the DoD TAP. Among these groups, participants self-selected by following the link sent to their email accounts or scanning the QR code I brought with me to their program location.

Based on self-reported demographic information, this sample is made up of:

Characteristic		%
Gender	Male	95
	Female	5
Race	White	60
	Hispanic	18
	African American	9
	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	9
	Asian	2
	Native American	2
Rank	E1-E3	0
	E4-E7	23
	E8/E9	38
	O1-O5	28
	O6-GO	10
Age	18-25	3
	26-30	13
	30-35	18
	36-40	31

¹⁰ “Values.” The Honor Foundation, May 24, 2018. <https://www.honor.org/guiding-principles/>.

¹¹ “Fellowship Programs.” Hiring Our Heroes, March 22, 2022. <https://www.hiringourheroes.org/career-services/fellowships/>.

	41-45	13
	46-50	16
	50+	8
<hr/>		
Education		
Level	Terminal Degree	3
	Master's Degree	41
	Bachelor's Degree	36
	Associate degree	8
	High School Graduate	13

Limitations

Reliability issues due to small sample size. Originally, I sought to partner with DoD and Headquarters, Marine Corps (HQMC) to survey every TSM participating in TAP aboard the West Coast installations Camp Pendleton and Marine Corps Air Station Miramar. For a variety of reasons, that proved impossible within the timeframe of this study. As a result, my sample size (n=47) leads to diminished reliability which I attempt to augment with the inclusion of VA Studies. Of note, I'd recommend wider sampling in the future if possible in order to verify the results of this survey with a broader audience. With that in mind, I'll discuss the relative strengths of the make-up of my sample and the unique insights it provides below.

As previously mentioned, both PSTAP studies do not account for the changes made to TAP by the FY19 NDAA regarding the removal of instruction around service organizations. My sample, therefore, provides the only insight into the program as amended by that law. It is on this topic that I exclusively reference my survey and where we can most rely on respondent's attitudes towards service organizations specifically.

The external validity (generalizability of data) is limited due to the demographics and experience of this sample. Both THF and HoH work almost exclusively with more senior members who already hold or are currently working towards undergraduate degrees. Age and years of experience within my cohort, then, tend to be skewed higher than for the general TSM population. In the 2019 PSTAP, for example, ~90% of TAP participants were enlisted members, with ~70% at or below the rank of E-6, compared to my sample where ~60% were enlisted and ~15% were E-6 or below. The mean age for PSTAP 2019 was 32.7 while my sample had only 16% under 30.¹²

¹² Office Transition & Economic Development, Post-Separation Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Assessment (PSTAP) 2019 Cross-Sectional Survey Report § (n.d.), 21 (2019 PSTAP)

Further, in the case of THF, members are exclusively those who are transitioning out of the Special Operations community. In San Diego, where this study took place, that typically means a TSM is a member of U.S. Naval Special Warfare (NSW) or U.S. Marine Forces, Special Operations Command (MARSOC). Both organizations tend to attract members who seek a more challenging, prestigious position within the larger military and therefore might be more inclined to seek a similar position in civilian life.

In either case, age or experience, the San Diego sample is made up of people who would more closely match competitively with their civilian counterparts than the wide military sample in terms of successfully matching with SOs.

This sample does not include structured qualitative feedback. I was able to have anecdotal conversations with TSMs while presenting to the two groups but nothing that could be considered scientific or structured. Therefore, the data under consideration here are limited to the quantitative responses captured in the survey.

This research does not include input from potential partners. Due to time and scope constraints, this research does not include feedback from any organization that could potentially provide input on or pilot a transition program.

VA Studies

In 2019, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) designed and commissioned the Post-Separation Transition Assistance Program (PSTAP) Assessment Outcome Study which “uses a cross-sectional and longitudinal survey to collect information from Veterans [to] aid VA in the continual improvement of TAP and ensure TSMs receive the information and benefits they need.”¹³ To date, the 2019 and 2020 versions of the PSTAP have been published by VA.

These studies present a much larger and more diverse sample than my survey (n=165,236 in 2019, n=139,834 in 2020) and feature a wider cross-section of ages, experiences, and transition circumstances (see Appendix II for selected demographic information). Along with an increase in sample size comes a corresponding skew to the low-end of age, experience, and education level simply as a factor of the population of the military as a whole.

Limitations

Content reliability due to changes to TAP. Unfortunately, as the 2020 study notes, “a major TAP overhaul was completed and rolled out in October 2019, driven primarily by the FY19 NDAA” but that those experiences are not captured in the 2019 or 2020 PSTAP

¹³ 2019 PSTAP

studies due to the TAP attendance dates cover in the PSTAP study universe.¹⁴ This is referring to, among other things, removal of the language around service organizations.

External reliability relating overall universe to likely competing workforce. 80% of the San Diego sample held at least a bachelor's degree. For all PSTAP 2019/2020 cohorts, that number was 30-50%.¹⁵ For comparison, civilians of comparable age looking to work with service organizations generally hold at least a four-year degree.

Data Analysis

Data collection for this project took the form of a quantitative survey administered to recent TSMs online. I also analyzed government-provided studies to provide a wider range of information and insight. When designing the survey and analyzing data, I was specifically interested in answering three overarching questions:

- 1. What motivates veterans in planning for their post-service life?**
- 2. How well does TAP prepare them to realize that plan?**
- 3. What skills and/or practices do veterans need to develop to work for service organizations?**

By focusing on these three questions, the data informed the creation of a program designed to address shortcomings in the TAP to fulfill veterans' goals while helping inform and prepare them for opportunities with service organizations.

What motivates veterans...?

San Diego Survey

TSMs are interested in pay/salary but also value career advancement and growth. Prestige and title are not as important.¹⁶

- 50% "strongly valued" pay/salary, but it was less important to respondents who only "valued" it.
- 64% said they have considered working for a service organization.
- On a scale of 1-5, the mean for valuing "career growth" was the highest, with 4.33 compared to "pay/salary," which was 4.19.
- 61% of respondents are retiring, which means they will receive a pension from the Department of Veterans Affairs and can therefore optimize for job satisfaction if they find the right fit.

¹⁴ Office Transition & Economic Development, Post-Separation Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Assessment (PSTAP) 2020 Cross-Sectional Survey Report § (n.d.). (2020 PSTAP)

¹⁵ 2019 PSTAP, 49. 2020 PSTAP, 79

¹⁶ San Diego Survey, Q2.1

- TSMs value prestige (mean=3.21) less than non-service members.¹⁷
- Figure 1 below shows a selected sample of TSM motivations by percentage surveyed responding agree/disagree to four motivating factors. Of note – almost all respondents value career growth and service, while comparatively few are motivated by status or prestige.

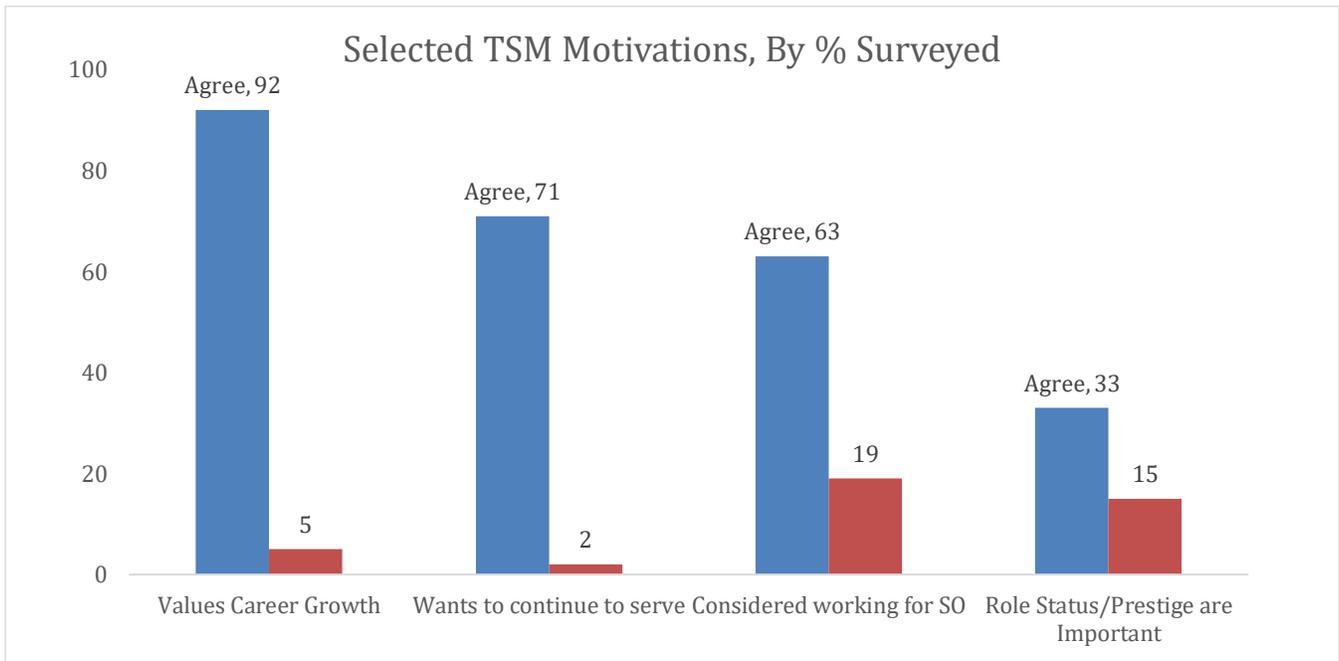


Figure 1, Survey Question 2.1

PSTAP 2020 Data

Of employed TAP-complete veterans who are looking to change jobs (Fig.2):

- The majority were doing so seeking higher pay, but “job satisfaction/better work environment” and “more opportunities for advancement also polled highly.”

