

THE IMPACT OF COMPULSORY
MILITARY SERVICE AND ARMED
CONFLICTS ON ARMENIAN MEN'S
PERCEPTION OF MASCULINITY AND
LIFE VALUES

by

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Introduction

Throughout history, mandatory military service and the intense heat of armed conflict have served as a significant moulding agent for personal identity and societal ideals. In this context, the story of the Armenian people is fascinating, as generations of men have struggled with the challenges of responsibility, compassion, and changing ideas of what it is to be a man against the backdrop of unstable geopolitical conditions. In order to shed light on the significant effects of mandatory military service and active participation in armed conflicts on Armenian men's perspectives regarding life values and the concept of masculinity, this capstone research attempts to delve deeply into the complex tapestry of these experiences.

In order to understand how mandatory military service redefines the ideals of strength, bravery, and duty, as well as how it affects Armenian men's perceptions of nationalism, citizenship, and patriotism, these themes are examined in a variety of ways. This capstone paper aims to provide a thorough knowledge of the numerous repercussions of military service on individual lives and society dynamics using a comprehensive methodology that combines quantitative survey and qualitative oral history interviews. This research attempts to shed light on the relationship between military duty, masculinity, and life values among Armenian males, both in its overt and covert forms, by interacting with a wide range of narratives and views.

Literature Review

I'm investigating how compulsory military service and participation in wars influence the perspectives of a person regarding life values and in what ways it alters their perception of masculinity. The goal of the research is to establish a deeper awareness of how these experiences alter an individual's perspective on life, redefine their ideals, and change the manner in which men are viewed by society and by themselves.

One of the themes is the alteration of the perception of masculinity because of compulsory military service, and the second one is compulsory military service's massive influence on the perspectives of a young person regarding life values. I will scrutinize literary pieces circling around these themes and try to create a big picture based on their similarities and connections.

Grønnerød et al. in "Men, Militaries and Civilian Societies in Interaction" combine the philosophy of civil-military interactions with the analysis of men and masculinities to present a nuanced approach (2008). The authors stress the importance of examining males and interactions between the armed forces and the broader gender system. The authors recommend against viewing security and military politics in a gender-neutral light and emphasize the significance of looking at how masculinities are constructed outside of the traditional framework of the man-soldier-military-war.

The importance of militaries in creating masculinities is emphasized, with references to the studies of Morgan (1994) and Arkin Dobrofsky (1978). The analysis of militarism and fascism by Theweleit (1980) is cited, highlighting the complex relationships between the military, violence, militarism, masculinities, and a body of men. The authors highlight how these connections in late-modern societies are becoming more intricate over time.

Grønnerød et al. offer valuable perspectives on the Finnish context, where national identity and citizenship are strongly linked to the armed forces and universal male conscription. The same is true in Armenia. Male citizens of 18-27 years of age are subject to compulsory military service in Armenia (National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia | Official Web Site | Parliament.am). They are conscripted at the age of 18 to compulsory military service. It is evident how conscription has socializing and democratizing effects, presenting military service as a "school for men." The authors also touch on how crisis

management roles are evolving, comparing the Defense Forces to a fitness center and tying public health issues into national defense. The authors also challenged the conventional notion of "stoic soldier-manliness," shedding light on how military norms have changed in response to the horrific nature of wartime experiences. Understanding soldiers' post-war readjustment policies, coping mechanisms, and return to civilian life are addressed. The authors explore "normalization," "remasculinization," and the role of women and families in these processes, connecting these discussions to the gender and identity politics of the post-war era. They enable readers to comprehend how military service and combat have molded Finnish soldiers and impacted broader perspectives of Finnish history and identity. The need to take into account variables like sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, and generation in the development of masculinities is emphasized, along with the necessity of taking a critical and reflective approach to the intersections of gender and the civil-military division. The foundation for a thorough knowledge of how compulsory military service affects people's views on life values and changes masculine ideals is laid by their study.

Grønnerød et al. (2008)'s groundbreaking study establishes the framework for thoroughly investigating the complex interactions between males, military, and civilian populations. Understanding how mandatory military service affects the transformation of male ideals and perspectives on life values is made more accessible by their emphasis on critical thinking and the complex aspects of masculinity.

The complex relationship between violence, militarized masculinity, and the difficulties faced by former soldiers in Colombia throughout the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process is effectively explored in "Reconstructing Masculinities: The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia" written by Kimberly Theidon (2009).

In order to comprehend the connections between weaponry, masculinities, and violence within certain historical contexts, the author emphasizes the necessity of a gendered study. The study argues that the construction of particular masculinities is essential to the maintenance of militarism, stressing that militarism depends on the maintenance of gender ideology alongside weapons.

The author examines the restricted availability of civilian symbols of masculine prestige for former fighters, with a focus on the cultural and political economy of militarized masculinity. The study analyzes soldiers' physical capital, where combat experience and physical prowess are valued commodities. Emphasis is placed on the relational dimensions of gendered identities, highlighting the responsibilities both men and women play in creating violent masculinities.

A nuanced approach is used in the process, which combines ethnographic techniques, semi-structured interviews, and extended presence. The study provides a thorough analysis of the DDR process beyond the purview of former combatants and involves a wide range of participants, including demobilized combatants, representatives of state agencies, NGOs, the military, intelligence services, and religious institutions. Theidon investigates why people join armed groups, exposing factors like financial incentives, coercion or fear as a recruiting tactic and social settings with few options for conflict resolution.

Former combatants' experience of militarized masculinity is presented as a performance informed by both combat training and larger class factors. The study promotes the demilitarization of masculinity models, especially when these men return to civilian life and deal with issues like spousal abuse and the conflict between the ideal of a family and the realities of post-war readjustment.

Theidon suggests that in order to broaden emotional repertoires and offer alternatives to militarized masculinities, the reintegration process should incorporate

sentimental and physical re-education. One major factor influencing the formation of masculine identities is the media's portrayal of males, firearms, and violence.

Understanding the difficulties and possibilities in the reintegration of former fighters is made possible by this research, which also adds insightful information to the larger conversation on gender and conflict resolution.

Theidon's research in Colombia shows how confronting and recreating hegemonic masculinities during the DDR process can have transformative effects. Theidon makes a significant contribution to the larger conversation on gender and conflict resolution by highlighting the connections between gender, violence, and militarized masculinities. This is especially true when it comes to the potential and problems associated with the reintegration of former soldiers. In addition, Jamieson's historical research critically looks at how gender relations, the politics of trust, and military need interact in times of conflict. Jamieson promotes an in-depth knowledge of the intricate complexities involved in preserving military performance while balancing soldiers' emotional commitments to civilian life by questioning oversimplified ideas of military masculinity.

In "The Man of Hobbes: Masculinity and Wartime Necessity", Jamieson provides a historical account of the entanglement between the private lives of soldiers and their spouses throughout times of war. According to Jamieson, these interventions—which he describes as a "politics of death and uncertainty"—were essential to preserving military effectiveness and morale during the time of war, especially in commands stationed overseas (1996).

The "politics of death and uncertainty," a notion based on the breakdown of loyalty and trust under unusual wartime conditions, is at the center of the debate. Jamieson makes a distinction between trust as a "human passion" and trust as a "modality of action," citing John Dunn's research to support his claim that state intrusion into servicemen's personal lives involves both forms of trust. The idea is that trust needs to be strategically positioned

in certain public and private entities to address issues about marital faithfulness and trust erosion, which appear as doubt and worry.

According to Jamieson's research, military ideals and priorities should take precedence over "regular" social interactions in order to maximize military success. Jamieson questions the oversimplified feminist portrayal of the military as a fundamentally patriarchal and masculine institution. The debate that surrounds the combat soldier as the embodiment of perfect citizenship and manhood is problematic, emphasizing the complexity of masculinity, gender norms, and servicemen's emotional states.

An understanding tone is evident in post-war narratives regarding mental casualties, which highlight men's concerns about being away from their homes. These stories from after the war show that while personal relationship problems and home fears were seen as demoralizing for all men, they were important triggers for the "weaker brethren." Low morale and the possibly spreading character of mental losses were perceived as a threat to the unit's overall effectiveness.

Jamieson explores historical customs, highlighting situations in which armies demanded that troops cut off their financial and emotional connections to their personal lives, using the Spartan Army as an extreme example. The essay points out that these approaches were unworkable in the conscript armies of the 20th century, it was necessary to review the procedures the British Army put in place to handle the personal matters of serving soldiers during World War II. This historical analysis adds insightful information to the larger discourse on how gender, trust, and military operations interact.

