



AEDC
Anchorage Economic
Development Corporation

VETERANS' INVENTORY REPORT

BRIDGING THE GAP

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

Over the summer, the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) conducted a survey to better understand the experiences and needs of active-duty military members, veterans, and their families.

The survey focused on factors influencing where veterans choose to live after military service and explored how Anchorage could better attract and retain departing military members.

Results revealed that employment opportunities, housing availability, and recreational activities are key considerations for veterans when deciding where to settle. While Anchorage excels in employment opportunities and outdoor amenities, challenges like high housing costs and homelessness were identified as significant deterrents.

This survey and report were made possible through the generous support of Ameriprise Financial. Conducted between March and October 2024, the survey was designed and collected by AEDC in collaboration with the Alaska Humanities Forum's Leadership Anchorage program. AEDC received 103 responses and compiled the findings in-house.

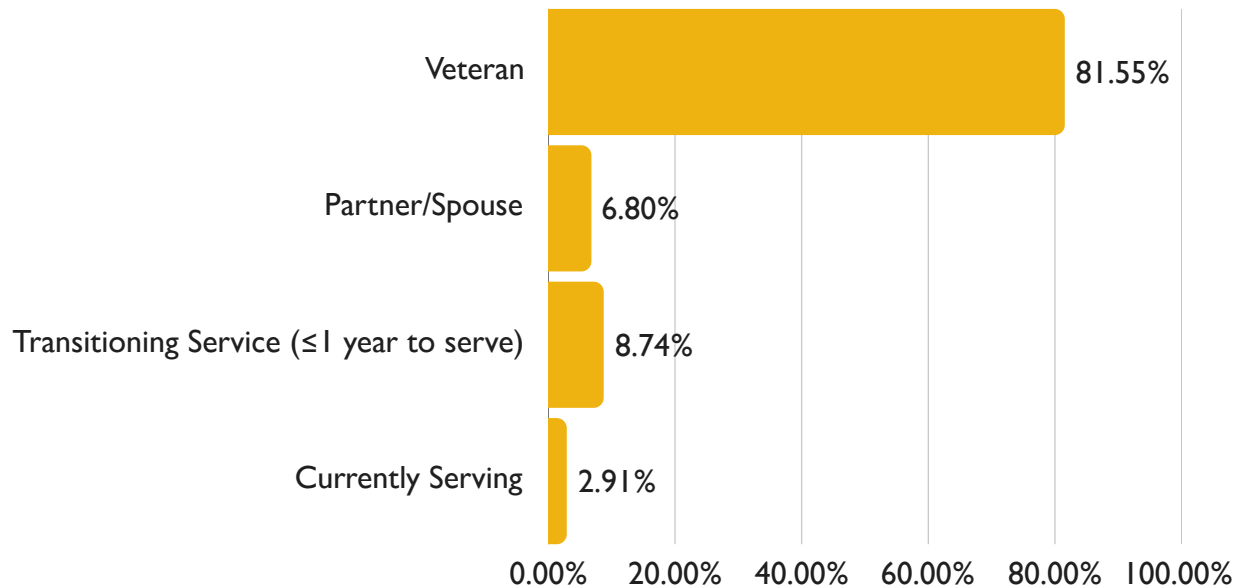
We extend our gratitude to all survey participants for their time and insights.



Who Responded?

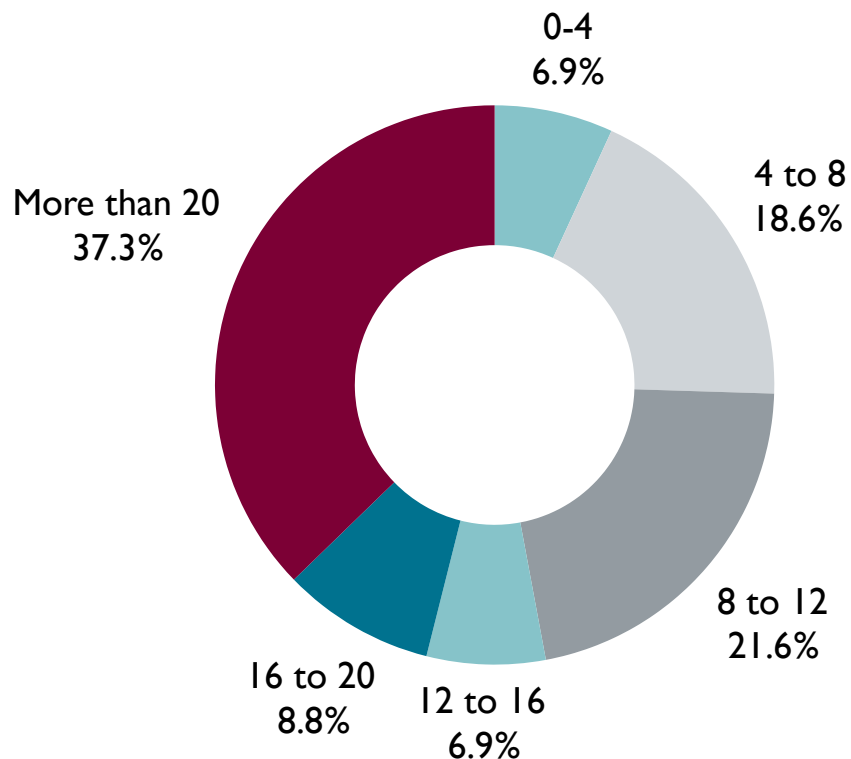
What is your current military status?