¹⁷ “What Makes a Career Prestigious? - JSTOR DAILY.” Accessed April 10, 2022. <https://daily.jstor.org/makes-career-prestigious/>.

This tracks with data presented in Figure 1 and further suggests that the San Diego data could be externally valid along these lines and **military members optimize for intangible satisfaction and growth in addition to pure monetary gain.**

Table 14. What are the primary reasons you are looking for another job? (Question 22 – Asked of Employed Veterans Who Participated in TAP)

Reasons for Looking for a Job	CS4	CS5	CS6
Higher pay	77.6%	74.9%	76.8%
Better fit for my skills and abilities	58.0%	55.7%	58.7%
Want a permanent position	31.1%	25.2%	23.6%
Job satisfaction/better work environment	59.5%	62.7%	63.4%
Something more interesting	42.9%	40.3%	40.8%
More flexible schedule	21.1%	20.6%	17.1%
Better training & educational opportunities	26.8%	28.6%	32.4%
Better hours	25.2%	26.1%	25.4%
Want more hours/full-time position	18.0%	15.1%	13.2%
More opportunities for advancement	52.5%	49.7%	55.2%
Shorter commute	17.8%	16.0%	19.9%
Prefer not to answer	1.4%	1.3%	2.2%
<i>Total Respondents Who Are Employed (N)</i>	(527)	(780)	(883)

Source: 2020 Cross-Sectional Survey Data merged with VA Administrative Data and DoD Data.

Figure 2: PSTAP 2020, 74

How well does TAP prepare veterans...

San Diego Survey

TSMs don't fully understand the job market or the process for getting a job.¹⁸

- 85% responded that they would “like to better understand what careers exist”
- 65% responded that they would “like more help getting a job”

TSMs are interested in public service

- 68% would like to “learn more about” service organizations

TSMs would overwhelmingly recommend a program to augment TAP

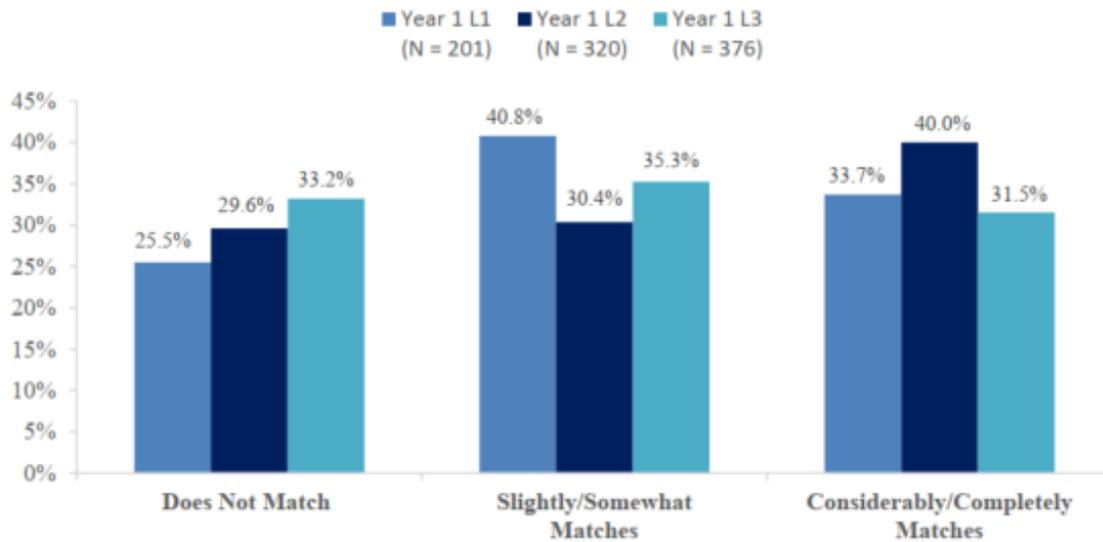
¹⁸ San Diego Survey Q3.1

- 98% would recommend fellow TSMs participate in a transition program outside of TAP

PSTAP 2020 Data

According to the 2020 PSTAP, TSMs had some **trouble matching their military skills with their current jobs** (Figure 3). They also faced **challenges translating military experience into civilian job requirements** (Figure 4). Here again, these challenges from the wider military universe echo the challenges from the San Diego survey.

Figure 30. How well does your current job match with the skills you have built through your military service? (Question 12 of Longitudinal Survey - Asked of Veterans Who Participated in TAP)



Source: 2020 Longitudinal Data merged with VA Administrative Data and DoD Data.

Figure 3, PSTAP 2020, 76

Table 10. Thinking about your transition to the civilian world, please rate the extent to which you found the following items challenging during the transition process. (Question 13 - Asked of Veterans Who Participated in TAP)

Item	Challenge Level	CS4	CS5	CS6
Q13_3: How to translate my military experience to civilian job requirements.	Challenging	32.1%	31.6%	39.2%
	Somewhat Challenging	18.8%	20.8%	19.5%
	Not challenging	47.6%	46.7%	40.4%
	Prefer not to answer	1.5%	0.9%	0.9%
	<i>Total Respondents (N)</i>	<i>(3,291)</i>	<i>(4,474)</i>	<i>(4,561)</i>
Q13_8: Learning to have a better work-life balance after the transition.	Challenging	26.7%	30.6%	35.8%
	Somewhat Challenging	19.3%	17.3%	18.4%
	Not Challenging	52.5%	51.0%	44.9%
	Prefer not to answer	1.4%	1.1%	0.9%
	<i>Total Respondents (N)</i>	<i>(3,273)</i>	<i>(4,461)</i>	<i>(4,589)</i>

Source: 2020 Cross-Sectional Survey Data merged with VA Administrative Data and DoD Data. "Challenging" is defined as responses of "Extremely challenging" or "Considerably challenging," where the answer scale ranges from "Extremely challenging" to "Not at all challenging." "Not Challenging" is defined as responses of "A little challenging" or "Not at all challenging."

Figure 4, PSTAP 2020, 68

Key Findings

Based on data reviewed from the San Diego Survey as well as the PSTAP reports, we can glean several key points that are relevant to creation of a program to address TAP shortcomings. Transitioning service members:

- Have **trouble matching military skills** with civilian jobs.
- Face **challenges translating military training** into civilian job requirements.
- Experience **problems navigating** the civilian **job market**.
- **Optimize for intangibles like satisfaction**, meaning, and growth in addition to compensation

Finding the Connection

According to her study in the Journal of Innovation and Knowledge, Lise Anne Slatten and team argue that service organizations have a hard time attracting and retaining employees.¹⁹ While this is true for the sector in general, smaller, more localized non-profit organizations (yearly revenue between \$100k – \$250k) struggle the most due to the inability to provide pay and benefits to compete with larger non-profits, to say nothing of for-profit companies.²⁰ In their research, Slatten and team focus on smaller non-profit organizations, which matches up with my definition of service organizations for the

¹⁹ Slatten, Lise Anne, Joshua S. Bendickson, Meagan Diamond, and William C. McDowell. "Staffing of Small Nonprofit Organizations: A Model for Retaining Employees." Journal of Innovation & Knowledge 6, no. 1 (2021): 50–57. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2020.10.003>.

²⁰ *Ibid* 1

purposes of this project. Slatten and her team point to four propositions that service organizations can offer their employees to attract and retain talent:

“Proposition 1. Purpose driven individuals are likely to be retained at [service organizations]

Proposition 2. Financially driven individuals are less likely to be retained at [service organizations]

Proposition 3. Individuals feeling valued are more likely to be retained at [service organizations]

Proposition 4. Family related incentives and values will enhance retention at [service organizations]”

These propositions not only make sense in the common understanding of service organizations, but they line up very nicely with our data about the motivations and desires of TSMs. Her research underscores that service organizations need people who value purpose, are less financially motivated, optimize for feelings of value and meaning, and want the best for the families and communities. In a sense, Slatten is saying that a veteran committed to continuing his or her service will not only benefit the organization lucky enough to have them but will themselves thrive in a well-run service organization.

By connecting our understanding of TSM motivations and TAP shortcomings, we can develop a program to address those problems and help veterans transition into service organizations.

Program Overview

Now that we’ve discussed what veterans are looking for in post-service life and considered the ways TAP fails to provide them the tools to make that transition, we can look at how to fill that gap left by the DoD program. As we’ve seen, almost all veterans surveyed recommend a third-party program and report having the time and inclination to participate in extra training. So in order to come up with a program that fits those needs this project seeks to build on the information we captured and analyzed to present an outline of an actionable plan – The Continuing to Serve Program.