In "Male Fantasies: Women, Floods, Bodies, History," Theweleit provides a deep dive into the minds of a particular group of men known as the Freikorps, who arose in the wake of World War I. These guys, who were mostly from "petty bourgeoisie" backgrounds in rural areas, formed their own armies after the war based on their experiences. Theweleit

explores the nuances of their masculinity, which is intricately linked to power struggles, aggressiveness, and their interactions with women (Theweleit, 1985).

Masculinity, aggression, and sexuality is one of the themes Theweleit deals with, it is very intricate. He inclines towards the work of Wilhelm Reich and Freud among other theorists. He analyzes how the repression of heterosexual desires, defined as latent homosexuality, gives rise to aggressive behaviour among soldiers. Theweleit refutes the simplistic explanation of homosexuality as a source of aggressivity, insisting on more complex understanding of social behaviours and love relationships in the militaristic environment.

Furthermore, Theweleit depicts the close ties that developed among the Freikorps, especially the admiration of charismatic leaders. These leaders inspire passionate devotion and affection from their followers, evoking idealized concepts of love and unity encountered during combat. Theweleit encapsulates the addictive charm of combat and the idealization of sacrifice for the country by quoting from the writings of Freikorps fighters.

Beyond focusing only on the psyches of the individual, Theweleit also explores the larger socio-political landscape of Germany. He clarifies how the violent and conflicted experiences of the Freikorps shaped their ideas about national identity and manhood. Theweleit provides significant insights into how mandatory military service can change personal life values and modify societal ideals of masculinity and patriotism by analyzing their dreams of dominance, power, and sacrifice.

To deepen understanding of the intricate connection between military service, masculinity, and life values, more research on global contexts, a variety of military experiences, and the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods is necessary. These studies work together to create a compelling narrative.

Nevertheless, the literature also demonstrates flaws, such as a restricted emphasis on a range of global experiences and a possible lack of generalizability due to context-specific studies. Furthermore, a more explicit link between how military service affects masculinity and life values could improve the literature's consistency. My Capstone research is designed to fill the gaps in the current literature by applying a comprehensive approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches and taking into account the limitations identified in the existing literature. To provide the audience with a more precise understanding of the relationship between military service, masculinity and life values in the Armenian context, both oral history interviews with Armenian men who have participated in armed conflicts and served in the military as well as survey questionnaires given to a larger sample have been used. This paper endeavors to expand the existing viewpoint by bringing various experiences and viewpoints to the table, which will help shed more light on the complexities of military service and its impact on personal identity and social ties.

Research Questions and Methodology

1. How does compulsory military service in Armenia influence the development of masculine identity among men, particularly regarding perceptions of strength, bravery, and duty?
2. How do Armenian men conceptualize notions of patriotism, nationalism, and citizenship in the context of their military service experiences?
3. How do Armenian men perceive their roles and responsibilities within the family and society before, during, and after military service?
4. How do the experiences of Armenian men who have undergone compulsory military service but have not participated in armed conflicts differ from those who

have experienced both military service and active engagement in armed conflicts in terms of their perceptions of masculinity and life values?

5. What are the psychological and emotional impacts on Armenian men who have served in the military during peacetime compared to those directly involved in armed conflicts, and how do these differences manifest in their post-service lives?

Qualitative Method - Oral History Interviews

Purpose: My goal was to explore and examine individual experiences, perceptions, and reflections on compulsory military service and active participation in armed conflicts, mainly focusing on the profound consequences and impacts on masculinity and life values among Armenian men.

Approach: I've conducted semi-structured oral history interviews for open-ended discussions that delve into personal narratives, experiences, and perspectives. By providing interviewees with the freedom to express themselves openly, I aimed to uncover surface-level insights and the underlying influences shaped by factors such as education, upbringing, and societal norms.

Sampling: Purposeful sampling was utilized to select interviewees who represent diverse backgrounds, military experiences, and perspectives, ensuring a rich and comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

Data Analysis: Thematic analysis identifies recurring patterns, themes, and meanings within the interview transcripts. I systematically analysed the qualitative data to uncover insights into the complex interplay between military service, armed conflicts, masculinity, and life values.

Quantitative Method – Survey

Purpose: I aimed to gather structured data on a larger scale, providing quantitative insights into the prevalence and distribution of certain attitudes, beliefs, and experiences related to compulsory military service and armed conflicts among Armenian men.

Approach: I've designed and distributed a survey questionnaire that would enable the collection of standardized responses from a broader sample of participants, allowing for statistical analysis and general findings.

Sampling: To ensure a deep and thorough grasp of the research issue, individuals from a variety of backgrounds, military experiences, and viewpoints were chosen through the use of purposeful sampling. Three interviewees were included in the sample: one had served in the army but had not engaged in war; another had served in the armed forces and had taken part in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War (2020); and a third had taken part in both the First and Second Nagorno-Karabakh Wars (1988–1994).

Data Analysis: Statistical analysis techniques, such as descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and correlation analysis, have been used to analyze the survey data. This quantitative approach provided numerical insights into the prevalence, trends, and associations related to the research variables, complementing the qualitative findings from the oral history interviews.

Research Findings and Analysis

For the oral history interviews, I aimed to explore, from the viewpoint of Armenians, the profound consequences of compulsory military service and active participation in wars, namely how these experiences affect a person's perspective on life, redefine their personal ideals, and change how men are perceived by themselves and also by the society. Throughout the interviews, I gave the interviewees the freedom to talk as

long and openly as possible so that I could get an opportunity to see not only the surface of their ideas but also the deep roots that vary based on education, upbringing and habits.

One of the reasons that the first interviewee, Sargis Bagdasaryan, has been so passionate about military service since childhood was his education and love of the subject of history. This phenomenon shows that military service is praised at schools, and preparing soldiers from pupils was and is a component of the national agenda. “To be written about and remembered on Armenian history pages” is a common expression in the Armenian context that is actively used and present in Armenian textbooks, lessons, and TV shows. Prioritizing the military over any other field is one of the main reasons that being a soldier is considered an important aspect and ingredient of being an exemplary citizen and good person in most Armenian contexts.

How military service influences a young soldier’s value system is complicated and layered. From the soldier’s perspective, the scale of evaluation values changes dramatically; according to Sargis, what was considered very important before military service becomes nothing and vice versa; this is because, during compulsory military service, the needs and interests are changing, assisting in revaluing and changing an individual’s priorities. Armenian youth are so connected and dependent on their families that their ego decreases during the war. Instead of considering their lives as supremely important, soldiers start to value their role in defending their families. Sargis states that the feeling that you are the only barrier between your family and the enemy is one of the vital aspects that a person feels on the front line.

One of the apparent reasons that compulsory military service influences the way a person thinks is that after returning from the service, youth face difficulties in communicating with different members of society. This leads to the idea that life in the

army and outside the army is different not only because of duties and responsibilities but also because of the communication standards and features.

While sharing some memories from his military experience, Sargis added that the “dirty”, accepted masculine perceptions in the Armenian reality, where oligarchic mentality and abuse of power are dominant, do not align with the principles of being a good soldier because what it means to be a “good” boy in the army and outside of it differs. According to him, in the army, being professionally competent and physically prepared is under consideration, while outside of it, the same things do not necessarily match the principles of the “good” boy.

The way society perceives a young person before and after military service is highly noticeable. The soldiers are getting credits, and they start to be treated specifically; however, it is interesting that this attitude sometimes annoys soldiers as being a soldier throws a shadow on their other advantages, and it becomes the main reason to be respected and treated well. Valuing and appreciating someone for something that is done not by personal choice and wish but on a mandatory and compulsory basis does not need to be emphasized at least that much. From the perspective of Sargis, it’s not heroism to be a soldier; it’s a duty you carry, sometimes even unintentionally and unwillingly.

One controversial thing that is noticed is that, on the one hand, education was one of the crucial reasons for Sargis’s love towards the army. On the other hand, his main disappointment came from the point that during his whole life, he was told and taught that Armenians are strong and everything is under control and by being under this propaganda, tale populist stories and afterwards seeing the huge shortcomings and problems in the army extremely disappointed him.

Wrong and biased presentation of historical events increases the passion and love towards the military and becomes a reason for disappointment. “Populists claims that there

is only one authentic will of the people” (Bickerton & Accetti, 2015, p. 51). That’s how populism generally operates not only in this narrow case but also in the broader context. The educational system in Armenia very often reflects populist agendas and ideologies which sometimes even the teachers and lecturers who deliver these ideas doesn’t even realize.

