

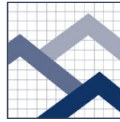
**SOUTH SOUND MILITARY & COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP**

**Joint Base Lewis McChord:  
Area Residents Attitudes & Awareness**

September 2015



***ELWAY RESEARCH, INC.***



## SOUTH SOUND MILITARY & COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP

# Joint Base Lewis McChord: Area Residents Attitudes & Awareness

September 2015

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## **SOUTH SOUND MILITARY & COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP**

# **Joint Base Lewis McChord: Area Residents Attitudes & Awareness**

September 2015

### **INTRODUCTION**

This report summarizes the results of a survey of residents in Pierce and Thurston Counties on behalf of the South Sound Military & Communities Partnership. The survey was conducted to assess attitudes about Joint Base Lewis McChord and its impact on the surrounding communities.

A total of 1524 adult heads of household were interviewed: 1024 by telephone and 500 online. A proportional sample was drawn from 39 ZIP Codes surrounding JBLM to match the population distribution in the area. Households in the sample for which no phone number was available were mailed a letter and asked to log onto the survey website and complete the questionnaire.

The survey was designed to assess:

- Local residents' connection to the military, both through employment and prior service;
- Attitudes about living close to JBLM, including advantages and disadvantages;
- Residents' perceptions of JBLM's impact on the community (local economy, quality of life, traffic, etc.);
- Awareness of certain JBLM programs and attributes;
- Anticipated impacts of potential troop drawdowns at JBLM (local economy, quality of life, traffic, etc.);

Demographic information was collected so as to compare and contrast answers by residents in various circumstances.

The survey was designed and administered by Elway Research, Inc. The questionnaire was designed in collaboration with SSMCP staff.

The report includes Key Findings, followed by annotated graphs summarizing the results to each question. The full questionnaire and a complete set of cross-tabulation tables is presented in the appendix.



## METHODS

- SAMPLE:** 1524 adult residents of Pierce and Thurston Counties selected at random from households in 39 ZIP Codes near JBLM. The sample was proportional to the number of households in each ZIP Code.
- TECHNIQUE:** Multi-Mode data collection.  
1024 interviews were conducted by telephone by live interviewers, including 23% on cell phones.  
500 residents completed the same questionnaire online.
- MARGIN OF ERROR:**  $\pm 2.5\%$  at the 95% confidence interval. That is, in theory, had all adults in the sample area been interviewed, there is a 95% probability that the results would be within  $\pm 2.5\%$  of the results of this survey.
- FIELD DATES:** August 31 through September 16, 2015.
- DATA COLLECTION:** TELEPHONE: calls were made during weekday evenings and weekend days by trained, professional interviewers under supervision. Up to six attempts were made to contact each number in the sample. Questionnaires were edited for completeness and 10% of each interviewer's calls were re-called for verification.  
ON-LINE: Invitation letters were mailed to 20,000 households asking residents to log on to the survey website and complete the questionnaire. A reminder post card was mailed one week later.

It must be kept in mind that survey research cannot predict the future. Although great care and rigorous methods were employed in the design, execution, and analysis of this survey, these results should be interpreted only as representing the answers given by these respondents to these questions at the time they were interviewed.



## RESPONDENT PROFILE

In interpreting these findings, it is important to keep in mind the characteristics of the people actually interviewed. This table presents a profile of the respondents in the survey.

NOTE: Here and throughout this report, percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

### Demographic Profile

<b>COUNTY</b>	69%	Pierce
	31%	Thurston
<b>GENDER</b>	51%	Female
	49%	Male
<b>MILITARY HOUSEHOLD</b> (Anyone in Household)	10%	Active Duty
	8%	Reserve/ Nat'l Guard
	9%	DoD Civilian Employee
	40%	Veteran of Armed Services
<b>AGE</b>	14%	18-35
	24%	36-50
	34%	51-64
	27%	65+
<b>HOUSEHOLD</b>	30%	Couple / Children at Home
	40%	Couple / No Children Home
	5%	Single / Children at Home
	17%	Single / No Children Home
	6%	Single Living with Other Adults
<b>EDUCATION</b>	19%	High School or Less
	37%	Some College (AA/Voc-Tech)
	26%	College Degree (4 yr.)
	21%	Graduate School
<b>INCOME</b>	12%	\$34,000 or less
	14%	\$35 to 49,000
	24%	\$50 to 74,000
	15%	\$75 to 99,000
	23%	\$100,000 or more
	13%	No Answer



### Sample Area

The sample was drawn from selected ZIP Codes surrounding JBLM in proportion to the number of households in each ZIP code. Not all of Pierce and Thurston Counties were included in the sample area. The estimated population of the sample area is 841,396 people in 317,294 households.

The table below indicates the proportion of respondents from the cities in the sample area. The percentages are based on the entire sample. Because ZIP Codes do not match city boundaries and because we could not verify the city of residence, the percentages are based on self-reported residence.

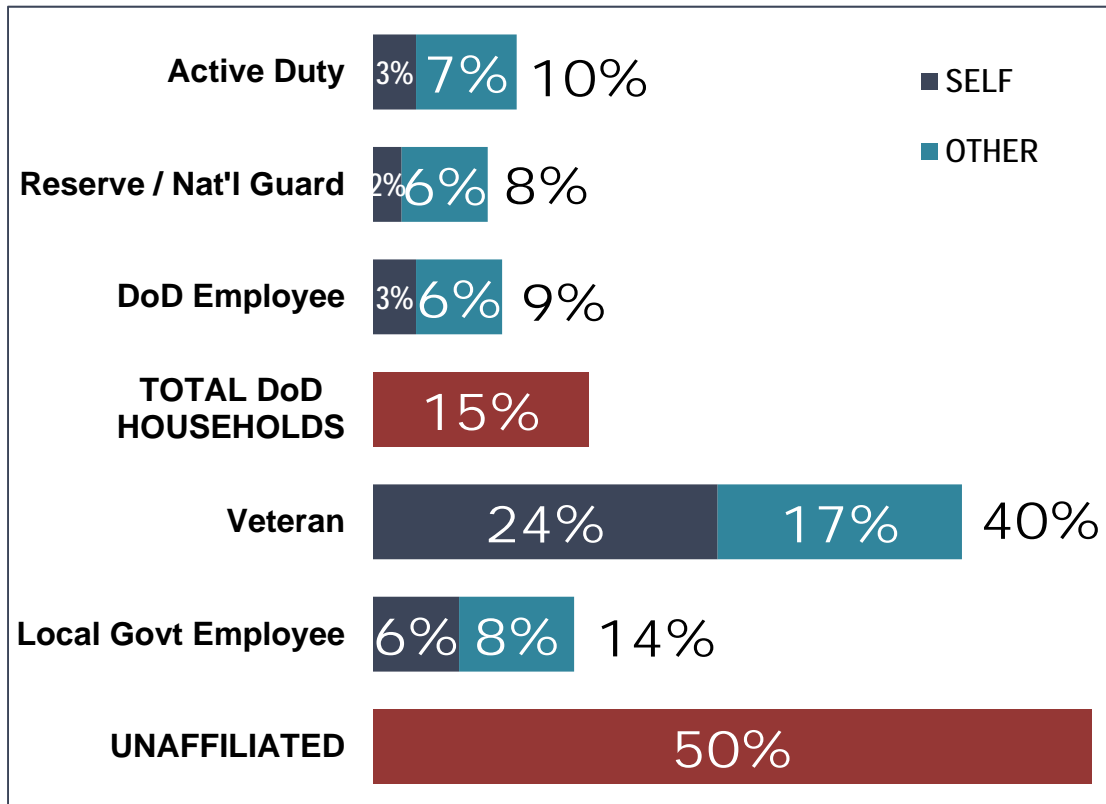
### Proportion of Sample by City

PIERCE (69%)	THURSTON (31%)
2% DuPont	5% Lacey
7% Lakewood	13% Olympia
12% Puyallup	2% Tumwater
>1% Steilacoom	3% Yelm
26% Tacoma	6% Unincorporated Thurston Co.
4% University Place	2% Other Thurston Co.
9% Unincorporated Pierce Co.	
8% Other Pierce County	1% No Answer



Personal Relationship to Military

### 1 in 7 Respondents Lived in DoD Households



Are you or anyone in your household...

Half of these survey respondents had some personal connection to the organizations in the South Sound Military & Communities Partnership. The percentages in this graph total to more than 100% due to overlap in households (e.g., one household may have a local government official and a veteran).

- A total of 15% of respondents lived in households with at least one person employed by the DoD, including
  - 10% active duty service members.
  - 7% were in households where more than 1 member was in the military or DoD.
- 40% lived in households in which there is a veteran.
- 14% lived in households where at least one member works for local government.
- 50% of respondents lived in "unaffiliated households" - households with no DoD employees, no veterans and no local government employees.