To maximize success for veterans looking to continue their service, this program will have to start with those who are most likely to fit into the culture they’ll find within various service organizations. This process begins in Phase 0 with targeted messaging and word-of-mouth to bring TSMs into the program orbit. It is followed by an application to screen potential participants. From there, the program curriculum would be broken into three phases beginning with the individual in phase 1, the materials needed for finding a non-profit in phase 2, through to phase 3 where the participant will be exposed to various SOs to experience the culture and reality of working in this space, culminating with graduation and, ideally, placement with a partner organization.

Program Structure and Curriculum

The Continuing to Serve Program is designed to give TSMs the skills, materials, and contacts they need to transition into work with a service organization. The program is broken up into three phases beginning with recruitment and ending with graduation.

Session Breakdown

- The program will last three months, with one phase per month. Sessions will occur twice weekly, on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 5:30-8:30 via online video conference
- The program will be run by one main facilitator assisted by specialty coaches and experts, as required
- Participants will be advised that they make every effort to attend each session, as the process is cumulative

Phase 0: Recruitment & Application

This phase begins with acquisition of prospective students and ends with them applying via online form.

Target Population:

- Transitioning servicemembers with college degrees who indicate an interest in exploring options besides the private sector
- TSMs who are retiring from service and/or applying for VA benefits
- TSMs who are members of selective units/organizations who demonstrate their commitment to motivators besides pure financial incentives

Application:

Prospective participants will be asked to submit an online application to facilitate a more thorough understanding of their motivations and desires. It will include:

- Basic demographic information
- Service background
- Essay question asking motivations for wanting to move into the service sector
- Essay question asking where they see themselves in five years, whether they choose to remain in service
- An applet to upload a resume if they have one

Once an applicant is screen and selected, they'll receive notification and be invited to an upcoming class, which begins with Phase I

Phase I: Individual

This phase begins with class introduction and expectations and ends with a presentation from each participant based on a process of individual exploration.

- **Week 1.** Introduction of facilitator and participants, including background, goals, and history of service. Outline the process and what to expect. Assign worksheet to allow participants to dig into what motivates them and what they're working towards.
- **Week 2.** Introduce Phase I capstone, which will be a fifteen-minute presentation by each student in Week 4. The presentation will be story, chosen by the participant, that illustrates a time they put service of others ahead of themselves and how that story influenced their decision to continue to serve. If available, share a video from a former participant as an example. Have students break into small groups to brainstorm ideas
- **Week 3.** Focus on tailoring those stories and experiences to better understand what sort of organizations participants might be interested in working with. Bring in coach/mentor to discuss his or her own journey.
- **Week 4.** Presentations and feedback.

Phase II: Materials and Practice

This phase begins following successful completion of presentations and feedback and ends when each participant has an edited resume, LinkedIn profile, professional e-mail, mentor, etc.

- **Week 1.** Introduction to the external phase. Now that participants understand their motivations and goals, they need to translate those things into the materials they need to begin looking for opportunities.
- **Week 2.** Resume week. Bring in external coach/guide to help participants tailor their experience in the military for civilian consumption.
- **Week 3.** Interviewing and networking tips. Teach participants how to discuss their time in the military and how that translates to the service sector. Provide list of volunteers in the local area with who participants can network to practice these soft skills.
- **Week 4.** Video mock interviews/conversations and provide feedback to participants. Come away with "elevator pitch" and some talking points about how their military experience informed their desire to work with or for a service organization.

Phase III: Putting it Together

This phase begins once all participants have the materials they need and ends with graduation and placement.

- **Week 1.** Introduction to synthesizing their background and introspection with their materials and soft skills to go out and talk to organizations and put it all into practice.
- **Week 2.** Prepare participants for a trip (hopefully in-person) to local non-profit/charity where they will get to see the day-to-day operation to better understand the culture and organization of a service organization.
- **Week 3.** Trip week. Take cohort to a partner organization. Build in time for mock or real interviews.
- **Week 4.** Graduation and placement, if available.

Outcomes

Successful completion of this curriculum should lead to participants developing the knowledge, skills, and materials they'll need to successfully transition into a service organization. Specifically:

- The ability to translate military experience into marketable qualifications
- Comradery with other TSMs in a similar situation
- Connections to the local service community and skills/people to network with

- A portfolio of material that's vetted, edited, and ready to use at various organizations

Resources Needed

Of course, all of this is purely academic without monetary and material support to develop and pilot this program. To that end, organizations need to be identified that have the resources to assist the program as well as the potential to benefit from the service it provides. Resources need not be purely financial, as the program requires coaches, mentors, and organizations to visit for insight. While no two organizations will look the same, I recommend seeking out entities that:

- Have a big market presence in a given area or a national footprint with entities across the country
- Are veteran-related, or already work to champion veteran's causes or are dedicated to hiring or otherwise assisting veterans or have an existing veteran employee base
- Are smaller or developing organizations – these entities could be perfect to visit for insight into a smaller operation and would be happy for the exposure
- One large entity to become a top-level sponsor in exchange for recognition or headline status

Recommendations For Future Research

As TAP and those going through it are always changing, it's important to continuously study and understand the environment these participants are coming from as well as where they're going. The following research points will prove useful in successfully implementing and iterating the Continuing to Serve Program as well as increasing our understanding of the TAP and motivations of future TSMs:

At the beginning, piloting, getting feedback, and iterating the program – its curriculum and outcomes will be paramount to finding the most efficient and effective use of time and resources. To that end, as part of Phase 0 Recruitment it will be important to understand the characteristics and mechanisms to reach an ideal participant and to modify tactics as that picture becomes clearer.

Once the program is underway, constant feedback will also be key to understanding what is working and what needs to be changed. I recommend a weekly check-in sent out to all participants following the last session of each week asking how they feel about the material, what – if anything – they'd change, and to provide open-ended feedback.

Partner feedback and input will help keep the program relevant. Regular feedback from partner organizations will be crucial in not only keeping them engaged and fulfilled, but also in making sure the material being presented stays relevant and useful for the participants.

Staying on top of developments coming out of TAP. Since both PSTAP reports referenced here have yet to take into account the changes of H.R. 5515 it will be necessary to study follow-on PSTAP reports to understand if and how those changes have affected satisfaction and outcomes among the next classes of TSMs.

Conclusion

As we've seen, transitioning servicemembers and service organizations could benefit in several ways by connecting with one another to do good in their communities and society. The shortsighted, congressionally imposed, programmatic shortfalls of TAP should not be an insurmountable obstacle to allowing TSMs to continue to serve. Through an iterative and dynamic program of introspection, exploration, learning, and connection, these TSMs that would otherwise be shepherded into the waiting rooms and lobbies of big corporations and defense contractors could go to work every day in a place where they're driven by purpose, feel valued, and continue to live their values of service and loyalty.

These shortfalls are not insurmountable, and by providing TSMs with an alternative path out of the military and into a service organization, it is my hope that more and more veterans are able to use their skills for good. The prohibition on encouragement of public service is only for the DoD-mandated TAP. By building a solid program with a successful and satisfied alumni network, I believe the Continuing to Serve program could grow organically through word-of-mouth and referrals. This mechanism of recruiting allows us to target those TSMs who would be most receptive to the training while also allowing the program to scale at a manageable rate.

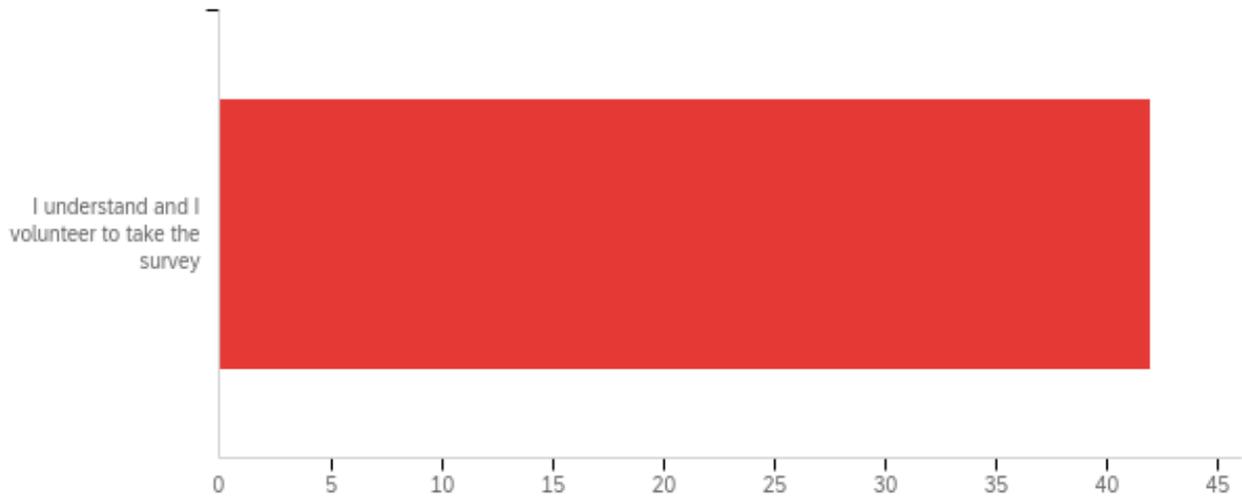
This program is based on those gaps left by the DoD TAP and is designed to re-introduce TSMs not just to the civilian world but to themselves and their communities. Through the Phase I introspection to Phase III experiential learning, TSMs are eased out of the rigidity and formality of the military and given the tools to expand and grow into their roles as citizens and neighbors. It is my sincere hope that this report and guide shows that there is not only a desire and opportunity for this type of program but a need to connect those with so much left to give with people who need a little help to make big change.