Most of the survey responses came from veterans.



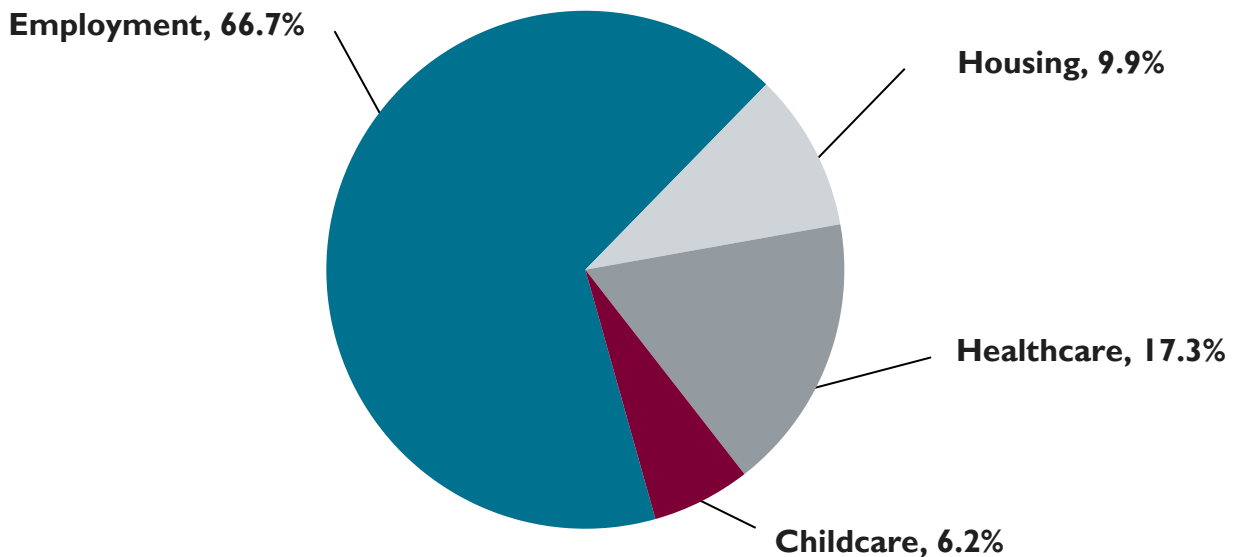
How many years did you serve in the military?

We received responses from veterans with various lengths of service, ranging from those who served over twenty years to others with less than four years of service.



Transition Challenges

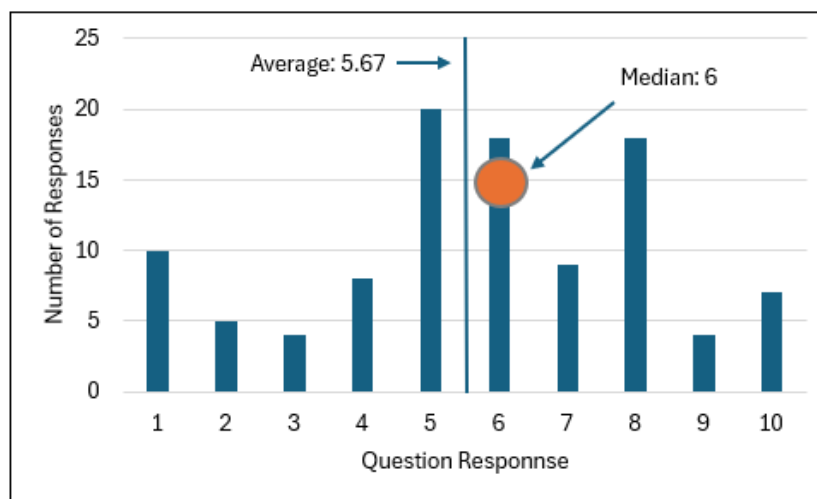
Did you face or are you facing any challenges during your transition?