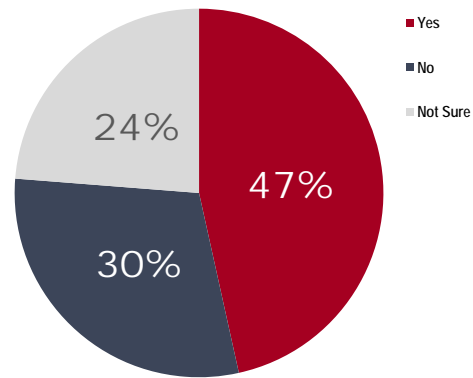


Personal Relationship to Military

**47% lived in neighborhoods with active duty service members**

- 45% of the non-active duty respondents lived in neighborhoods with active duty service members.

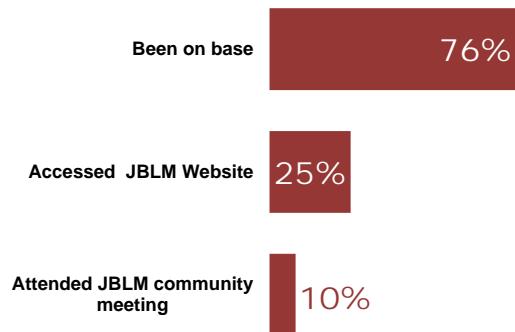
Q5 Are there (other) active duty military families in your neighborhood?



**76% had been on base**

- 73% of respondents from non-DoD households had been on the base, including 67% from non-veteran households.
- 25% of all respondents had accessed the JBLM website, including: 20% of non-DoD households, and 17% of non-veteran households.
- 8% of all respondents had been to a JBLM community meeting, including: 6% of non-DoD respondents and 4% of respondents who were *not* DoD, *not* veterans or *not* employed by local government.

Q9: Have you ever done any of the following things?







# KEY FINDINGS

## Connection to the Military

- ◆ **1 in 7 respondents had a current connection to the military.**
  - 10% lived in a household where at least one person was on active duty;
  - 8% lived in a Reserve or National Guard household;
  - 9% lived in a household in which someone was a DoD civilian employee;
  - 7% were in households where more than 1 member was in the military or DoD.
- ◆ **45% of non-active duty respondents lived in neighborhoods with active duty service members.**
- ◆ **40% lived in households with at least one veteran.**

## Rating JBLM as a Neighbor

- ◆ **8 in 10 volunteered at least one advantage of having JBLM nearby:**
  - Half (48%) of the advantages named were economic;
  - 19% cited increased security.
- ◆ **7 in 10 volunteered at least one disadvantage:**
  - Half (46%) cited traffic congestion;
  - Nearly 1 in 4 (23%) cited noise from aircraft or the firing range.
  - In a separate question:
    - 75% said JBLM-related traffic was an issue for them personally, including 49% who said it was a "significant" issue;
    - 49% said noise from military aircraft was an issue for them, including 15% who said it was a "significant" issue;
    - 40% said noise from firing ranges was an issue for them, including 10% who said it was a "significant" issue.
- ◆ **7 in 10 rated having JBLM nearby as positive:**
  - 40% said it was "very positive" and 32% said "mostly positive."
  - More than 8 in 10 said the attitude in their neighborhood toward service members is "supportive" (32%) or "very supportive" (52%).



## JBLM's Impact on the Community

- ◆ **4 in 10 estimated that more than 25% of their city's population is stationed or employed at JBLM.**
- ◆ **4 in 10 also estimated that more than 25% of their community's economy depends on JBLM.**
- ◆ **JBLM was seen to have positive impacts on local communities:**
  - Economic. 77% said there was a positive economic impact, including 29% who said it was "significant";
  - Overall quality of life. (63% positive; 20% "significant");
  - Safety in the community. (54% positive; 21% "significant");
  - Real estate prices (41% positive; 11% "significant").
- ◆ **Traffic was the only factor with a majority negative impact rating:**
  - 51% said JBLM's impact on traffic in their community was negative, with 24% saying it was a "significant" negative.

## Awareness of JBLM

- ◆ **71% knew that JBLM has an endangered species protection plan; 57% said that fact made them more favorable toward JBLM.**
- ◆ **67% knew that JBLM is the state's third largest employer; 50% said that fact made them more favorable toward JBLM.**
- ◆ **35% knew that JBLM lands are often open to the public; 40% said that fact made them more favorable toward JBLM.**

## Community Relations

- ◆ **Most (55%) thought JBLM "does enough" to minimize its impact on the surrounding communities.**
- ◆ **Most did not think communities need to be doing more to improve JBLM relations (50 to 59% depending on issue).**
  - The exception was supporting veteran hiring programs (62% said their community should be doing more of that).

## Drawdown Impact

- ◆ **3 in 4 said large troop reductions would have a negative impact on the area, including 1 in 3 who said "very negative."**
  - Nearly 6 in 10 brought up negative economic consequences for the area of losing "several thousand service members" from JBLM.



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# FINDINGS

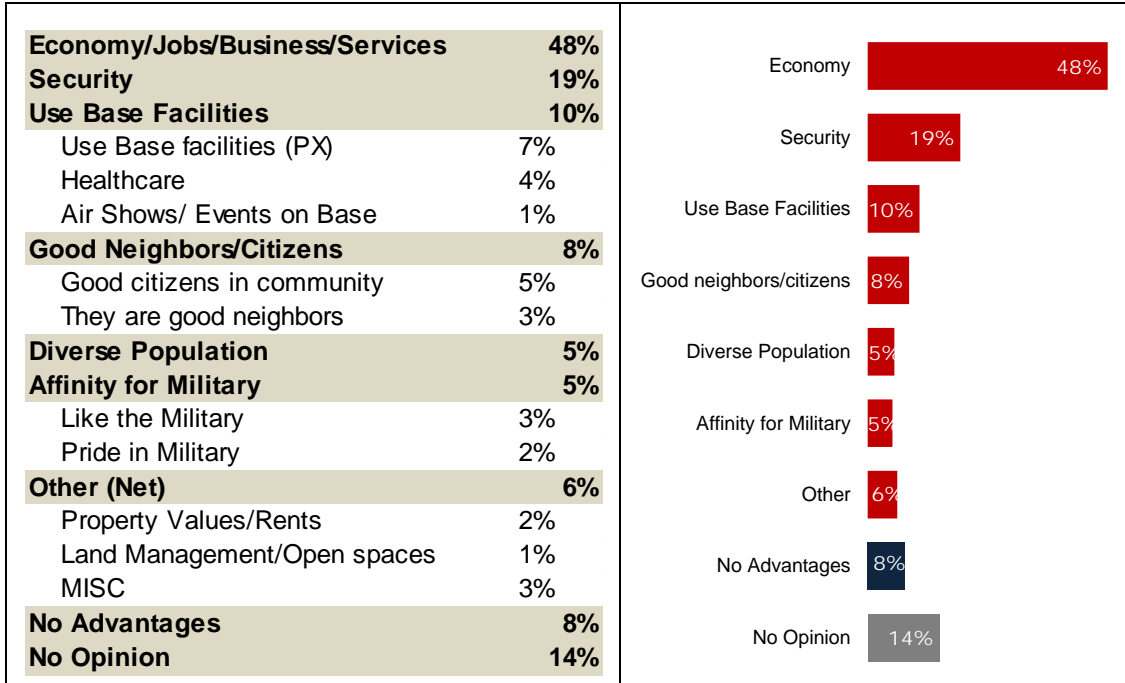
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- This section presents the survey findings in the form of annotated graphs.
- Bullet points indicate significant or noteworthy differences among population subgroups.



Having JBLM Nearby

### 8 in 10 Named at Least One Advantage of Having JBLM Nearby – Half Were Economic Advantages



Q7 In your opinion, what are some of the advantages of having JBLM nearby?

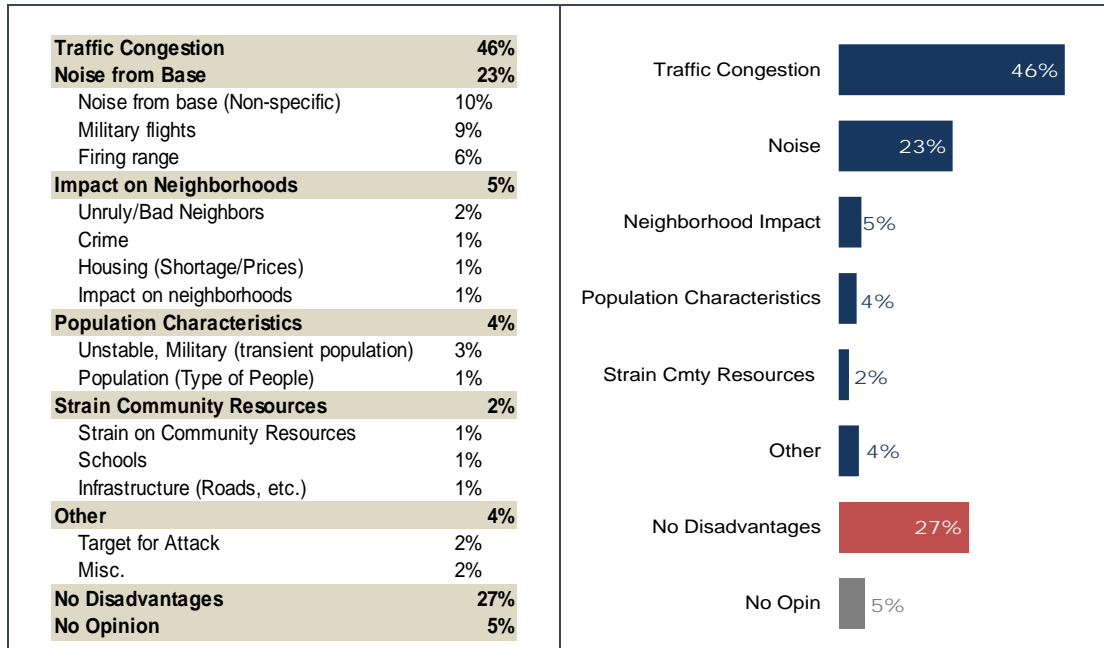
78% volunteered at least one advantage to having JBLM nearby when asked in an open-ended question.