Appendix I

San Diego Survey Results

March 22nd 2022, 12:06 pm PST

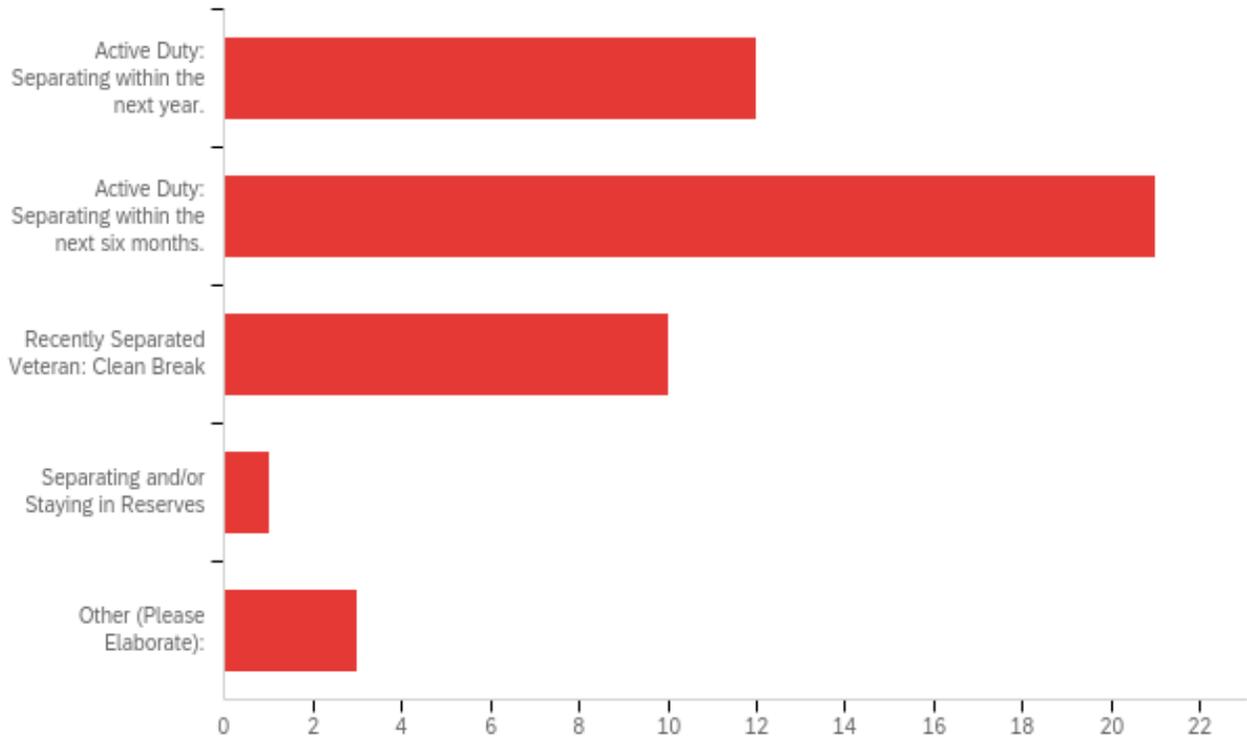
Q0 - Thanks for participating in the survey. It is completely voluntary and you may quit at any point. Please select below if you understand.



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	In this survey, I am looking to understand the motivations driving servicemembers as they transition to civilian life. It is completely voluntary and data will be anonymized. It should only take 5-10 minutes. Thank you for your time and participation.	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	42

#	Answer	%	Count
1	I understand and I volunteer to take the survey	100.00%	42
	Total	100%	42

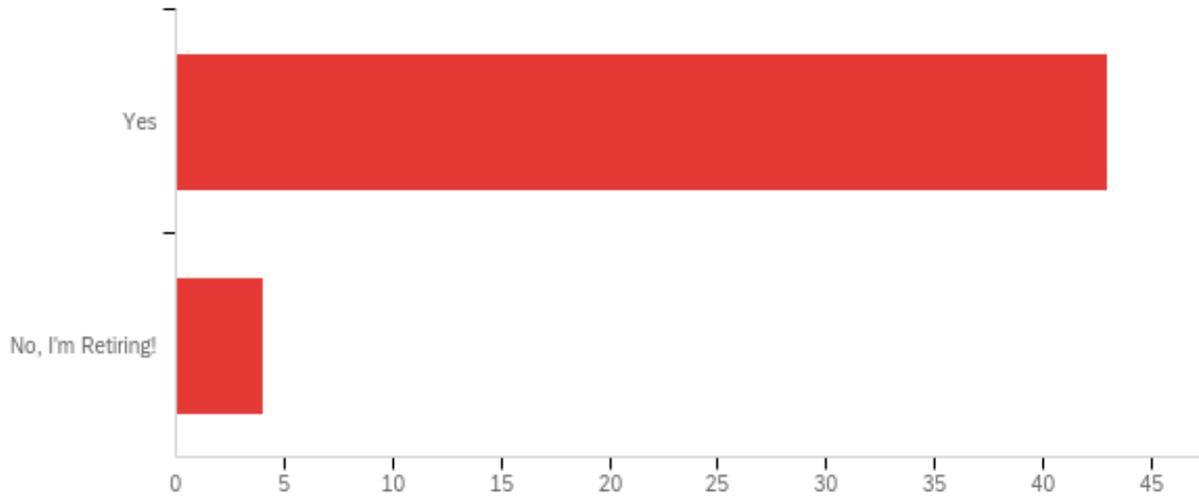
Q1.2 - Which of the following best describes your transition progress?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Which of the following best describes your transition progress? - Selected Choice	1.00	7.00	2.36	1.51	2.27	47

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Active Duty: Separating within the next year.	25.53%	12
2	Active Duty: Separating within the next six months.	44.68%	21
3	Recently Separated Veteran: Clean Break	21.28%	10
6	Separating and/or Staying in Reserves	2.13%	1
7	Other (Please Elaborate):	6.38%	3
	Total	100%	47

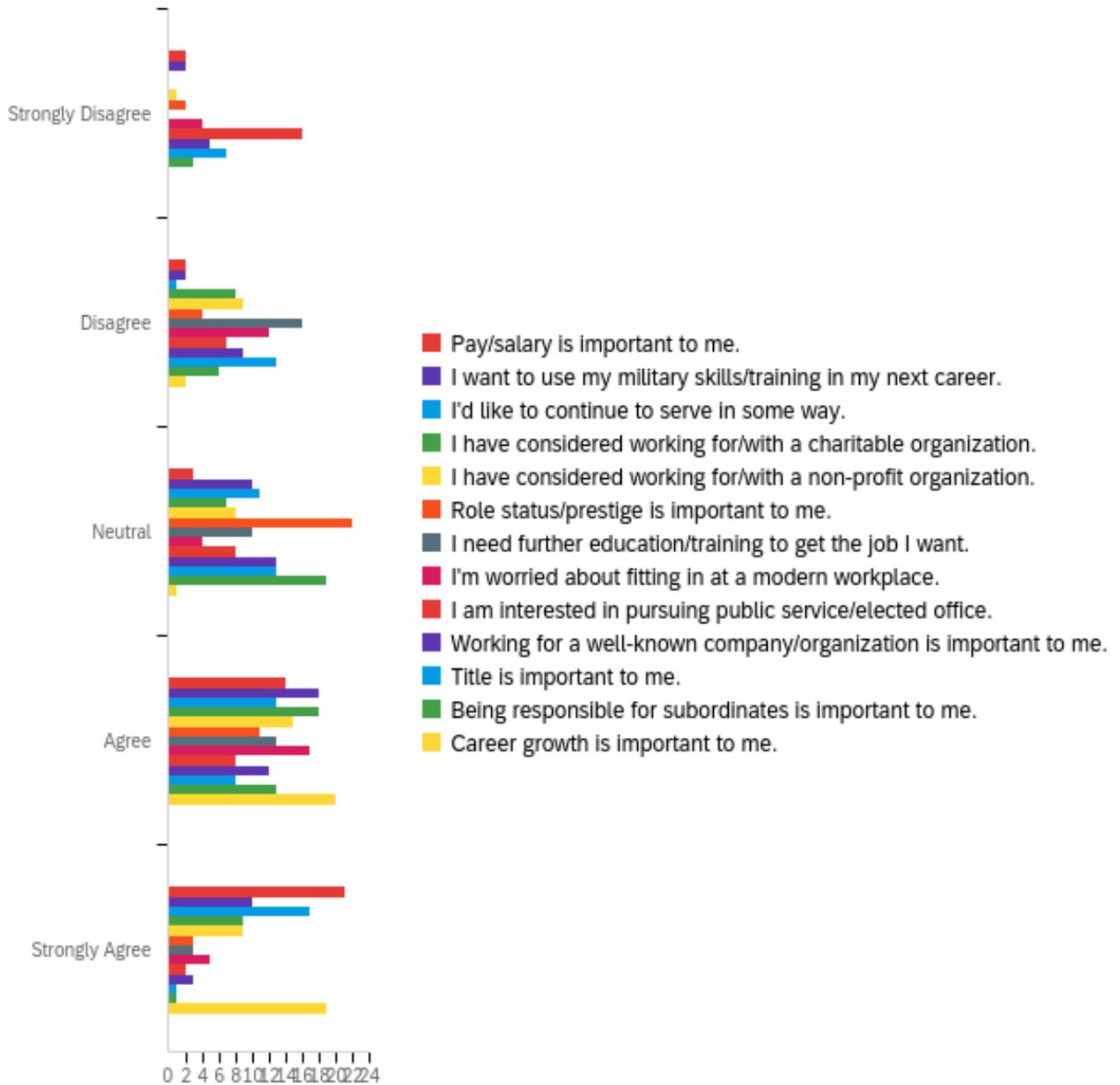
Q1.3 - Are you seeking post-service employment?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Are you seeking post-service employment?	1.00	2.00	1.09	0.28	0.08	47