Based on individual cases, the whole picture about the influence changes; while for Sargis, the primary goals during military service were obtaining all the necessary military skills and knowledge was a priority, for others, the priorities were different, and these differences are the result of the background of the youth from where they are coming and what kind of family background they have. The hierarchal and capitalist divisions and huge gaps between Armenians are also present in the army. A soldier from a bordering village and the son of an oligarch who appeared to share the same bed and conditions for two years clearly do not share the same values and ideologies.

There is a huge difference between serving in the army in peaceful conditions and in a war situation. The differences between soldiers decrease and sometimes even vanish during war situations, and everyone appears on the same line where interests and perspectives become identical. This shows that compulsory military service and directly participating in war influence youth differently. While in peaceful conditions, the army is just a place where all the differences are present, in wartime, everything starts from a zero point; war forces an individual to take responsibility, grow, and look at and judge events coldly. Although war is one of the worst things in the world, it still has the power to change a person by making him more just and critical and capable of questioning the accepted norms and values of society.

The way values are created is so much influenced by society, family, upbringing and education, but because of war, these external influences gradually vanish, and an individual starts questioning his beliefs, trying to reveal his true nature and passions.

The second interviewee, Davit Gevorgyan, was born in 1995, a native of Sisian, Syunik province, and served in the Armenian military from 2013 to 2015. From his childhood, Davit hunted and fished with his father and uncle, and he had a long-standing familiarity with the weapons and their use before entering the army.

Davit's experience in the military was largely positive. In the beginning, Gevorgyan's relatives had worries that the military service might jeopardize his future career as a physician, but he was willing to serve his country despite the obstacles. He found camaraderie among fellow soldiers from diverse backgrounds and appreciated the enforced discipline that became integral to his daily routine.

The military taught Gevorgyan to be disciplined and organized, and therefore, a new outlook on these traits appeared in him. He highlighted the role of a harmonious combination of physical and mental power, knowing that victory and success are the result of nursing both sides. Thus, he used his own experiences in the army as an illustration that some soldiers were not able to read the educational materials and instructions in the army due to being illiterate. In contrast, others who were very clever could not manage with exercises or training with weapons because of physical inadequacy. Based on these cases, he understood that men have to find the golden middle to equip his mind and body. His military experience shaped his perspective on the value of orderliness and preparedness in all aspects of life.

Gevorgyan's idea of patriotism was expanded further during his military service. At first, his main goal was to protect his family, but later, he realized that patriotism was not only a matter of defending his family but also a commitment to the nation. The veteran's

inclusion in the Army Day celebrations and his participation in the events enhanced his sense of patriotism and unionism.

Gevorgyan's relationships with family and friends evolved positively following his military service. His increased discipline and willingness to contribute to group tasks were noticed and appreciated by family members, leading to improved dynamics within the household. His friendships remained intact, reflecting the resilience of those bonds.

Through army service, he acquired a more profound comprehension of what it meant to be a man. He extended beyond the surface of the complex phenomenon of manhood, which was based on physical characteristics and emphasized ethical and mental qualities. His perspective shifted towards valuing men who utilize their strengths for the betterment of society.

Communication came out as the most crucial instrument of life that Gevorgyan used during his military service. Open dialogue facilitated problem-solving and alleviated misunderstandings, enabling him to navigate challenges effectively. He recognizes the crucial role of family, friends and community support as they uplift one's spirits during and after the military service.

Gevorgyan would like to tell young Armenians who have to undergo compulsory military service that the opportunity is full of potential for transformation. He instructs them to treat this two-year commitment as a chance for personal development and skill acquisition, in which they will gain advantages for both personal and professional careers.

Davit Gevorgyan's interview shows how service in the army can affect the different aspects of individual views, values, and relationships. His narrative shows us the inseparable link between military service and personal maturation. Throughout his

experiences, he focuses on qualities such as resilience, adaptability, and a sense of duty to the nation.

The last oral history interviewee was 52-year-old accountant Vigen Khachatryan from Charentsavan, a city in the Kotayk Province of Armenia. His experiences during the First Nagorno-Karabakh War (1988–1994) and the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War (2020) showed the significant influence of military service on people's values and perspectives both within and outside of society. Through his experiences as a young soldier in the First World War and as an accomplished observer of the Second World War, Khachatryan provides insights on society's changing views toward soldiers, masculinity, and morals.

Khachatryan's family's engagement in the Artsakh movement and early exposure to it in 1988 gave him a sense of responsibility and readiness for military action at a young age. The importance of national defence in Armenian society was further underscored by the era's turbulent socio-political environment, which characterised the Spitak Earthquake and severe economic problems. His voluntary participation in the first conflict in Artsakh exemplifies the deeply rooted feeling of national pride and intergroup solidarity that characterize Armenians.

The differences in Khachatryan's experiences between the two conflicts show how military tactics and technology have changed significantly in the last thirty years. The 2020 battle demonstrated the dominance of contemporary weaponry and strategic asymmetry, in contrast to the first war, which primarily depended on physical strength and fortitude. In addition to highlighting soldiers' adaptability, Khachatryan's views of the evolution of warfare also emphasize the difficulties of facing an adversary with greater technological capabilities. According to Khachatryan, during the first war, the success formula of Armenians was physical power and masculinity; however, during the 2020 Artsakh war, he was feeling extremely helpless. He spent almost 30 days in Artsakh and rarely saw

Azerbaijani soldiers. The fight was against Azerbaijani artillery and UAVs. It was like a sad game where the task was to run away from bombs and artillery. This was the biggest disappointment of Khachatryan's life, seeing that during three decades, Armenia wasted time and millions to build an up-to-date army while Azerbaijan created a highly modern and competitive army.

The realities of war have had an impact on Khachatryan's views on life and morals, as seen by his observations on them. After his initial conviction that success in the first battle was essential, he came to gloomy conclusions about Armenia's geopolitical vulnerability in the 2020 fight. The experience brought about a reassessment of priorities, with a renewed respect for peace and familial relationships emerging as major themes. He started to value freedom and peace, while it's hard to understand the value of peace in peaceful conditions. However, his experience helped him to see it as an essential thing. Secondly, he was forced to be far from his family for long periods, strengthening their family connection. Now, he values every second spent with family, and during his free time, he is either with his wife or with his daughters.

The interviewee's experience serving in the military throughout two wars caused a paradigm change in his view of masculinity. In the face of technological combat, the 2020 war revealed the limitations of conventional ideas of masculinity, whereas physical power was once regarded as a sign of success. Khachatryan's recognition of the value of intelligence and flexibility indicates larger cultural changes undermining traditional gender norms. He believed that having large muscles was a sign of success during the First World War, but the 2020 War demonstrated that we are now living in an era of sophisticated minds and advanced technology and that having large muscles is only an attractive feature of the body.

To put military conflicts into perspective and prepare the next generation for the complexity of battle, Khachatryan's post-war views emphasize the importance of historical and political education. His need for a critical comprehension of technical developments emphasizes how crucial modernization and strategic planning are to the country's defense.

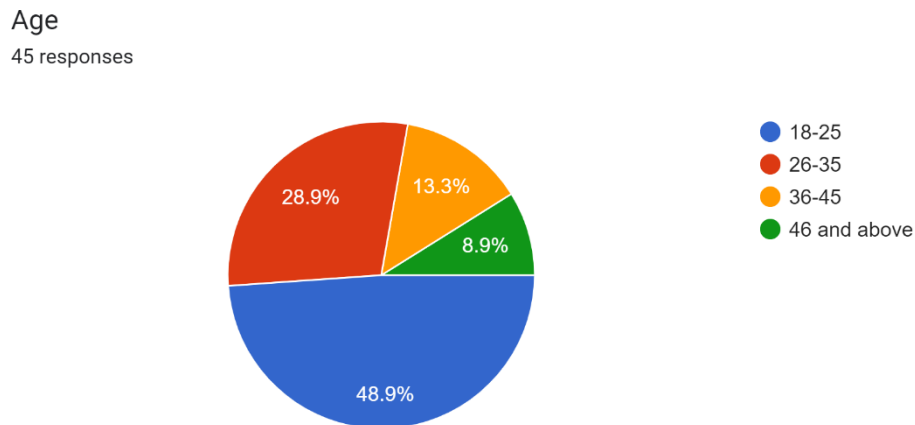
All in all, Khachatryan's story provides a thoughtful examination of the complex effects of military duty on people and society. His experiences demonstrate the Armenian people's unwavering endurance and adaptation in the face of hardship, from the transformation of ideals to the redefining of masculinity.

