



**2017 ANNUAL MILITARY SPOUSE ATTORNEY SURVEY
REPORT OF FINDINGS**

INTRODUCTION

About MSJDN

The Military Spouse JD Network (MSJDN) is a bar association for military spouse attorneys. MSJDN members include men and women building careers in the legal profession while also serving their country with a spouse or partner in the United States Uniformed Services. Founded in 2011, MSJDN's mission is to improve the lives of military families by empowering military spouses through advocacy, professional networking, and job opportunities. The organization's over 700 members come from active duty, guard, and reserve units in all branches of the Armed Services. MSJDN also includes members who are veterans and/or are married to veterans of the Armed Services.

Purpose

MSJDN developed an annual survey of military spouse attorneys to collect data to inform MSJDN initiatives and impact. The survey collects information about:

- military service affiliation of military spouse attorneys;
- branches of service, length of service, and military careers represented among military spouse attorneys and their spouses and partners;
- family composition and frequency of moves of military spouse attorneys;
- careers, including duration, type of practice, and how military service may have impacted careers of military spouse attorneys; and
- other factors impacting careers of military spouse attorneys, including service, licensing issues, and student loans.

Methodology

The MSJDN Annual Survey opened on December 4, 2017, and was published to military spouse attorneys and military spouse law students via email and social media. The survey ran from December 4, 2017 to January 8, 2018. The survey was advertised internally to MSJDN members and publicly to all military spouse attorneys during the period it was open. Three hundred and fifty (350) individuals participated in the survey. MSJDN permitted any military spouse attorney to participate, regardless of membership.

MSJDN members compiled results for this report, and the full MSJDN Board of Directors had an opportunity to review the report for accuracy prior to publication.

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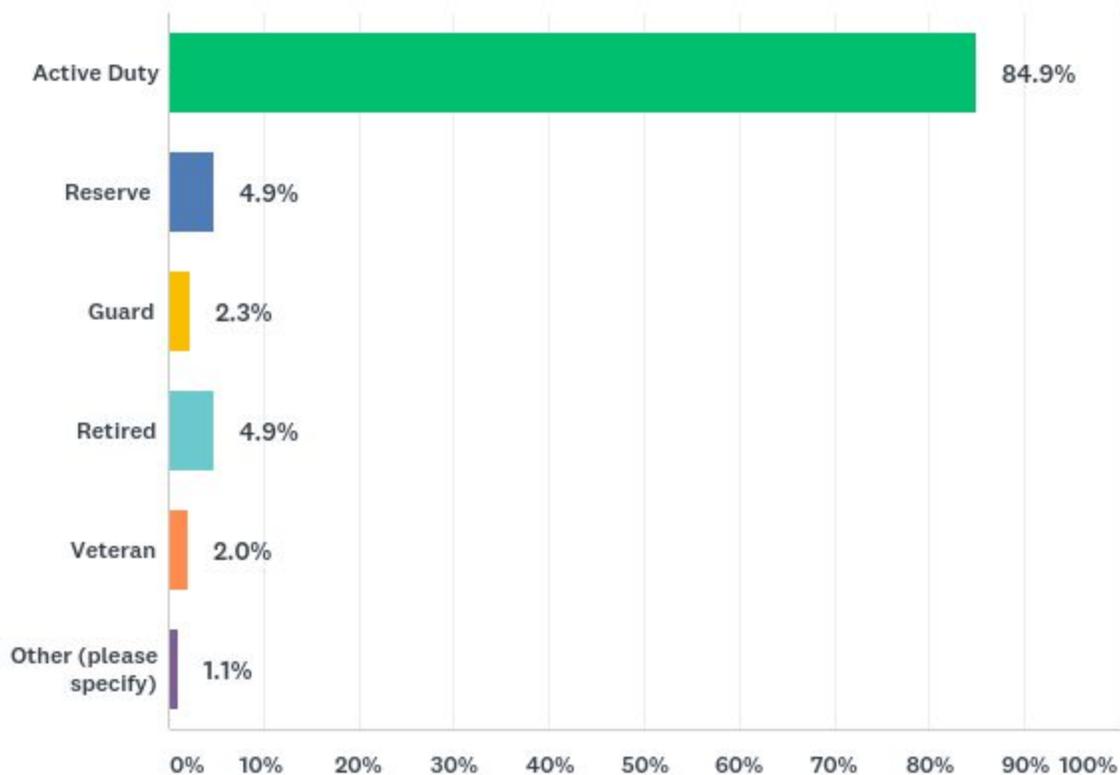
FINDINGS