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	91.49%	43
2	No, I'm Retiring!	8.51%	4
	Total	100%	47

Q2.1 - Consider your ideal post-service work situation and respond to the statements below.



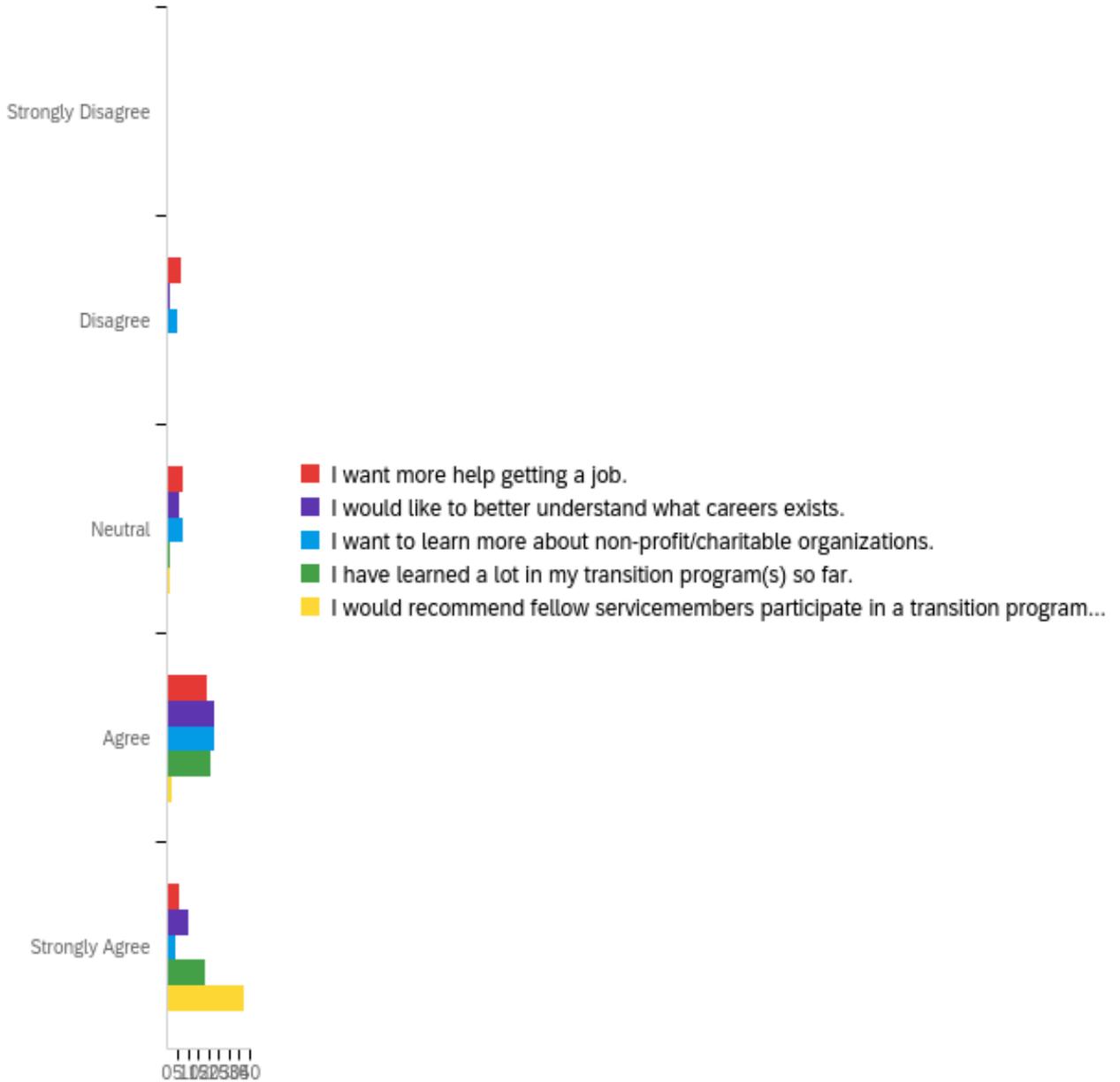
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Pay/salary is important to me.	1.00	5.00	4.19	1.07	1.15	42
2	I want to use my military skills/training in my next career.	1.00	5.00	3.76	1.02	1.04	42
3	I'd like to continue to serve in some way.	2.00	5.00	4.10	0.87	0.75	42

4	I have considered working for/with a charitable organization.	2.00	5.00	3.67	1.02	1.03	42
5	I have considered working for/with a non-profit organization.	1.00	5.00	3.52	1.12	1.25	42
6	Role status/prestige is important to me.	1.00	5.00	3.21	0.89	0.79	42
7	I need further education/training to get the job I want.	2.00	5.00	3.07	0.99	0.97	42
8	I'm worried about fitting in at a modern workplace.	1.00	5.00	3.17	1.23	1.52	42
9	I am interested in pursuing public service/elected office.	1.00	5.00	2.34	1.30	1.69	41
10	Working for a well-known company/organization is important to me.	1.00	5.00	2.98	1.12	1.26	42
11	Title is important to me.	1.00	5.00	2.60	1.05	1.10	42
12	Being responsible for subordinates is important to me.	1.00	5.00	3.07	0.91	0.83	42
13	Career growth is important to me.	2.00	5.00	4.33	0.75	0.56	42

#	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total					
13	Career growth is important to me.	0.00%	0	4.76%	2	2.38%	1	47.62%	20	45.24%	19	42
4	I have considered working for/with a charitable organization.	0.00%	0	19.05%	8	16.67%	7	42.86%	18	21.43%	9	42
2	I want to use my military skills/training in my next career.	4.76%	2	4.76%	2	23.81%	10	42.86%	18	23.81%	10	42
8	I'm worried about fitting in at a modern workplace.	9.52%	4	28.57%	12	9.52%	4	40.48%	17	11.90%	5	42
5	I have considered working for/with a non-profit organization.	2.38%	1	21.43%	9	19.05%	8	35.71%	15	21.43%	9	42
1	Pay/salary is important to me.	4.76%	2	4.76%	2	7.14%	3	33.33%	4	50.00%	21	42

3	I'd like to continue to serve in some way.	0.00%	0	2.38%	1	26.19%	11	30.95%	13	40.48%	17	42
12	Being responsible for subordinates is important to me.	7.14%	3	14.29%	6	45.24%	19	30.95%	13	2.38%	1	42
7	I need further education/training to get the job I want.	0.00%	0	38.10%	16	23.81%	10	30.95%	13	7.14%	3	42
10	Working for a well-known company/organization is important to me.	11.90%	5	21.43%	9	30.95%	13	28.57%	12	7.14%	3	42
6	Role status/prestige is important to me.	4.76%	2	9.52%	4	52.38%	22	26.19%	11	7.14%	3	42
9	I am interested in pursuing public service/elected office.	39.02%	16	17.07%	7	19.51%	8	19.51%	8	4.88%	2	41
11	Title is important to me.	16.67%	7	30.95%	13	30.95%	13	19.05%	8	2.38%	1	42

Q3.1 - Consider the process of taking your next steps and respond to the prompts below.