These interviews of the oral history illuminate the complicated influence of military service on individual perception, social values, and national identity in Armenia. Education turns out to be an indispensable factor that influences the attitudes towards military service, with the historical narratives and social norms that promote the role of soldiers from an early age being glorified. Nevertheless, the reality of military service is usually much different from what is shown in romantic movies, and thus, disillusionment sets in, and the values get reconsidered. Compulsory military service rebuilds the entire set of individual values and affects the communication style and perception of masculinity. War often helps soldiers overcome prejudice and superficial differences when they fight for a common cause, thus creating a unique bond between them. As a result, the development of the form of warfare means that we should prepare for the present conflicts by being adaptable and modernising.

Survey Analysis

The survey findings offer valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences of respondents regarding military service, patriotism, and societal roles.

Most respondents fall within the 18-25 age group, indicating a younger demographic. However, the smaller representation from older age groups suggests a potential generational shift in attitudes towards military service and patriotism. Understanding how generational differences influence these perceptions provides valuable insights into evolving national identities. . Most respondents fall within the 18-25 age group (22 people), followed by the 26-35 age group (13 people). There's a smaller representation from the 36-45 age group (6 people) and even fewer respondents from the 46 and above category (4 people).



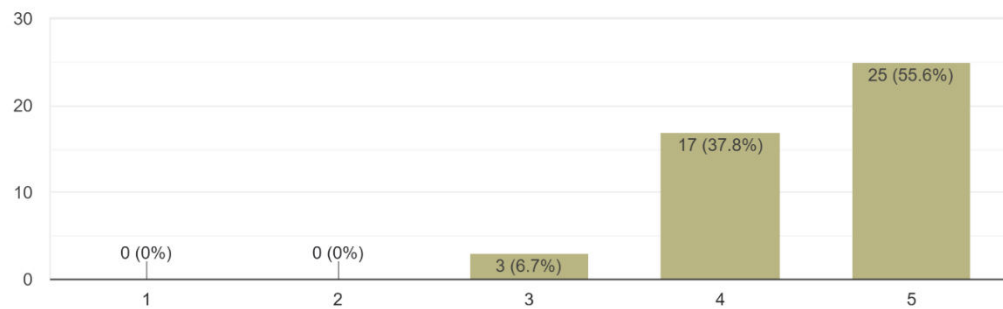
Most respondents are veterans who have completed their military service, indicating a significant portion of individuals who have transitioned out of the military. . Most veterans surveyed participated in armed conflicts during their military service (28 people). The respondents started their compulsory military service at various ages, with the majority beginning between 18 and 25.

Exploring how this transition impacts their views on patriotism, societal roles, and personal identity post-service offers valuable insights into the broader impacts of military service on individuals and society.

Overall, respondents generally agree that their military service has positively impacted various aspects of their masculine identity. They feel it contributed to their strength, bravery, sense of duty, leadership abilities, camaraderie, discipline, resilience, self-confidence, understanding of sacrifice, decision-making skills, and sense of honor and integrity.

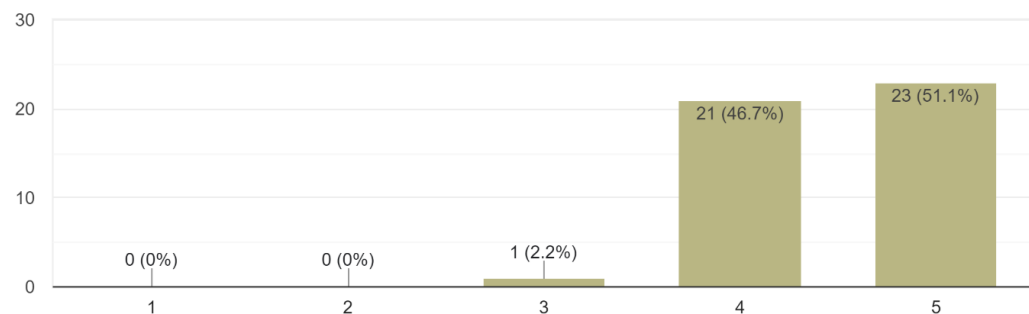
I perceive a sense of duty towards my country due to my military service.

45 responses



My military service has instilled in me a greater sense of discipline.

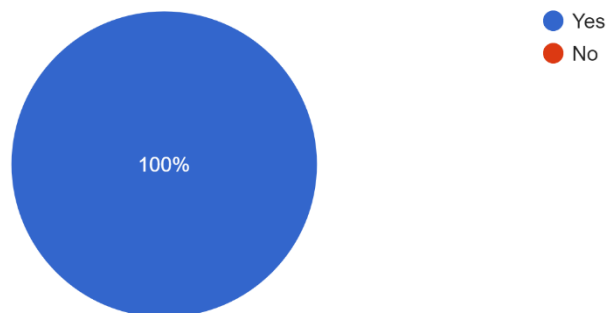
45 responses



Interestingly, veterans who participated in armed conflicts reported a heightened sense of camaraderie and brotherhood/sisterhood, indicating that shared combat experiences play a significant role in fostering bonds among service members. Understanding the psychological and emotional impacts of combat experiences on individuals provides deeper insights into their perceptions of patriotism and societal roles.

The overwhelming consensus among respondents regarding patriotism's definition being a strong attachment and loyalty to one's country or willingness to defend and serve their country is indicative of deeply ingrained societal values and beliefs. This alignment suggests that, for the majority of respondents, patriotism is closely tied to concepts of loyalty, duty, and service to the nation. The respondents' definitions of patriotism commonly include strong attachment and loyalty to one's country (37), willingness to defend and serve their country (39), constructive criticism and efforts towards improving the nation's shortcomings, and commitment to justice, equality, and inclusivity.

Do you believe your military service experience has influenced your understanding of patriotism?
45 responses



One factor contributing to this understanding of patriotism could be upbringing. From an early age, individuals are often taught to honor and respect their country, its symbols, and its history. Messages of national pride and duty are instilled through family

traditions, education systems, and cultural practices. For many, patriotism becomes intertwined with personal identity, shaping their worldview and guiding their actions.

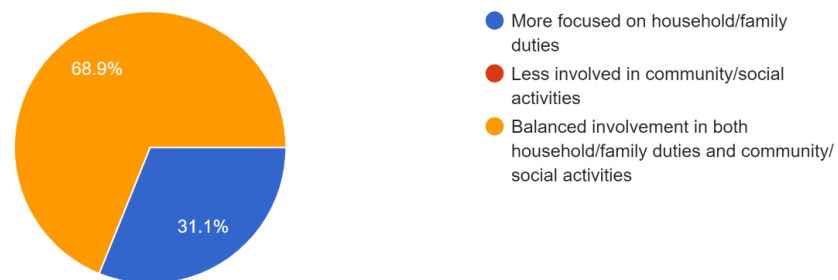
Cultural influences also play a significant role in shaping perceptions of patriotism. In societies where collective identity and national unity are highly valued, expressions of patriotism are strongly encouraged and reinforced through media, celebrations, and social norms. This cultural emphasis on loyalty to one's country can further solidify the association between patriotism and service to the nation.

Furthermore, military service may be a formative experience that fundamentally reshapes how individuals define patriotism. The soldiers' dedication to their country's security takes the form of many sacrifices and personal risks. Soldiers can be bonded through training, deployment, and comradeship with their fellow soldiers. This can result in the development of a strong feeling of responsibility and patriotism for their nation. The combat experiences, which can be the most intense, can strengthen the sense of patriotism as the individuals can see that protecting their country and its values are the most important. People who place more emphasis on military power and national security may ignore or undervalue other types of patriotism that highlight peaceful engagement and civic engagement. The significance of civil liberties, democratic principles, and diplomatic solutions in preserving a nation's well-being may be overshadowed by this restricted emphasis on patriotism that is military-centric. Therefore, people who only embrace a militarized definition of patriotism could unintentionally suppress opposing viewpoints, stifle fruitful discourse, and uphold an aggressive and conflictual culture. As a result, even though serving in the military can foster a strong sense of duty and loyalty to one's country, it is crucial to weigh the pros and cons of this loyalty as well as the wider range of patriotic activities, such as social responsibility, civic engagement, and nonviolent advocacy.

Consequently, the combination of upbringing, cultural influences, and military service experiences makes the patriotism, often shown by the respondents, so strong. Acknowledging the complex phenomenon of patriotism can be instrumental in the development of a sense of cohesion, belongingness, and mutual sense of responsibility.