- Half of the advantages named (48%) had to do with jobs or customers related to JBLM's presence.
- 19% mentioned the security of having a large military base nearby, including:
  - Protection from terrorist attack; and
  - The availability of military personnel for civil emergencies.
- 17% mentioned the people brought to the area by the base, saying:
  - Military personnel are good citizens and neighbors (8%); and
  - They add diversity to the local population (5%).



Having JBLM Nearby

### 7 in 10 Named at Least One Disadvantage of Having JBLM Nearby – Half Were Traffic Related



Q7 In your opinion, what are some of the disadvantages of having JBLM nearby?

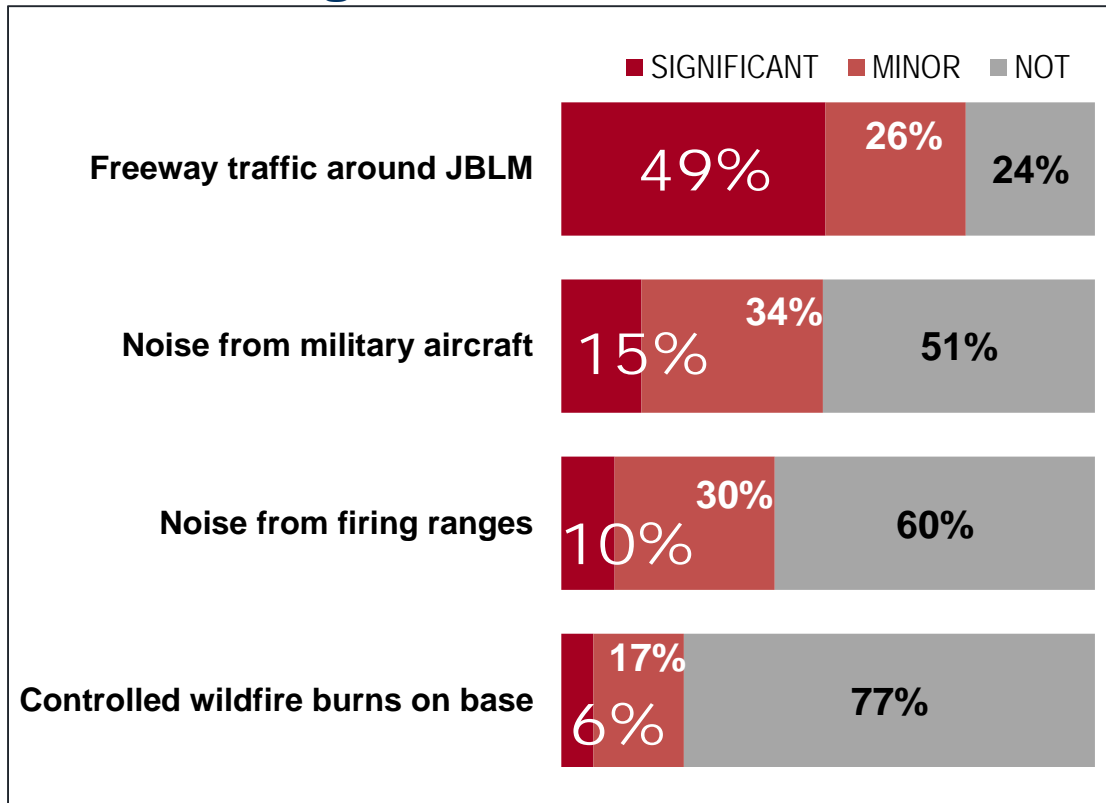
**68% volunteered at least one disadvantage of having JBLM nearby.**

- Nearly half of all respondents (46%) cited traffic congestion.
- Another 23% cited noise from the base, including:
  - Military flights (9%); and
  - Noise from firing ranges (6%).
- 27% said there were "no disadvantages" and
  - Another 5% could not think of one.



## JBLM Impact

## Half Rated JBLM Related Traffic as a "Significant Issue" for Them



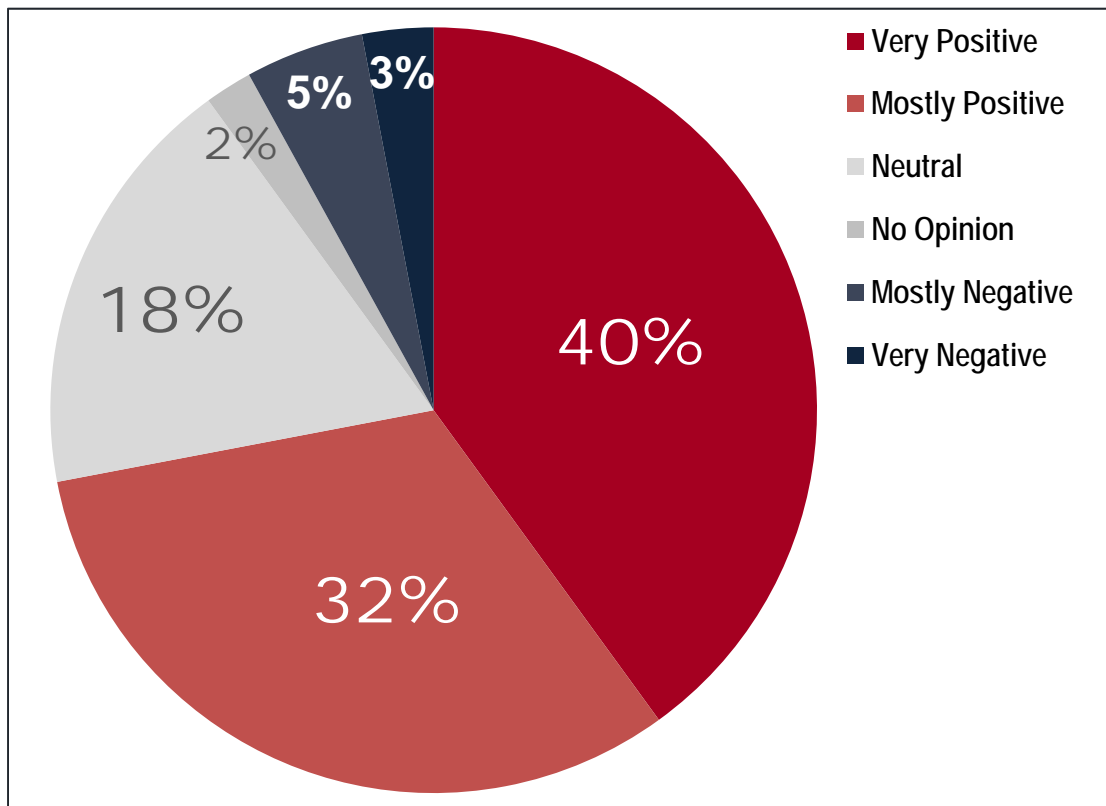
Q14 Tell me whether each item is a Significant Issue for you, a Minor Issue, or Not an Issue at all.

Respondents were read a number of potential issues and asked if each was an issue for them personally. Three of the four were rated as "issues" by at least 40% of respondents, with traffic rated as a "significant issue" by a near majority.

- Most likely to rate JBLM **traffic** as a significant issue (49% overall):
  - Local government employees (70%);
  - College graduates (60%);
  - Income over \$75,000 (60%);
  - Thurston County residents (59% v. 45% in Pierce);
  - Age 36-50 (57%).
- Most likely to rate JBLM **aircraft noise** as a significant issue (15% overall):
  - Income \$75-100,000 (22%);
  - Thurston County residents (19% v. 13% in Pierce);
  - College graduates (19%);
  - Civilian, non-government, non-veterans (17%).
- Most likely to rate JBLM **firing range noise** as a significant issue (10% overall):
  - Thurston County residents (15% v. 8% in Pierce);
  - Civilian, non-government, non-veterans (12%).



## JBLM as a Neighbor

**7 in 10 Rated Having JBLM Nearby as Positive**

Q8 In your personal opinion, would you say that, on balance, having JBLM nearby is...