I. Demographics of Military Spouse Attorneys

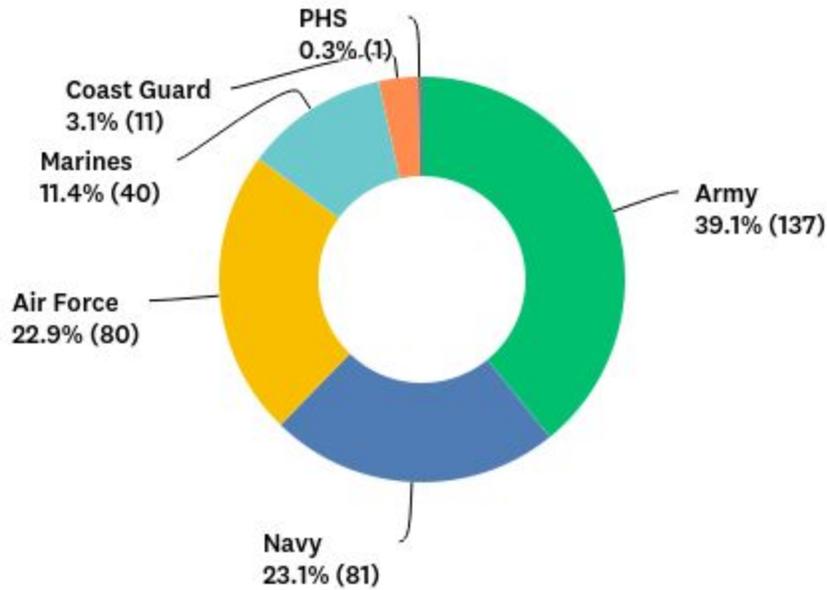
The community of military spouse attorneys is predominantly composed of women. Ninety-five percent of military spouse attorneys are women, while approximately 5% are men. These numbers are consistent with other demographics reports on military spouses. (The 2015 Department of Defense Demographics Report showed 92% of active duty spouses are female. A 2013 report commissioned by the Military Officers Association of America showed 90% of military spouses are female).

A. Service Affiliation

Military spouse attorneys come from active duty, guard, and reserve families, as well as veteran and retired active duty, guard, and reserve families. Active duty families make up the largest percentage of military spouse attorneys at nearly 85%. The distribution of each type of service is reflected in the chart below. In addition, a number of military spouse attorneys are servicemembers or veterans themselves. Four percent of military spouse attorneys are currently serving in the military, and 13% are veterans. Among veterans, approximately 55% were Judge Advocate General (JAG) officers.

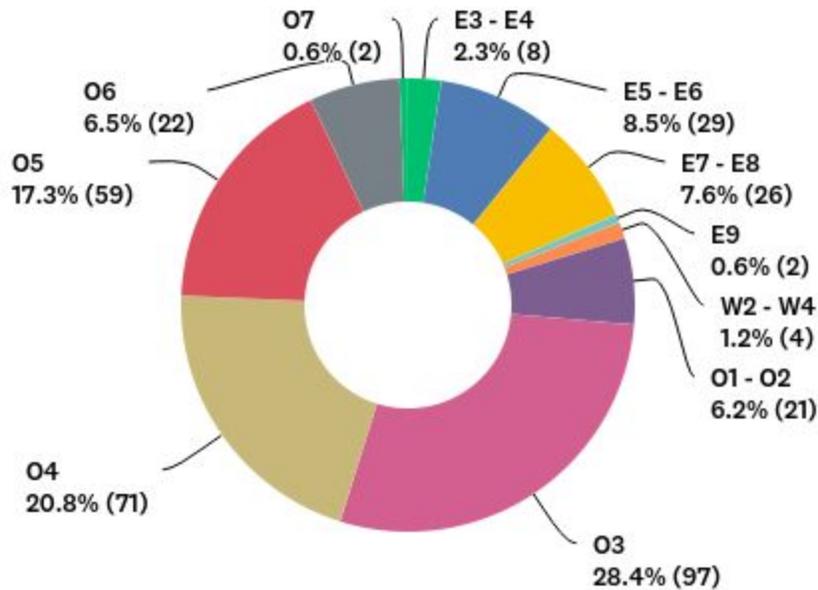


Military spouse attorneys represent all branches of service, as reflected in the following graph. The largest percentage of military spouse attorneys are affiliated with the Army at 39%.