How do you perceive your role and responsibilities within your family and society after completing your military service?

45 responses



The fact that after military service, some individuals focus more on their family and the community means that the military experience can be a factor which makes people pay more attention to their families and the community. Realizing that military service significantly impacts how people observe their roles in society and their obligations towards each other may give a clue to the overall effects of military service on social unity and community strength.

To sum up, the results from the oral history interviews and the survey analysis reveal the diverse influence that the military service has on the patriotism, masculine identity and social roles of the Armenian men. As a result of the examination of individual stories and experiences, it is apparent that military service is a formative experience that fundamentally modifies people's perception of duty, sacrifice, and patriotism to their country. Additionally, the camaraderie and endurance of adversity that military service is built on contributes to the development of a strong feeling of patriotism that centers on defending the nation and its values.

Nevertheless, the fact that this military interpretation of patriotism is not without its complexities and possible downsides should be recognized. While military service cultivates a strong sense of duty and loyalty, it sometimes does this at the expense of other forms of peaceful civic engagement and patriotism. The danger of such narrow definition of patriotism is that the people might overlook the importance of civil liberties, democratic values, and diplomatic solutions for the sake of national security. Consequently, in the future, research should focus on the space where military service, masculinity, and patriotism meet, as well as the consequences for veterans' transition to civilian life and the national unity.

As we look ahead, it is crucial to acknowledge the different backgrounds and views of veterans, and to establish a comprehensive system of support that cater to their specific needs and obstacles. Through promoting dialogue, encouraging inclusivity, and advocating policies that focus on veterans' welfare, society can play a key role in creating a more inclusive and supportive society for veterans as they face the challenges of re-adjusting to civilian life.

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Appendices

Oral History Interviews

Interview #1 with Sargis Baghdasaryan

Questionnaire

Introduction and Basic Information:

1. Can you please introduce yourself? (Name, age, occupation)
2. To provide some context, could you briefly share your background and experiences leading up to your involvement in the military? (Education, family, hobbies, etc.)

Military Service Experience:

3. How did you feel about mandatory military service before you started?
4. Can you describe your experience during the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War?
What role did you play?

Life Perspectives and Values:

5. In what ways, if any, do you feel that your perspectives on life have changed as a result of your military service?
6. Are there specific values that you believe were influenced by your experiences during the war?

Perception of Patriotism:

7. How would you define patriotism, and do you think your definition has evolved based on your military service?
8. Can you share specific moments or experiences that strengthened your patriotism?

Impact on Relationships:

9. Have your relationships with family and friends changed since your military service? If so, in what ways?
10. How do you think your experiences in the war have affected your relationships with fellow Armenians?

Changes in Masculinity Perception:

11. In what ways, if any, do you think your perception of masculinity has changed as a result of your military service?

Coping Mechanisms and Support:

12. Did you find any particular coping mechanisms helpful in dealing with the challenges of military service and war?
13. How important was family, friends, or community support during and after your military experience?

Post-War Reflections:

14. Looking back, is there anything you wish you had known or understood before your military service or during the war?

Advice for Others:

15. If you could give advice to young Armenians about to embark on compulsory military service, what would it be?

Closing Thoughts:

16. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences and the impact of military service on your life?

Interview #2 with Davit Gevorgyan

Questionnaire

Introduction and Basic Information:

1. Can you please introduce yourself? (Name, age, occupation)
2. To provide some context, could you briefly share your background and experiences leading up to your involvement in the military? (Education, family, hobbies, etc.)

Military Service Experience:

3. How did you feel about mandatory military service before you started?
4. Can you describe your experience during your military service? What were your duties and responsibilities?

Life Perspectives and Values:

5. In what ways, if any, do you feel that your perspectives on life have changed as a result of your military service?
6. Are there specific values that you believe were influenced by your experiences during your military service?

Perception of Patriotism:

7. How would you define patriotism, and do you think your definition has evolved based on your military service?
8. Can you share specific moments or experiences that strengthened your patriotism?

Impact on Relationships:

9. Have your relationships with family and friends changed since your military service? If so, in what ways?

Changes in Masculinity Perception:

10. In what ways, if any, do you think your perception of masculinity has changed as a result of your military service?

Coping Mechanisms and Support:

11. Did you find any particular coping mechanisms helpful in dealing with the challenges of military service?
12. How important was family, friends, or community support during and after your military experience?

Post-Military Reflections:

13. Looking back, is there anything you wish you had known or understood before your military service?

Advice for Others:

14. If you could give advice to young Armenians about to embark on compulsory military service, what would it be?

Closing Thoughts:

15. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences and the impact of military service on your life?

Interview #3 with Vigen Khachatryan

Questionnaire

Introduction and Basic Information:

1. Can you please introduce yourself? (Name, age, occupation)
2. To provide some context, could you briefly share your background and experiences leading up to your involvement in the military? (Education, family, hobbies, etc.)

Military Service Experience:

3. How did you feel about military service before you started?
4. Can you describe your experiences during both the First Nagorno-Karabakh War (1988-1994) and the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War (2020)? What roles did you play in each?

Life Perspectives and Values:

5. In what ways, if any, do you feel that your perspectives on life have changed as a result of your military service, especially considering your participation in two wars spanning several decades?
6. Are there specific values that you believe were influenced by your experiences during the wars?

Perception of Patriotism:

7. How would you define patriotism, and do you think your definition has evolved based on your military service across two wars?
8. Can you share specific moments or experiences from both wars that strengthened your patriotism?

Impact on Relationships:

9. How have your relationships with family and friends changed since your military service, considering your experiences in both wars and now having a family and children of your own? If so, in what ways?
10. Considering the generational differences and the evolving socio-political context, How do you think your experiences in both wars have affected your relationships with fellow Armenians?

Changes in Masculinity Perception:

11. In what ways, if any, do you think your perception of masculinity has changed as a result of your military service, particularly considering your participation in two different conflicts over time?

Coping Mechanisms and Support:

12. Did you find any particular coping mechanisms helpful in dealing with the challenges of military service and war across both conflicts?

13. How important was family, friends, or community support during and after your military experiences in both wars?

Post-War Reflections:

14. Looking back, is there anything you wish you had known or understood before your military service or during the wars, considering your experiences in both conflicts?

Advice for Others:

15. If you could give advice to young Armenians about to embark on compulsory military service, drawing from your experiences in both wars, what would it be?

Closing Thoughts:

16. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences and the impact of military service on your life, considering your unique journey spanning two different wars and stages in life?

Survey

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. Your input is invaluable as it will contribute to our understanding of the experiences of Armenian men concerning military service and armed conflicts. Please provide your responses thoughtfully and to the best of your ability.

Demographic Information:

1. Age:

- 18-25

- 26-35

- 36-45

- 46 and above

2. Military Service Status:

- Currently serving

- Veteran (completed service)

- Not served

3. If you are a veteran, did you participate in armed conflicts (wars) during your military service?

- Yes

- No

Compulsory Military Service Experience:

4. How old were you when you began your compulsory military service?

Perceptions of Masculine Identity:

5. To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your military service experience? (Rate each statement on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

a) My military service has contributed to my sense of strength.

- b) My military service has helped me develop bravery.
- c) I perceive a sense of duty towards my country due to my military service.
- d) My military service has enhanced my leadership abilities.
- e) I feel a heightened sense of camaraderie and brotherhood/sisterhood as a result of my military service.
- f) My military service has instilled in me a greater sense of discipline.
- g) I believe my military service has shaped my resilience and ability to overcome challenges.
- h) I perceive a greater level of self-confidence as a result of my military service.
- i) My military service has deepened my understanding of sacrifice and dedication.
- j) I feel a stronger connection to traditional notions of masculinity because of my military service.
- k) My military service has contributed to my skills in decision-making and problem-solving.
- l) I believe my military service has positively impacted my sense of honor and integrity.

