



U.S. Department of Defense



Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
Military Community and Family Policy

2024 Active Duty Spouse Survey (ADSS) **Key Findings**

Prepared for Public Release
May 2025

Quality of life policies and programs that help our service members, their families and survivors be well and mission ready.

Survey Background

- The Active Duty Spouse Survey (ADSS) is conducted by the Office of People Analytics (OPA) every other year to assess key issues for military spouses and families.
- Since 2006, ADSS has enhanced understanding of how spouse and family factors impact force readiness and retention. It is used to assess the need for programs and policies supporting military families.
- The ADSS is a scientific survey using industry-standard practices including stratified random sampling and statistical weighting; consequently, results are generalizable to the full active duty spouse population.
 - 2024 response rate: 20%
- Field period: January 8 to May 8, 2024.

2024 Active Duty Spouse Insights

Satisfaction and Support to Stay on Active Duty

Financial Condition

Spouse Employment

Impact of PCS

Impact of PCS on Children

Well-Being

Counseling Use

The Military Spouse: At a Glance



Spouse Demographics*

SEX



85%
are female

14%
are male

DUAL-MILITARY

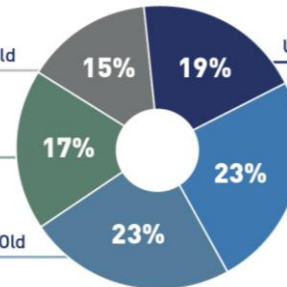
14%
of spouses are in a
dual-service family

AGE

Over 40 Years Old

36-40 Years Old

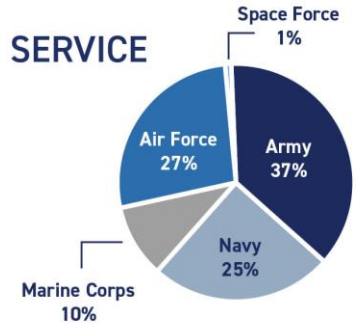
31-35 Years Old



Under 26 Years Old

26-30 Years Old

SERVICE



CHILD STATUS

67% have children under 18 living
at home, part-time or full-time

AGE OF CHILDREN (PERCENTAGE WITH AT LEAST 1 CHILD)



Under 6 years old (45%)

6 to 13 years old (35%)

14 to < 18 years old (13%)

WHERE SPOUSES LIVE

26%
Live on base

74%
Live off base

DEPLOYMENT

74% have experienced their
spouse being deployed for
longer than 30 days

PCS MOVE

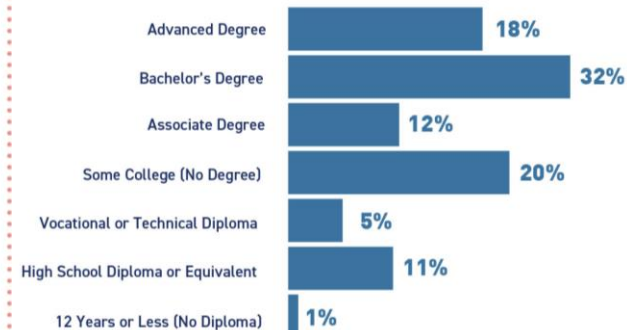


23% experienced a Permanent Change of Station
(PCS) move in the last 12 months

81% experienced a PCS move during their spouse's career

18% chose to remain in place and not move with their
spouse at least once during their spouse's career

EDUCATION LEVEL



Quality of life policies and programs that help our service members, their families and survivors be well and mission ready.