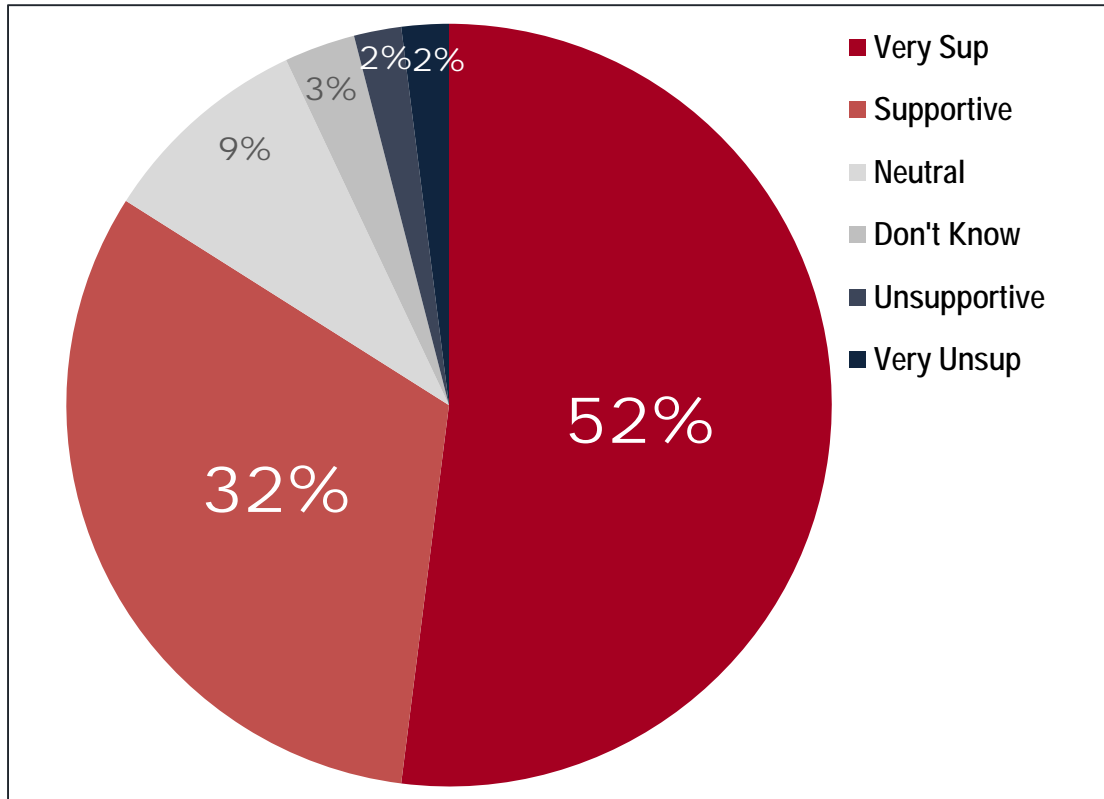
**72% of respondents said that having JBLM nearby is "positive" including 40% who said it is "very positive."**

- Responses were generally high across the board with some differences in the propensity to answer "Very Positive."
- The most positive ratings were from:
  - DoD households (49% "very positive" );
  - Over age 50 (46% v. 30% of those under 50);
  - Pierce County (43% "very positive" v. 33% in Thurston);
  - People without college degrees (43% v. 36% of college graduates);
  - Men (42% v. 38% of women).
- There were significant differences by relationship to the military:  
On the 5-point scale (with "very positive" = 5)
  - Veteran households average = 4.27;
  - DoD households average rating = 4.19;
  - Those with no connection to the military or local government = 3.88.
  - Local government employees = 3.67.



## JBLM as a Neighbor

## 8+ in 10 Said the Attitude in Their Neighborhood is Supportive Toward Service Members



Q12 Let's talk about your specific community. Would you describe the overall attitude in your neighborhood toward service members as: Very Supportive; Generally Supportive; Generally Unsupportive; Very Unsupportive.

**84% of respondents said their neighborhood was "very" (52%) or "generally" (32%) supportive of service members.**

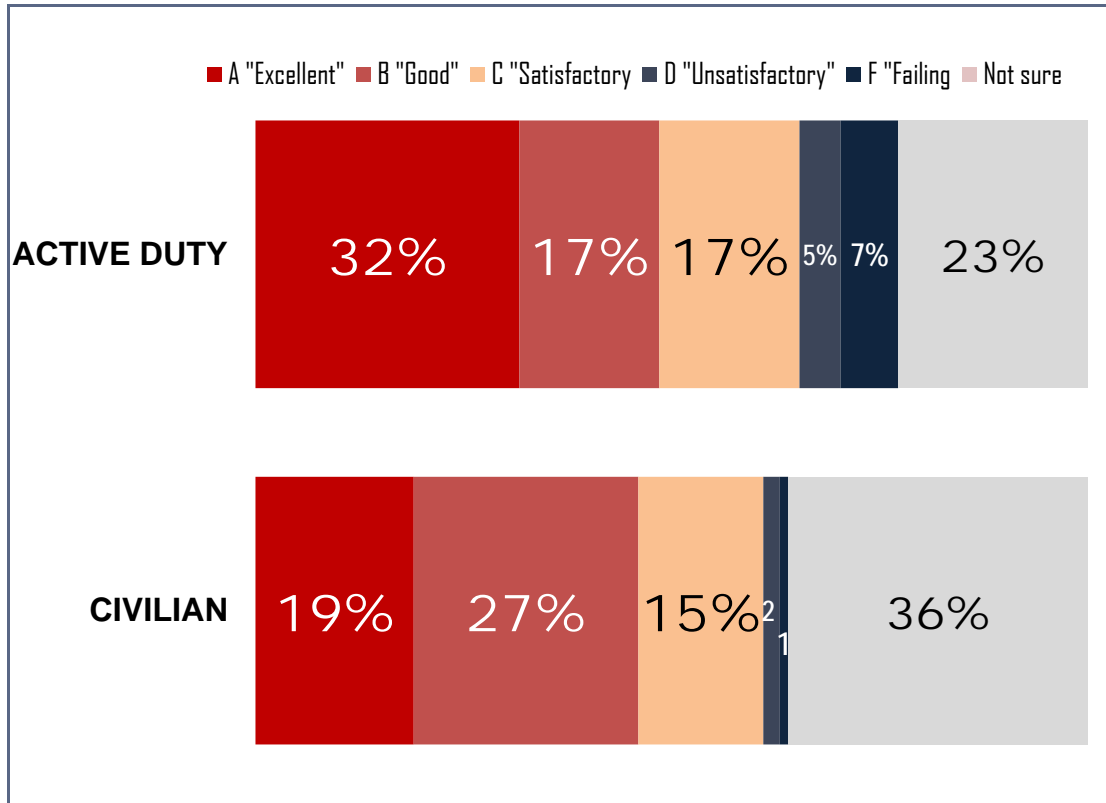
- This is slightly higher than the proportion who said having JBLM nearby was a positive (72%).
- Unlike the rating of "having JBLM nearby," there were few differences between demographic categories on this question.
- Although there was very little difference in *overall* support level, respondents in neighborhoods with military families said their neighborhood was more supportive of service members than respondents without military neighbors:
  - 59% of those with military neighbors said their neighborhood is "very supportive" of service members; compared to
  - 50% of those without military neighbors; and
  - 43% of those who did not know whether or not there were military families in their neighborhood.





JBLM as Neighbor

### Local Schools Get "B-" for Integrating Military Students into Classrooms



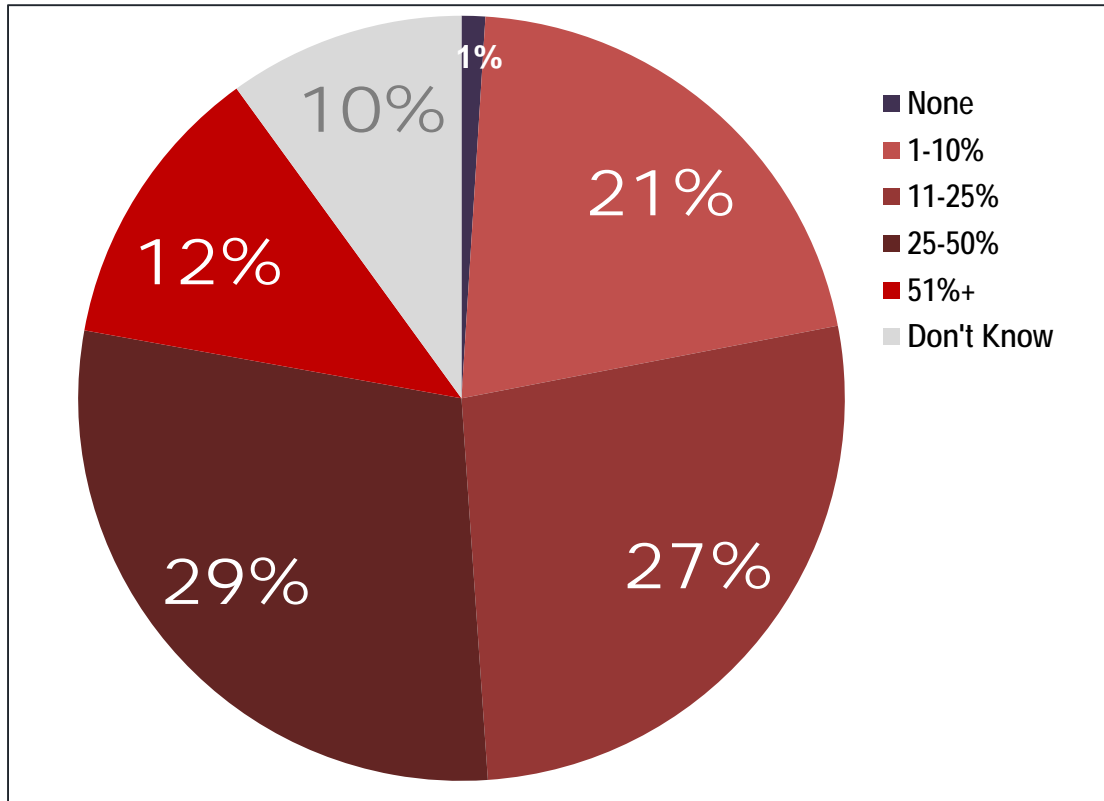
Q6.1 How would you rate the job that local school officials do at integrating and assisting military families? If you were to give them a letter grade, would you give them a grade of:...

