

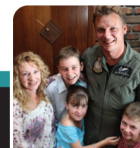


Australian Government
Department of Defence

A PICTURE OF AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE FAMILIES 2009

*Results from the first survey of Australian Defence Force Families
General Report*

DIRECTORATE OF STRATEGIC PERSONNEL POLICY RESEARCH
DSPPR REPORT 31/2009
SEPTEMBER 2009



A PICTURE OF AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE FAMILIES 2009

Results from the first survey of Australian Defence Force Families

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The findings and views expressed in this report are the results of the author's research and are not to be taken as the official opinion of the Department of Defence.

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FOREWORD

The ADF Families Survey represents the first time Defence has asked ADF members and their spouses and partners about their experiences and opinions via a survey. This has provided you, as ADF members, spouses and partners, an unprecedented opportunity to influence Defence policy, and enables Defence to consider your views in its policy evaluation and development processes.

What you have told us has provided valuable insight into how you feel about how Service conditions affect your lives, how you cope with the challenges of the ADF way of life, how the work and family domains of ADF members interact, and the relationship between families and ADF capability. We now have a better understanding of your views about deployment lengths, and how important reliable communication with Defence during all stages of deployment is for family preparation and adjustment. We are particularly encouraged to note that so many of the respondents appear to be highly resilient, resourceful and tolerant people, and that this had been fostered via their life experiences and their willingness to access the support available to them, whether from Defence or the general community.

The results have reinforced to us how important families are to Service commitment, retention and capability. They also highlight that communication is a significant issue. Specifically, while Defence has an extensive range of services, policies and conditions of services which support the needs of families, it is clear from your responses that we need to do more to promote awareness of these services and encourage greater access to them. We recognise how important communication is for to your sense of trust for, and confidence in Defence, and the subsequent impact on retention in the ADF.

The survey findings have reinforced to the need for us all to work together more closely to *prepare* ADF families for the *known* challenges of ADF life, and *educate* them on dealing with the *unknown* challenges arising from the unpredictability and ambiguity of ADF life. We recognise that the responsibility for this is a shared one between ADF members, Defence, ADF commanders and family members themselves.

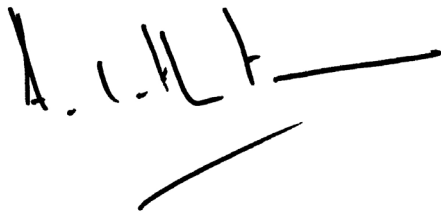
Specifically, the feedback that ADF family members have given us is now being used to inform the development of the following strategies and initiatives:

- Under the ‘New Generation Navy’ programme, the survey findings from Navy members and their spouses are informing the development of options for enhanced career planning and principles-based people management, increased location stability, family-friendly policies, greater access to flexible working arrangements and ‘individual choice’ focused employment.
- The Army *Work-Life Balance Strategy* which creates supportive, healthy work environments for members and assists them to maintain a balance between their paid work commitment and their personal, community and cultural responsibilities, interests and obligations.
- Army support programs aimed at improving the resilience of members and their families.
- Under the Air Force Personnel Strategy, the development of more flexible career management practices, flexible employment arrangements and improved information and support for members and families about their maternity and parental leave entitlements and transition back into work.

- The current reviews of the Defence Community Organisations' (DCO's) absence from home support and deployment support programs.
- DCO's *Self Reliance Strategy*. This features a Community Capacity Building Initiative that aims to help ADF families realise the potential that they have to develop social networks and systems of community support in their posted locations. Through a host of existing family education programs, the initiative also aims to empower families to make the necessary decisions and actions that enable them to assert control over their own wellbeing, quality of life and preparedness.
- The short and long term goals of the ADF Housing and Accommodation Strategy 2009-2029, one of which is the development and trial of more flexible options for ADF housing assistance.

I thank everyone who took the time to complete this inaugural survey. Your time, effort and thoughtful contributions have been greatly appreciated.

I commend this report to all members of the ADF, their families, and the public, and encourage the utilisation of the findings to guide decisions affecting the ADF members and their families.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Houston', with a horizontal line extending to the right and a diagonal line below it.

Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston AC, AFC
Chief of the Defence Force

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INTRODUCTION

Background

To date, Defence has not conducted research in which information is directly sought from the families of ADF members. Instead, much of the research focus on military families within Australia has been clinical studies on how the health and functioning of veterans impacts on their families. There is, however, increasing recognition of the role that families are likely to play in the recruitment, commitment, effectiveness and turnover of ADF members. This has stimulated interest in assessing the relationship between conditions of service, family factors and outcomes such as retention and military capability.

While data from the Defence Census and other sources provides information on the circumstances of ADF spouses and partners, their attitudes and experiences have been inferred from survey data collected from ADF personnel. In contrast to the ADF, other nations such as Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States have been more active in collecting information from the families of their military personnel, which includes on-going attitude surveys targeting military family members.

The objectives of the ADF Families Survey are:

- To understand the relationship between the demands of military service, family experiences and attitudes, and retention as an outcome,
- To inform the evaluation and development of family and member support programs to enhance quality of life, service commitment and retention, and
- To understand organisational and family factors which promote ADF family adaptation.

Survey population

The target population for the survey consisted of the following categories:

- Spouses and ADF recognised interdependent partners of permanent full-time ADF members. Spouses and partners could be ADF Reserve members and/or Defence APS employees.
- Permanent full-time ADF members who were single parents.
- Both members of dual ADF couples (where both were permanent full-time ADF members).

In terms of member categorisation, this survey population is captured by all those permanent ADF members who are categorised as:

- Member with dependants (MWD), or
- Member with dependants (Unaccompanied) (MWD(U)).

Administration of the survey

In early November 2008, the survey was mailed out to the home addresses of approximately 28700 ADF members who were classified as MWD or MWD(U) (as described in 'Survey Population' above). A return reply paid envelope was provided for respondents to return their survey. Respondents were asked to return the survey by 23 January 2009.

Information about how to complete the survey on-line was also provided in the survey instructions and other pre-survey communications.

Response Rate

Out of the approximately 28700 surveys mailed out, a total of 5826 surveys were returned or completed on-line, representing a response rate of 20.6%. Of the 5826 surveys, 698, or 12.0% were completed on-line. Following data cleaning, 77 cases were removed due to large amounts of missing and/or invalid responses, leaving a total sample size of 5749 cases.

Representativeness of the respondents

Analysis of the representativeness of the survey respondents to all ADF spouses, partners and single parent members was conducted by comparing the survey data to other data sources. This analysis indicated that:

- The survey data appears to under-represent the following groups:
 - Dual-ADF couples
 - Enlisted personnel/spouses/partners of enlisted personnel
 - People with a secondary school education
 - Members who are classified as MWD(U) and their spouses/partners
 - Members who have served less than five years of service and their spouses/partners

- The survey data appears to over-represent the following groups:
 - Spouses/partners of ADF members who were not ADF members themselves
 - Officers/spouses/partners of officers
 - People with a university education
 - Members who had served more than five years of service and their spouses/partners. Those with 20 years of service or more were particularly over-represented.

Caveats

In light of the observations described above with regard to representativeness, readers of this report are advised to exercise caution when making inferences or generalisations about all ADF families based on the collected data. Readers should also be aware that the survey data was not collected from a researcher controlled random (and/or stratified) sample, but from a respondent controlled self-selecting sample. However, the results described in this report are derived from all valid survey responses, and thus represent those who wished to influence Defence policy in a constructive way. Readers of this report are therefore encouraged to recognise the integrity of this data in itself, and the utility of understanding the views and experiences of those who, by virtue of their response, wanted to shape Defence policy.

Some of the data analysis has included the use of a Chi-square (χ^2) statistic. This statistic enables identification of statistically significant associations between two different variables; that is, the probability that the association is not occurring by chance.

For example, a statistically significant association between number of removals and satisfaction with removals means that the association is unlikely to be occurring by chance. Chi-square statistics enable identification of the direction and magnitude of the association, so that we can say that high numbers of removals is associated with low satisfaction with removals. However, it *does not* mean that high numbers of removals *causes* low satisfaction with removals. Caution about inferring causal relationships from Chi-square statistics will be highlighted again throughout this report.