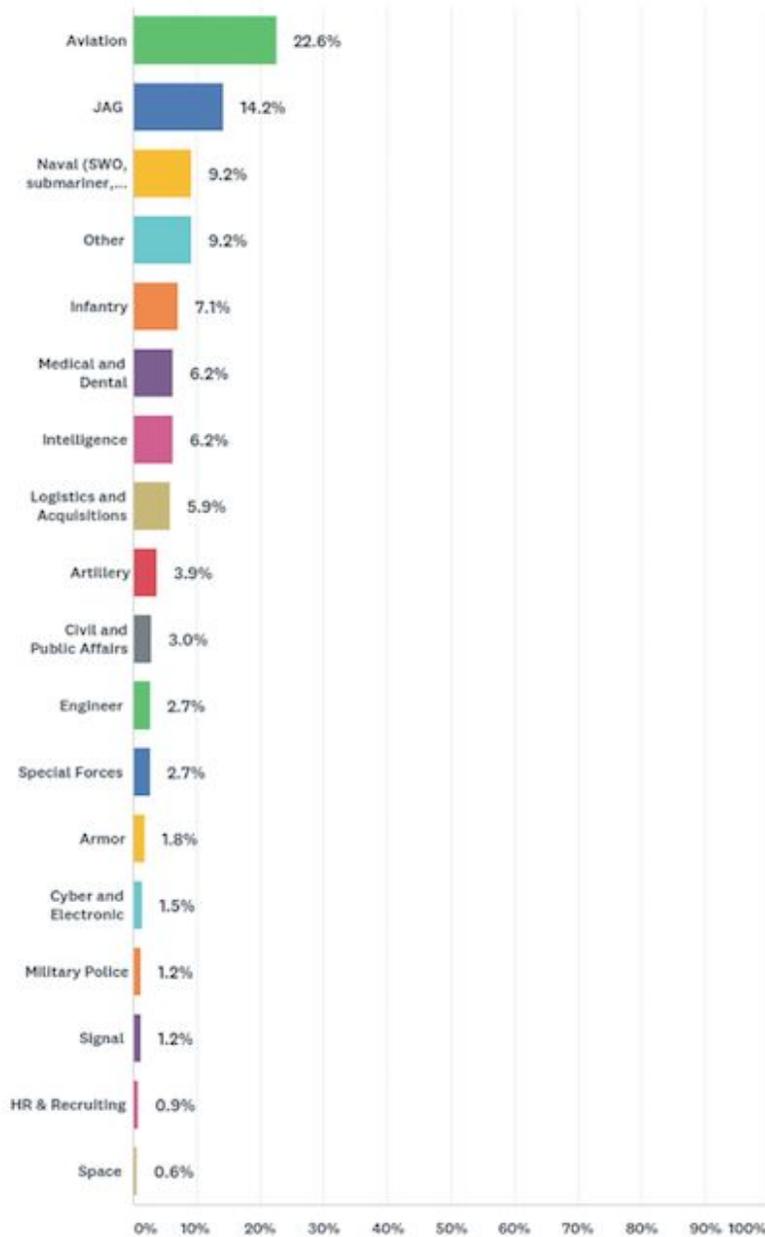
B. Officer/Enlisted statistics

The ranks of MSJDN member spouses and partners vary widely, as reflected below. However, the largest distribution is among mid-level officer ranks. Approximately 80% of military spouse attorney are married to officers, 1% are married to warrant officers, and 19% are married to enlisted servicemembers.



C. Career Field

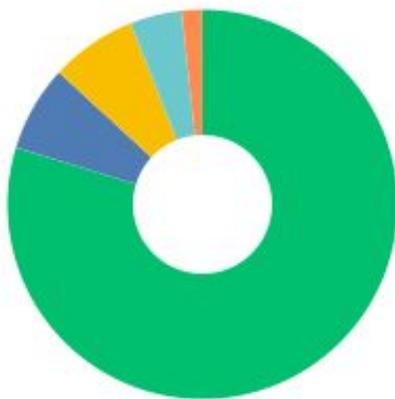
Military spouse attorneys are married to servicemembers in a wide variety of career fields in the military. The top five career fields were pilot (16%), JAG (14%), infantry (7%), aviation - other than as a pilot (7%) and intelligence (6%).



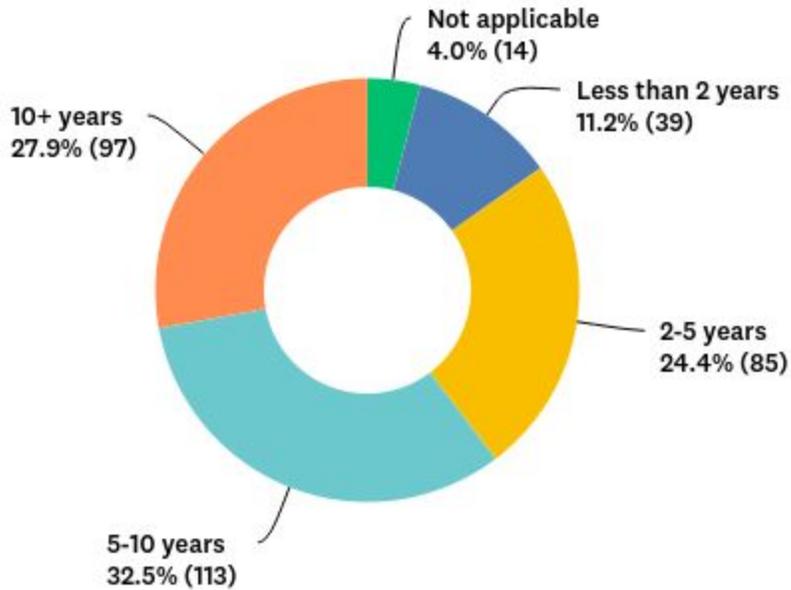
II. Characteristics of Military Spouse Attorneys

A. Relationship to the Military

Military spouse attorneys are a diverse group, but one thing they have in common is a connection to the United States Uniformed Services. The number of survey respondents married to active duty servicemembers is 80%, with another 4% dating or engaged to a servicemember.

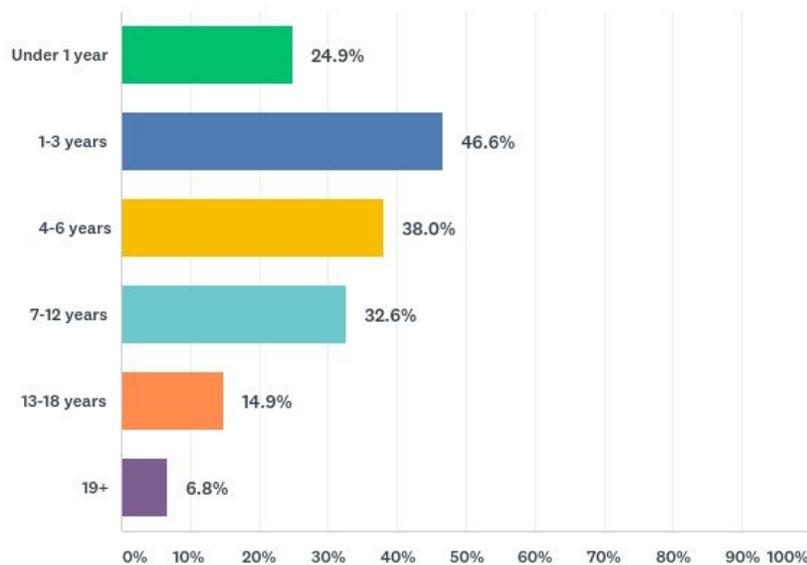


Of those married to servicemembers, approximately 2% are in a relationship with a same-sex partner. As reflected below, 33% of military spouse attorneys have been married to their servicemembers for five to ten years of their spouse's military service while nearly 30% have been married to their spouse for over 10 years of their spouse's military service.