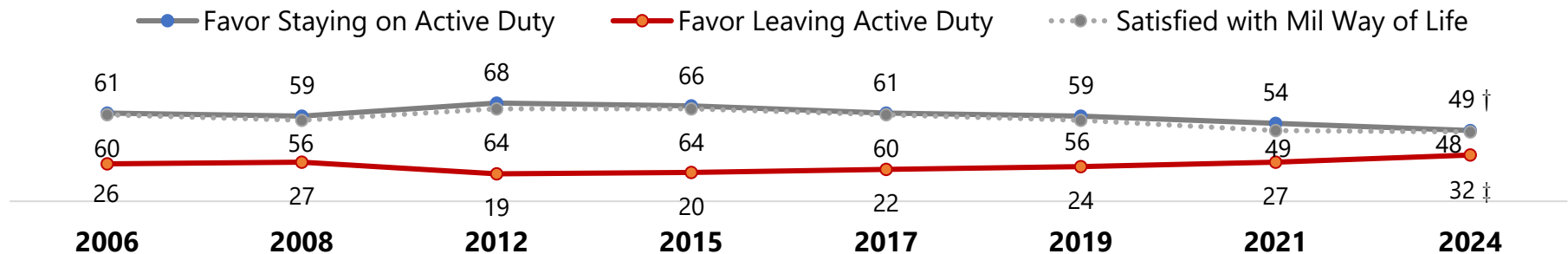
*Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Key Metrics: Satisfaction and Support to Stay on Active Duty

- The percentage of spouses who favored *leaving* the military in 2024 was the highest ever reported on the ADSS (32%) while the percentage of spouses *satisfied* with the military way of life remained low (48%).

Spouse Support to Continue Active Duty & Satisfaction with Military Way of Life

Percent of All Active Duty Spouses



Margins of error range from $\pm 1\%$ to $\pm 2\%$

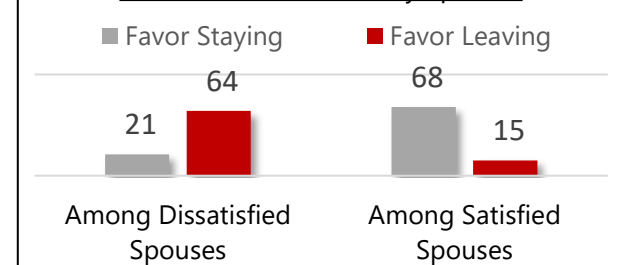
† Significantly lower than 2006-2021.

‡ Significantly higher than 2006-2021.

- Spouses who were *dissatisfied* with military life were more likely to favor their spouse leaving active duty (64%) than those who were *satisfied* (15%).
- Spousal support to stay is a predictor of actual member retention.¹

Spousal Support to Stay By Satisfaction With MilLife

Percent of All Active Duty Spouses

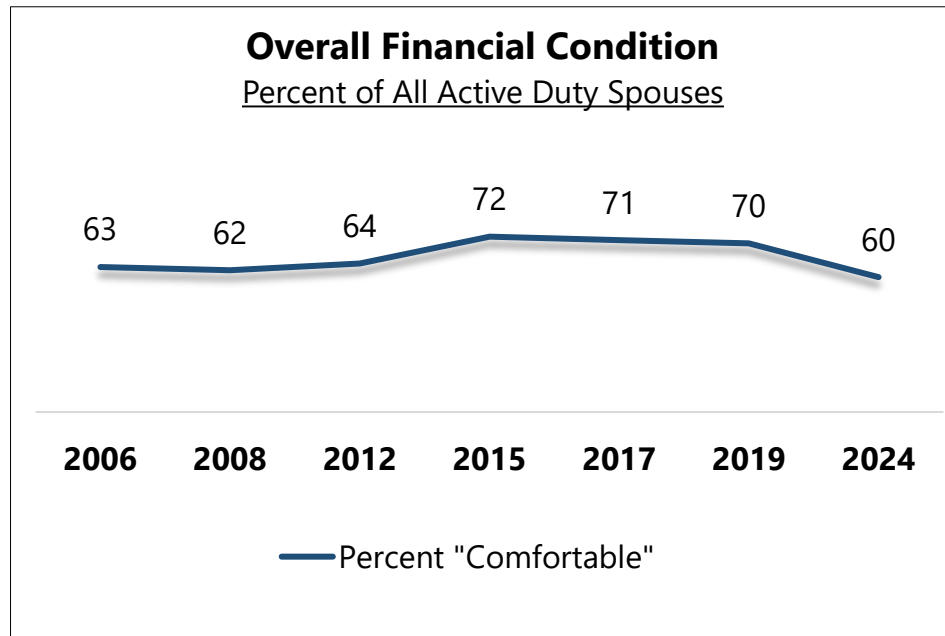


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¹ Spousal Support to Stay as a Predictor of Actual Retention Behavior: A Logistic Regression Analysis – OPA.mil