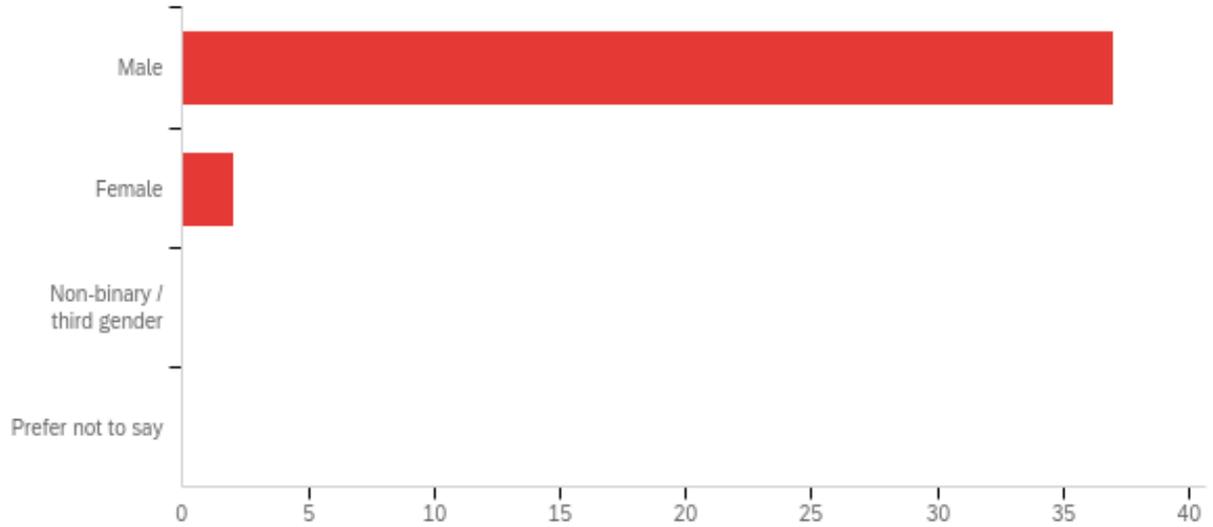


#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I want more help getting a job.	2.00	5.00	3.60	0.94	0.89	40
2	I would like to better understand what careers exists.	2.00	5.00	4.05	0.71	0.50	40
3	I want to learn more about non-profit/charitable organizations.	2.00	5.00	3.65	0.82	0.68	40
4	I have learned a lot in my transition program(s) so far.	3.00	5.00	4.42	0.54	0.29	40

5	I would recommend fellow servicemembers participate in a transition program outside of TAPS/DoD-mandated programs.	3.00	5.00	4.90	0.37	0.14	40
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#	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
2	I would like to better understand what careers exists.	0.00% 0	2.50% 1	15.00% 6	57.50% 23	25.00% 10	40
3	I want to learn more about non-profit/charitable organizations.	0.00% 0	12.50% 5	20.00% 8	57.50% 23	10.00% 4	40
4	I have learned a lot in my transition program(s) so far.	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.50% 1	52.50% 21	45.00% 18	40
1	I want more help getting a job.	0.00% 0	17.50% 7	20.00% 8	47.50% 19	15.00% 6	40
5	I would recommend fellow servicemembers participate in a transition program outside of TAPS/DoD-mandated programs.	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.50% 1	5.00% 2	92.50% 37	40

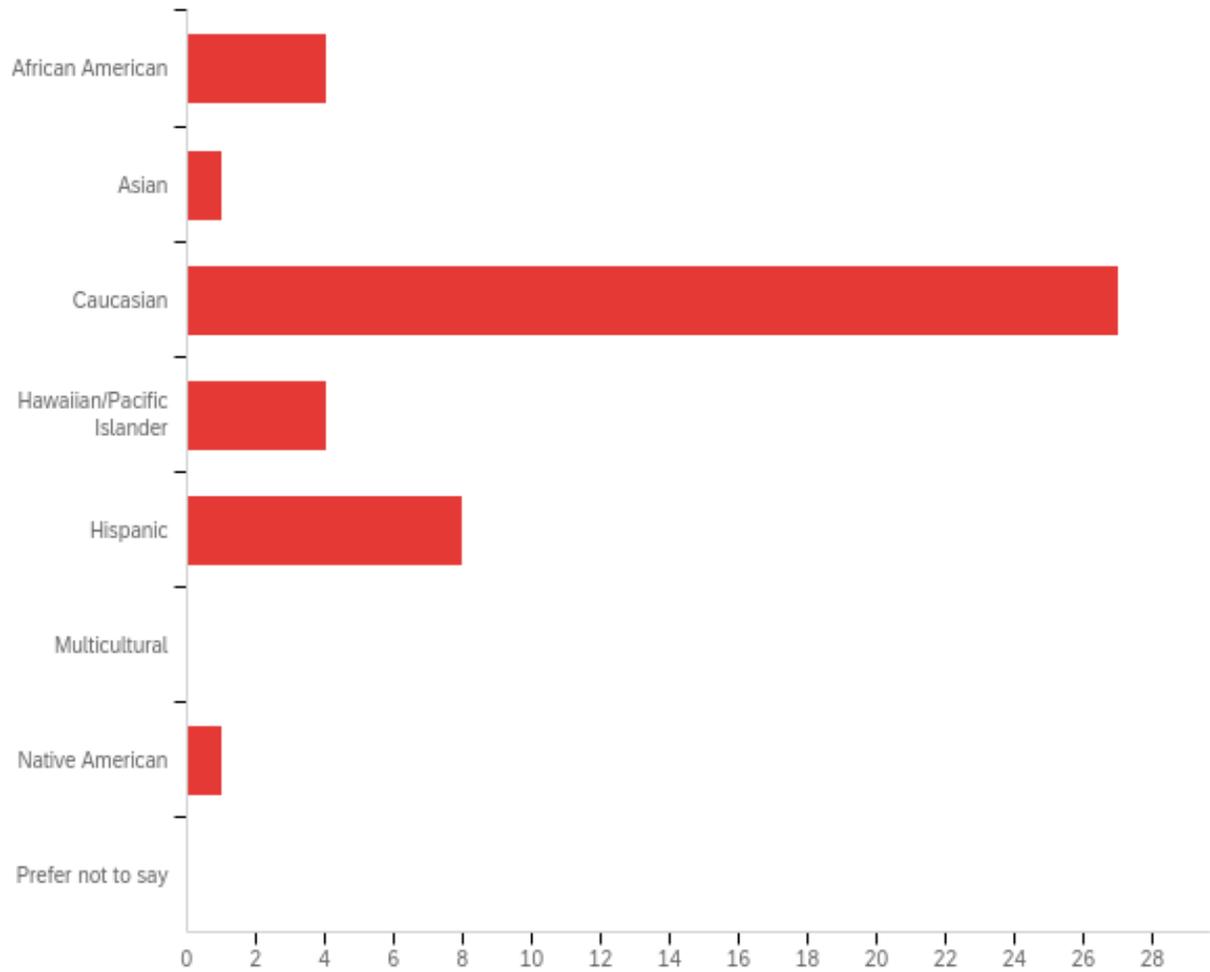
Q4.1 - How would you describe your gender identity?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How would you describe your gender identity?	1.00	2.00	1.05	0.22	0.05	39

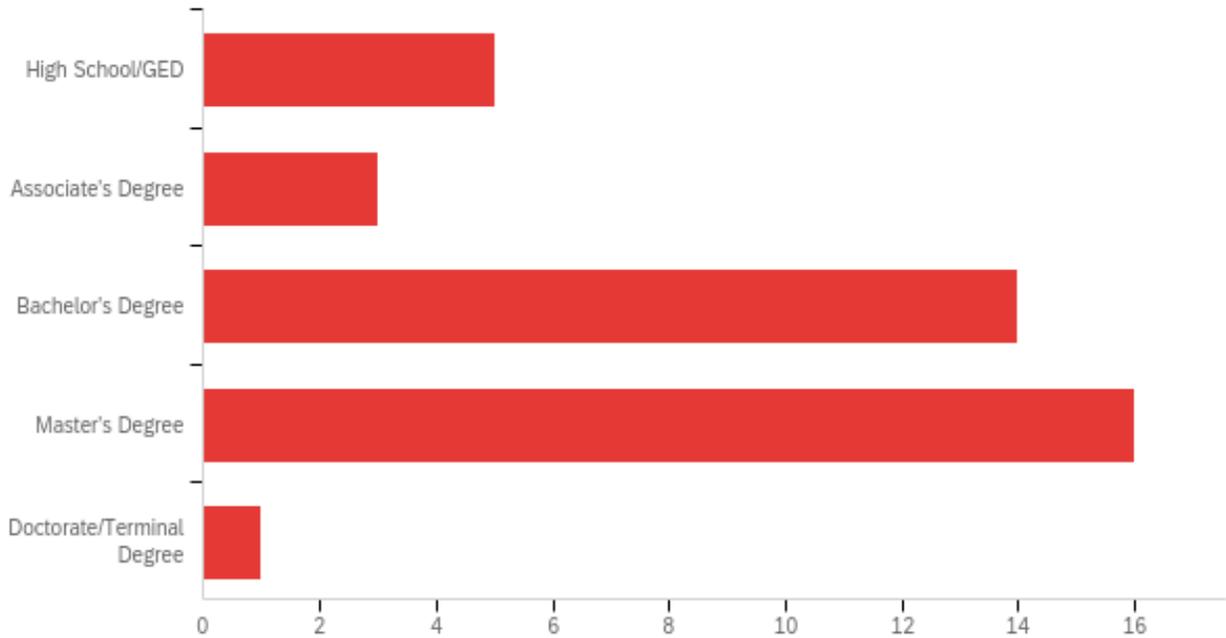
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	94.87%	37
2	Female	5.13%	2
3	Non-binary / third gender	0.00%	0
4	Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	39

Q4.2 - Which of the following best describes your race/ethnicity? Please check all that apply.