Conceptualization of Patriotism:

6. How do you define patriotism? You can choose more than one

- Strong attachment and loyalty to one's country
- Willingness to defend and serve one's country
- Pride in one's country's achievements and values
- Respect for the principles and institutions of one's country
- Advocacy for the well-being and prosperity of one's fellow citizens
- Active participation in civic duties and responsibilities
- Embracing the cultural heritage and diversity of one's nation
- Upholding the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the constitution
- Promoting unity and solidarity among citizens regardless of differences

- Supporting sustainable development and environmental conservation efforts within one's country
- Constructive criticism and efforts towards improving the nation's shortcomings
- Commitment to justice, equality, and inclusivity for all members of society
- Honoring the sacrifices made by past generations for the betterment of the nation

7. Do you believe your military service experience has influenced your understanding of patriotism?

- Yes
- No

Perceptions of Roles and Responsibilities:

8. Before your military service, how did you perceive your role and responsibilities within your family and society?

- Primarily focused on household/family duties
- Actively involved in community/social activities
- Balanced involvement in both household/family duties and community/ social activities

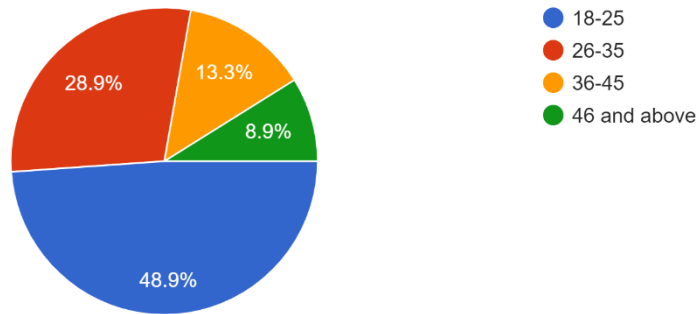
9. How do you perceive your role and responsibilities within your family and society after completing your military service?

- More focused on household/family duties
- Less involved in community/social activities
- Balanced involvement in both household/family duties and community/ social activities

Survey results

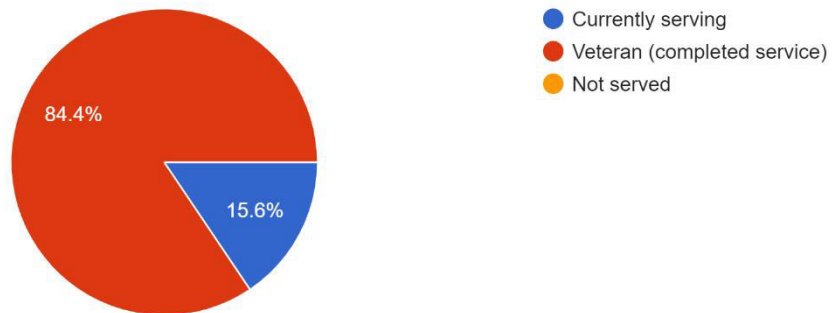
Age

45 responses



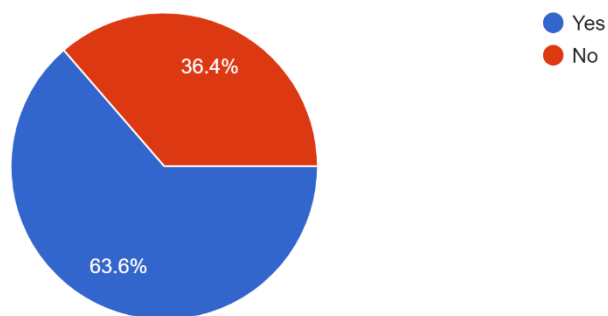
Military Service Status

45 responses



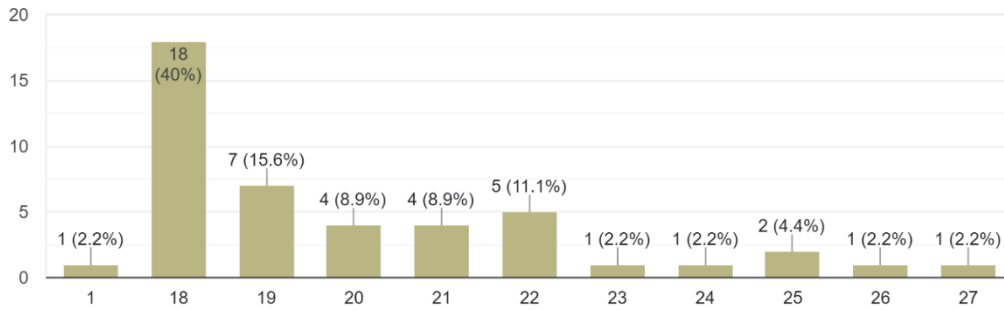
If you are a veteran, did you participate in armed conflicts (wars) during your military service?

44 responses



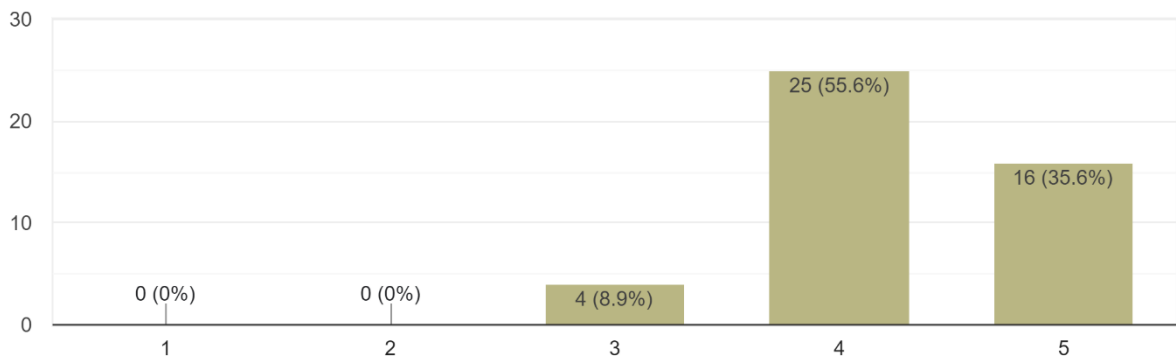
How old were you when you began your compulsory military service?

45 responses



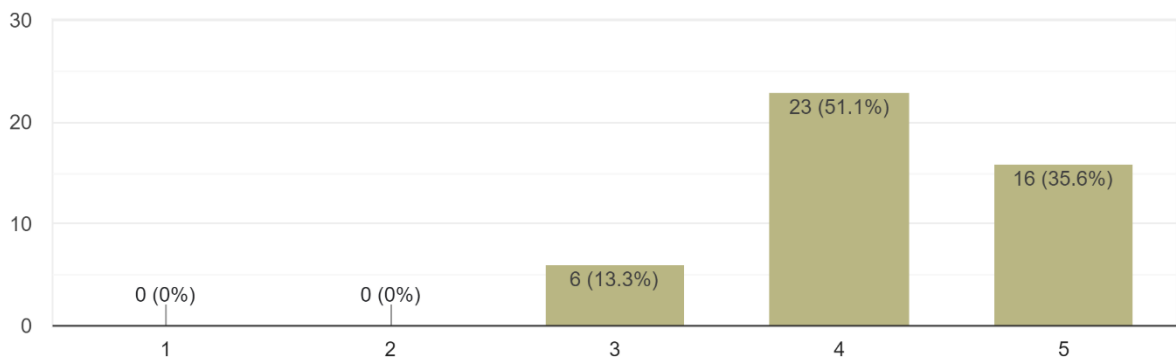
My military service has contributed to my sense of strength.

45 responses



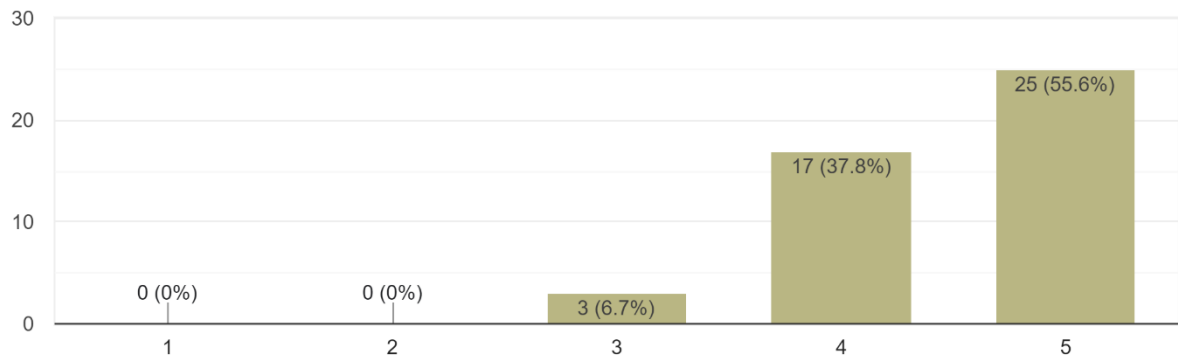
My military service has helped me develop bravery.