- **41% of the active duty service members in this survey had children in school, compared to**
  - 26% of civilian respondents.
- **Half of the active duty parents (49%) gave the schools an "A" (excellent) or "B" (good) grade for "integrating and assisting military families."**
  - One-third of active duty parents (32%) gave their schools a "A" grade.
  - 12% gave local schools and unsatisfactory (5%) or failing grade (7%).
  - The overall "Grade Point Average" was 2.83 ("B-").
- **Nearly half of the civilian parents (46%) gave a "A" or "B" grade.**
  - More than 1/3 of the civilian parents (36%) were unsure or did not have an answer to this question – 1 ½ times as many as active duty parents.
  - Civilians' "Grade Point Average" was 2.95 ("B-").



## Community Impact

## 4 in 10 Estimated That More Than 25% of Their City Population is Military



Q10: If you were to guess, what percentage of the population of your city would you estimate is directly connected to the military – either in the military or employed at a base?

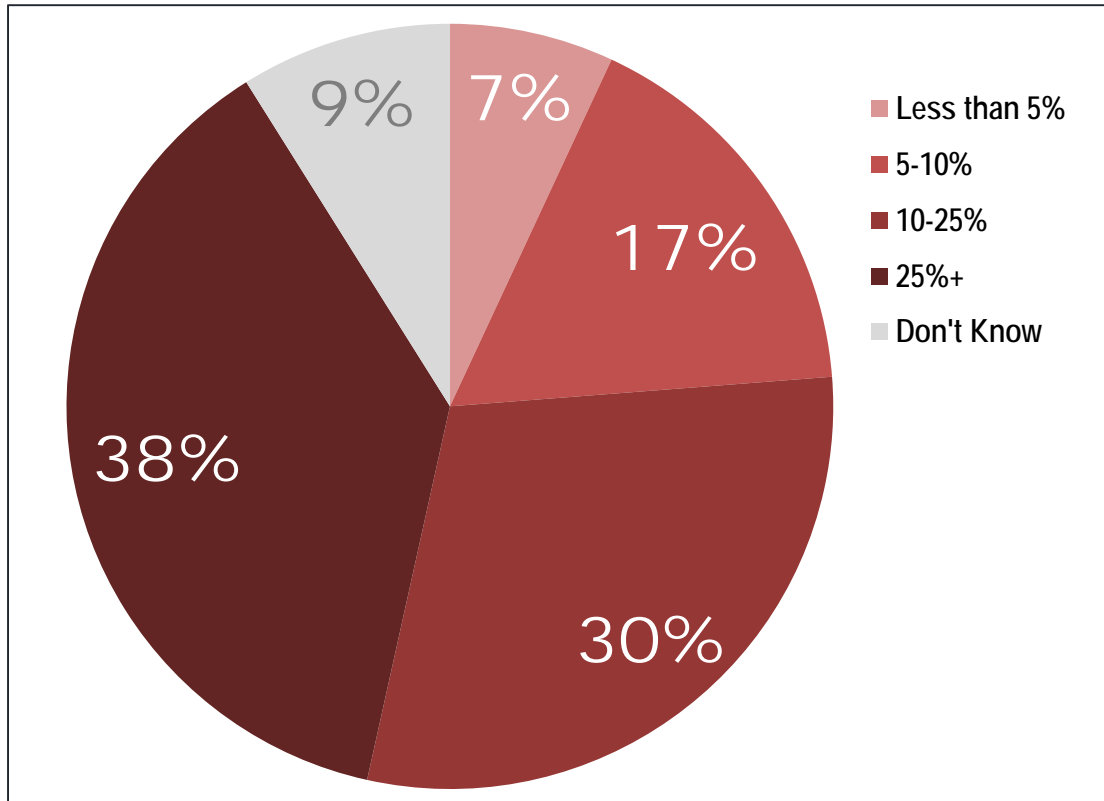
**Residents have high estimates of the proportion of military personnel in the region.**

- **41% estimated that at least 1 in 4 residents of their city is military or a civilian JBLM employee.**
  - 68% said the number of JBLM personnel in their city was at least 1 in 10.
- **Pierce County residents' estimates were higher than those from Thurston County:**
  - 43% in Pierce estimated the city proportion of military to be over 1 in 4, including 13% who said it was more than half;
  - 35% in Thurston estimated the proportion to be over 1 in 4, with 9% saying it is more than half.
- **People in DoD households made the highest estimates:**
  - 58% said more than one-quarter their city population was military; and
  - 25% said it was more than half.



Community Impact

### 4 in 10 Estimated That More Than 25% of Their Community's Economy Depends on JBLM



Q11 How much of the economic activity in your community would you estimate is dependent on JBLM? Would you say...

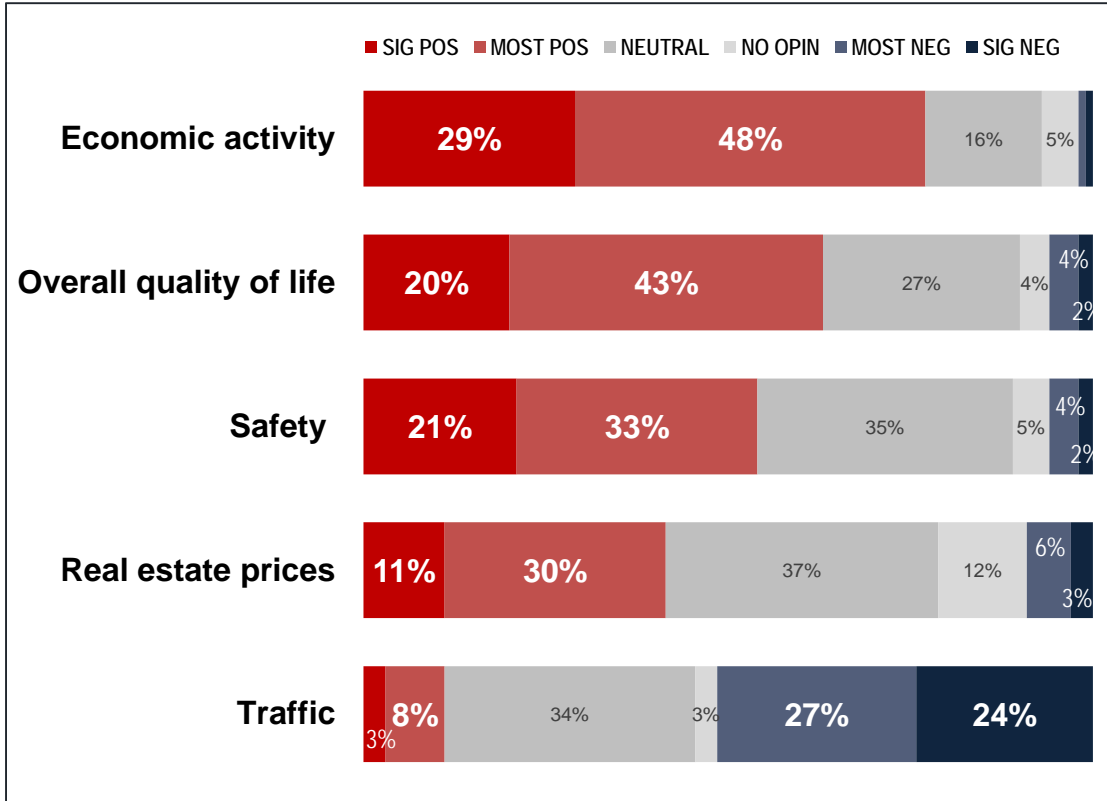
**Estimates of the economic impact of JBLM mirrored the estimates of the population impact.**

- **38% estimated that more than a quarter of their community's economic activity is dependent on JBLM.**
  - Two-thirds (68%) estimated that more than 10% of their community's economic activity is dependent on JBLM.
- **Again, people in DoD households made the highest estimates:**
  - 52% estimated their impact at more than 25% of their town's economic activity.
- **Estimates of the economic impact went down somewhat with income:**
  - 40% of those with incomes under \$75,000 estimated the impact at more than 25%; compared to
  - 34% of those with incomes over \$75,000.



Community Impact

### Most Said JBLM Has a Positive Impact on the Local Economy, Quality of Life and Safety



Q13 As I read the following list rate the impact of JBLM on your community. First, does JBLM have a Significant positive impact, on Mostly positive, Mostly negative or a Significant Negative impact on [READ FIRST ITEM]?. If you don't think it has an impact one way or the other, just say that.