#	Answer	%	Count
1	African American	8.89%	4
2	Asian	2.22%	1
3	Caucasian	60.00%	27
4	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	8.89%	4
5	Hispanic	17.78%	8
6	Multicultural	0.00%	0
7	Native American	2.22%	1
8	Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	45

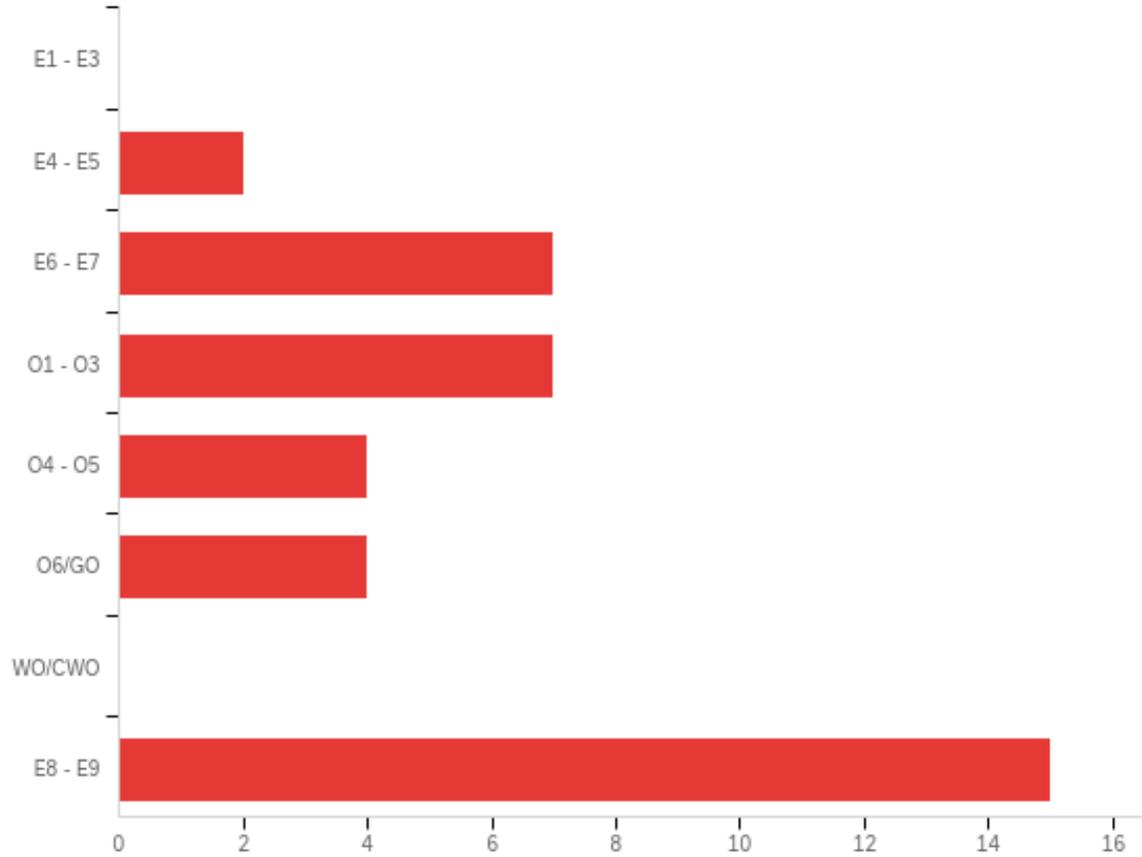
Q4.3 - What is your highest completed level of education?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What is your highest completed level of education?	1.00	5.00	3.13	1.04	1.09	39

#	Answer	%	Count
1	High School/GED	12.82%	5
2	Associate's Degree	7.69%	3
3	Bachelor's Degree	35.90%	14
4	Master's Degree	41.03%	16
5	Doctorate/Terminal Degree	2.56%	1
	Total	100%	39

Q4.4 - What was your highest military rank?

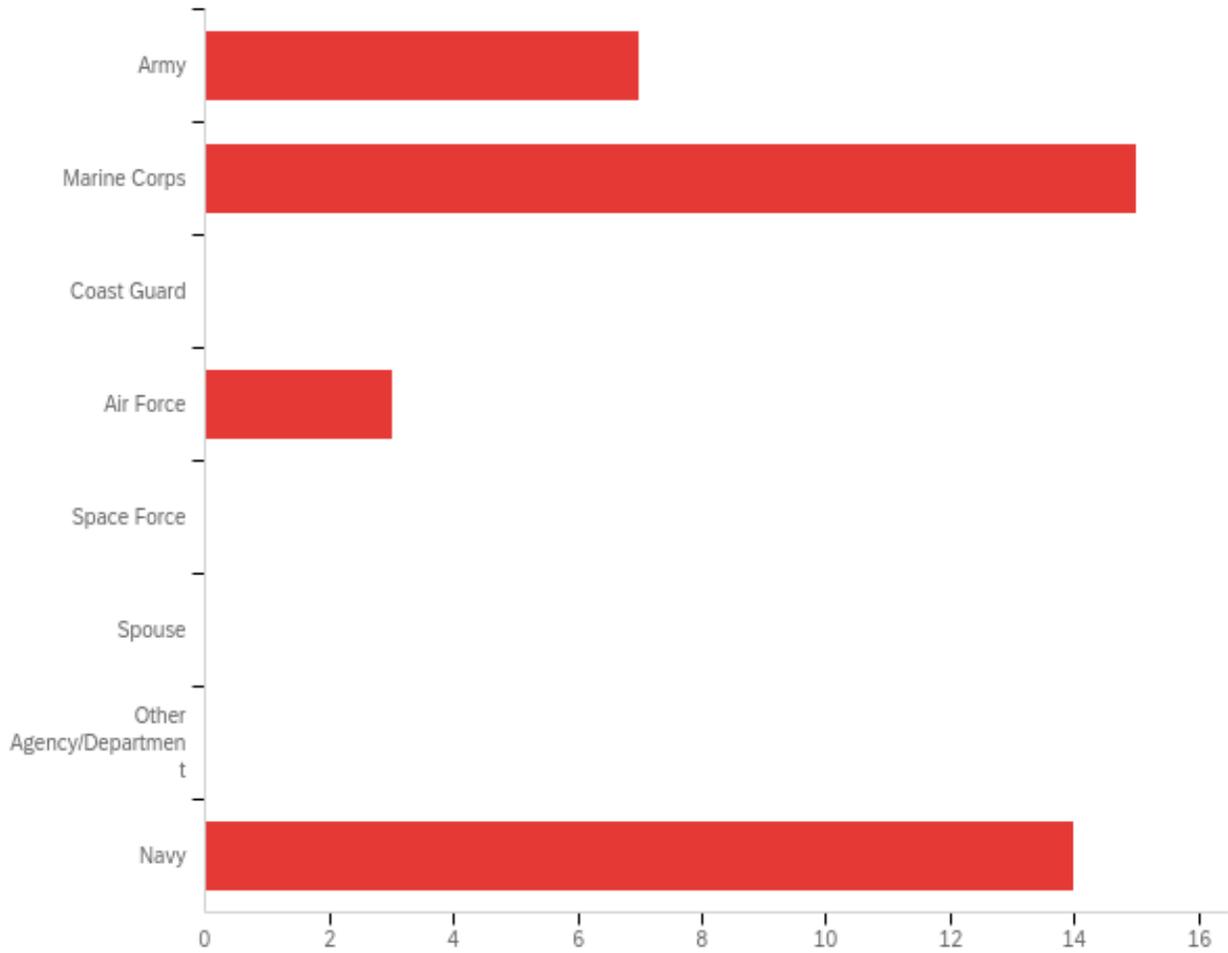


#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What was your highest military rank?	2.00	8.00	5.56	2.15	4.60	39

#	Answer	%	Count
1	E1 - E3	0.00%	0
2	E4 - E5	5.13%	2
3	E6 - E7	17.95%	7
4	O1 - O3	17.95%	7
5	O4 - O5	10.26%	4
6	O6/GO	10.26%	4
7	WO/CWO	0.00%	0

8	E8 - E9	38.46%	15
	Total	100%	39

Q4.5 - What is your branch of service?