Drivers of Satisfaction: Financial Condition

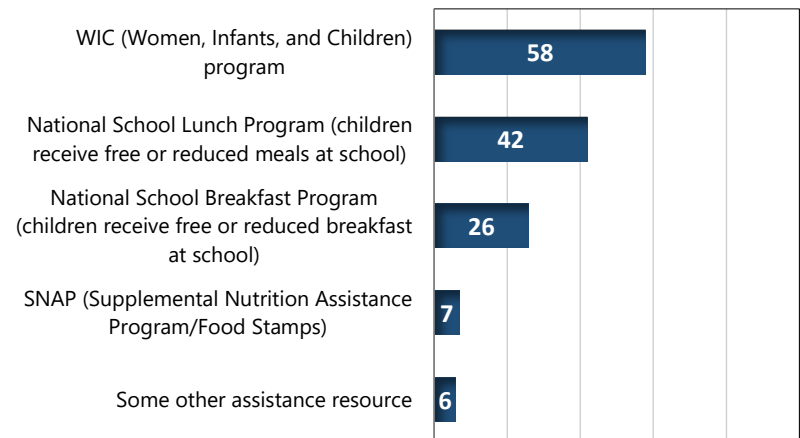
- Six in ten (60%) spouses described their financial situation as *comfortable*, a 10-percentage point drop from 2019 and lower than nearly all years back to 2006.



Margins of error range from $\pm 1\%$ to $\pm 2\%$
2024 percent "comfortable" significantly lower than 2006 and 2012-2019.
Item was not asked in 2021.

- About 1 in 10 (13%) of active duty spouses used some type of nutrition assistance.
- WIC was the most commonly used nutritional assistance program.

Program Use Among Spouses
Currently Receiving Support From
Nutrition Assistance Resources
Percent of Active Duty Spouses Who Currently Use A
Nutrition Assistance Program



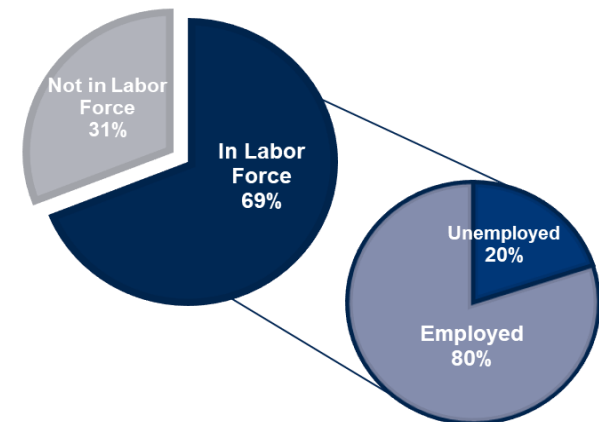
Margins of error range from $\pm 3\%$ to $\pm 4\%$

Drivers of Satisfaction: Spouse Employment

- The percentage of civilian spouses in the labor force increased significantly from 2021 (64%) to 2024 (69%).
- There was no statistically significant change in the civilian unemployment rate from 2021 (21%) to 2024 (20%), though the 2024 rate was significantly lower than in 2017 (24%).
- In addition to unemployment, spouses often face underemployment (i.e., insufficient pay, inadequate use of people's abilities, working outside one's field.)¹; the average underemployment score on the six-item scale was 2.9 in 2024, the same as in 2021, though the percentage of spouses who indicated their pay was not enough to live on increased between 2021 (52%) and 2024 (57%).