Every respondent faced challenges transitioning to civilian life. Many experienced longer-than-expected job searches, and even after finding employment, securing meaningful work remained a struggle. In healthcare, accessing mental health care and enduring lengthy wait times for Veterans Affairs providers were the most significant obstacles.

How satisfied are you with the job opportunities available for veterans in your current community?

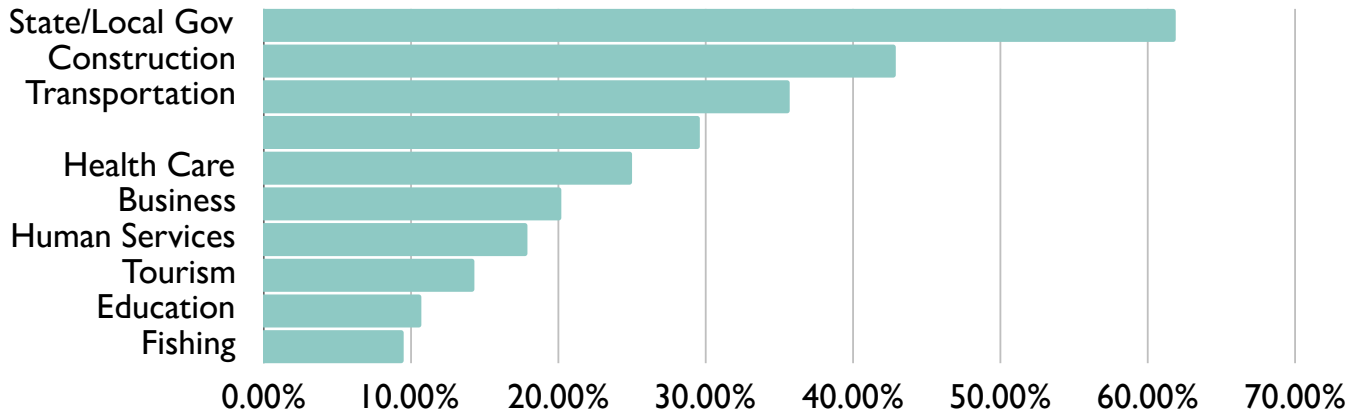
1-10, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest.



Survey results reveal moderate satisfaction among veterans with job opportunities, reflected in a median score of 6 and an average of 5.68. While some veterans reported high satisfaction, others expressed significant dissatisfaction, highlighting a divide likely caused by mismatches between military skills and civilian job requirements or a lack of opportunities in preferred industries.

Employment Opportunities

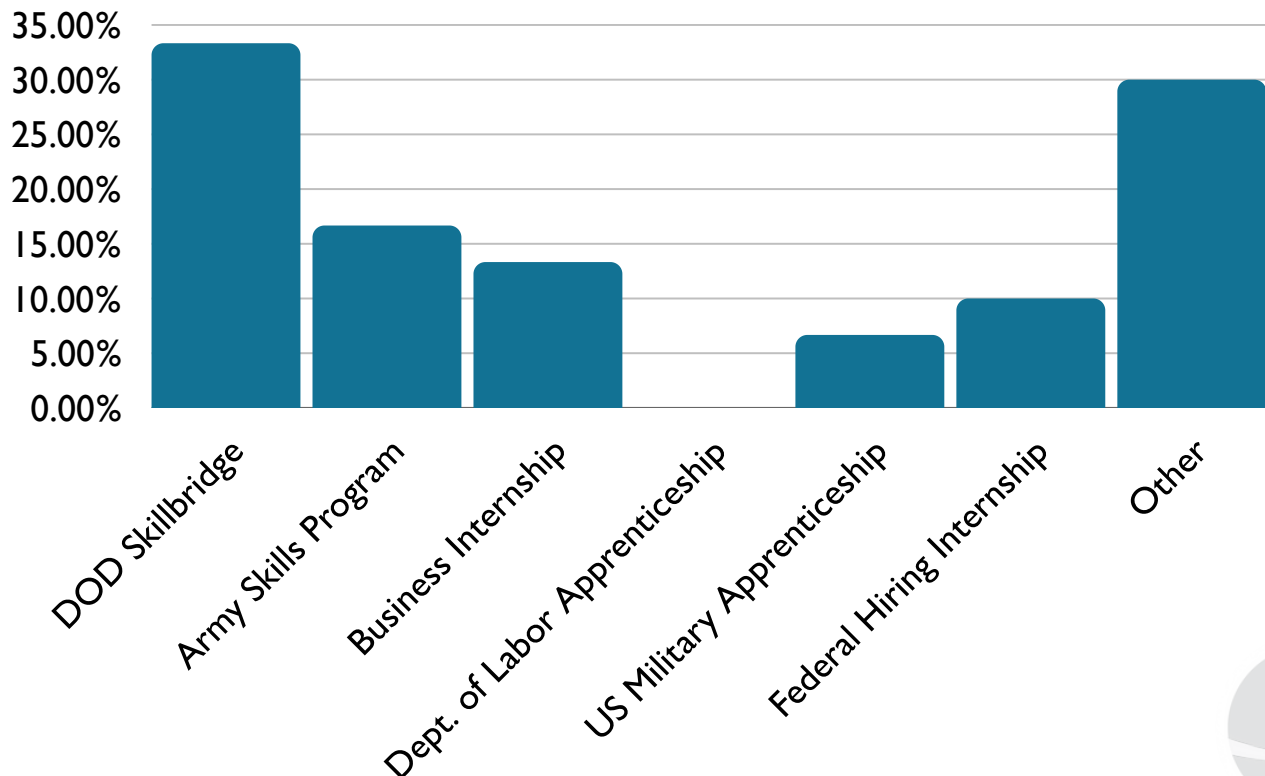
Are there industries or jobs that you feel are more welcoming to veterans? Respondents were able to select multiple options.