SECTION 1: RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were a spouse or partner of a permanent ADF member, whether they were part of a dual ADF couple, or whether they were a single parent ADF member. Their responses are displayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Responses to Question 1 Section A: Respondent type.

	Number	Percent
I am a spouse (wife or husband) of a permanent ADF member	4255	74.0%
I am an ADF recognised interdependent partner of a permanent ADF member	603	10.5%
My spouse and I are both permanent full-time ADF members	508	8.8%
My ADF recognised interdependent partner and I are both permanent ADF members	131	2.3%
I am a permanent ADF member and a single parent (either full or shared custody)	240	4.2%
Either a spouse or interdependent partner of an ADF member (but not an ADF member themselves) ¹	12	0.2%
Total	5749	100.0%

1. These 12 respondents did not answer Question 1 of Section A, but, from their responses to other items, it could be ascertained that they were either a spouse or an interdependent partner of an ADF member, but were not ADF members themselves.

Table 1 above shows that most (84.7%) of the respondents were either a spouse or a partner of a permanent ADF member. This group of respondents were not permanent ADF members themselves, but a small proportion (4.3%) reported that they were currently serving as an ADF Reserve member. A further 5.2% reported that they were Defence APS employees, while 3.6% reported that they were a Defence contractor. Dual ADF couples (from marriages and interdependent partnerships) constituted 11.1% of the total sample.

All respondents other than single parent permanent ADF members were asked to indicate the Service of their spouse or partner. Their responses are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2 Responses to Question 2 Section A: Service of the respondent's spouse or partner.

	Number	Percent
Navy	1056	19.4%
Army	2680	49.4%
Air Force	1694	31.2%
Total	5430	100.0%

Note: This data excludes the 240 single parent permanent ADF members who were instructed to skip this question. 79 of the spouse/partner respondents did not answer this question

Table 2 shows that, of those who answered this item, the majority (49.4%) of respondents' spouses and partners were serving in the Army, while almost one-third (31.2%) were serving in the Air Force.

All respondents were asked to indicate their employment status and their responses are displayed in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Responses to Question 3 Section A: Respondent employment status.

	Number	Percent
Full-time employment	2770	48.5%
Part-time employment (including ADF members on part-time leave without pay)	1005	17.6%
Casual employment	548	9.6%
Retired	42	0.7%
Not currently employed	1344	23.5%
Total	5709	100.0%

Note: 40 respondents did not answer this question

Table 3 shows that almost half (48.5%) of the respondents reported that they were in full-time employment. Of those respondents who were not permanent ADF members themselves, 40.2% reported being employed full-time, while 31.2% reported being employed on a part-time or casual basis. The remainder (28.7%) reported that they were either unemployed or retired. While all of the single parent ADF members reported that they were in full-time employment, 7.5% of the dual ADF couple respondents reported that they were working part-time.

The respondents who were ADF members themselves (dual ADF couples and single parents) were asked to indicate their Service, while those who were not ADF members themselves were asked to indicate if they were in the ADF Reserves, and/or employed in Defence in any other way. Their responses are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4 Responses to Question 4 Section A: Respondent’s Defence or ADF employment by respondent type.

	Spouse/partner	Dual ADF couple	Single parent
Perm Navy		21.8% (139)	23.3% (56)
Perm Army		41.6% (266)	39.6% (95)
Perm RAAF		33.8% (216)	29.6% (71)
ADF Reserves	6.0% (207)	1.7% (11)	6.3% (15)
APS/Defence contractor	12.4% (428)		
No Defence Employment	82.8% (2853)		
No response	0.7% (25)	1.1% (7)	1.2% (3)
Total employed respondents	3445	639	240

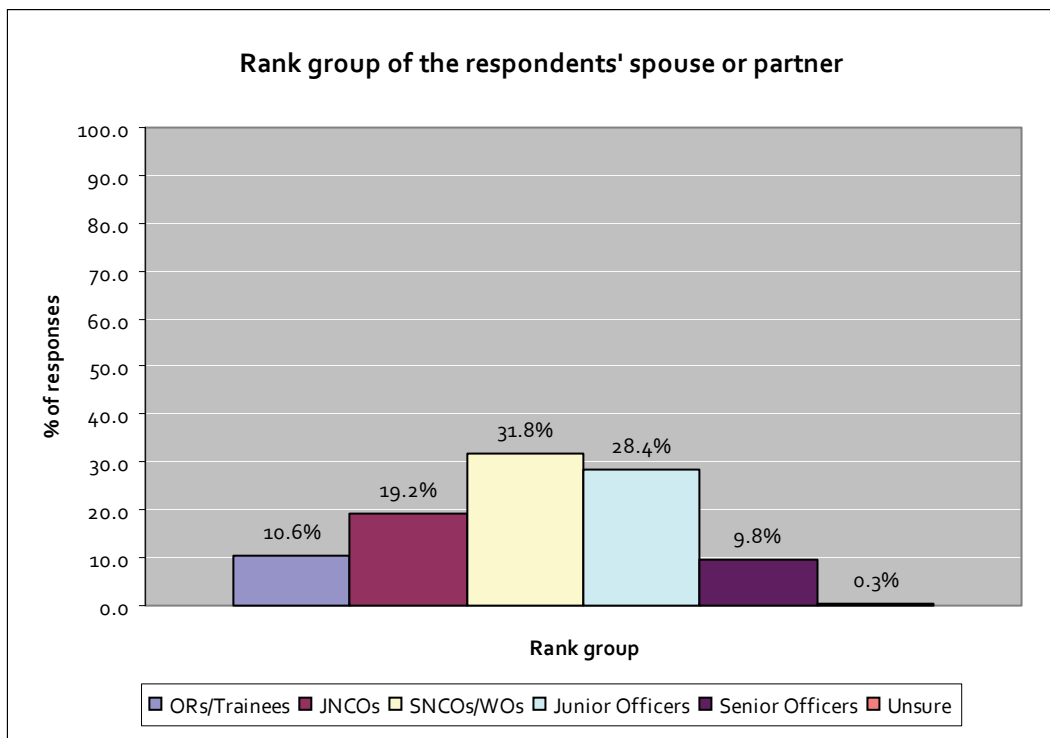
Note: This data excludes the 1386 respondents who were not employed or retired, and who were asked to skip this question. The percentages in the spouse/partner column do not equal 100% because of the spouses and partners, 29 indicated two types of Defence employment. 25 of the spouse/partner respondents, 3 of the single parent respondents, and 7 of the dual ADF couples did not answer this question.

Table 4 shows that most (82.8%) of the employed spouses and partners (non-permanent ADF only) were not employed in Defence, the ADF or Defence affiliated organisations. A small proportion (6.0%) of the employed spouses and partners (non-permanent ADF only) reported that they were serving in the ADF Reserve Forces. Of the dual ADF couples, 1.7% reported being a Reservist while 6.3% of the single parent ADF members also reported being a Reservist. For these respondents, it is assumed that they were on Continuous Full-Time Service (CFTS), and thus part of the target population of permanent members, at the time of the survey administration.

As noted below Table 4, 29 of the spouses and partners (non permanent ADF only) indicated one of the following three combinations of two responses: Defence APS employee and ADF Reservist, ADF Reservist and Defence Contractor, or Defence APS employee and Defence Contractor.

Respondents were asked to indicate the rank of their spouse/partner, and their own rank if applicable. Their responses are displayed in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 Responses to Question 5 Section A: Rank group¹ of the respondents' spouse or partner.