**JBLM was seen to have a positive impact on respondents' communities in several ways:**

- **Economic.** 77% said there was a positive economic impact, including 29% who said it was "significant";
- **Overall quality of life.** (63% positive; 20% "significant");
- **Safety in the community.** (54% positive; 21% "significant");
- **Real estate prices** (41% positive; 11% "significant").

**Traffic was the only factor with a majority negative impact rating:**

- 52% said JBLM's impact on traffic in their community was negative, with 24% saying it was a significant negative.

CONTINUED ►



## Community Impact

### Individual impacts

Majorities in nearly all respondent categories agreed on the overall impact. There were some differences in the *intensity*, but not in the *direction* of opinion.

#### Economic activity in your community (77% positive; 29% significant).

- Most likely to say JBLM has a *significant positive* impact:
  - Single parents (37%);
  - Active duty military (34%);
  - Veterans (33%);
  - Middle-aged (31% of those age 36-64);
  - High income (33% of those with incomes over \$100,000).
- Most likely to say JBLM has no impact on economic activity (16% overall):
  - Under age 35 (23%);
  - Local government employees (22%);
  - Lower income (21% of those with income under \$35,000);
  - Women (18%).

#### Overall quality of life in your community (63% positive; 20% significant).

- Most likely to say JBLM has a *significant positive* impact:
  - Active duty military (27%);
  - Single parents (27%);
  - Veterans (25%);
  - High school education (23%);
  - Over age 50 (22%).
- Most likely to say JBLM has no impact on the quality of life (27% overall):
  - Local government employees (41%);
  - Civilian, non-government, non-veterans (31%);
  - Under age 35 (33%);
  - High school education (31%).

#### Safety in your community (54% positive; 21% significant)

- Most likely to say JBLM has a *significant positive* impact:
  - Single parents (30%);
  - Veterans (25%);
  - Lower incomes (24% of those under \$35,000).
- Most likely to say JBLM has no impact on community safety:
  - Local government employees (41%);
  - Those with graduate degrees (41%);
  - High incomes (40% of those over \$100,000);
  - Civilian, non-government, non-veterans (39%).

CONTINUED ►



### Real estate prices in your neighborhood (41% positive; 11% significant)

- Most likely to say JBLM has a *significant positive* impact:
  - Active duty military (18%);
  - DoD households (17%);
  - Over age 50 (12%).
- Most likely to say JBLM has no impact on real estate prices (37% overall)
  - Local government employees (49%);
  - Single parents (43%);
  - Pierce County residents (40%);
  - Income \$50-74,000 (42%).

### Traffic was the only negative tested

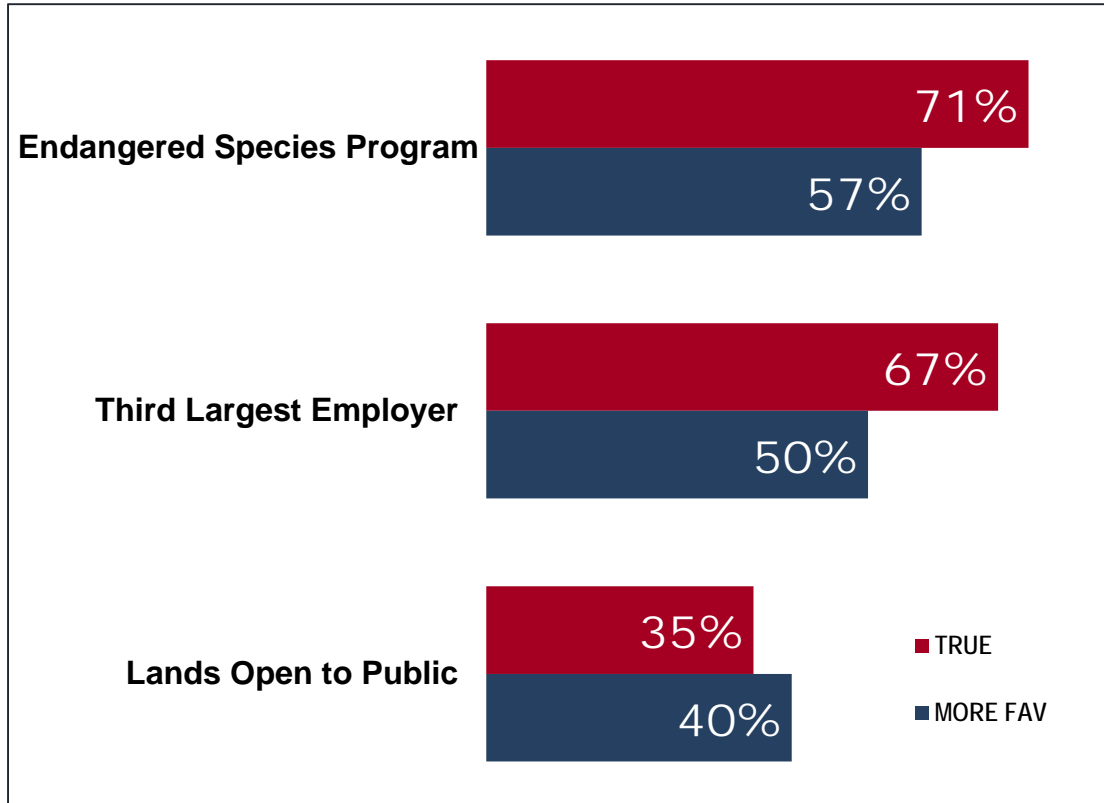
Of the five potential impacts tested, only "traffic in your community" was rated as a negative by a majority of respondents. Overall 52% said the impact on traffic was negative, including 24% who said it was significant.

- Most likely to say JBLM has a *significant negative* impact on traffic:
  - Local government employees (38%);
  - Graduate school educations (34%);
  - Thurston County (30% v. 22% in Pierce);
  - Age 36-50 (30%);
  - Higher income (29% of those over \$75,000).
- Most likely to say JBLM has no impact on traffic (34% overall):
  - Over age 65 (40%);
  - Lower income (40% of those under \$35,000);
  - Non-college graduates (39%).



Awareness

### Most Aware of JBLM Employer Ranking and Endangered Species Program



Q16 Next I am going to read some statements. As I read each one, tell me first whether you think the statement is true or false. Then whether it would make a difference to you if it were true.

\* JBLM has an active program to protect local endangered species

\* JBLM is the third largest employer in the state

\* JBLM training lands are open to the public when they are not being used for training

Respondents were read a series of statements about JBLM and asked: 1) if they thought the statement was true, and 2) if it were true, would it make them more or less favorable toward JBLM. All three of the statements are true.

71% believed that JBLM has an endangered species protection plan, and 57% said that fact made them more favorable toward JBLM.

- Veterans (78%) and those in DoD households (75%) were more likely to believe it to be true than people with no military connection (67%) or those employed by local government (66%).
- Those who said an endangered species program would make them more favorable to JBLM included:
  - 60% of those who believed it to be true;
  - 46% of those who believed it to be false;
  - 51% of those with no opinion.

CONTINUED ►



- Those who said it made them more favorable also included:  
60% of those who had initially expressed a negative opinion of JBLM;  
55% of those who were initially neutral; and  
57% of those with a positive opinion of JBLM.

**67% believed that JBLM is the state's third largest employer, and 50% said that fact made them more favorable toward JBLM.**

- Those in DoD households (74%) and veterans (70%) were more likely to believe this to be true than those employed by local government (67%) or people in unaffiliated households (64%).
- Pierce County residents were more likely than Thurston County residents to believe this (70% v. 62%).
- Those who said the employment fact would make them more favorable to JBLM if true included:  
55% of those who believed it to be true;  
41% of those who believed it to be false;  
37% of those with no opinion.
- It also included:  
49% of those who had initially expressed a negative opinion of JBLM;  
37% of those who were neutral; and  
55% of those with a positive opinion of JBLM.

