



TECHNICAL REPORT & METHODOLOGY

Background

In 2021, Fors Marsh Group (FMG) conducted the Military Times Best for Vets: Employers Survey. The intent of this survey was to identify and highlight the efforts that companies and organizations make to recruit, retain, and support current and former service members, military spouses, and military caregivers. The purpose of the Military Times Best for Vets: Employers rankings is to show the different employment practices, policies, and services that companies provide to U.S. veterans, as well as to provide veterans with a trusted list of the top employers for their needs. This report details the approach to the survey instrument, administration, data cleaning, and analysis in 2022.

FMG, in collaboration with Sightline Media Group (SMG) and Military Times, updated the survey from previous years to provide a streamlined, user-friendly, and methodologically sound instrument. Results from the self-report survey were used to construct a ranking of employers whose practices and policies make them an attractive place to work for current employees and future job seekers. In 2022, FMG updated the survey instrument to make it easier to complete and facilitate more streamlined analysis and reporting. These updates are detailed in the next section.

Changes From the 2021 Best for Vets: Employers Survey

Survey Instrument

In 2021, FMG developed a comprehensive survey instrument measuring 10 key performance indicators (KPIs) that veterans and subject matter experts identified as paramount support that companies should provide to active duty and veteran service members.

Table 1: Final Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

Ranking by Importance	KPI Domain
1	Recruitment and employment practices
2	Retention and support programs
3	Employment support for Guard and Reserve employees
4	General inclusive workplace policies
5	Programs/policies/initiatives for military spouses
6	Programs/policies/initiatives for military caregivers
7	Recognition of military service
8	Attainment of civilian credentials
9	Credit toward retirement for military service
10	Partnerships with military connected vendors and vet-owned businesses

In 2022, updates were made to the survey instrument to capture company size by number of employees and company size by revenue separately for reporting purposes. Table 2 indicates the question changes that were made in 2022. In addition, we reduced the number of mandatory questions that must be completed so that the survey experience would be less frustrating for respondents. All mandatory questions triggered prompts asking the respondent to complete the question before they could proceed through the remainder of the survey. In 2022, only questions that would be used for reporting remained mandatory. None of these changes required any updates to the ranking methodology.

Table 2: Survey Item Changes

Old Item	New Item
<p>Q4.3 Which best describes your organization?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 SMB (Small or Medium-Sized Businesses). Employees: 0-100 Annual Revenue: \$5-\$10 million Location: Limited geographical boundaries 2 SME (Small or Medium Enterprises). Also known as the "Mid-Market" Employees: 101-500 Annual Revenue: \$10 million-\$1 billion Location: Likely to have more than one office location, and more remote employees 3 Large Enterprise. Employees: Over 1,000 Annual Revenue: Over \$1 billion Location: Several office locations domestically and internationally 4 Other 	<p>Q4.3 Which best describes your organization?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 SMB (Small or Medium-Sized Businesses). Annual Revenue: \$5- \$10 million. Location: Limited geographical boundaries 2 SME (Small or Medium Enterprises). Also known as the "Mid-Market" Annual Revenue: \$11 million- \$1 billion. Location: Likely to have more than one office location, and more remote employees 3 Large Enterprise. Annual Revenue: Over \$1 billion. Location: Several office locations domestically and internationally 4 Other <hr/> <p>Q4.3.2 How many employees does your organization currently have?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 0-100 Employees 2 101-500 Employees 3 501-1000 Employees 4 Over 1,000 Employees
<p>Q5.9 Does your organization specialized training, in some capacity, in military culture, structure, career paths or other related topics to current employees or to those who work specifically with military-connected employees?</p>	<p>Q5.9 Does your organization offer current employees any type of specialized training, in military culture, structure, career paths or other related topics so that they are more equipped to work with military-connected employees?</p>
<p>Q6.6 When considering candidates for hire, in which of the following ways does your organization provide military-connected candidates assistance during the hiring process? Select all that apply.</p>	<p>Q6.6 When considering candidates for hire, in which of the following ways does your organization assist military-connected candidates during the hiring process? Select all that apply.</p>
<p>Q5.15 Do you have a recruitment or hiring policy, program, or initiative specifically for military caregivers—the spouses, parents, family members, and friends who care for wounded, ill, or injured veterans?</p>	<p>Q5.15 Do you have a recruitment or hiring policy, program, or initiative that is specifically for military caregivers—family members or friends who care for ill or wounded veterans?</p>