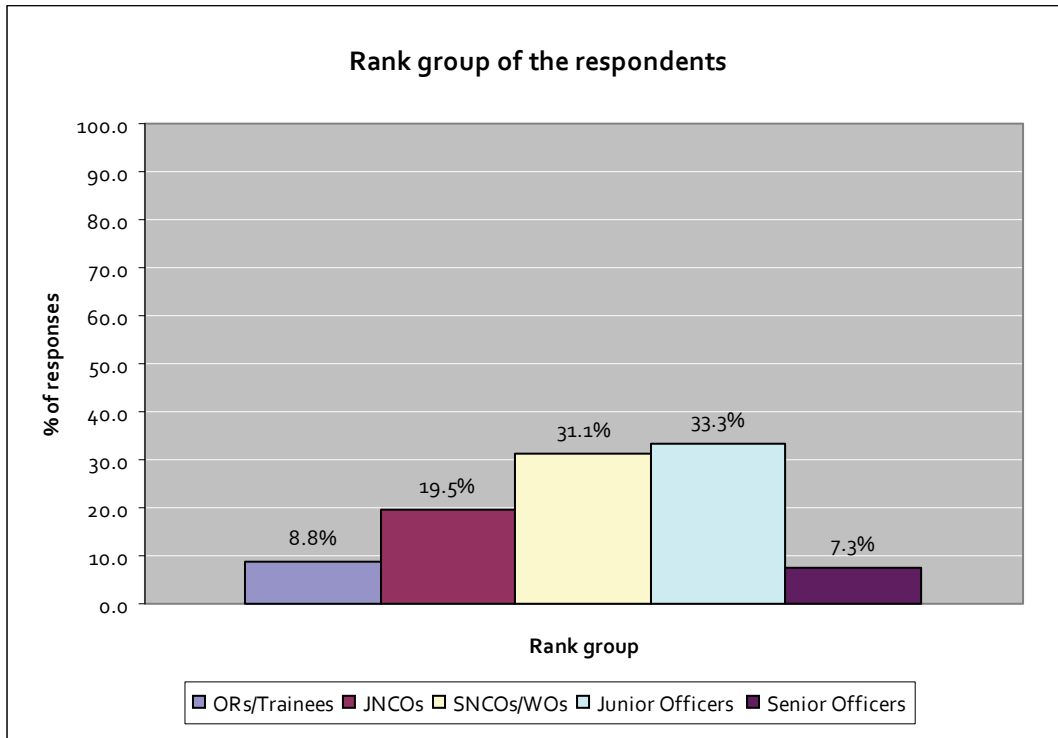


Note: This data excludes the 240 respondents who were single parent permanent ADF members. 78 respondents did not answer this question.

Figure 1 shows that for the respondents with a spouse or partner in the permanent ADF, one-half (51.0%; 2770) reported that they were married to/partnered with a Junior Non-Commissioned Officer, a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer or a Warrant Officer. A further 38.2% (2074) of these respondents reported that they were married to a Commissioned Officer.

1. Rank groups were based on the following groupings: Recruits/Trainees/Apprentices and Private (equivalent) ranks = ORs/Trainees; Lance Corporals/Corporal (equivalent) ranks = Junior Non-Commissioned Officers; Sergeant, Staff Sergeant, Warrant Officer Class II/Class I (equivalent) ranks = Senior Non-Commissioned Officers; Staff Cadet, Second Lieutenant, Lieutenant, Captain and Major (equivalent) ranks = Junior Officers; Lieutenant-Colonel (equivalent) & above = Senior Officers.

Figure 2 Responses to Question 5 Section A: Rank group of the respondents.



Note: This data excludes the 4870 respondents (spouses and partners) who were not in the permanent ADF. 17 respondents did not answer this question

Figure 2 shows that for the respondents who are serving in the permanent ADF, one-half (50.6%; 436) reported that they were a Junior Non-Commissioned Officer, a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer or a Warrant Officer. A further 40.6% (350) of these respondents reported that they were a Commissioned Officer.

Respondents were asked to indicate the postcode of the workplace or unit of their spouse/partner (if applicable) and their own workplace postcode (if applicable). Their responses are displayed in Tables 5 and 6, by DCO region, and in Figures 3 and 4, by state/territory.

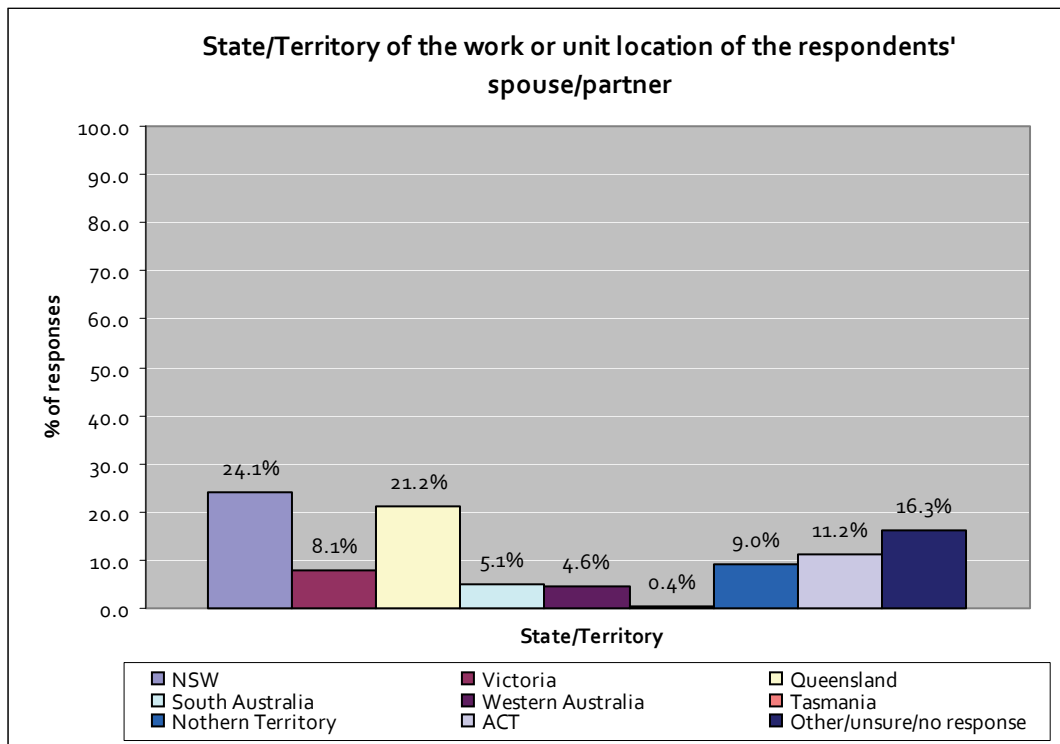
Table 5 Responses to Question 6 Section A: Region of the workplace or unit of the respondent's spouse or partner.

	Number	Percent
Darwin	422	7.7%
Tindal	76	1.4%
Perth	254	4.6%
Sydney	384	7.0%
Richmond	182	3.3%
Liverpool	180	3.3%
Hunter	275	5.0%
Darling Downs	95	1.7%
Brisbane	382	6.9%
Amberley	193	3.5%
Nowra	118	2.1%
ACT	617	11.2%
Wagga	104	1.9%
Albury	84	1.5%
Adelaide	279	5.1%
Melbourne	71	1.3%
Williams	98	1.8%
Macleod	64	1.2%
Frankston	74	1.3%
Puckapunyal	91	1.7%
Sale	47	0.9%
Townsville	417	7.6%
Cairns	79	1.4%
Tasmania	22	0.4%
Other/unsure/no response	901	16.3%
Total	5509	100.0%

Note: This data excludes the 240 respondents who were single parent permanent ADF members.

Table 5 shows that 11.2% of respondents' spouses and partners were based in the Canberra region. It is apparent that a high proportion of the respondents did not know the postcode of their spouse or partner's workplace or unit. Overall, 16.3% of the respondents did not report a valid postcode, reported that they were unsure of it, or did not provide any response to this item. From the postcodes reported, it could not be ascertained how many, or if any of the respondents' spouses or partners were based at overseas locations.

Figure 3 Responses to Question 6 Section A: State/territory of the workplace or unit of the respondents' spouse or partner.



Note: This data excludes the 240 respondents who were single parent permanent ADF members.

Figure 3 shows that almost one-quarter (24.1%) of the respondents (excluding single parent ADF members) had spouses or partners working in New South Wales, while a further 21.2% were working in Queensland, and 11.2% were working in the ACT.