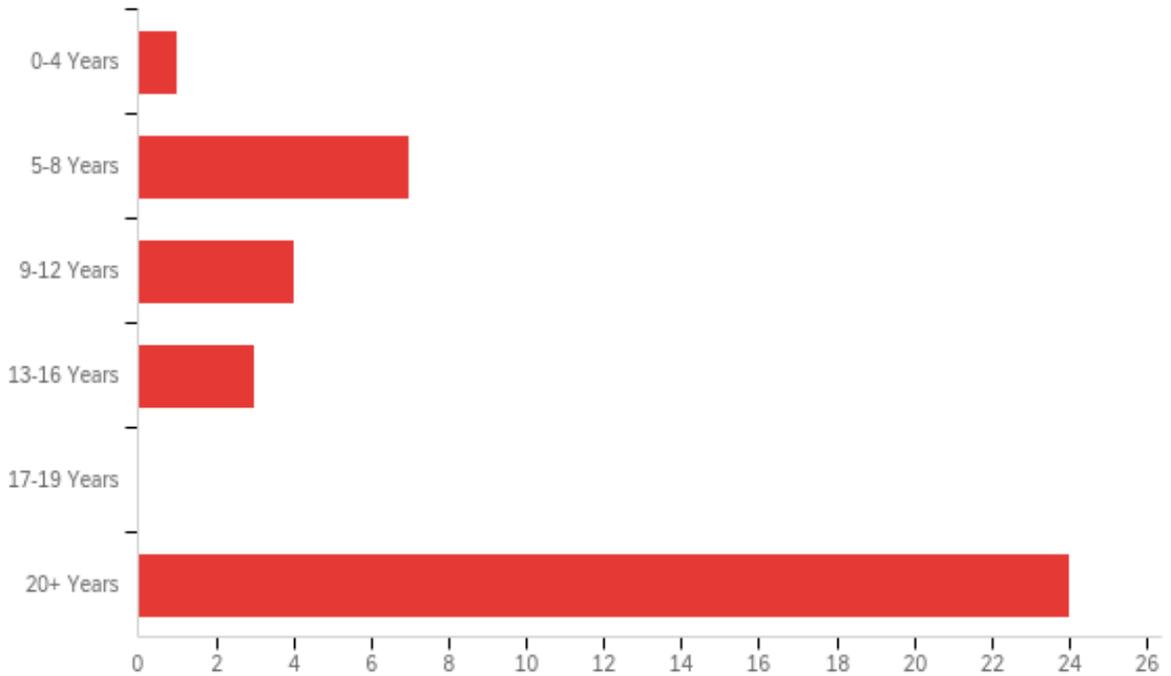


#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What is your branch of service?	1.00	8.00	4.13	2.98	8.88	39

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Army	17.95%	7
2	Marine Corps	38.46%	15
3	Coast Guard	0.00%	0
4	Air Force	7.69%	3
5	Space Force	0.00%	0

6	Spouse	0.00%	0
7	Other Agency/Department	0.00%	0
8	Navy	35.90%	14
	Total	100%	39

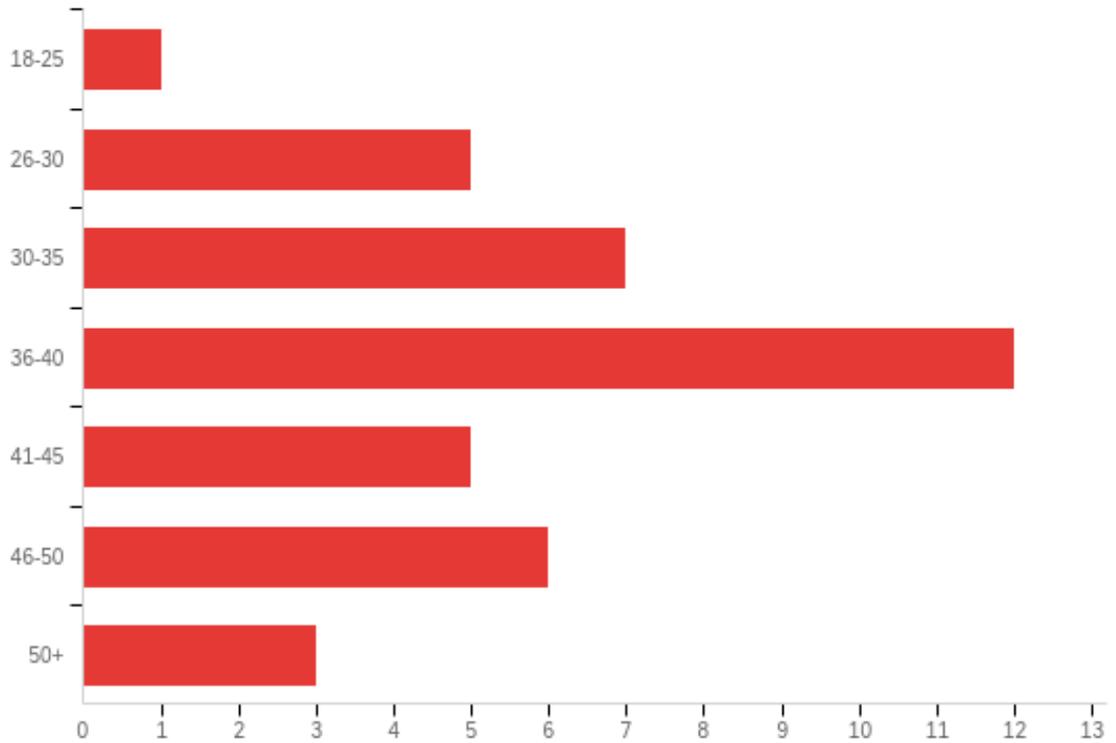
Q4.6 - How long did you serve?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How long did you serve?	1.00	6.00	4.69	1.74	3.03	39

#	Answer	%	Count
1	0-4 Years	2.56%	1
2	5-8 Years	17.95%	7
3	9-12 Years	10.26%	4
4	13-16 Years	7.69%	3
5	17-19 Years	0.00%	0
6	20+ Years	61.54%	24
	Total	100%	39

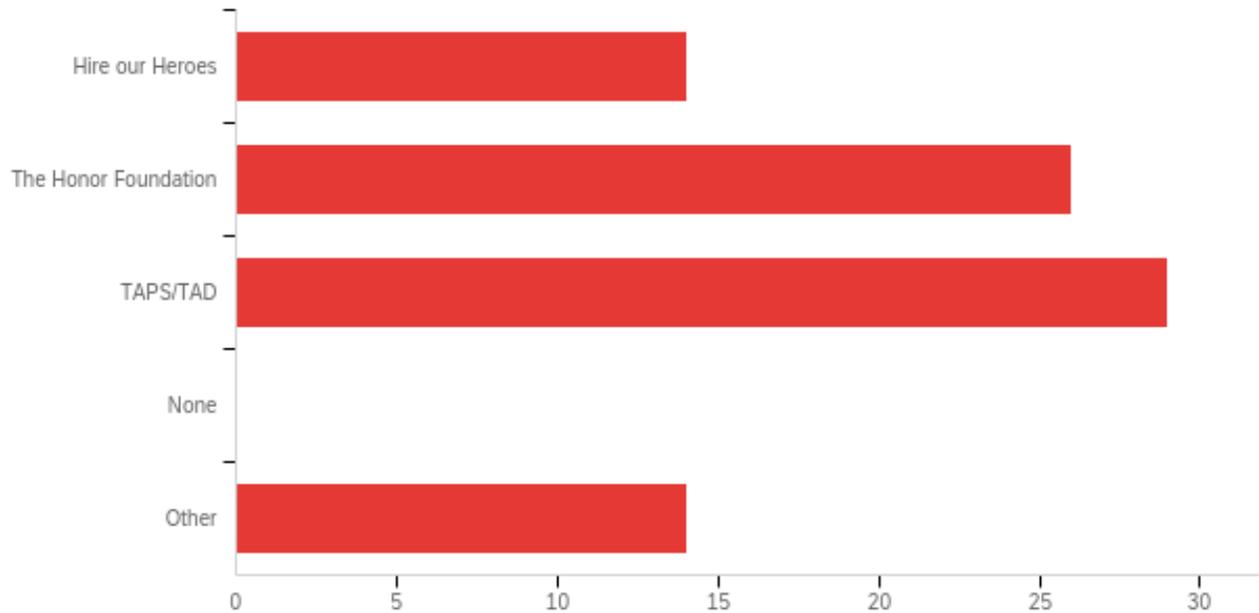
Q4.7 - How old are you?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How old are you?	1.00	7.00	4.15	1.53	2.34	39

#	Answer	%	Count
1	18-25	2.56%	1
2	26-30	12.82%	5
3	30-35	17.95%	7
4	36-40	30.77%	12
5	41-45	12.82%	5
6	46-50	15.38%	6
7	50+	7.69%	3
	Total	100%	39

Q4.9 - What transition program(s) have you participated in (check all that apply)?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Hire our Heroes	16.87%	14
2	The Honor Foundation	31.33%	26
3	TAPS/TAD	34.94%	29
4	None	0.00%	0
5	Other	16.87%	14
	Total	100%	83

Q4.8 - Thanks again for your participation. If you'd like to provide any further details about yourself, your goals, this survey, my project, or anything at all - please do so below.

Thanks again for your participation. If you'd like to provide any further details about yourself, your goals, this survey, my project, or anything at all - please do so below.

Skillbridge was a critical component to my successful transition.

I think it would be interesting to capture why they left service. As a female SM, wanting to start a family is a big one but I also felt fear of not having a job that was as meaningful as the one I did in the Army. Retention of women in SOF is low.

Pursuing MBA and PMP

Good luck with your future endeavors.

Skillbridge viability and utility needs to be looked into. IFF transitioning SMs can get away to skillbridge, are they able to work meaningful "internships"? IFF their is a pathway to professional certs, or training to a specific industry/company the SM is interested, it is good. If not, the SM is free labor and is wasting valuable time.

Pride of belonging, something I used for recruiting duty to ask if this was what they wanted and I believe those like me retiring want this. If service connected to base this would allow most recent retired to have this and allow those can contribute to make a difference for service member because we know what could be done better or there's a lack of it for service members.