



In 2016, the Global SOF Foundation and The Honor Foundation sought to better understand the experience of Special Operations Forces (SOF) operators as they transitioned out of uniformed service and into civilian careers. The *SOF for Life* Survey was developed and sent to former SOF operators or those who had served in a supporting role in a SOF unit. After almost 1.5 years, there have been 555 responses to the survey. Survey respondents answered questions related to:



- Anxiety and Stress
- Financial Readiness
- Mental and Physical Health and Healthcare
- Post Military Career Preparedness

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The *SOF for Life* Survey has been answered by valuable members of the SOF community with the following demographic data:

SERVICES:

The Army's SOF make up approximately 63% of SOF deployed overseas and therefore it is not surprising to see that the response rate from the Army is much higher than the other services.

SEPARATION DETAILS:

Almost three-quarters of the respondents retired from active duty and 21% separated from the military prior to retirement eligibility. Nearly one-third of the respondents separated from the military with 21 to 25 years of service and 32% separated with 26 or more years of service.

RANK AND STATUS:

Thirty-nine percent of the respondents were from the senior enlisted ranks (E7 to E9) and 30% were senior officers (O5 to O8). The survey is very SOF-representative: 74% of the respondents were badged SOF operators and 19% were non-badged operators who served in a SOF unit in a supporting role.

Service	Count	%
Army	348	63%
Navy	82	15%
Air Force	74	13%
Marine Corps	45	8%
Other	6	1%
Total	555	100%

0-5 years of service	22	4%
6-10 years of service	58	10%
11-15 years of service	45	8%
16-20 years of service	75	14%
21-25 years of service	177	32%
26-30 years of service	132	24%

Senior Enlisted (E7 to E9)	215
Senior Officer (O5 to O8)	165
Junior Enlisted (E5 to E6)	72
Junior Officer (O1 to O4)	70
Senior Warrant Officer (W3 to W4)	20
Senior Warrant Officer (W5)	9
Warrant Officer (W1 to W2)	4

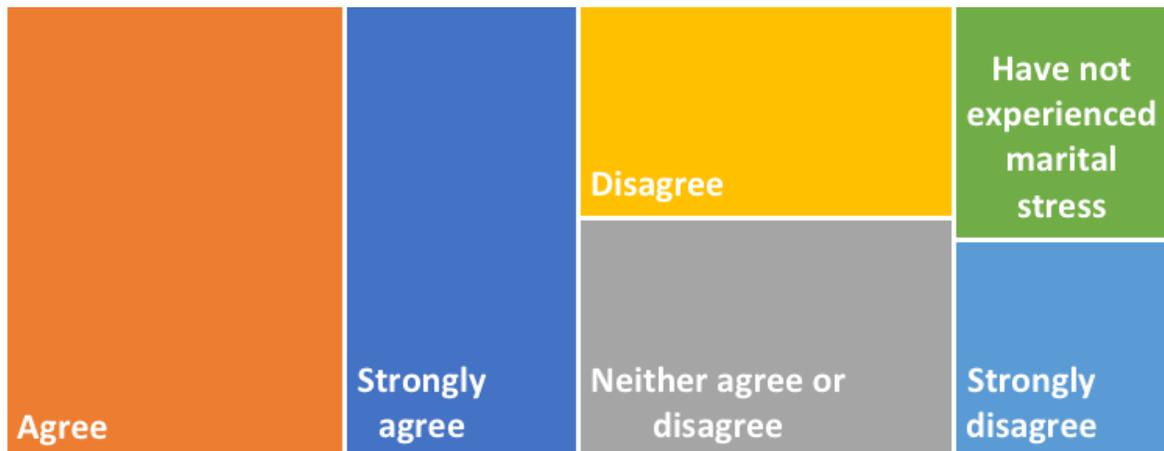
ANXIETY AND STRESS

Over two-thirds of survey respondents indicated that they experienced anxiety prior to and leading up to their separation from active duty, with a large portion of those respondents stating that it impacted their marriage. This was one of the more one-sided areas of the survey, with a large portion of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that they or their spouse experienced this anxiety:

"I experienced anxiety prior to and leading up to the moment that I separated from military service."