45 responses



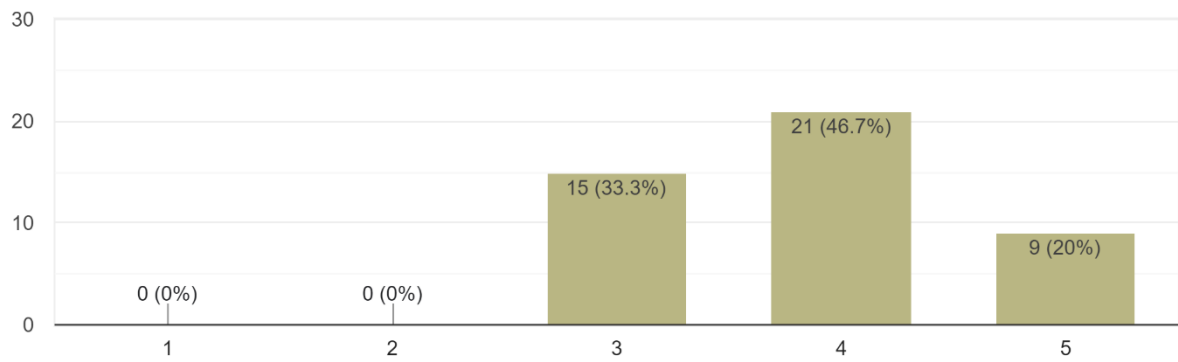
I perceive a sense of duty towards my country due to my military service.

45 responses



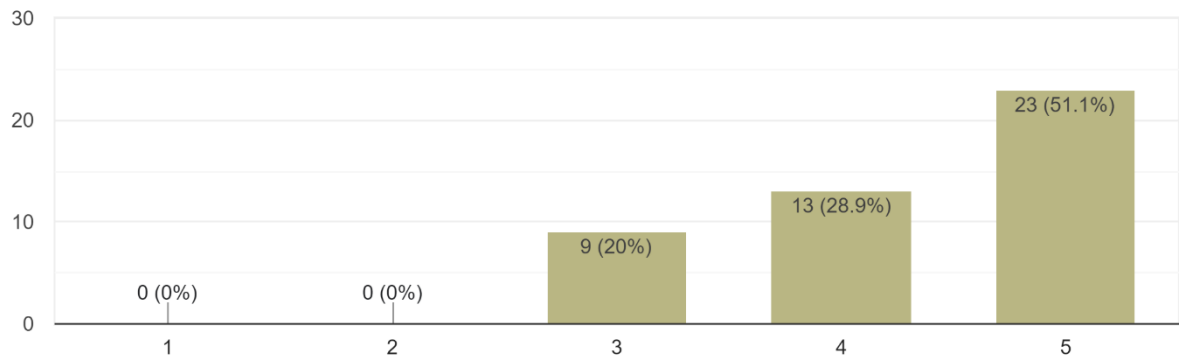
My military service has enhanced my leadership abilities.

45 responses



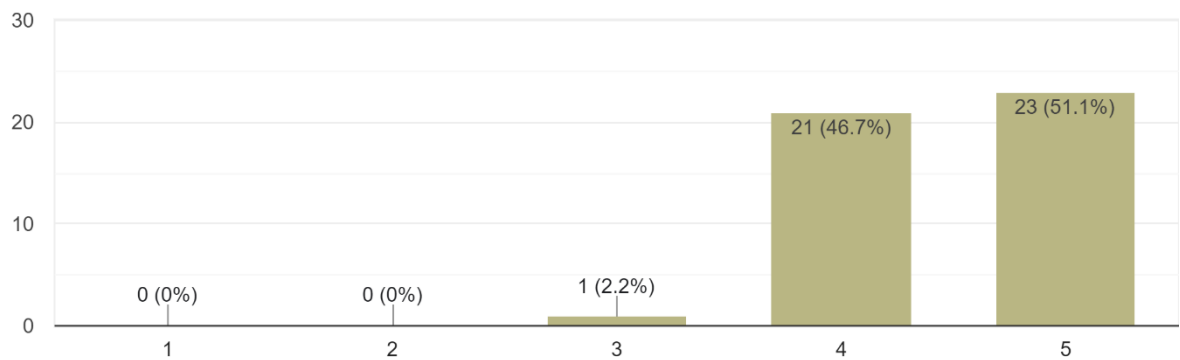
I feel a heightened sense of camaraderie and brotherhood/sisterhood as a result of my military service.

45 responses



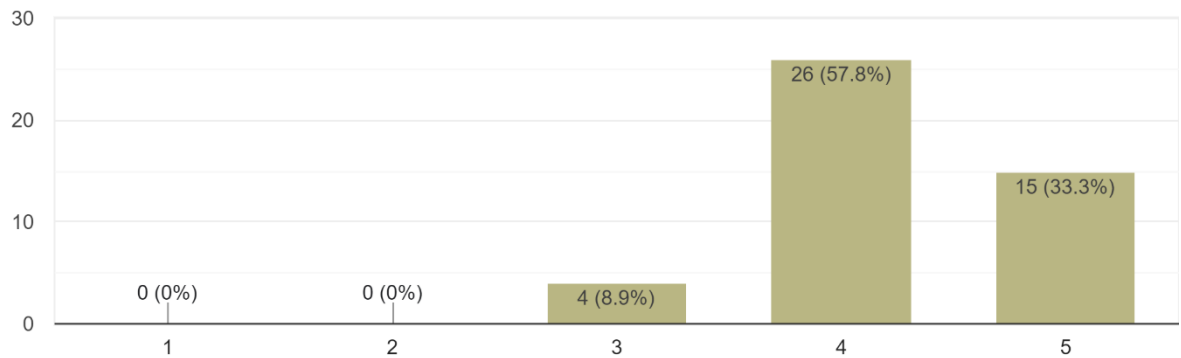
My military service has instilled in me a greater sense of discipline.

45 responses



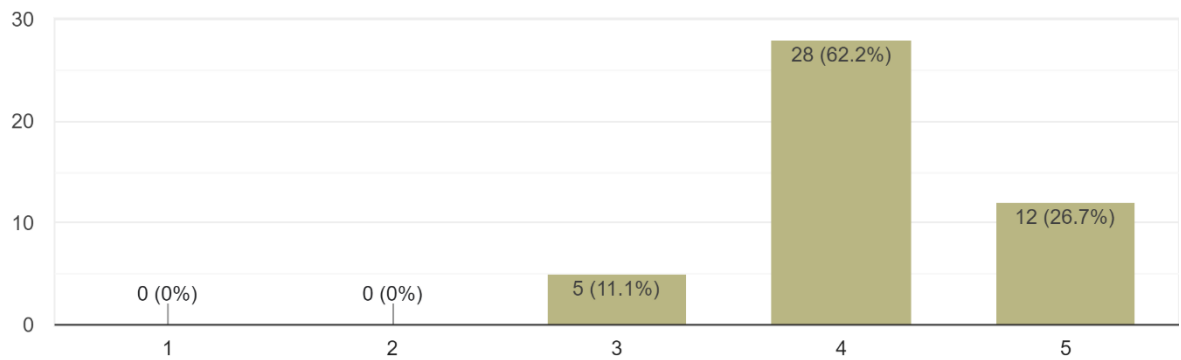
I believe my military service has shaped my resilience and ability to overcome challenges.

45 responses



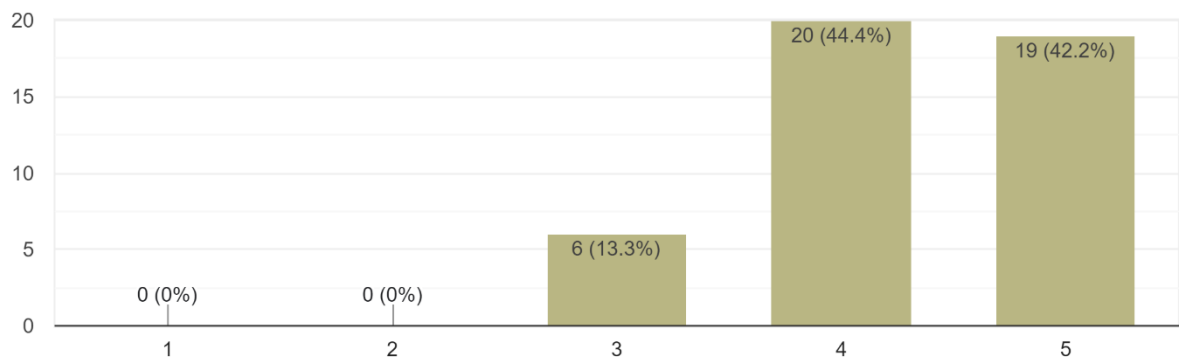
I perceive a greater level of self-confidence as a result of my military service.