Veterans felt most welcomed working for a government agency after service, and the least welcomed in the commercial fishing industry.

Did you participate in a workforce program as part of your transition?

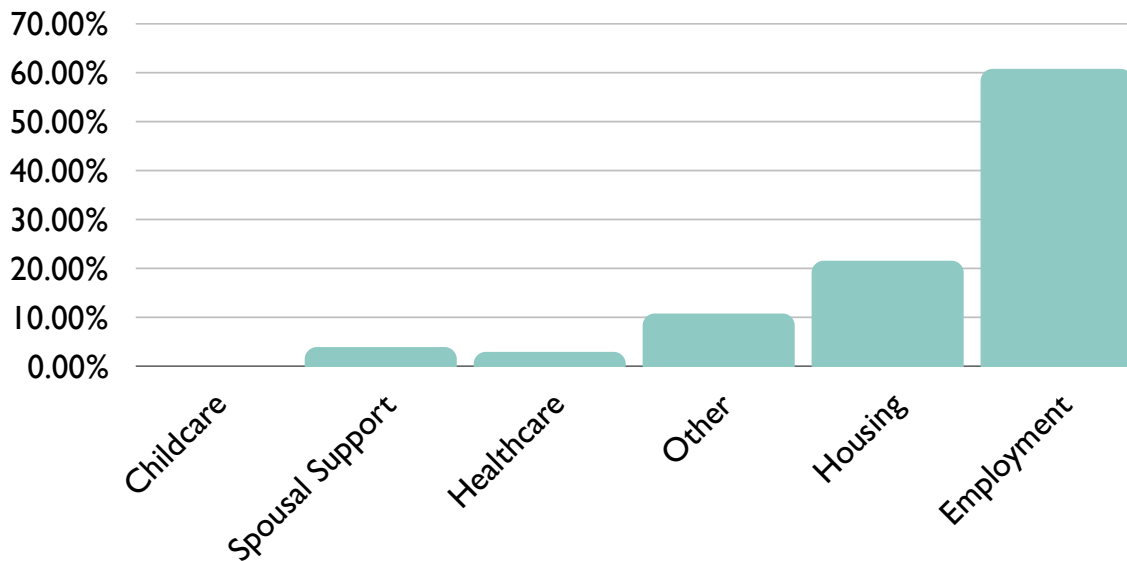
Most veterans attended a transition program prior to leaving military service.