B. Military Spouse Attorney Family Composition

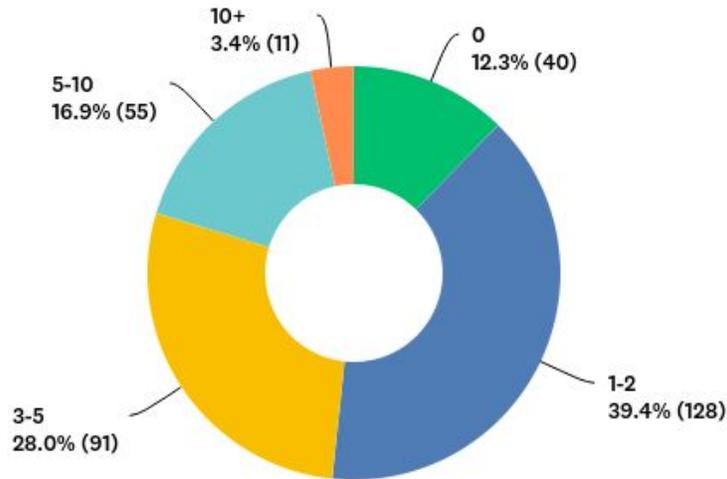
Approximately 64% of military spouse attorneys have children. The chart below reflects the ages of children in military spouse attorney households. For those who have children, the majority (76%) have 1 or 2 children, and as the below chart illustrates, their children’s age varies with the majority tending to be of younger age.



C. Relocations

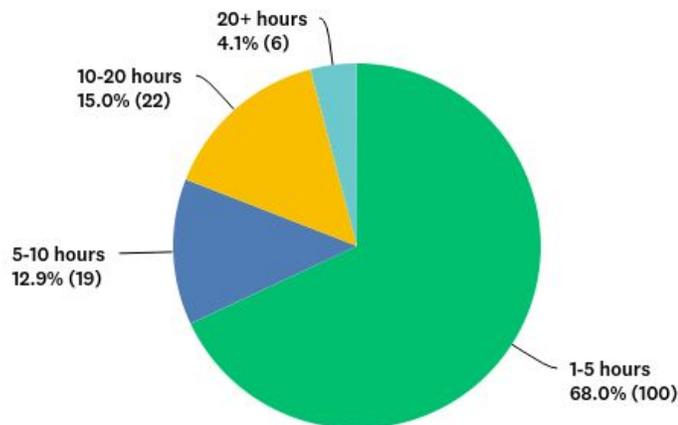
Permanent changes of duty station (“PCS moves”) are a frequent occurrence for military families and happen, on average, every two to three years. Nearly half of military spouse attorneys indicate they had experienced three or more PCS moves. Approximately 40% of

respondents indicated only one move during the course of their careers. Some indicated they have experienced more than 10 PCS moves. Not all military spouse attorneys move with their servicemember; approximately half, at one point in their marriage, lived separately from their servicemember in order to maintain a legal career.



D. Volunteerism

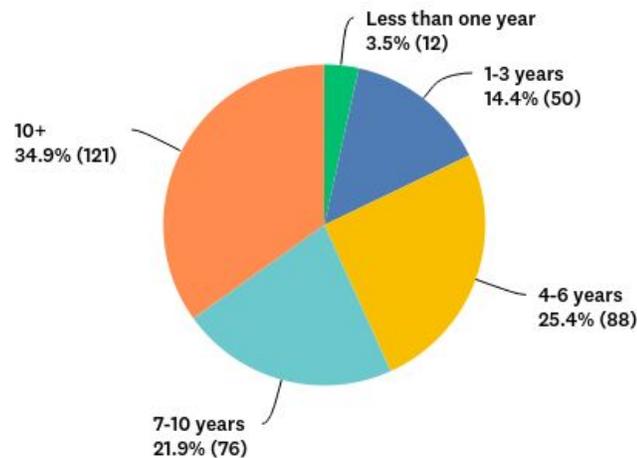
As a community, military spouses tend to perform significant hours of volunteer work. Approximately 46% of military spouse attorneys report they volunteer in their communities. The next chart reflects the number of hours military spouse attorneys report they volunteer on a weekly basis, for those who reported volunteer work. This reflects all volunteer hours performed by military spouse attorneys and is not specific to pro bono work.



III. Military Spouse Attorneys as Professionals

The levels of experience among military spouse attorneys are fairly evenly distributed. Roughly 14% have between one and three years of practice. Another 26% have four to six years of practice, approximately 22% have seven to ten years of practice, and 35% have over ten years

of practice.