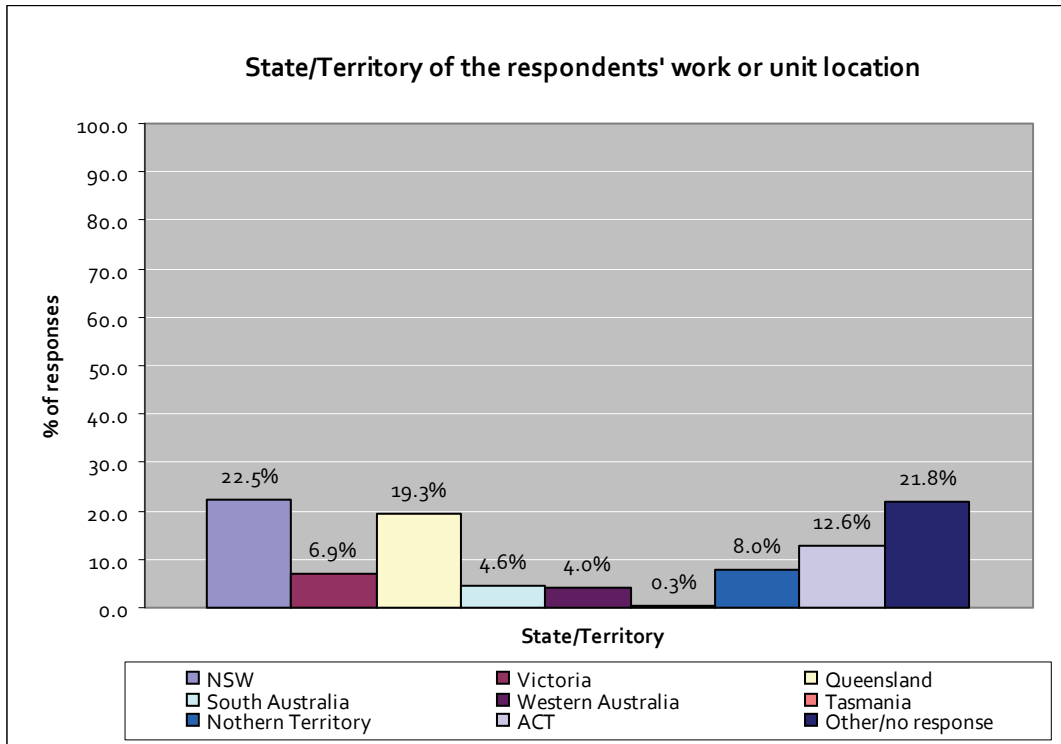
Table 6 Responses to Question 6 Section A: Region of respondents' workplace or unit.

	Number	Percent
Darwin	288	6.7%
Tindal	57	1.3%
Perth	175	4.0%
Sydney	343	7.9%
Richmond	144	3.3%
Liverpool	89	2.1%
Hunter	200	4.6%
Darling Downs	70	1.6%
Brisbane	300	6.9%
Amberley	119	2.8%
Nowra	89	2.1%
ACT	545	12.6%
Wagga	63	1.5%
Albury	44	1.0%
Adelaide	197	4.6%
Melbourne	63	1.5%
Williams	53	1.2%
Macleod	53	1.2%
Frankston	55	1.3%
Puckapunyal	43	1.0%
Sale	32	0.7%
Townsville	296	6.8%
Cairns	50	1.2%
Tasmania	12	0.3%
Other/no response	943	21.8%
Total	4323	100.0%

Note: This data excludes the 1386 respondents who reported that they were not employed, and the 40 respondents who did not indicate their employment status in Question 3 Section A.

Table 6 shows that a strong response to the survey was received from respondents who work in the Canberra region (12.6% of all respondents). Of the 21.8% (943) of respondents who did not report a postcode or valid postcode, 325 reported that this item was 'not applicable' to them. One possible reason for responding 'not applicable' is that some respondents may have thought that they only needed to report this if they were serving in the ADF. Alternatively, this might reflect that some respondents do not have a fixed location from where they normally work. From the postcodes reported, it could not be ascertained how many, or if any of the respondents were based at overseas locations.

Figure 4 Responses to Question 6 Section A: State/territory of the respondents' workplace or unit.

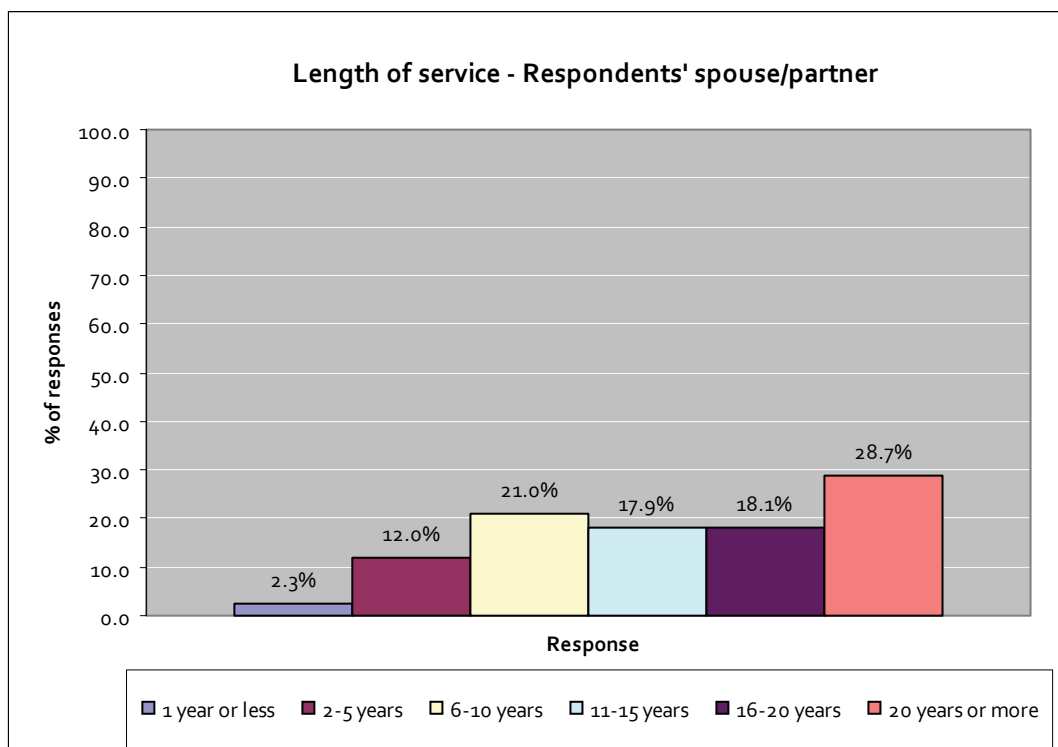


Note: This data excludes the 1386 respondents who reported that they were not employed, and the 40 respondents who did not indicate their employment status in Question 3 Section A

Figure 4 shows that almost one-quarter (22.5%) of the respondents who were employed worked in New South Wales, while a further 19.3% were working in Queensland, and 12.6% were working in the ACT.

Married/partnered respondents were asked to indicate their spouse/partner's length of service, and respondents who were ADF members themselves were also asked to indicate their length of service. Their responses are displayed in Figures 5 and 6.

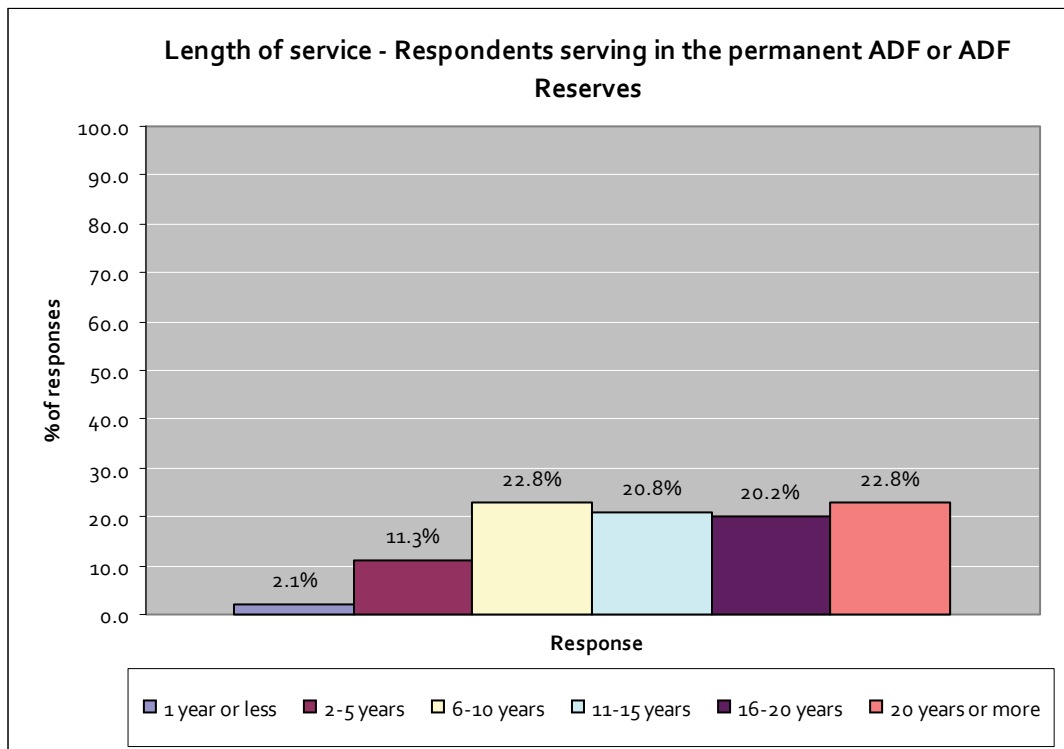
Figure 5 Responses to Question 7 Section A: Length of service of the respondents' spouse or partner.