2024 Active Duty Spouse Civilian Labor Force Participation & Employment

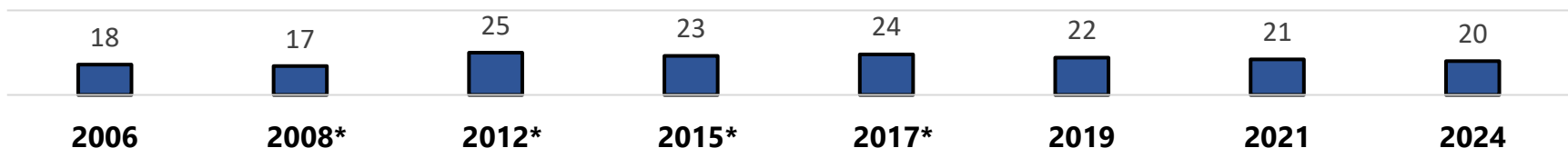
Percent of Active Duty Spouses, Excluding Spouses of Warrant Officers and Dual Military Spouses



Margins of error do not exceed $\pm 2\%$

Civilian Unemployment Rate 2006 - 2024

Percent of Active Duty Spouses Who Are in the Labor Force, Excluding Spouses of Warrant Officers and Dual Military Spouses



Margins of error range from $\pm 2\%$ to $\pm 3\%$

*Denotes statistically significant difference compared to the 2024 rate.

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¹ [Public Health Impacts of Underemployment and Unemployment in the United States: Exploring Perceptions, Gaps and Opportunities – PMC and Structural Predictors of Underemployment During COVID-19 Pandemic: A Psychology of Working Perspective.](#)

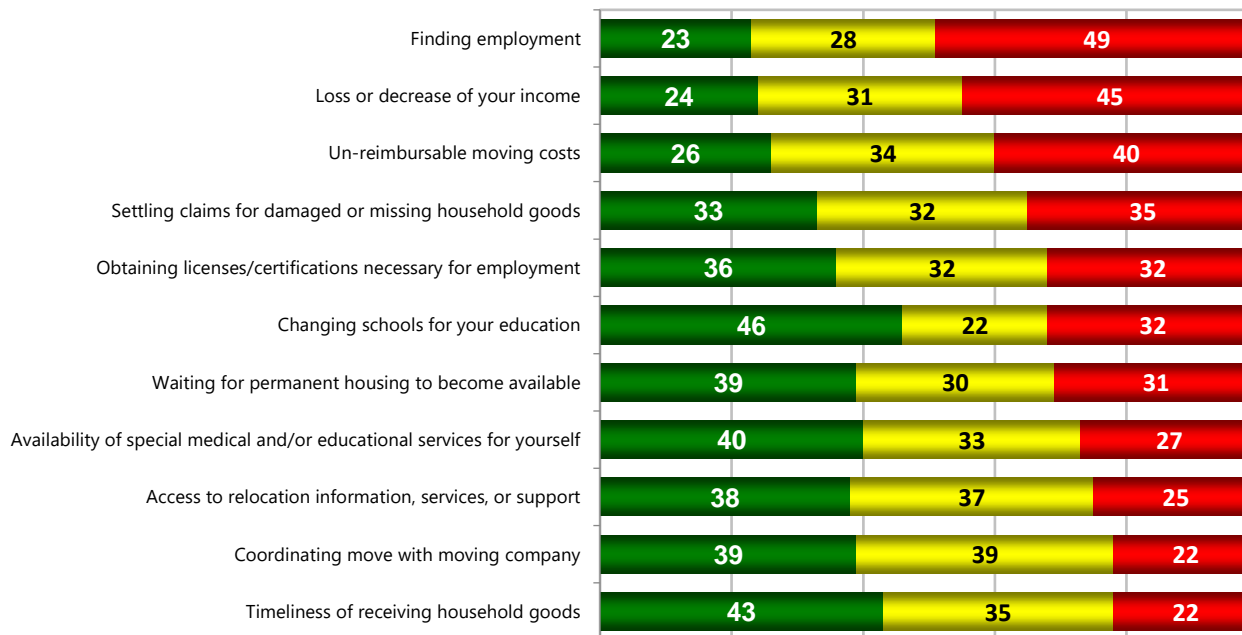
Drivers of Satisfaction: PCS Impacts

- Active duty spouses are highly mobile, which impacts a wide range of issues from employment to housing.