A. Types of Legal Practice

Military spouse attorneys come from a wide array of legal backgrounds. The two most common practice backgrounds for military spouse attorneys are small firm and government practice. About 34% have experience working in a law group that has more than 50 lawyers. Only 16% reported ever having a solo practice during their legal careers.

B. Remote Work

Due to frequent moves, it is often hard to keep a single position for an extended period of time unless an employer is willing to permit a military spouse attorney to work remotely. 45% of military spouse attorneys answered that an employer has provided the opportunity to work remotely. This is an increase from the 33% who answered this question affirmatively during the 2013 survey.

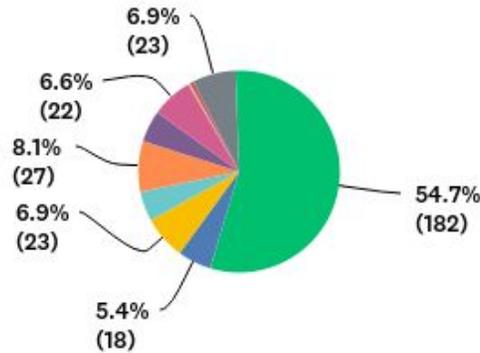
IV. Impact of Military Service on Job Prospects

When asked whether military service has impacted their ability to progress in the legal profession, 87% of military spouse attorneys answered in the affirmative. Fifty-nine percent reported having been asked by a prospective employer about their status as a military spouse. Responses indicate their military affiliation is frequently a reason employers choose not to hire military spouse attorneys. Based on annual survey responses, employers provide a number of explanations, including: (a) the reality of frequent military moves; (b) concern that deployments will interfere with work performance; (c) the existence of gap periods in resumes; or (d) the perception that the military spouse is looking for a job instead of a career.

A. Employment Status

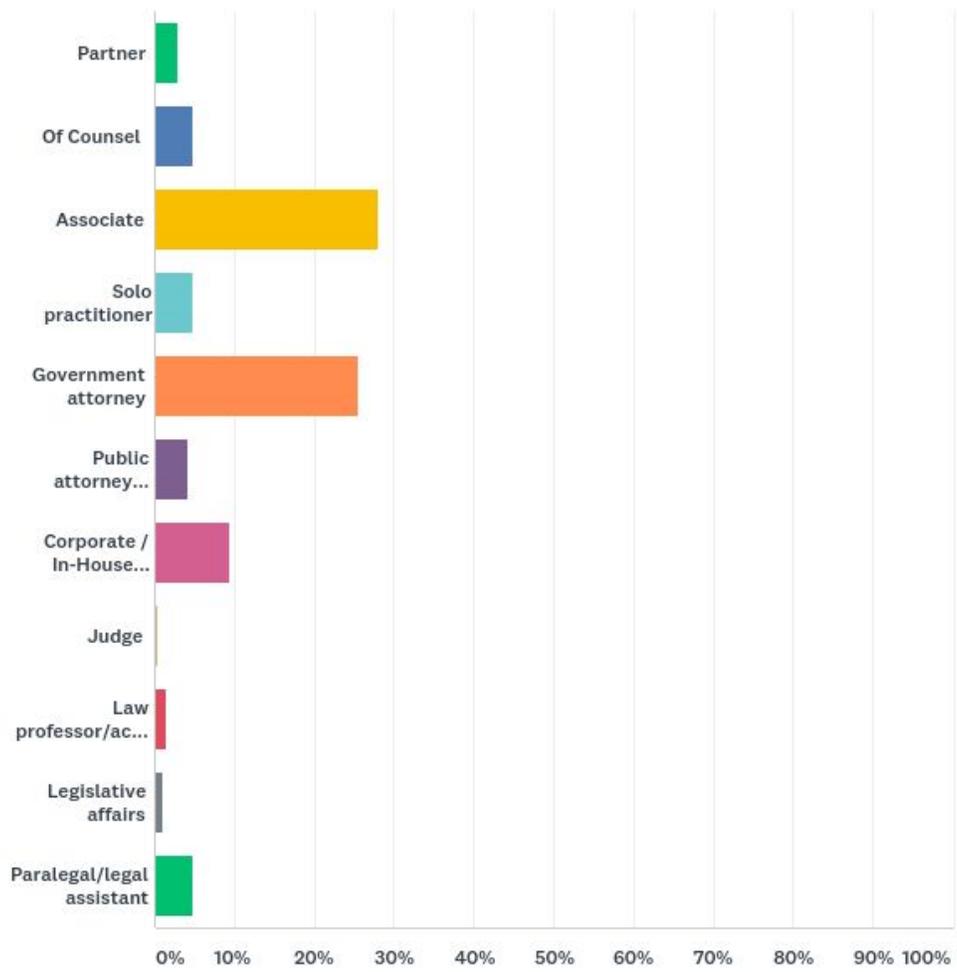
Despite the fact that 87% of military spouse attorneys have a license to practice law in at

least one jurisdiction, only about 74% report having employment in a job requiring a law license. Approximately 14% have some kind of part-time or self-employment; 17% are unemployed and seeking employment and 8% are unemployed and no longer seeking employment. The chart below reflects responses concerning current employment status:



B. Work Experience

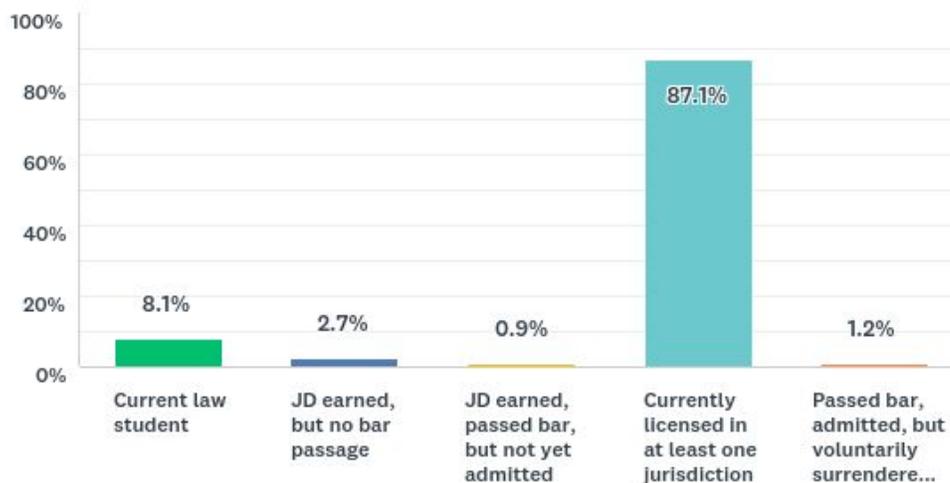
Of the roughly 74% of military spouse attorneys who are employed in legal positions, the majority are involved in private practice. Many work in a number of other legal fields as well, albeit in smaller numbers. The chart below reflects the job title of respondents who are presently working:



V. Law Licensure

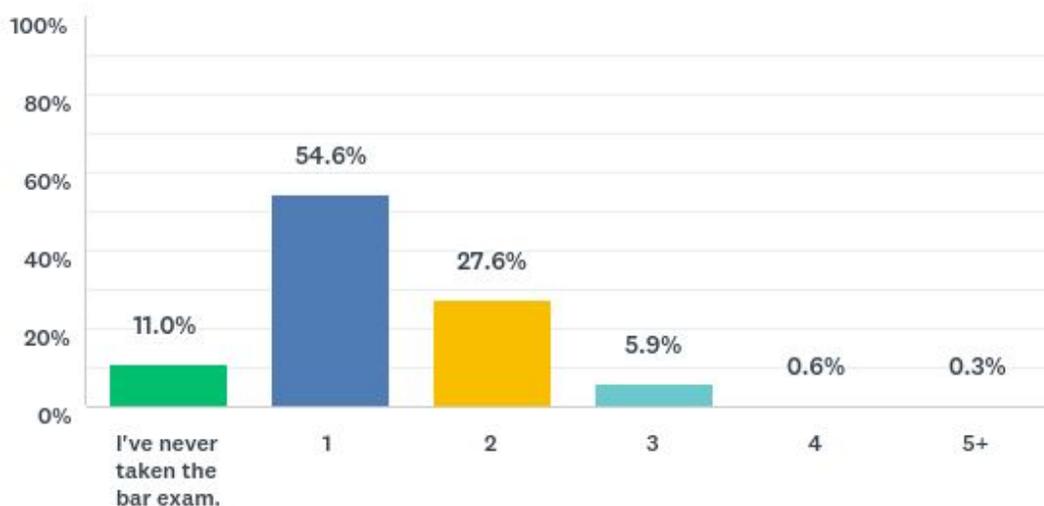
A. Law Licensure Status

Approximately 87% of military spouse attorneys reported that they have at least one active law license. Another 8% of members are law students, and 3% have earned a juris doctor but do not yet have a license.



B. Number of Bar Examinations

Due to the mobile nature of military life, military spouse attorneys often must take more than one bar exam; 89% of military spouse attorneys have taken and passed at least one bar exam. Of those, 28% have been admitted to two jurisdictions by examination, nearly 6% have been admitted to three jurisdictions by examination, and less than one percent have taken been admitted to more than three jurisdictions by examination.



C. Bar Admission Without Examination

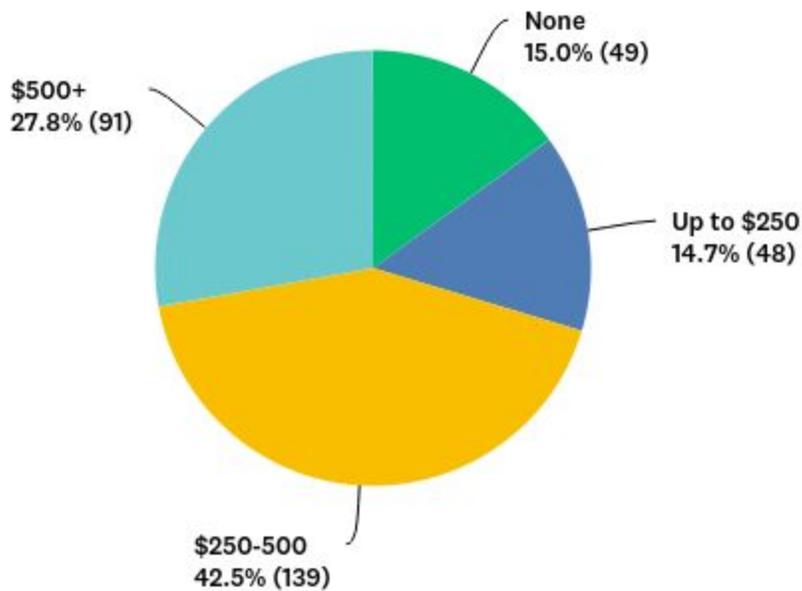
Approximately a quarter of military spouse attorneys have been admitted on motion in at least one jurisdiction. Of those admitted by motion, the majority did so in DC; 55% of military spouse attorneys admitted by motion have done so with the DC bar. Sixteen percent of military spouse attorneys admitted by motion used a military spouse admission.