Old Item	New Item
<p>Q6.2 Does your organization track its retention of military-connected employees?</p>	<p>Q6.2 Does your organization track its retention of military-connected employees? This survey defines tracking retention as regularly measuring the number of military-connected employees that stay with your organization.</p>
<p>Q10.3 Some organizations have multiple pay levels for Reservists and Guard members during military leave periods. Which best describes your organization’s pay plan for these employees while they fulfill their military duties?</p> <p>Option 2: They receive the difference between their civilian pay and their military pay</p>	<p>Q10.3 Some organizations have multiple pay levels for Reservists and Guard members during military leave periods. Which best describes your organization’s pay plan for these employees while they fulfill their military duties?</p> <p>Option 2: They receive the full difference between their civilian pay and their military pay</p>
<p>Q13.9 Which of the following practices related to the retention and advancement of people with disabilities does your organization implement?</p>	<p>Q13.9 Which of the following practices related to the retention and advancement of people with disabilities does your organization implement?</p> <p>New Option 5: Offers hard, technical skills training available to all employees</p>
<p>Q14.3 We may run your organization’s logo online or in print next to your ranking. Please upload a digital version of your organization's logo in a scalable, vector format (.eps, .ai, or .svg are acceptable).</p>	<p>Q14.3 We may run your organization’s logo online or in print next to your ranking. Please upload your logo as a PNG or JPEG file: Ideal file size is 300px wide x 200px tall. Files larger than 100 MB cannot be uploaded.</p>

Old Item	New Item
<p>Q14.4 Military Times may run pictures, online or in print, featuring military-connected employees or events associated with your organization.</p> <p>If possible, please provide approved photos of military-connected employees. For example, these can be pictures of employees acting natural in the place of work.</p> <p>Please do not send large group shots of a dozen or more people.</p> <p>Make sure to label each picture as the next question will also prompt you to provide a caption providing context for the picture.</p>	<p>Q14.4 Military Times may run pictures, online or in print, featuring military-connected employees or events associated with your organization.</p> <p>If possible, please provide approved photos of military-connected employees. For example, these can be pictures of employees acting natural in the place of work.</p> <p>Please do not send large group shots of a dozen or more people.</p> <p>Make sure to label each picture as the next question will also prompt you to provide a caption providing context for the picture. Files larger than 100 MB cannot be uploaded.</p>
<p>Q14.6 Make sure to label each picture as the next question will also prompt you to provide a caption providing context for the picture.</p>	<p>Q14.6 Make sure to label each picture as the next question will also prompt you to provide a caption providing context for the picture. Files larger than 100 MB cannot be uploaded.</p>
<p>Q14.7 Please provide a caption for each picture you uploaded. Make sure you indicate the file name with a caption for the corresponding picture you previously uploaded, in the space below. For example: File 1_Celebrating women veterans for Women's History Month at Military Times.</p> <p>Captions might include military branch of person pictured, separation rank or current rank, years served, etc.</p>	<p>Q14.7 Please provide a caption for each picture you uploaded. Make sure you indicate the file name with a caption for the corresponding picture you previously uploaded, in the space below. For example: <i>File 1_Celebrating women veterans for Women's History Month at Military Times.</i></p> <p>Captions might include military branch of person pictured, separation rank or current rank, years served, etc.</p>

Survey Administration

In 2022, data collection was focused on user experience, reducing the burden on respondents and making the survey easier to take for organization points of contact (POC). Knowing that each organization may require multiple representatives to respond to the survey questions, FMG

assigned unique links per organization, rather than per unique respondent. FMG also provided a table of contents or “Survey contents” toggle in the online survey so that POCs could directly access the sections of the survey relevant to their area of expertise.

Unique link: In 2022, FMG provided survey respondents a unique survey link assigned to their organization. The unique link allowed for organizations to complete the survey at their own pace and to save progress over the survey administration period.

Access for multiple POCs: Survey link assignment at the organization level (as opposed to POC level) allowed for multiple POCs from one organization to complete the survey in a timely manner without relying on support from the help desk.

Table of contents: Leveraging the Qualtrics survey platform capabilities, FMG added a table of contents with multiple POCs in mind. FMG understood that representatives of organizations may only respond to a few questions related to their area of expertise (e.g., human resources). The table of contents assisted representatives who received a forwarded survey link so that they could reach the questions relevant to their area of expertise. FMG designed a table of contents that mapped to the nine sections of the survey (see Figure 1). Partially completed surveys took respondents right where the last POC left off. Having the table of contents allowed respondents to revisit completed sections for reviewing and updating responses. Once the participants reached the signature page confirming their responses throughout the survey, the table of contents was no longer accessible.