Extent of Problems With Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Move

Percent of Applicable Active Duty Spouses Who Experienced a PCS Move

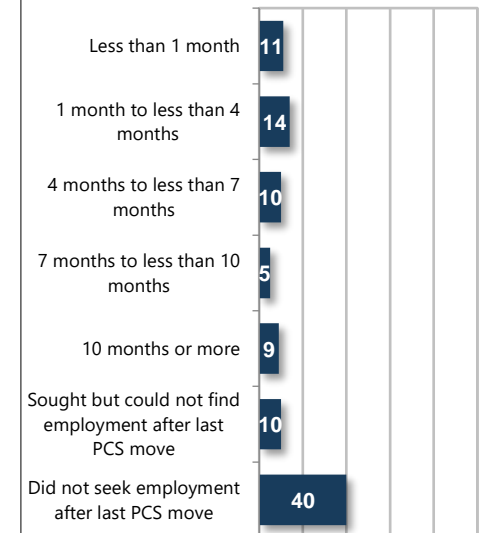
■ Not a problem ■ Small/Moderate extent ■ Large/Very large extent



Margins of error range from $\pm 2\%$ to $\pm 3\%$

Length of Time Taken To Find Employment After Last Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Move

Percent of Active Duty Spouses Who Experienced a PCS Move



Margins of error range from $\pm 1\%$ to $\pm 2\%$

Quality of life policies and programs that help our service members, their families and survivors be well and mission ready.

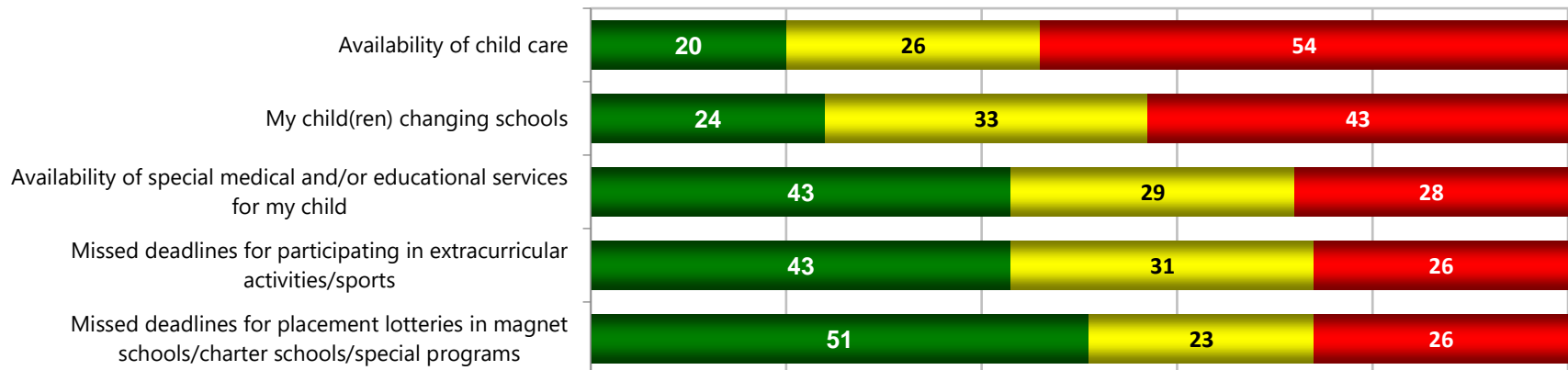
Drivers of Satisfaction: Impact of PCS on Children

- PCS significantly impacts military families.
- Nearly half (44%) of spouses with children 13 years old or younger at home routinely use child care arrangements; and just over half of these use civilian child care without military child care fee assistance (53%).
- The top reasons for using civilian child care rather than military child care are lack of availability (73%) and inconvenient location (59%).