D. Bar Admission Nationwide

Survey respondents have taken the bar exam in all states. The top five states where military spouse attorneys have taken the bar are California (18% of respondents), Virginia (14%), Texas (11%), Florida (9%), and New York (8%).

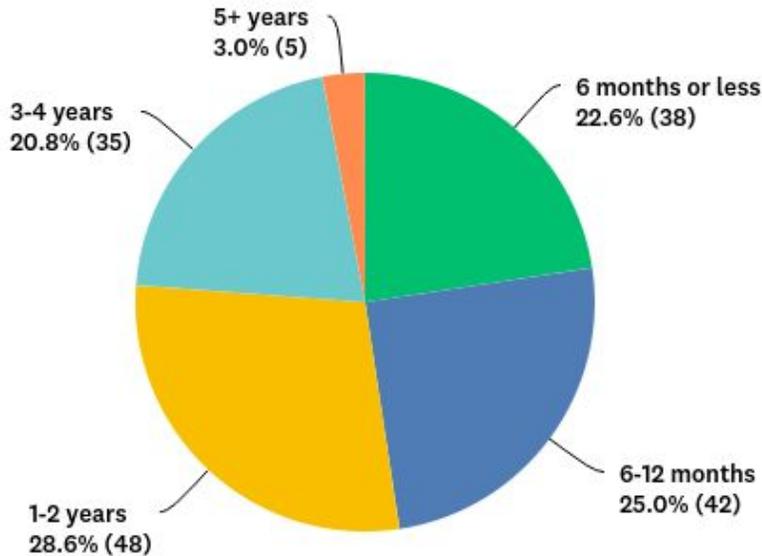
E. Professional Dues

When asked to calculate the total amount they pay in annual mandatory bar dues, 28% report paying more than \$500 a year in annual mandatory bar dues and 43% report paying between \$250 and \$500 in bar dues. In addition to mandatory bar dues, sixty percent of military spouse attorneys report paying up to \$250 annually in voluntary bar dues.

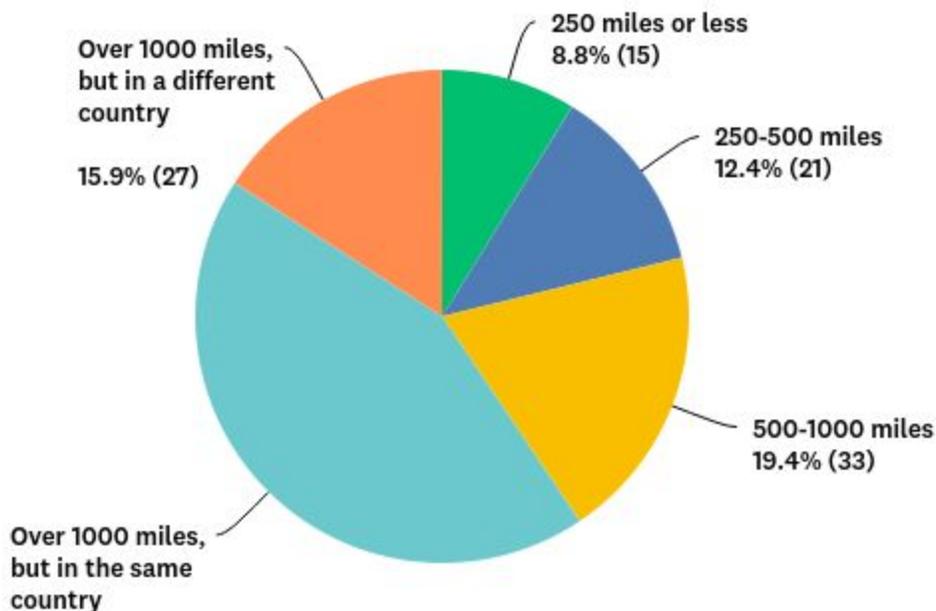


VI. Separations and Remote Families

Approximately 49% of military spouse attorneys reported that they have lived remotely away from their servicemember in order to maintain their legal career. Of this number, 24% have lived away from their servicemember for this reason for over three years. The chart below illustrates the total amount of time military spouse attorneys have reported living away from their spouse, for those who have reported any length of separation.