45 responses



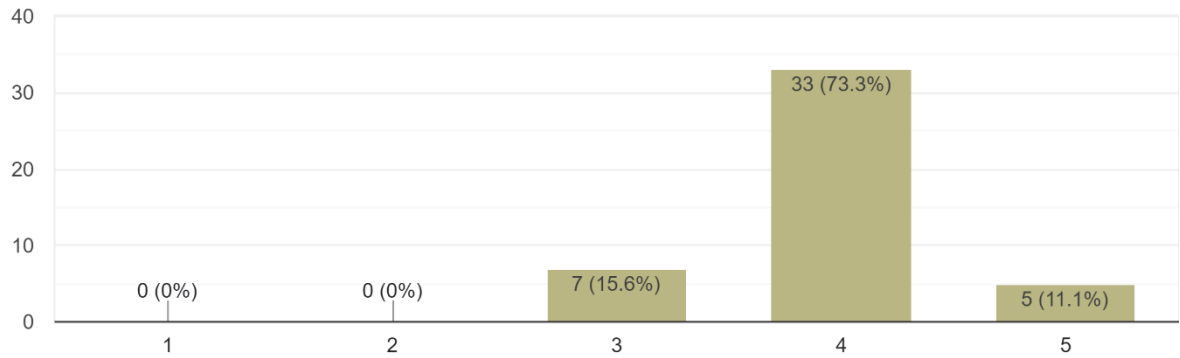
My military service has deepened my understanding of sacrifice and dedication.

45 responses



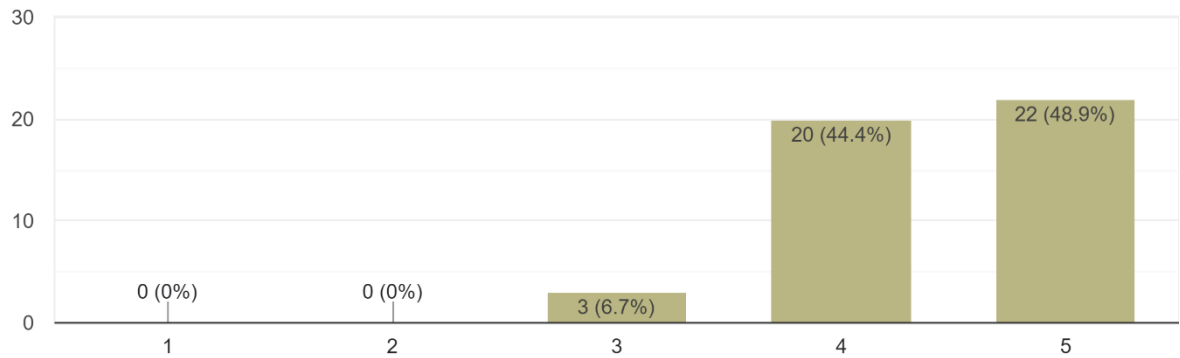
I feel a stronger connection to traditional notions of masculinity because of my military service.

45 responses



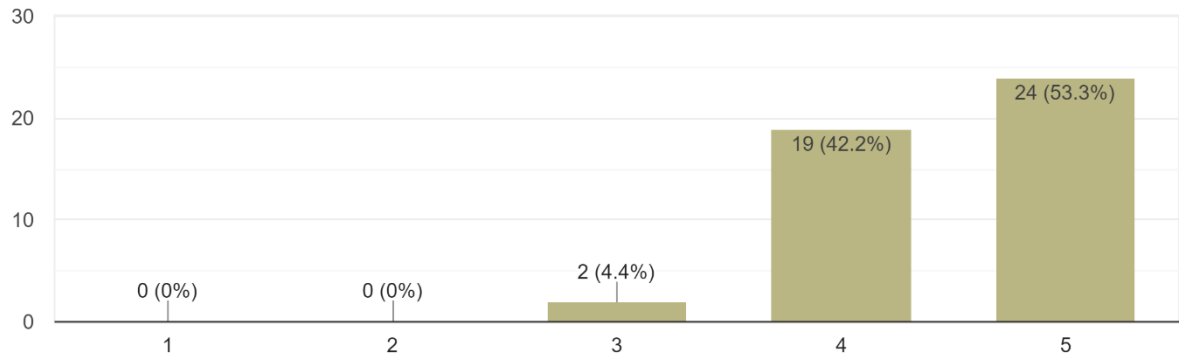
My military service has contributed to my skills in decision-making and problem-solving.

45 responses



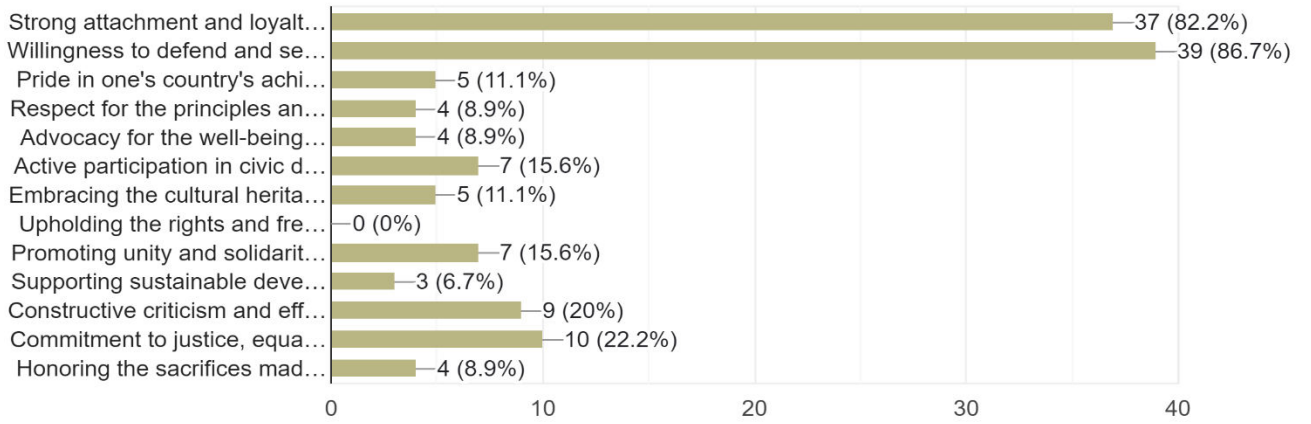
I believe my military service has positively impacted my sense of honor and integrity.

45 responses



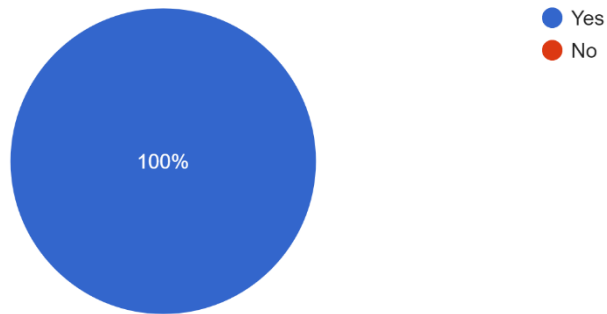
How do you define patriotism? Please select up to three options from the list below.

45 responses



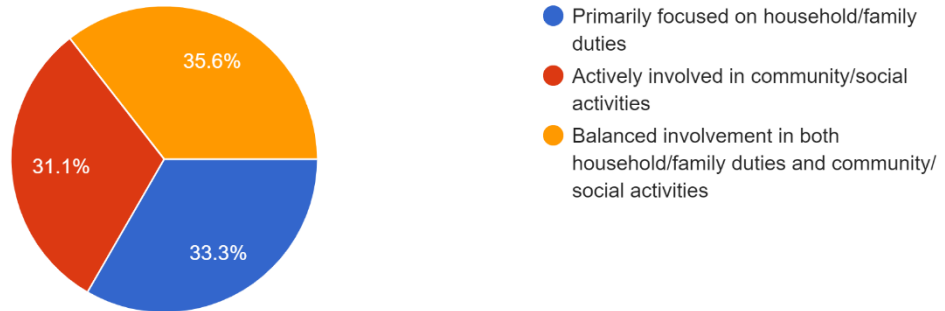
Do you believe your military service experience has influenced your understanding of patriotism?

45 responses



Before your military service, how did you perceive your role and responsibilities within your family and society?

45 responses



How do you perceive your role and responsibilities within your family and society after completing your military service?

45 responses