Note: This data excludes the 240 respondents who were single parent permanent ADF members. 255 respondents did not answer this question.

Figure 5 above shows that almost half (46.8%) of married/partnered respondents had spouses and partners with 16 years of service or more. As explained in the Introduction section, the distribution of responses overall indicates that spouses and partners of long-term serving personnel were much more likely to respond to the survey than those married to/partnered with short periods of service. Of the 255 respondents who did not provide an answer to this question, 185 indicated that they did not know how long their spouse or partner had served.

Figure 6 Responses to Question 7 Section A: Length of service of the respondents who are serving in the permanent ADF or in the ADF Reserves.

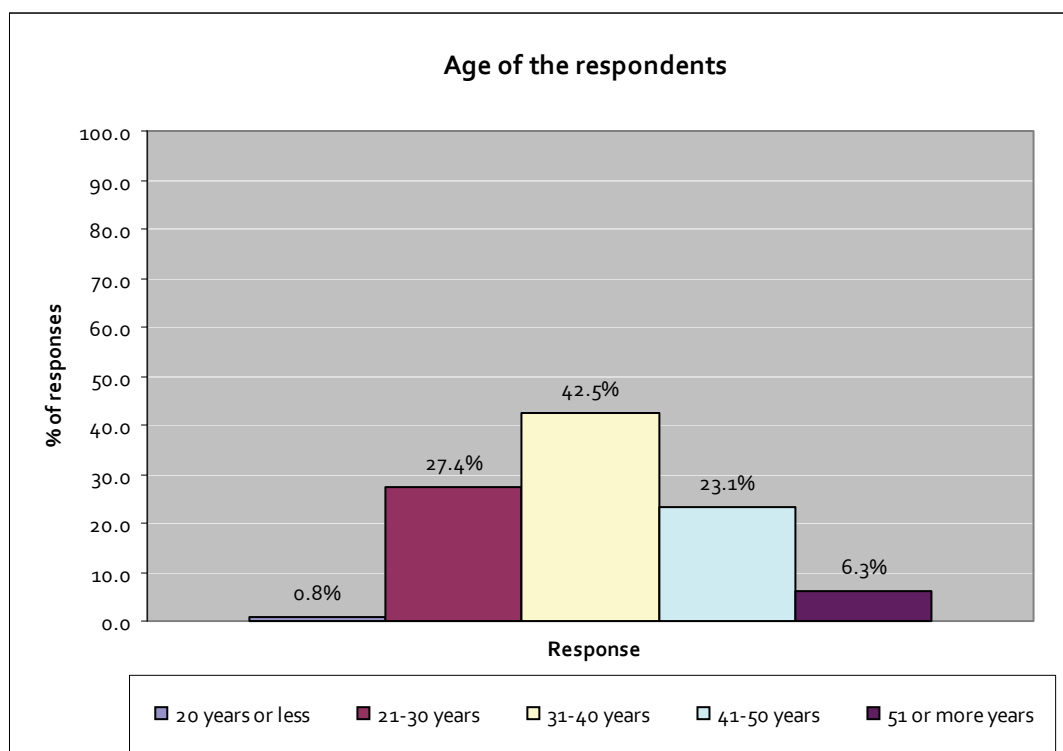


Note: This data includes the 1076 respondents who indicated that they were serving either in the permanent ADF or in the ADF Reserves. Of these 1076 respondents, 29 did not provide a response to this item.

Figure 6 above shows that almost half (43.0%) of the respondents who were serving in the ADF (either as a permanent member or reservist) had served for 16 years or more. The distribution of the data displayed above highlights the over-representation of those with long periods of service (as described in the Introduction section of this report).

Respondents were asked to indicate their age. Their responses (by age group) are displayed in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7 Responses to Question 8 Section A: Age of the respondents.



Note: 63 respondents did not respond to this item.

Figure 7 above shows a relatively normal distribution for age across the sample. The mean age of the sample was 36.3 years. The majority (42.5%) of the respondents were aged between 31 and 40 years at the time of the survey, while over one-quarter (27.4%) were aged between 21 and 30 years. The age distribution appears to be consistent with the length of service data displayed in Figures 5 and 6.

Respondents were asked to indicate their gender. Their responses are displayed in Table 7 below.

Table 7 Responses to Question 9 Section A: Gender of the respondents by respondent type

	Male	Female	Total
Spouse/partner	4.7% (226)	95.3% (4,609)	100.0% (4,835)
Dual ADF Couple	34.6% (220)	65.4% (415)	100.0% (635)
Single parents	64.9% (155)	35.1% (84)	100.0% (239)
Total	10.5% (601)	89.5% (5108)	100.0% (5709)

Note: 40 respondents did not answer this question.

Table 7 shows that overall, 89.5% of the respondents were female, while 10.5% were male. Of the spouse/partner respondents, 95.3% were female, in comparison to the dual ADF couples, 65.4% of whom were female. Almost two-thirds (64.9%) of the single parent ADF members were male.

Respondents were asked to indicate the postcode of their usual home residence. Their responses are displayed in Table 8 (by DCO region) and in Figure 8 (by state/territory).

Table 8 Responses to Question 10 Section A: Region of respondents' usual home residence.

	Number	Percent
Darwin	462	8.0%
Tindal	80	1.4%
Perth	331	5.8%
Sydney	493	8.6%
Richmond	258	4.5%
Liverpool	173	3.0%
Hunter	371	6.5%
Darling Downs	117	2.0%
Brisbane	550	9.6%
Amberley	230	4.0%
Nowra	133	2.3%
ACT	766	13.3%
Wagga	102	1.8%
Albury	96	1.7%
Adelaide	366	6.4%
Melbourne	49	0.9%
Williams	112	1.9%
Macleod	149	2.6%
Frankston	93	1.6%
Puckapunyal	91	1.6%
Sale	50	0.9%
Townsville	481	8.4%
Cairns	77	1.3%
Tasmania	31	0.5%
Other/no response	88	1.5%
Total	5,749	100.0%

The data displayed in Table 8 is mostly consistent with the data for workplace or unit location. Postcode data was subjected to a cross-checking process where workplace and home postcodes were compared to data for MWD(U) status, and the Australia Post postcode database. Nevertheless, postcodes reported by the respondents could not be validated beyond this process. From the postcodes reported, it could not be ascertained how many, or if any of the respondents were based at overseas locations.

Figure 8 Responses to Question 10 Section A: State/territory of the respondents' usual home residence.