Community Priorities

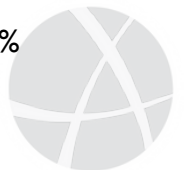
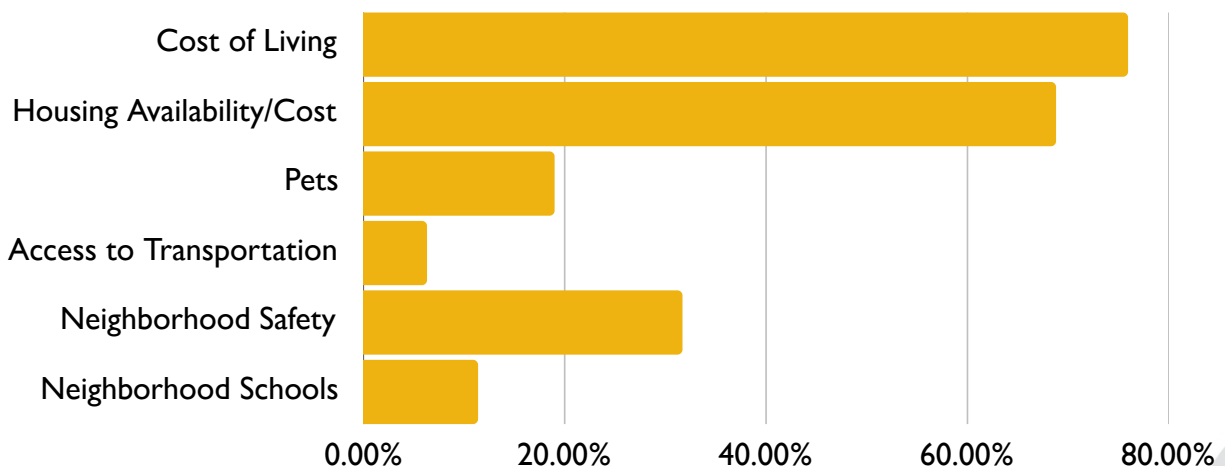
Most important factor impacting your decision to stay or leave a community.

Veterans prioritize employment opportunities when choosing where to live, as most are unwilling to remain in an area without a way to support their families.



What challenges did you face finding housing after the military?

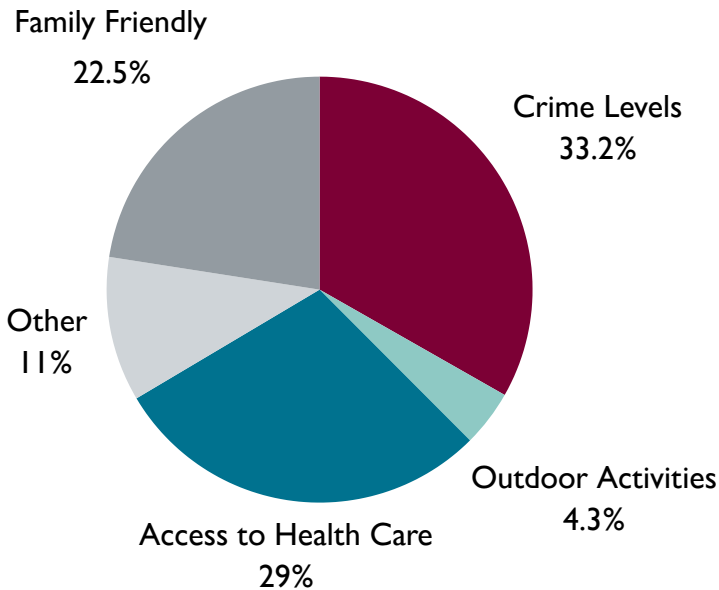
The data highlights cost of living and housing availability as top priorities when choosing where to live, underscoring the importance of affordable, accessible housing. Meanwhile, factors like transportation, schools, and pet accommodations are considered secondary, often overshadowed by the need for economic stability and safety.