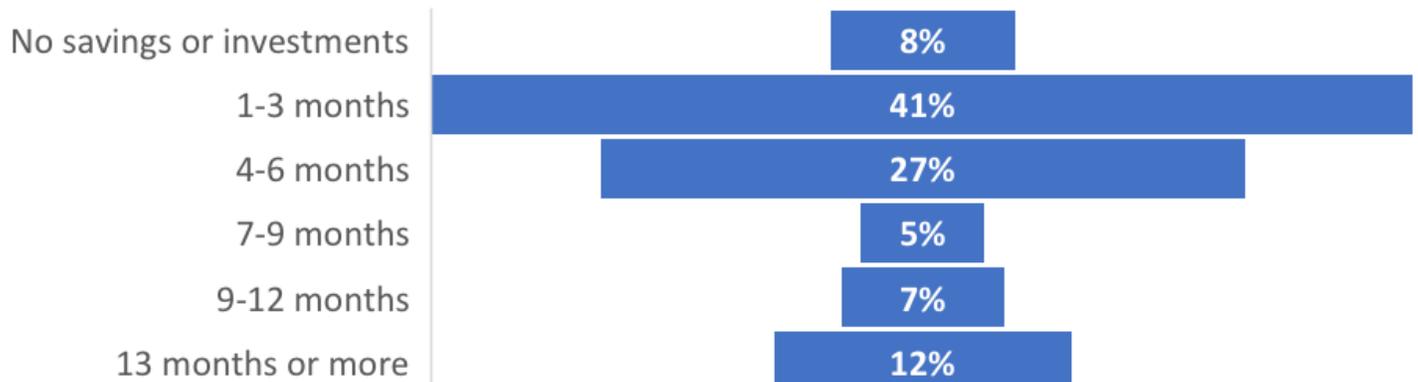
"Financial strain has been a significant factor in my experience of marital stress."



FINANCIAL READINESS

Financial strain was a recurring theme in the *SOF for Life* survey--a large percentage of respondents could not support themselves and/or their families for a substantial period of time:

"At the time of my separation from the military, I was able to go without a paycheck for this duration before needing to find work or dip into savings or other investments in order to support my family."



MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH (AND HEALTHCARE)

The large majority of survey respondents (89%) reported some level of disability, with about 200 of them reporting that they are 70% or more disabled, as shown in the data below.

In contrast, only 40% of respondents felt that they had a "thorough understanding of their government health benefits."

Almost all of the respondents (82%) began medical out-processing 9 months or less prior to separating from service. Given the amount of time it takes to make appointments, run tests, see specialists, and discuss medical history with all of the various actors that will be a part of the service members' medical care during transition and after separation, 9 months or less is generally not enough time to do an adequate job of assessing and documenting the service member's medical history.

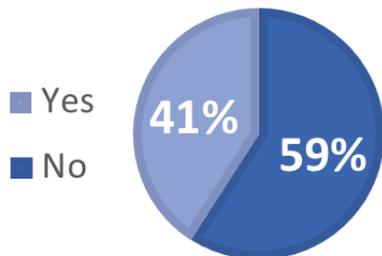
If you are separated, retired, or medically retired, what is your level of disability?

10-29%	62	11%
30-49%	80	14%
50-69%	91	16%
70-89%	97	17%
90-100%	106	19%
No disability	119	21%

POST-MILITARY CAREER PREPAREDNESS

These questions focused on career assessments, resumes, professional networks, and transition planning, and largely showed that respondents had received limited support in translating their military experience into a meaningful civilian career.

"I created a comprehensive transition plan."



Only 41% of the respondents created a comprehensive transition plan prior to separating from service. This is a surprising number given most if not all of those surveyed have spent decades in a career that required careful and meticulous planning.

Five percent of the respondents did no planning at all for their separation from military service and transition to civilian life. Of those that did any planning, 72% prepared 12 months or less in advance for their transition.

In addition, 44% of respondents indicated that the career assessments they took prior to separation did not leave them better prepared to begin a new professional career.

"The career assessments I have taken prior to separation from military service have better prepared me to begin a new professional career."

Strongly agree	25	5%
Agree	98	18%
Neither agree or disagree	109	20%
Disagree	124	22%
Strongly disagree	120	22%
No career assessments	79	14%



The *SOF for Life* Survey has shown that while SOF have sacrificed their bodies and minds to fight for their Nation, they are not being properly armed for life after active duty. Here's how *SOF for Life* works to help:



The GSF hosts an online portal in which current and former SOF personnel can upload their resumes to be viewed by GSF corporate partners for employment opportunities. Corporate Partners also have the ability to distribute job postings to GSF Members, specifically *SOF for Life* applicants. GSF Membership is free for Active Duty Military and Police.



The Honor Foundation holds a rigorous 120 hour transition program for SOF that are 12– 18 months out from military separation. Since 2014, it has collaborated closely with the SOF community, top business schools, and America's finest companies in order to create a transition pipeline that gets results. The program has a 92% job placement rate.



AAFMAA Wealth Management & Trust LLC delivers financial planning, investment management, and trust services to AAFMAA members. AAFMAA is a not-for-profit and has a long history (since the Civil War) of helping U.S. military personnel.

VISIT US ONLINE FOR MORE AT

<http://bit.ly/SFL-18>

SEE THE FULL REPORT: This is just a sampling of information from the survey. See all of the results, to include the data for each of the 68 questions, on the website.

TAKE THE SURVEY: The *SOF for Life* Survey is still open for responses, and we continue to collect and analyze data to monitor trends and gauge impacts and changes.