Data Collection

Survey Methodology and Fielding

FMG conducted an online survey from May 19 through August 22, 2022, via the Qualtrics survey platform via the Military Times account. The sample was drawn from the 2021 Best for Vets: Employers Survey respondents, Military Times’ points of contact, and social media platform posts. The target population was respondents who represent U.S. companies, organizations, nonprofits, and governments. Each 2022 survey respondent and POC provided by Military Times was provided a unique survey link based on the organization they represent. If multiple POCs represented a single organization, they received the same link. New respondents who were not part of the original email campaign were invited through marketing efforts led by Military Times and were supported by FMG via social media. FMG fielded the survey for 95 days, longer than in 2021, to achieve 175 completes. FMG extended the survey administration beyond the original

close date of August 15, 2022, for organizations that were near completion. Reminder emails to respondents who partially completed the survey and nonrespondents were sent every 2 weeks from May to mid-July. From mid-July to August 15, reminders were sent weekly to participants who had not completed the survey. SMG also sent reminder emails to participants who had not completed the survey in case the Qualtrics emails were going to spam/junk folders. FMG provided an email helpdesk to support respondents with questions about or their experiences with any technical issues with the survey.

Analysis

Data Cleaning

Before fielding, 500 simulated cases were generated through the online survey instrument, and five to 10 surveys were conducted manually to examine the accuracy of the data capture. The test data were cleaned, formatted, and checked against the original questionnaire for potential discrepancies. Any errors or inconsistencies that were found during testing were corrected before administering the online survey.

Once the target sample was achieved, the data were cleaned per standard practices in the research industry.

Data can be unnaturally corrupted by forces beyond a researcher's control, but human behavior can affect quality as well. Both situations involve removing the offending data from the data set due to inaccurate or false responses, specifically:

- Duplicates were removed from the data set.
- All behaviors that appeared unnatural, including similar answers across all questions (i.e., straight lining) and fast completion rates, were identified in the data set.
- An assessment was made regarding the completeness of the survey: at least one question was completed, 25% of the survey was completed, 50% of the survey was completed, 75% of the survey was completed, 85% of the survey was completed, the number of refused questions, the number of "don't know" answers, and the number of valid skips.

Case Dispositions

Each respondent who entered and exited the survey platform was assigned a category of disposition. This information provides an important quality assurance component for the survey data by helping researchers understand the quality of the sampling pool.

Ranking Methodology

The ranking of the KPIs was calculated based on an aggregated ranking of all KPIs across both the in-depth interview (IDI) and focus group (FG) studies conducted in 2021 to develop this instrument. The ranking across all participants was aggregated and KPIs were ranked from the lowest sum (most important) to the highest sum (least important).

The methodology used in assigning weights to each KPI was based on thematic qualitative data analysis. To develop the weight, the qualitative data were evaluated, taking each of the following factors into consideration:

1. The attributed importance to each of the domains;
2. The justification or reasoning provided for each KPI's attributed importance, and an assessment of its value
3. The group level assessment of agreement among participants; and
4. Equal weighting, ensuring that those with similar importance reports are weighted the same.

Weighting across the above four key factors was done independently by two coders and the results were cross-referenced for consistency and any differences in weighting were discussed and reviewed.

Having reduced the length of the original survey instrument to the most relevant items and using benchmarks of similarly ranking surveys, FMG determined that respondents must have completed 85% of the survey in order to be included in ranking analysis. The rank orders of the KPIs were converted into a single weight by taking the average of the criteria ranks (Alfares & Duffuaa, 2008)¹. We assigned each survey question within each KPI group equal importance; thus, the weight for each question was calculated by dividing 1 by the total number of questions for the KPI.

Once the weights were created and the total points of each question were calculated, they were incorporated into a dynamic model. The weights of the survey questions functioned as coefficients that determined the degree of contribution of the question within the KPI. The KPI

weights functioned as coefficients that determined the degree of contribution (weight) of each KPI to the final rank score.

Responses to each question were assigned points, and based on the question type, we designed a point-calculating rubric. Overall, each valid response that was not “No” or “None of the above” was worth 1 point. For most of the questions, the total score was the total number of valid responses selected. The raw score was standardized to be out of 100 points. The standardized score equals the raw score divided by the maximum score.

Ranking Categories

Organizations were ranked according to several categories, including state, region, size of the organization by revenue, size of the organization by number of employees, for-profit versus nonprofit status, industry, and having a spousal care program in place. If organizations did not answer survey questions related to these categories, they were not included in the ranking for that category. Size of the organization by revenue, size of the organization by number of employees, organization state, industry, for-profit versus nonprofit status, and the presence of a spousal care program were determined by the responses to particular survey questions.

Regional categories (Northeast, Midwest, South, and West) were determined using the U.S. Census Bureau’s definitions of each region.² Responses to survey question Q4.4 identified in which state the organization headquarters is located, and states were then coded into one of the region categories below:

- Northeast: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania
- Midwest: Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Missouri
- South: Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas
- West: Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington

Organizations outside of the United States were not included in the regional ranking categories.

Summary

In conclusion, FMG made significant strides to improve the user experience for the 2022 cycle of the Military Times Best for Vets: Employer Survey by incorporating feedback from past survey respondents and from Military Times. By improving the survey design and facilitating multi-user survey completion, survey completions rose slightly from 161 in 2021 to 175 in 2022.