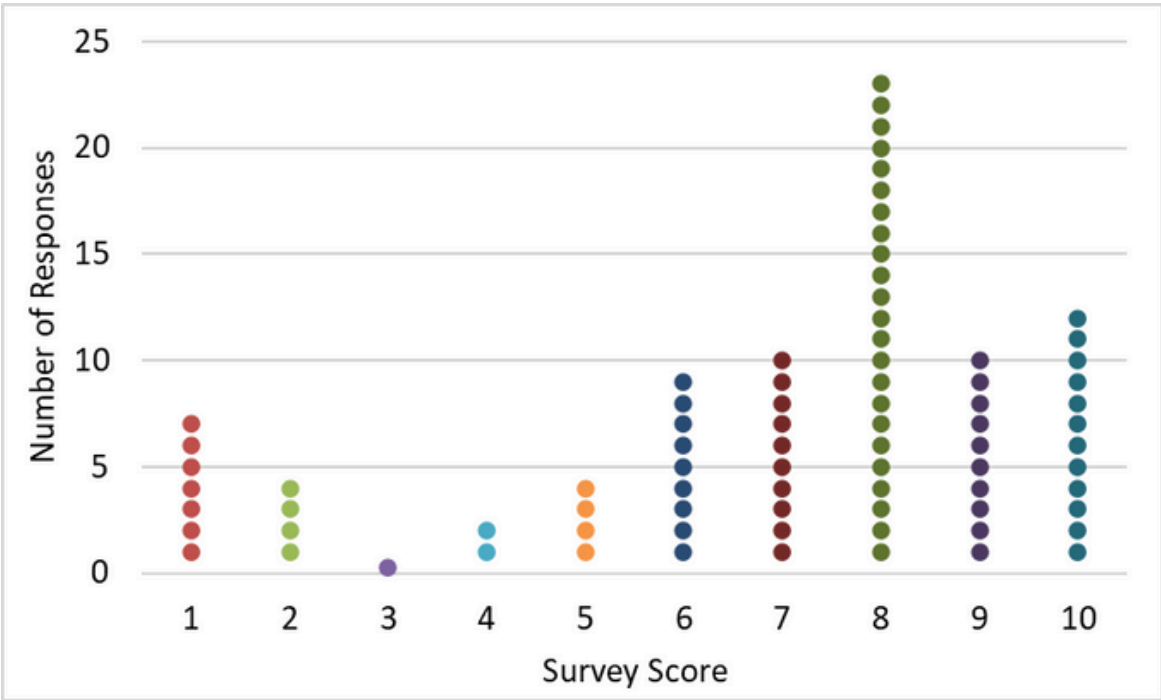
Community Characteristics

Are there specific housing features or community characteristics that you believe are important?

Departing military members prioritized crime levels, family amenities, and access to medical services when selecting a neighborhood.



To what extent does the availability of job opportunities for your spouse/partner influence decisions about relocation after leaving the military? 1-10, with 10 being the highest.

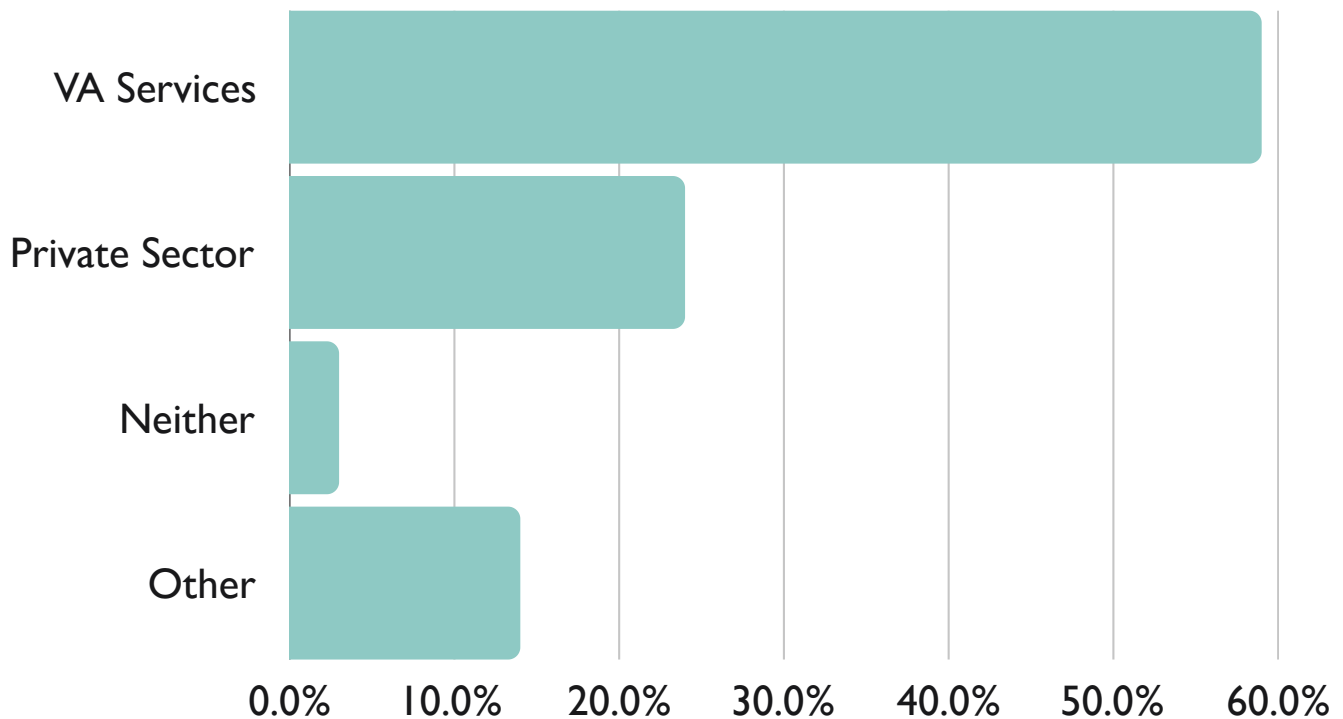


Spouse job opportunities were a decisive factor for some when choosing where to live after military service, while others found them largely irrelevant, with little middle ground.



Healthcare Needs

Where do you receive your primary medical care at?