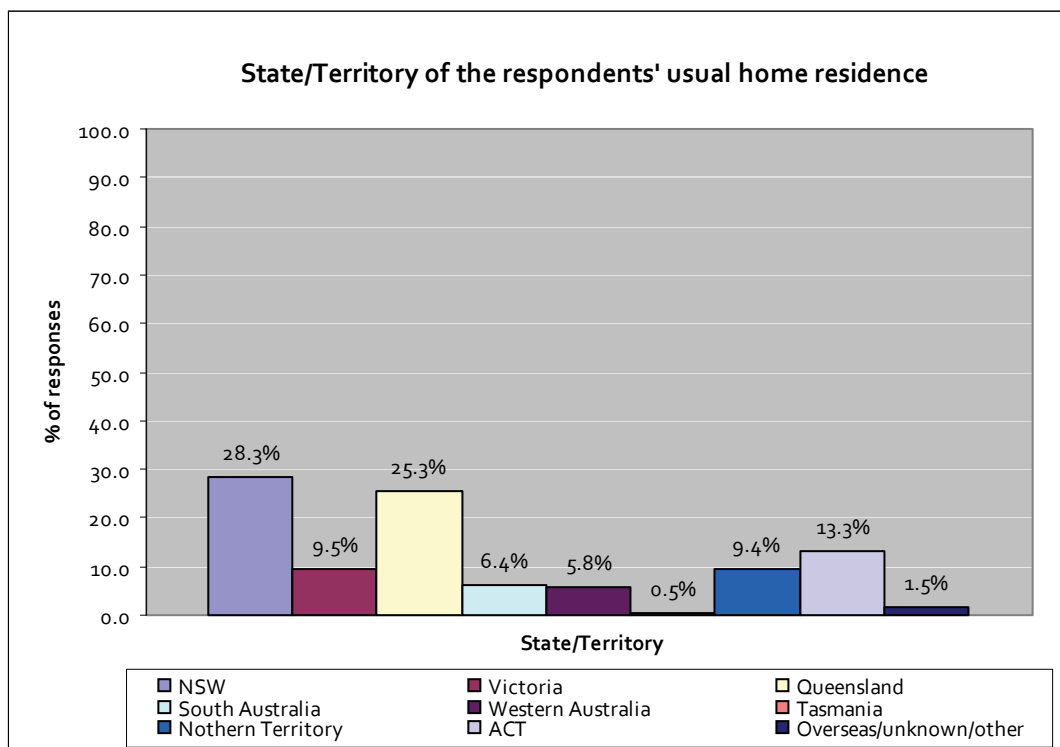
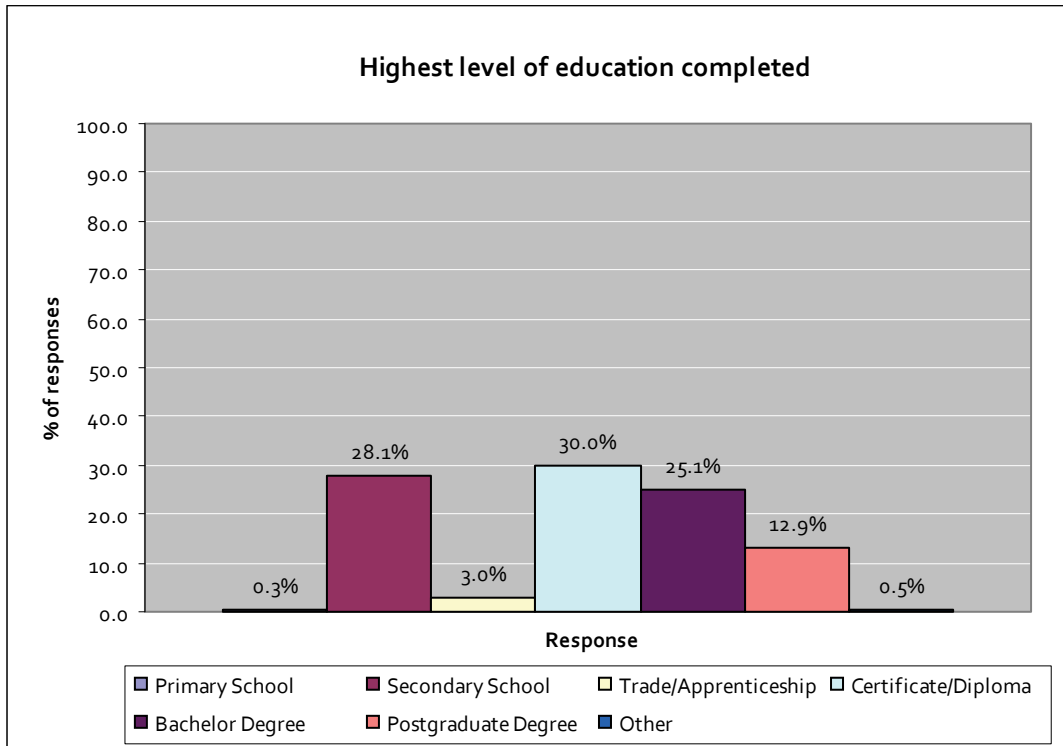


Figure 8 shows that over one-quarter (28.3%) of the respondents were living in NSW and that 25.3% were living in Queensland.

Respondents were asked to indicate the highest level of education that they had completed. Their responses are displayed in Figure 9.

Figure 9 Responses to Question 12 Section A: Highest level of education completed.



Note: 421 respondents did not answer this question.

Figure 9 shows that for one-third (30.0%) of respondents, their highest level of education was a Certificate or Diploma. One-quarter (25.1%) of respondents had a Bachelor's degree, while 28.1% of the respondents completed high school. Table 9 displays education level disaggregated by respondent status.

Table 9 Responses to Question 12 Section A: Highest level of education completed by respondent type.

	Primary School	Secondary School	Trade/Certificate/Diploma	Bachelor/PG Degree	Other	Total
Spouse/partner	0.4% (17)	27.4% (1244)	33.2% (1508)	38.4% (1742)	0.6% (25)	100.0% (4536)
Dual ADF couple	0.0% (0)	32.0% (186)	28.5% (166)	39.2% (228)	0.3% (2)	100.0% (582)
Single parents	0.5% (1)	31.0% (65)	41.0% (86)	27.1% (57)	0.5% (1)	100.0% (210)
Total	0.3% (18)	28.1% (1495)	33.0% (1760)	38.0% (2027)	0.5% (28)	100.0% (5328)

Note: 421 respondents did not respond to this item. Response categories were aggregated by combining data for Trade/Apprenticeship and Certificate/Diploma, and data for Bachelor Degree and Postgraduate Degree.

Table 9 shows some differences in education level across respondent types between single parent permanent ADF respondents and other respondents. While 41.0% of single parents had a Trade or certificate/diploma level education, a lower proportion (between 28.5% and 33.2%) of the other respondents reported this as their highest education level. Similarly, while 27.1% of single parent respondents reported a Bachelor or post graduate degree as their highest level of education, between 38.4% and 39.2% of other respondents reported having the same education level.

SECTION 2: LIVING ARRANGEMENTS, DEPENDANTS AND OTHER CHARACTERISTICS

Respondents were asked to indicate their current accommodation arrangements and their responses are displayed in Table 10 below.

Table 10 Responses to Question 11 Section A: Accommodation arrangements of the respondents.

	Number	Percent
In a Barracks/mess	14	0.2%
In a Service residence on a base/barracks	350	6.2%
In a Service residence off base	2816	49.5%
In privately rented accommodation (with Rent Allowance)	625	11.0%
In a privately rented accommodation (without Rent Allowance)	56	1.0%
In a home that you are buying/paying off	1568	27.6%
In a home that you own/is fully paid off	224	3.9%
Rent free	8	0.1%
Other	24	0.4%
Total	5685	100.0%

Note: 64 respondents did not answer this question.

As displayed in Table 10, half (49.5%) of the respondents reported that they were living in a Service residence outside of a base/barracks environment. More than one-quarter (27.6%) of the respondents reported that they were living in a home that they were paying off.

Overall, 11.8% (680) of all survey respondents reported that either their spouse or partner, or they, were classified as MWD(U).¹ A very small proportion of the married/partnered respondents (1.6%) reported that they were unsure whether their spouse or partner was classified MWD(U). Table 11 displays the frequency and proportion of respondents within each respondent type who reported that their spouse or partner, or they, were classified as MWD(U). It shows that almost one-third (29.2%) of all the single parent permanent ADF respondents reported that they had this classification.

1. Responses to Question 13 of Section A were 'cleaned' prior to this analysis, to include only a 'Yes' response to 'Your spouse/partner' OR a 'Yes' response to 'You', but not both.