Extent of Child-Related Problems Due to a PCS Move

Percentage of Applicable Active Duty Spouses Who Experienced a PCS Move and Have at Least One Child Under Age 18 Living at Home

■ Not a problem ■ Small/Moderate extent ■ Large/Very large extent

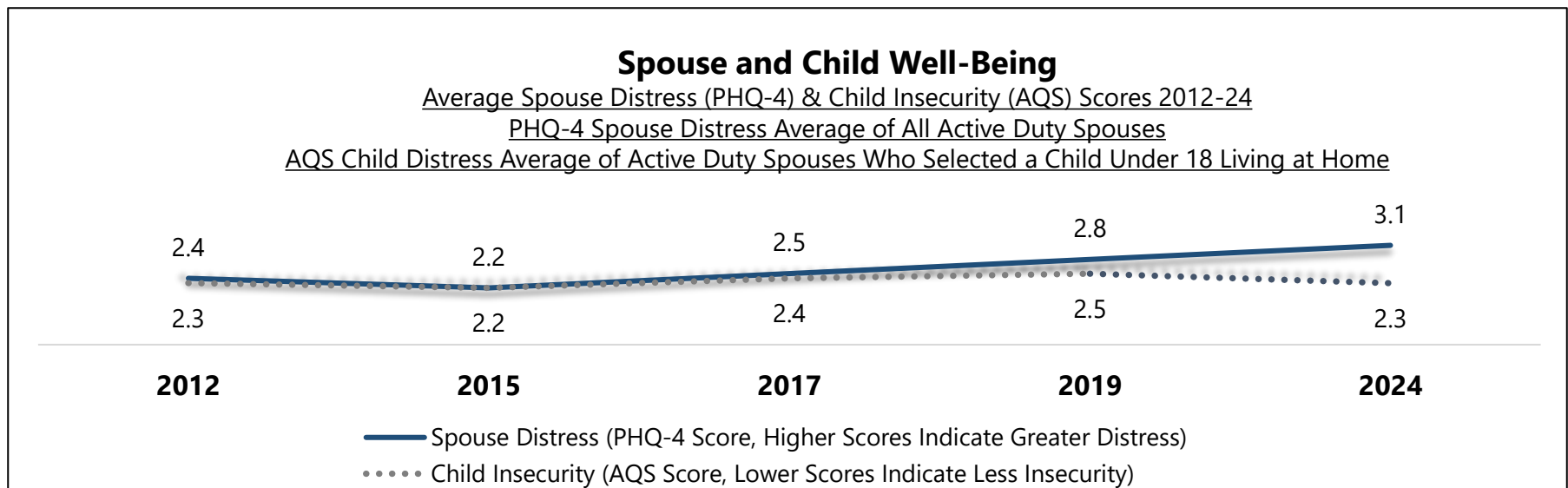


Margins of error range from $\pm 2\%$ to $\pm 3\%$

Quality of life policies and programs that help our service members, their families and survivors be well and mission ready.

Drivers of Satisfaction: Well-Being

- Anxiety and depression have increased in recent years among military spouses, in line with similar increases seen in the broader American public.¹
- In 2024, there was a small but statistically significant decline in child insecurity (a metric that captures the impact of military life on children's well-being).



The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-4) is a brief scale for measuring anxiety and depression; lower scores are better.

PHQ-4 Margins of error range from ± 0.1 to ± 0.2 .

PHQ-4 Spouse Distress Average Score in 2024 significantly higher than 2012-2019.

The Attachment Q-Set (AQS) is a scale used to measure insecurity of children; lower scores are better.

AQS Margins of error do not exceed ± 0.1 .