The data shows that the Veteran Affairs (VA) system is the primary healthcare provider for veterans. The “Other” and “Neither” responses reflect a mix of using private sector providers and VA services.

Several respondents reported using the VA services for their general medical needs, but were referred out of the VA medical system for specialist services.

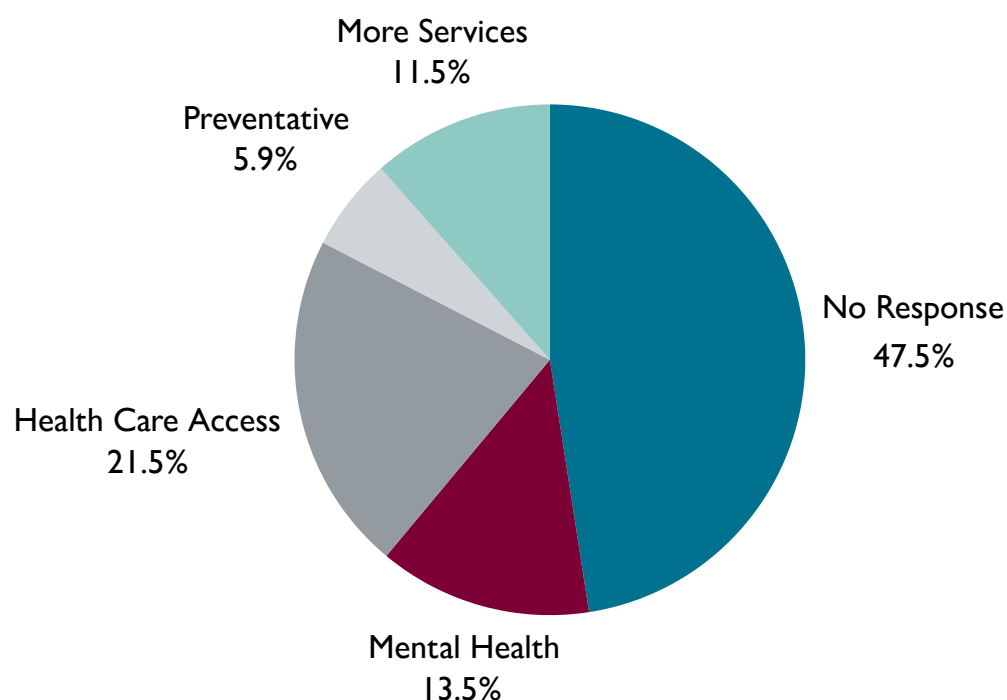
While most respondents received their medical care from the VA, there was a large amount of dissatisfaction with the VA system.

Several people reported that the waitlists to see doctors at the VA were months long and that they didn’t receive timely responses to set up medical appointments.



Expansion of Healthcare Services

Are there specific healthcare needs or services that you believe are not adequately offered?



Many veterans reported feeling as though their healthcare needs were not being adequately met, particularly in mental health, specialty care, and access to naturopathic treatments.

Mental health services were frequently cited as a pressing concern, with veterans expressing frustration over long wait times, lack of real-time care, and difficulties accessing appropriate mental health resources.

Some veterans highlighted the need for more specialized PTSD treatment and counseling for trauma-related issues. Additionally, access to specialty care, such as dermatology and endocrinology was seen as severely lacking.

Another significant gap identified by veterans is in long-term care and rehabilitation services. Veterans stressed a lack of access to rehabilitation plans, advanced medical technology, and support services.

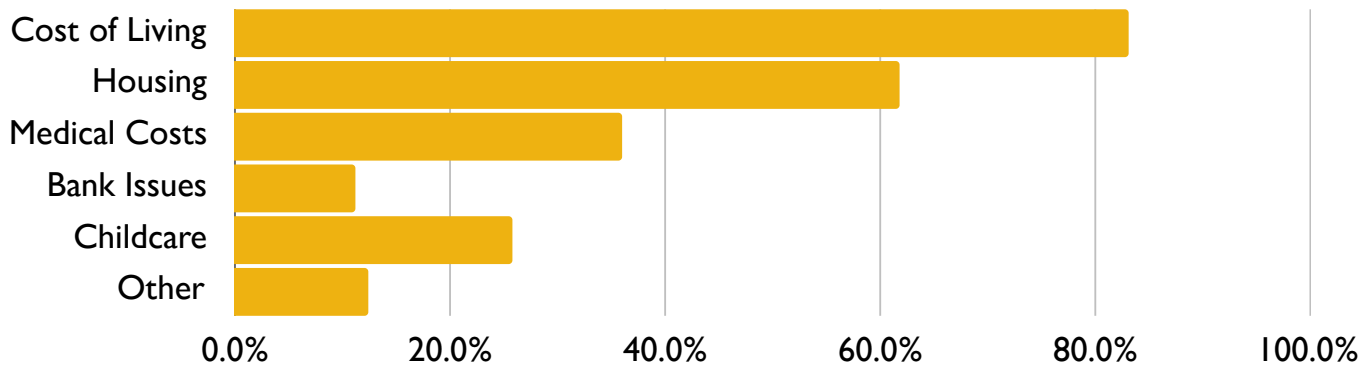
The availability of these services, especially for elderly veterans and those with long-term conditions, was noted as particularly insufficient.