**35% believed that JBLM lands are open to the public when not being used; 40% said that fact made them more favorable toward JBLM.**

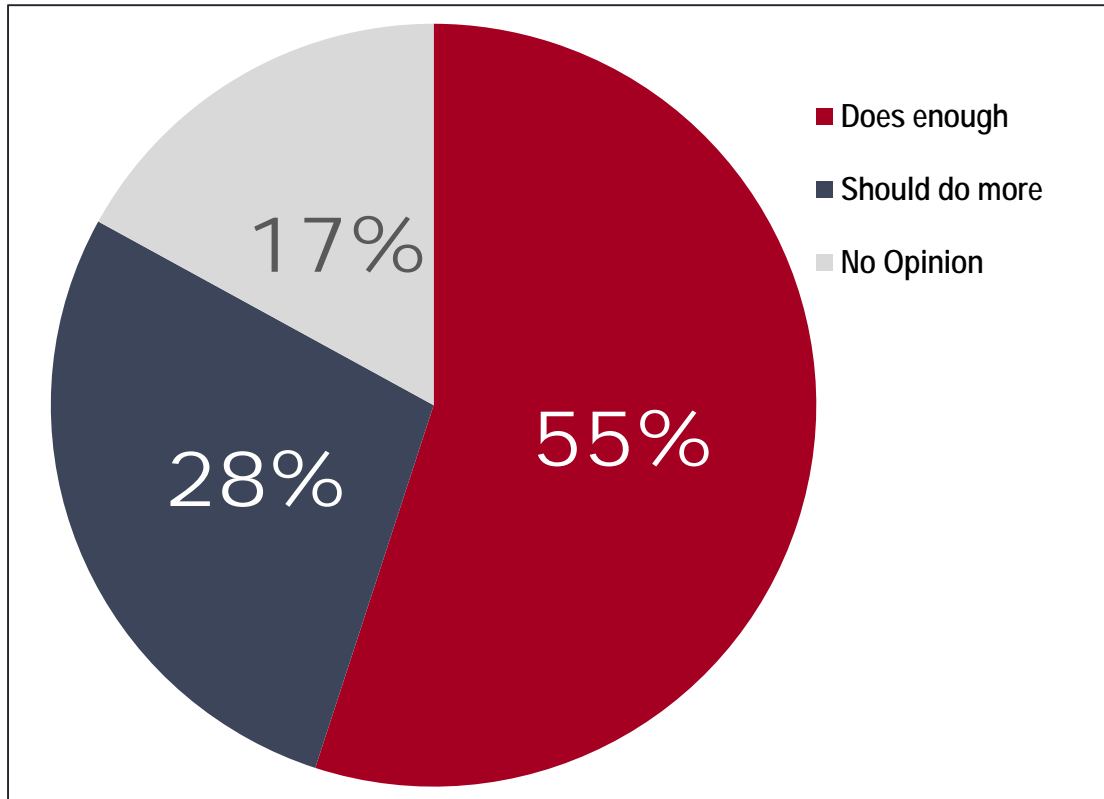
- Pierce County residents were slightly more likely than Thurston County residents to believe this (37% v. 32%).
- Those in DoD households (42%) and veterans (39%) were more likely to say this was true than those employed by local government (33%) or people in unaffiliated households (31%).
- Those who said the opening of lands to the public would make them more favorable to JBLM if true included:  
56% of those who believed it to be true;  
30% of those who believed it to be false;  
33% of those with no opinion.
- It also included:  
43% of those who had initially expressed a negative opinion of JBLM;  
32% of those who were neutral; and  
42% of those with a positive opinion of JBLM.





## Community Relations

## Most Think JBLM "Does Enough" to Minimize Its Impact on the Surrounding Communities



Q15 In your opinion, does JBLM do enough to minimize any negative impact on the surrounding communities? Or should it be doing more?

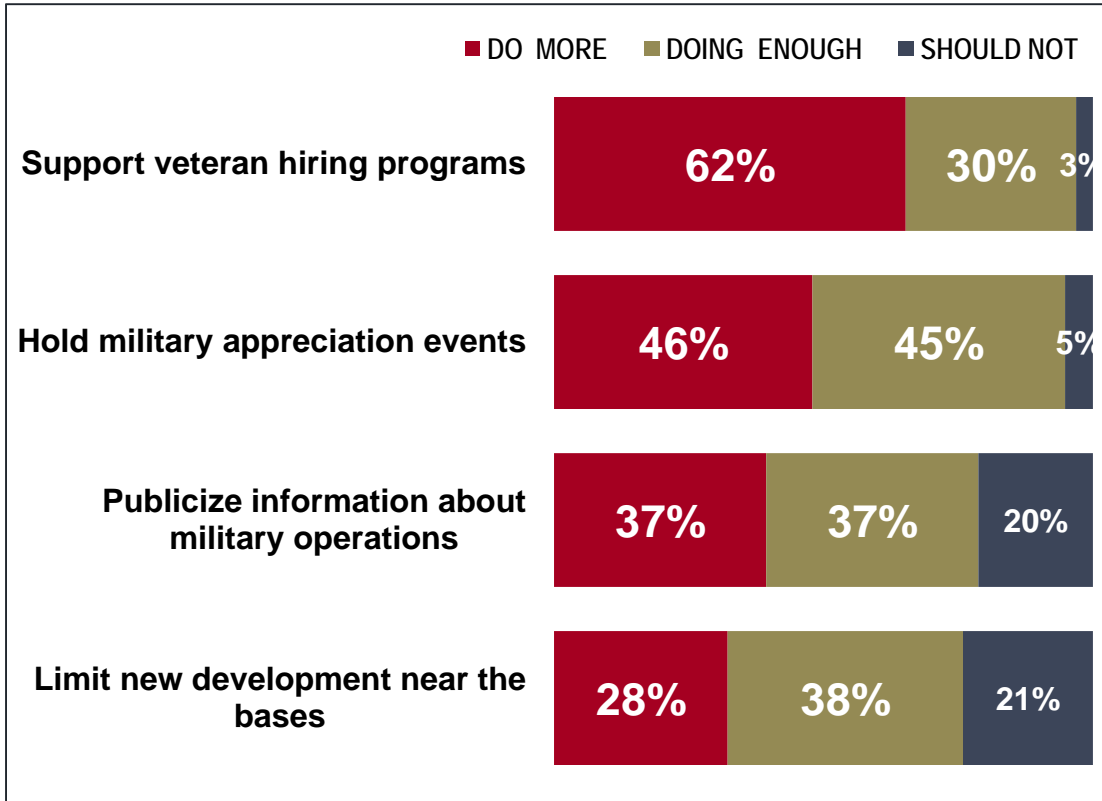
**A 55% majority said JBLM "does enough" to minimize any negative impact on the surrounding communities. 28% said the base should be doing more.**

- **A 46% plurality of local government employees said the base should be doing more.**
  - 40% said JBLM is doing enough.
- **Pierce County residents were more likely than Thurston County residents to say the base is doing enough (58% v. 48%).**
  - 35% in Thurston County said it should be doing more
- **Veterans (65%) and DoD households (56%) were more likely than non-affiliated households (51%) to say JBLM is doing enough.**
- **Even 50% of those who said that having JBLM nearby was a negative said that they are doing enough to minimize negative impacts. 25% said they should be doing more, and 25% had no opinion.**



Community Relations

### Most Do Not Think Communities Need to Be Doing More to Improve JBLM Relations



Q17 Next are some suggestions for things that your local community could do to improve its relationship with JBLM. As I read each one, tell me whether you think that is something your community should do more, or is doing enough already, or should not be doing. The first one is...

**Other than supporting veteran hiring programs, most local residents did not think their community needed to be doing more to improve its relations with the base.**

- **62% said they should support veteran hiring programs.**
  - There were not differences between veterans, DoD households and unaffiliated households on this question.
  - Local government employees were most likely to say they are doing enough (37%) and least likely to say they should be doing more (54%).
- **46% said their communities should hold more military appreciation events; 45% said they were doing enough already.**
  - 51% of local government employees said they were doing enough;
  - 51% of active duty service members thought there should be more.

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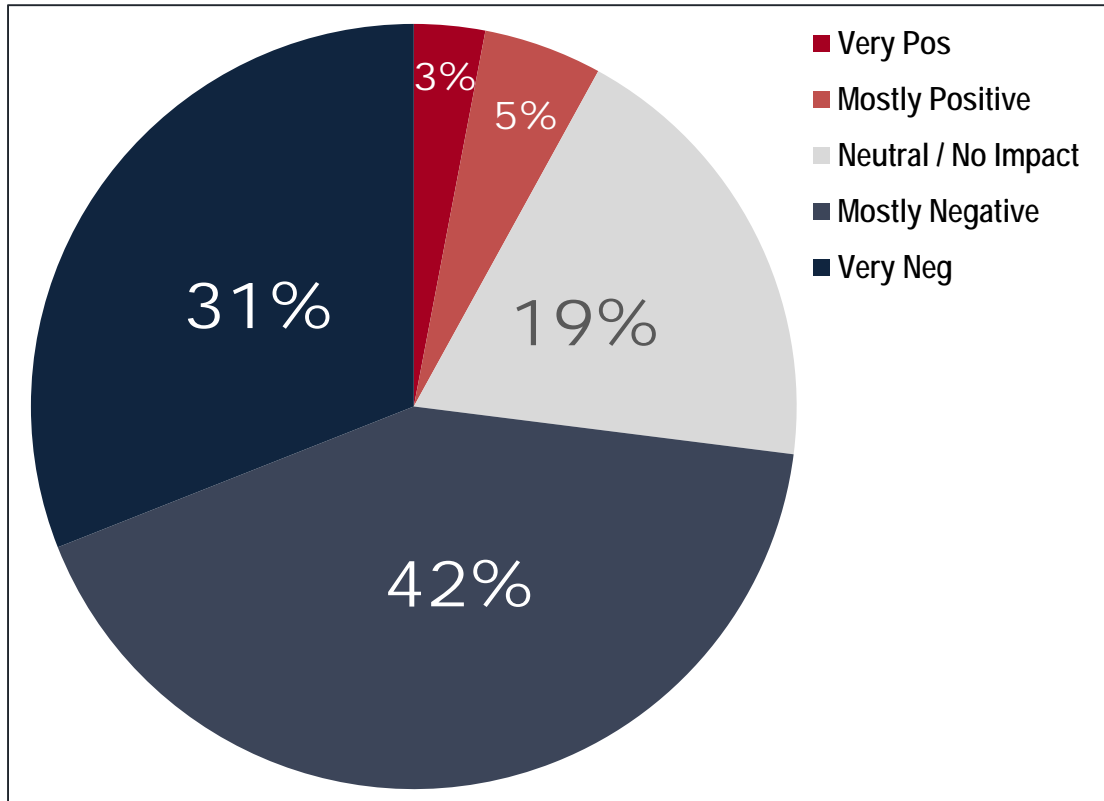


- **37% said local communities should do more to publicize information about military operations.**
  - Local government employees were most likely to say they should be doing more (43%).
- **28% said local communities should be doing more to limit development near the base; 21% said they should not do that.**
  - Local government employees were divided:  
38% they should be doing more  
37% said they were doing enough already; and  
15% said they should not be doing that at all.
  - DoD households were most likely to say they should not be doing that (25%).
  - There was no difference between Pierce and Thurston County residents on this question.