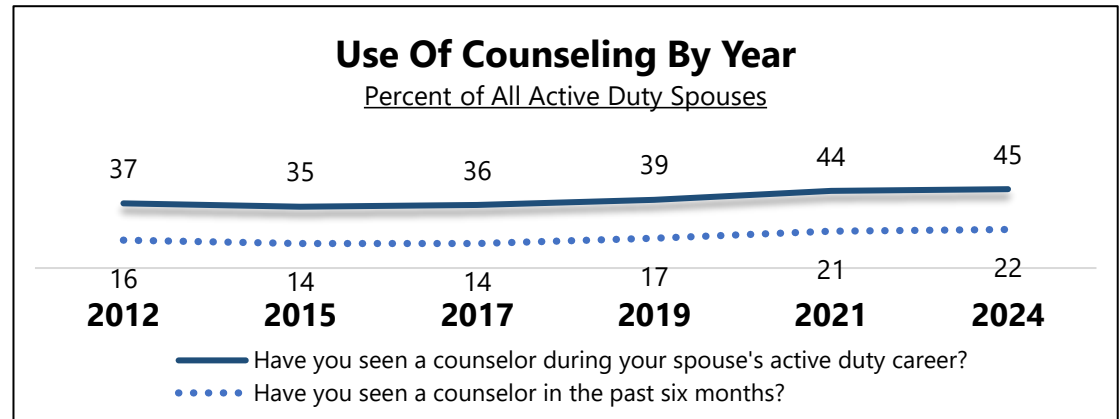
AQS Average Child Insecurity Score in 2024 was significantly lower than 2019, significantly higher than 2012 and 2015.

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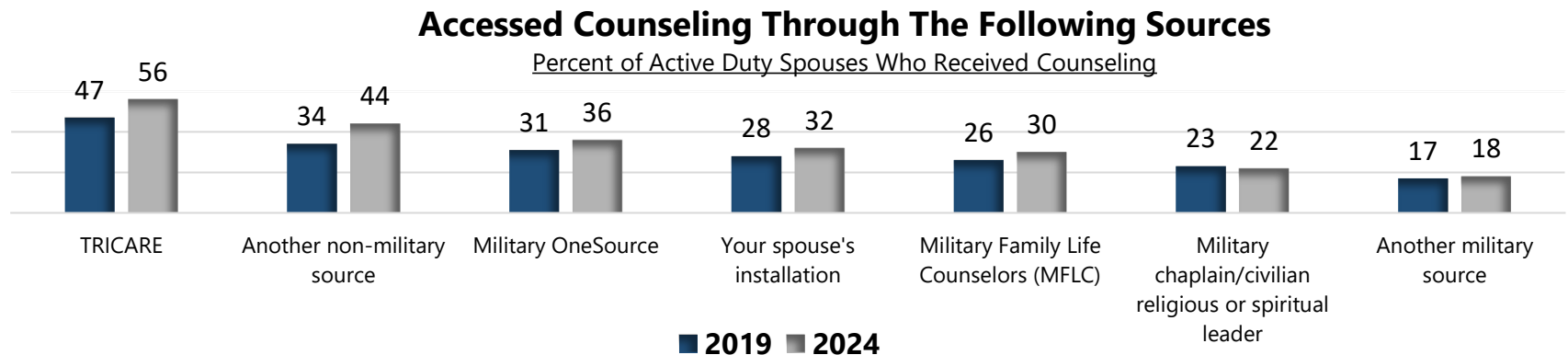
¹ [The National Survey on Drug Use and Health \(NSDUH\)](#) and [The National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey](#)

Drivers of Satisfaction: Counseling Use

- Access to resources is critical for military family well-being.
- Counseling use was steady in 2024, sustaining the significant increase in use from 2021.
- Access to counseling through Tricare and most other counseling sources saw an increase from 2019 to 2024.



Margins of error range from $\pm 1\%$ to $\pm 2\%$
No statistically significant change from 2021 to 2024, 2024 significantly higher than 2012-2019.



Margins of error range from $\pm 2\%$ to $\pm 3\%$
All differences are statistically significant except for Military chaplain/civilian religious or spiritual leader and another military source.

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