Financial Considerations

What financial challenges have you faced?

Respondents were able to select multiple options.



What veteran-related financial considerations should community leaders be aware of?

Veterans reported facing significant financial challenges when transitioning to civilian life, particularly the loss of military allowances like housing stipends, which many relied on during service.

After leaving the military, some veterans reported needing to rework their household budgets, as they assumed civilian pay would include a housing stipend in addition to their hourly pay.

The rising cost of living, including high property taxes and a lack of affordable housing, made the transition to civilian life difficult. Veterans suggested expanding tax breaks and access to affordable housing as ways to help reduce these financial burdens.

Employment was another significant concern. Many veterans reported struggling to find jobs that matched their skills and experience, and were forced to accept lower-paying jobs just to get a foot into the civilian sector.

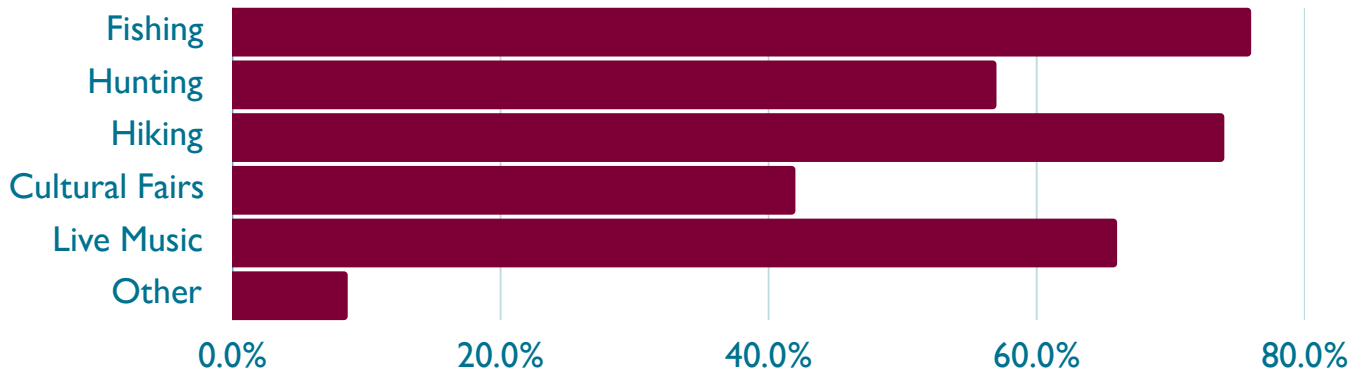
Veterans also expressed frustration with the lack of awareness and access to available benefits. Survey respondents expressed a need for classes on how to manage household finances as well as the typical compensation structure for civilian jobs.

Additionally, the high cost of living and limited access to affordable healthcare and mental health support worsened veterans' transition to civilian life.



Quality of Life Enhancements

What activities would enhance the quality of life for veterans and their families?



How can communities help support veterans?

Survey responses reflected a wide range of ideas and priorities for ways to support veterans.

Many respondents suggested improving recognition for veterans, such as creating honor walls, organizing symposiums, or featuring veterans in community celebrations, as ways to showcase veterans' service and contributions.

Others emphasized the need for practical steps, like improved communication channels, advertising events through veteran-focused organizations, or offering civic education courses tailored to veterans as ways to better support veterans.

Similarly, outreach programs—whether in person, through social media, or direct invitations—were frequently highlighted as effective ways to connect veterans with opportunities.

A recurring theme was the importance of creating spaces and events specifically for veterans, such as volunteer opportunities, outdoor activities, or family-friendly gatherings.

These initiatives not only draw on veterans' leadership and teamwork skills but offer meaningful ways for veterans to contribute and connect with their communities.



Overall Picture



The Anchorage Veterans Survey identified key challenges and opportunities for veterans in the community. Many respondents highlighted access to well-paying jobs and affordable housing as crucial factors in deciding where to live after leaving military service.

On the positive side, many veterans noted Anchorage's abundance of recreational opportunities as a strong incentive for them and their families to remain in the area post-service.



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