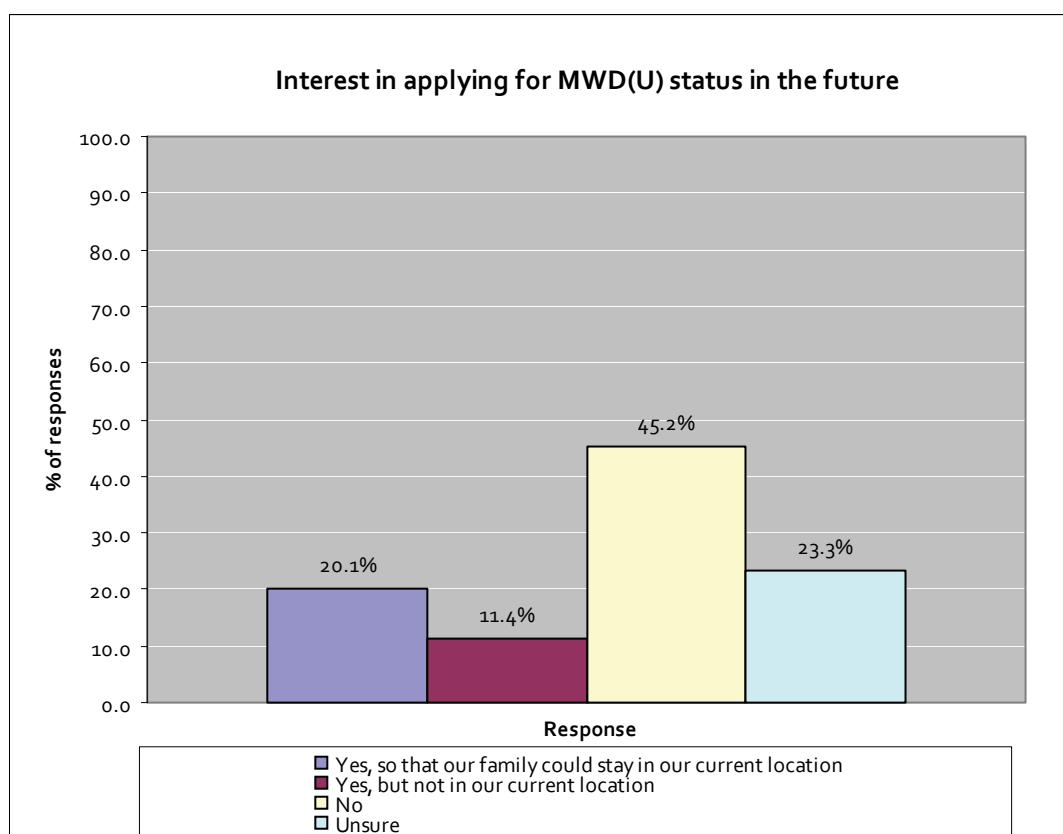
Table 11 Responses to Question 13 Section A: MWD(U) status by respondent type.

	Spouses and partners	Dual ADF couples	Single parents	Total
MWD(U)	545	65	70	680
Total respondents	4870	639	240	5749
Percent	11.2%	10.2%	29.2%	11.8%

Note: 94 of the spouse and partner respondents, 30 of the dual ADF couple respondents and 2 of the single parent respondents did not answer the question about MWD(U) status.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were interested in applying for MWD(U) status in the future. Their responses are displayed in Figure 10.

Figure 10 Responses to Question 14 Section A: Interest in applying for MWD(U) status in the future.



Note: 69 respondents did not answer this question.

Figure 10 shows that almost one-third (31.5%) of the respondents would consider applying for MWD(U) status in the future. This included 20.1% of respondents who wanted to remain in their current location, and 11.4% who did not wish to remain in their current location.

Those respondents residing in the Australian Capital Territory (23.7% of respondents residing in the Territory) and Tasmania (29.0% of respondents residing in Tasmania) at the time of the survey were more likely to report an interest in MWD(U) status in order to remain in their current location than respondents from other states/territories. Conversely, respondents residing in the Northern Territory (17.2% of Northern Territory respondents) were more likely to report an interest in applying for MWD(U) status and move to a different location than respondents from other states/territories. These findings indicate that Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory are seen as desirable places to live, whereas the Northern Territory may be seen as undesirable.

Those respondents who were residing in a home that they own (32.1% of all respondents who were residing in a home that they own), or in a home that they were paying off (30.8% of all respondents who were residing in a home that they are paying off), were more likely to report an interest in applying for MWD(U) status in order to stay in their current location, than respondents with other accommodation arrangements. Conversely, respondents living in homes that they owned (3.6% of all respondents who were residing in a home they owned) or were paying off (6.3% of all respondents residing in a home they were paying off) were least likely to report an interest in applying for MWD(U) status in order to move to another location.

Overall, 67.8% of the respondents reported that they had ADF recognised dependants other than their spouse or partner. Over two-thirds (68.1%) of spouses and partners reported having dependants, compared to 56.3% of dual ADF couples and 92.5% of single parents.¹ As shown in Table 12 below, almost all (98.2%) of the dependants were children.

Table 12 Responses to Question 16 Section A: Types of dependants.

	Number	Percent
Children	3885	98.2%
My/my spouse/partner's parents	54	1.4%
Other relatives/non-relatives	18	0.4%
Total	3957	100.0%

Note: While a total of 3900 respondents reported that they had dependants, the total of 3957 above reflects the fact that 54 respondents reported having 2 types of dependants, while 2 respondents reported having 3 types of dependants. One respondent who indicated that they had dependants did not respond to this item.

1. Of the single parent ADF respondents, 7.5% (18) reported that they did not have any ADF recognised dependants. Examination of their responses indicates that these respondents were most likely to be non-custodial and non-residential parents of children. That is, their children were not ADF recognised dependants either because no application had been made, or their children did not live with them for the requisite 90 nights a year to qualify for ADF recognition, or meet any of the other recognition criteria. The data for these 18 individuals was retained for analysis, given that the information they reported appeared to have the potential to add value to the understanding of single parent attitudes and circumstances.

Respondents with dependent children were then asked to indicate their children’s education level. Table 13 below displays the number of children in each education level as a proportion of all dependent children. Also, the number and proportion of respondents with children in each education level are presented.

Table 13 Responses to Question 17 Section A: Education level of dependent children.

	Number of children	Percent of all dependent children (n=7772)	Number of respondents with one or more children in this group	Percent of all respondents with dependent children (n= 3885)
Pre-school	3046	39.2%	2111	54.3%
Primary school	2725	35.1%	1805	27.9%
High school	1449	18.6%	1049	27.0%
Left school	552	7.1%	421	10.8%
Total	7772	100.0%	5386	

Note: 7 respondents with dependent children did not respond to this item. The percentages in the far right column do not equal 100%, given that respondents were asked to indicate the number of children within each category that applied to them.

Table 13 shows that over one-third (39.2%) of all dependent children were pre-school age or under. Of all respondents with dependent children, over half (54.3%) had children at pre-school age or under, while a minority (10.8%) had dependants who were likely to be nearing independence from their parents. Based on the total of 7772 dependent children, the average number of dependent children per respondent with dependent children was two.

Respondents who reported having dependent children were asked to indicate whether they had a requirement for, or had used, occasional care for their children in the past 12 months. Their responses are displayed in Table 14.

Table 14 Responses to Question 18 Section A: Requirement for, and use of occasional childcare in the past 12 months.

	Number	Percent
Have not required occasional care in the past 12 months	1686	43.7%
Required occasional care but could not access it	722	18.7%
Have used the following types of occasional care in the past 12 months	2007	52.0%

Note: 36 of the respondents who reported having dependent children did not answer this question. Of those respondents who did answer this question, 566 provided 2 responses – that they had required occasional care but could not access it, and that they had used some form of childcare in the past 12 months. As such, the percentages reported do not add up to 100 as they are based on the total number of respondents to this question (3859) rather than the total number of responses.

Table 14 shows that while 43.7% of the respondents with dependent children did not have a need for occasional care, a further 52.0% reported that they had used some form of occasional care. A smaller proportion (18.7%) of those with dependent children reported that they could not access occasional care when they needed it.

Of those respondents who reported that they had one or more children of pre-school age, 22.5% reported that they required occasional care sometime in the past 12 months but could not access it. Two-thirds (66.3%) of respondents with pre-school aged children reported that they had used some form of occasional care in the past 12 months.