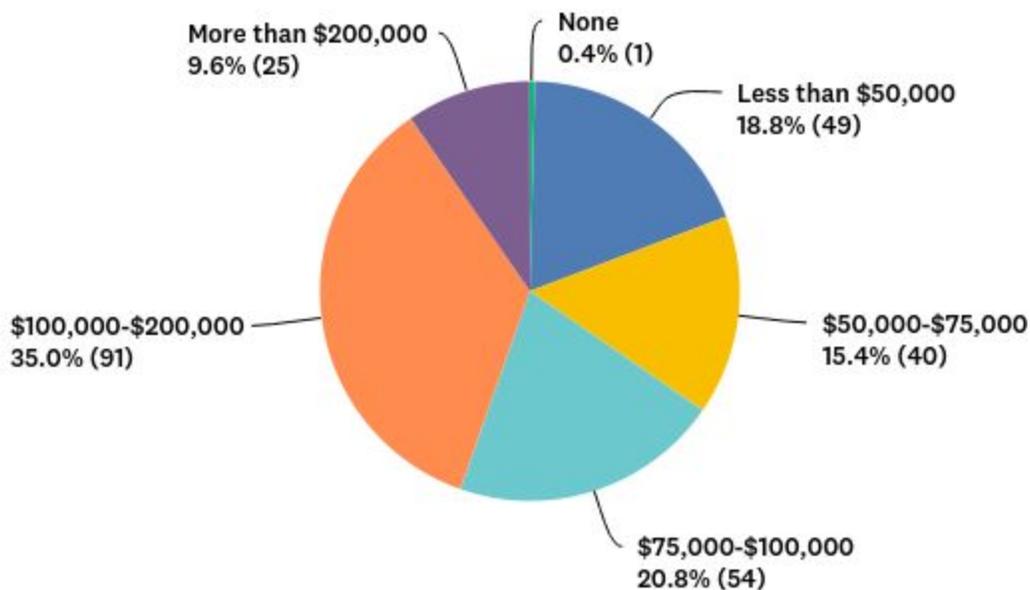
Of those who have lived apart from his or her spouse, approximately 60% of military spouse attorneys reported living as far as over 1,000 miles from his or her spouse in order to maintain a legal career. Nineteen percent of military spouse attorneys have lived remotely from their servicemembers between 500 to 1000 miles in order to maintain a legal career.



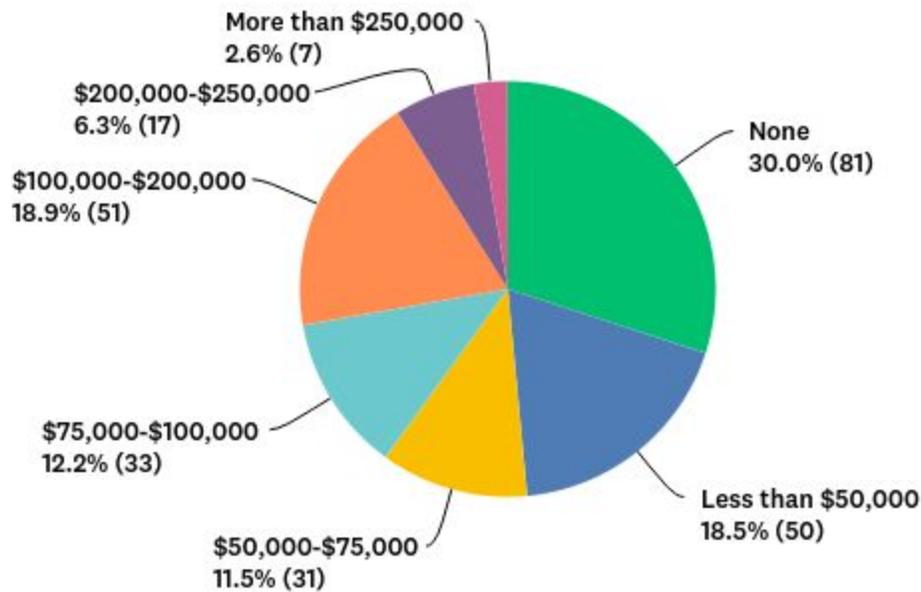
VII. Student Loan Debt and Household Income

A. Debt Incurred Prior to and After Law School Graduation

Based on survey responses, 99% of military spouse attorneys graduated from law school with student loan debt. According to the American Bar Association, law students incur an average debt of \$84,000 after graduation from a public school, and \$122,158 after graduation from a private school. The following chart demonstrates the total debt held by military spouse attorneys after graduating law school.



The next chart demonstrates the total debt currently owed by military spouse attorneys.



Less than 1% of military spouse attorneys finished law school with no student loan debt. Twenty-one percent of military spouse attorneys finished law school with between \$75,000 and \$100,000 in student loan debt; fifteen percent graduated with between \$50,000 and \$75,000 in student loan debt, and approximately 35% incurred more than \$100,000 in student loan debt by the time they finished law school.

Approximately 40% of military spouse attorneys currently owe more than \$75,000 in student loans. Thirty percent have no outstanding student loans, and 3% have a balance owed of over \$250,000 of student loan debt.

Almost one-third of military spouse attorneys report that a high student loan balance impacts their spouse's decision to stay in the military. In addition, 30% of military spouse attorneys report that student loan debt affects their decision about whether or not to PCS with their servicemember.

B. Household Income

Household income among military spouse attorneys varies widely, with the largest distribution of income over \$100,000 annually. Based on survey responses to the question concerning their servicemember's rank, this data would suggest that even in the households reporting income on the higher end of the spectrum, the military spouse attorney in the household is being paid below the national average for attorneys. When respondents were asked what their current income was (not total household income), nearly 80% of military spouse attorneys reported income below \$100,000 annually. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median salary of an attorney in 2017 was approximately \$120,000 per year. Therefore, it is evident that military spouse attorneys are being paid below the national average.