



MILITARY RETIREMENT

Planning for Retirement

The military offers great retirement benefits, including the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) and a pension if you serve long enough. The exact benefit you'll receive from each of these programs depends on whether you're covered under the Legacy (also called the "High-3") or Blended Retirement System.

The Legacy "High-3" Retirement System

Key Features:

- For Service members who first entered active duty after September 8, 1980, but before January 1, 2018
- Typically requires 20 years of active-duty service to qualify for retirement pay (pension). Reserve members must complete 20 qualifying years and attain age 60 (or earlier based on qualifying active service).
- The TSP is available and is funded only by Service member contributions.

Calculating the Monthly Pension:

$$2.5\% \times \text{Years Served} \times \text{Retired Pay Base}$$

Examples:

- Enlisted: $2.5\% \times 20 \times \$4,900 = \$2,450$ per month
- Officer: $2.5\% \times 20 \times \$9,400 = \$4,700$ per month

**Reserve members divide accumulated retirement points by 360 for "Years Served."*

Blended Retirement System (BRS)

Key Features:

- For Service members who first entered active duty after January 1, 2018, or opted into BRS
- Typically requires 20 years of active-duty service to qualify for retirement pay (pension). Reserve members must complete 20 qualifying years and attain age 60 (or earlier based on qualifying active service).
- The TSP is available and is funded by Service member contributions plus automatic and potential matching contributions from your military branch.
- Offers Continuation Pay and a lump-sum option

Calculating the Monthly Pension:

$$2.0\% \times \text{Years Served} \times \text{Retired Pay Base}$$

Examples:

- Enlisted: $2.0\% \times 20 \times \$4,900 = \$1,960$ per month
- Officer: $2.0\% \times 20 \times \$9,400 = \$3,760$ per month

**Reserve members divide accumulated retirement points by 360 for "Years Served."*

Survivor Benefits

Once qualified, you will receive retirement pay for life. The amount is periodically adjusted to the cost-of-living index. Upon your death, your spouse or other eligible beneficiary(ies) may receive payments only if you arrange it through the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) before you retire.



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Four Unique Elements of BRS

1. Branch of Service Contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan

The TSP is a defined contribution plan, like a civilian 401(k). For BRS participants, it is funded with a combination of Service member contributions plus automatic and potential matching contributions from your military branch.

- **Automatic Contributions:** Your branch of service automatically contributes the equivalent of 1% of your basic pay to your TSP account each pay period beginning after 60 days of service. Automatic contributions vest (meaning the money is yours to take with you when you leave the military) after two years of service.
- **Matching Contributions:** After two years of service, your military branch will begin matching your contributions to the TSP as outlined in the chart below. Matching contributions vest immediately.

You put in:	Your service puts in:		Total contribution:
	Automatic (1%) Contribution	Service Matching Contribution	
0%	1%	0%	1%
1%	1%	1%	3%
2%	1%	2%	5%
3%	1%	3%	7%
4%	1%	3.5%	8.5%
5%	1%	4%	10%
More than 5%	1%	4%	Your contribution + 5%

2. Automatic TSP Enrollment

As of October 1, 2020, all BRS participants are automatically enrolled in the TSP at a 5% contribution level. Service members are permitted to reduce or increase this contribution amount. The maximum annual contribution, known as the IRS Elective Deferral Limit, is \$19,500 in 2020. Those deployed to a combat zone are permitted to contribute substantially more: up to \$57,000. An additional catch-up contribution up to \$6,500 is also permitted for those age 50 and older. Service member contributions are always vested immediately.

3. Continuation Pay

Continuation Pay is a one-time, mid-career payment in exchange for additional service. Depending on the needs of your branch of service, it can be 2.5 to 13 times your monthly basic pay for active duty or 0.5 to 6 times your monthly basic pay (as if on active duty) for Reserve members. This one-time payment is in addition to any other career field-specific incentives or retention bonuses.

4. Lump-Sum Option

The lump-sum option gives you choices at retirement. You can choose to receive a 25% or 50% discounted portion of your monthly pension benefit in exchange for a lump-sum payment at retirement. Your pension reverts to the entire amount at the Social Security age of full retirement, which for most is 67. You must notify your human resources servicing office no less than 90 days before retirement if you choose to take the lump-sum option.