Drawdown Impacts

### Nearly 3 in 4 Said Larger Troop Reductions Would Have a Negative Impact on the Area



Q18 As you may have heard, the Army is decreasing the number of active duty soldiers. In your opinion, if JBLM were to lose several thousand service members, would the impact on the area be:

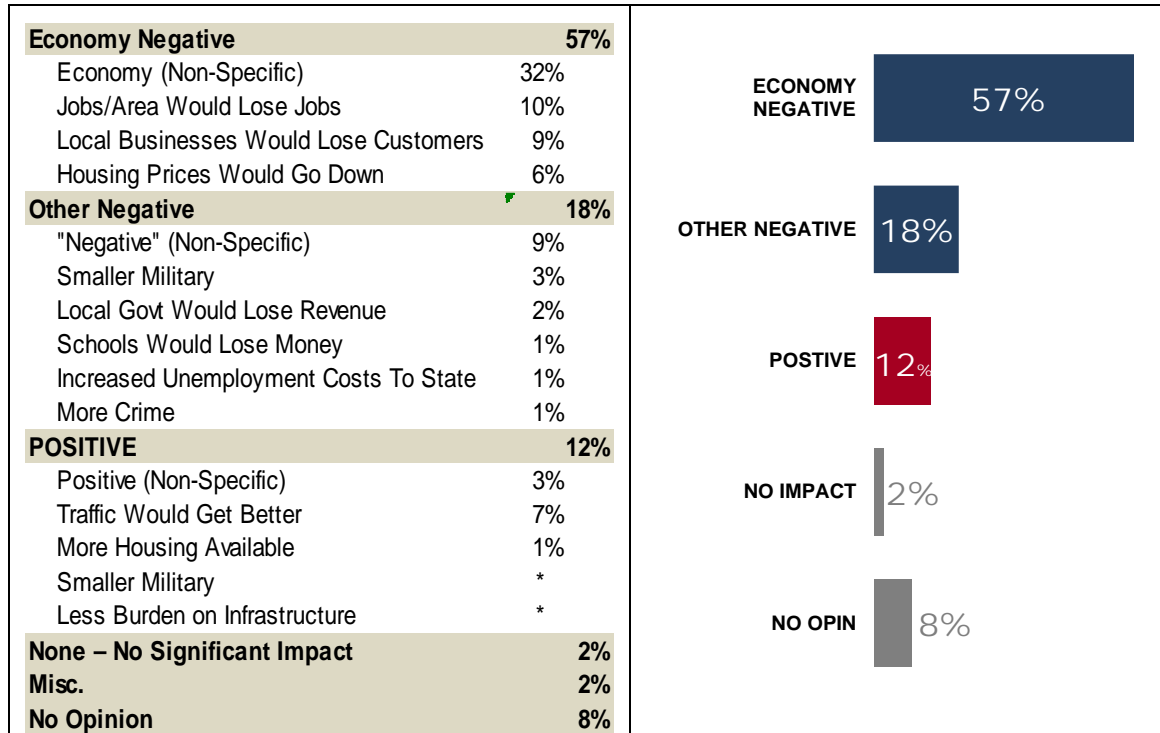
**72% of respondents anticipated negative consequences if JBLM were to lose "several thousands of service members," including 31% who said the fallout would be "very negative."**

- **Overall response was relatively uniform. Large majorities in every category of respondents said the consequences would be negative. There were some differences in the intensity of response:**
  - Veterans (35%) and current DoD personnel (33%) were somewhat more likely to say "very negative" than were unaffiliated respondents (29%) or local government employees (22%).
  - Propensity to say "very negative" went up with age, from 21% of those under 35 to 35% of those over 65.



## Drawdown Impacts

## Half Named Negative Economic Consequences of Troop Reductions



Q19 In your personal opinion, what would be the most significant impact – positive or negative - if JBLM lost several thousand service members?

**90% of respondents volunteered an opinion about what the most significant impact would be if JBLM were to lose several thousand service members. 75% of the anticipated consequences were negative.**

- **57% mentioned economic impacts, including:**
  - 32% non-specified (e.g. "it would hurt the economy");
  - 10% mentioned the loss of jobs; and
  - 9% cited loss of customers for local businesses.
- **18% cited an array of other negative impacts, including:**
  - Loss of revenue to local governments and schools, increased unemployment costs, and increased crime.
- **12% said the most significant impact would be positive and 2% said there would be no significant impact.**
  - Improved traffic was cited as the most significant impact by 7% of all respondents.



# DISCUSSION

For residents of the South Puget Sound, Joint Base Lewis McChord is as much a part of the region as the Sound and Mount Rainier. It has been here longer than all but the region's centenarians and most locals would have a hard time imagining the region without it. Nor would they want to.

Overall, 7 in 10 rated having JBLM nearby as positive. JBLM's relationship with its neighbors, while generally positive, is complex: 3 out those 7 said "mostly positive" instead of "very positive." And more than 7 in 10 respondents could think of both advantages and disadvantages to living near the base.

The dominant consequences of having JBLM as a neighbor are economic on the positive side of the ledger and traffic congestion on the negative side. Half of all respondents brought up each of these impacts.

A significant number of respondents cited other advantages as well, including the security of having a large military presence nearby, and the contributions of JBLM personnel as neighbors and citizens. The second most-mentioned disadvantage was noise from aircraft and firing ranges, which was later rated as a minor issue or non-issue for most respondents.

The economic impacts are clearly defined in terms of the number of consumers the base brings into the area. Most of the economic impacts called out were the number of customers for local businesses and the number of jobs created to serve those customers.

Half of these respondents have some direct relationship with JBLM or the military, either because someone in their household is currently in the military, works at JBLM or is a veteran. Half of the non-military respondents live in neighborhoods with active duty service members. This all makes for a more informed and engaged public than would be the case for most institutional neighbors. It may also tend to bolster respondents' estimates of JBLM's impact.

Some 4 in 10 respondents estimated that more than 25% of their city's population is stationed or employed at JBLM. And 4 in 10 also estimated that more than 25% of their community's economy depends on JBLM. In the companion survey of business operators, 1 in 3 said that more than 10% of their business was JBLM connected. Whether or not those estimates are accurate, they are how locals see the situation. These beliefs shape their attitudes and behavior toward JBLM. What they see is a major presence and influence in the



region.

They also see a generally healthy relationship. Most did not think JBLM needs to be doing more to minimize its impact on the surrounding communities and most did not think those surrounding communities needed to be doing more to improve their relations with JBLM (beyond hiring more veterans). There were some differences in perspective on these questions between local government employees and JBLM personnel. These differences merit some attention, but were mostly a matter of degree, rather than disagreements.

Familiarity with JBLM was demonstrated in response to messages designed to improve public opinion of the base. Large majorities already knew, or believed it when told, that JBLM is the state's third largest employer and that it has an active endangered species program. Only 1 in 3, however, knew that JBLM lands were open to the public when not being used for training. All of these messages had a positive effect.

- Learning of the endangered species program made 57% of respondents more favorable toward JBLM, including 60% who had initially expressed a negative opinion of having JBLM nearby.
- Being reminded that JBLM is the state's third largest employer made 50% of respondents more favorable toward JBLM, including 49% who had initially expressed a negative opinion of having JBLM nearby.
- Learning that JBLM lands are open to the public program made 40% of respondents more favorable toward JBLM, including 43% who had initially expressed a negative opinion of having JBLM nearby.

These findings indicate that public education about JBLM, has significant potential to further enhance its reputation in the region.

Not surprisingly, the prospect of a shrinking military presence in the region was greeted negatively. Nearly 7 in 10 respondents said that larger troop reductions at JBLM would have a negative impact – mostly economic – on the area. For 4 of those 7, the impact would be "mostly negative" instead of "very negative." And the feeling was not universal: 1 in 5 said either that the impact would be positive, or they could not think of a significant impact.

These responses could be expected to fluctuate depending on the size of the troop withdrawals. The reductions announced so far have been well below the intimal estimates, which may have dampened the level of concern. For most South Sound residents, however, a smaller JBLM would mean fewer jobs, fewer customers, and fewer taxpayers in their community.