For those respondents who had primary school aged children, 21.2% reported that they had some difficulty accessing occasional care, while 59.1% reported that they had used some form of occasional care in the past 12 months.¹ There were virtually no differences in the proportions of spouses and partners, dual ADF couples and single parent ADF members reporting difficulty accessing occasional care. There were also only very minor differences in employed and non-employed respondents with regard to difficulty accessing occasional care.

Table 15 Responses to Question 18 Section A: Types of occasional care used by the respondents in the past 12 months..

	Number	Percent
Long day care centre	1002	28.0%
Occasional care centre	331	9.3%
Friends/relatives	1140	32.0%
Nanny	91	2.5%
Vacation care	415	11.6%
Au Pair	19	0.5%
Family day care	226	6.3%
In-home care by approved carer	65	1.8%
Other	285	8.0%
Total	3574	100.0%

Note: This data was derived from the 2007 respondents with dependent children who indicated that they had used some form of childcare in the past 12 months. One respondent who reported having used some form of childcare in the past 12 months did not respond to this question.

Table 15 shows that, of all types of occasional care used by the respondents with dependent children, around one-third (32.0%) was sourced from friends and relatives, followed by long day care centres (28.0%). The most common 'Other' types of occasional care reported by respondents were before and after school care, pre-school and babysitters. It should be noted that 5.0% of respondents indicated 'pre-school' in the 'Other' category of occasional care used.

1. Readers should note that this data does not provide a clear indication of the demand for occasional care for children according to age. For example, for those respondents with pre-school aged children who reported that they had difficulty accessing occasional care, it is not possible to identify whether they had access problems for their pre-school aged child / children or for their children of other age groups (if they had any). Likewise, for the same reasons, this data also does not provide a clear indication of the use of occasional care according to the age group of children.

Table 16 Responses to Question 19 Section A: Reasons why occasional care was required by the respondents in the past 12 months.

	Number	Percent
Partner/spouse absent on deployment	660	13.4%
Partner/spouse absent for other reason	614	12.4%
Usual carer unavailable	66	1.3%
Illness	270	5.5%
Respite	260	5.3%
Own work commitments	1298	26.4%
For children's socialisation	502	10.2%
To attend appointments	693	14.1%
To be able to enjoy social time with friends	317	6.4%
Other	245	5.0%
Total reasons	4925	100.0%

Note: This data was derived from the 2729 respondents with dependent children who indicated that they had used some form of childcare in the past 12 months and/or had required occasional care but could not access it. 125 of these respondents did not respond to this item.

As displayed in Table 16, the most commonly cited reason (26.4%) respondents required, and/or used occasional care was to be able to meet their own work commitments. The next most frequently cited reasons for needing occasional care was to attend appointments (14.1%), partner being away on deployment (13.4%) and spouse/partner being absent for other reasons (12.4%). The 'Other' reasons for needing occasional care reported by respondents included attending study commitments, school holidays, respite from parenting demands and impromptu family and social events. For the single parent respondents, the most commonly reported reason for needing occasional care was for their own work commitments (58.1% of all reasons for single parent respondents).

Table 17 Responses to Question 20 Section A: Reasons why respondents could not access occasional care in the past 12 months.

	Number	Percent
Occasional care was not available at the times it was needed during the day	242	18.8%
Occasional care was not available during the day at all	147	11.4%
Occasional care was not available at the times I needed it at night and on weekends	226	17.5%
Occasional care was not available at night and weekends at all	121	9.4%
Did not know how or where to access occasional care	102	7.9%
The available occasional care services were not affordable	181	14.0%
The available occasional care services were not in a preferred location	72	5.6%
The quality of the available occasional care services was not acceptable	108	8.4%
Other	91	7.0%
Total reasons	1290	100.0%

Note: This data was derived from the 722 respondents with dependent children who indicated that they had required occasional care but could not access it. 24 of these respondents did not respond to this question.

Table 17 shows that the most commonly cited reasons why respondents were not able to access occasional care was that it was not available at the times needed during the day (18.8% of all reasons), and that it was not available at night and on weekends (17.5% of all reasons). Affordability was also commonly reported as a reason (14.0% of all reasons) occasional care could not be accessed by respondents.

The ‘Other’ reasons reported by the respondents mostly related to lack of availability of any types of care in their region, long waiting lists for care, a preference to have family members care for children, but not being able to do this with no family in the posted location, and lack of childcare options that suited the specific needs of their children. For single parent respondents, the most common reason why they were not able to access occasional care was that the care was not available at the times they needed it at night and weekends (26.0% of all reasons cited by single parents). The second most frequently reported reason for access problems for the single parent respondents was affordability (19.8% of all reasons cited by single parent respondents).

Single parent respondents were asked to indicate the arrangements they normally made for their care of their children when they were required to be absent from their home for military duties. Their responses are displayed in Table 18.

Table 18 Responses to Question 14 Section C: Arrangements made by single parent respondents for the care of their children when required to be absent from home for military duties.

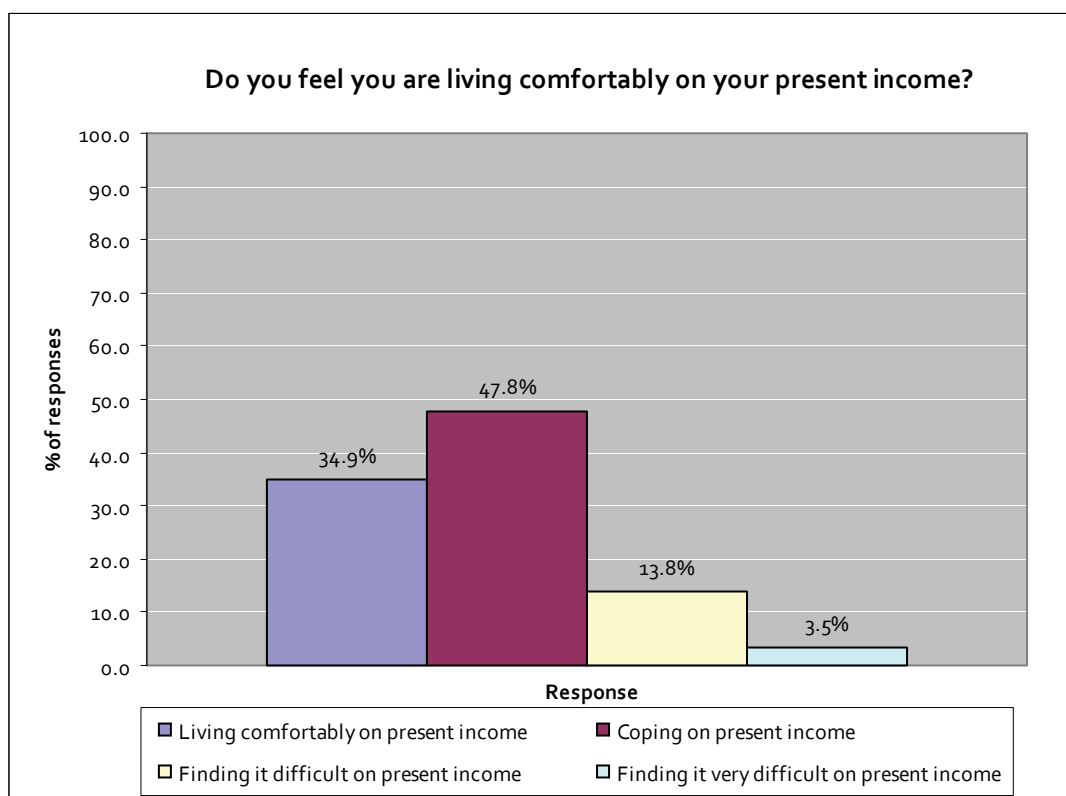
	Number	Percent of all arrangements reported by the single parents
One or more people who live in my home location care for my child/children in my home location	82	26.7%
My child/children travel to a location other than my home location to be cared for by one or more other people	62	20.2%
One or more people travel to my home location from a different location to care for my child/children in my home location	56	18.3%
I pay for a carer to live in my home and care for my child/children	21	6.8%
Other	35	11.4%
Not applicable/Not able to be away from home	51	16.6%
Total reported arrangements	307	100.0%

Note: Respondents could indicate more than one type of arrangement.

Table 18 indicates that of all care arrangements made by single parent respondents for the care of their children while they are away, one or more people (such as former spouses/partners, family members or friends) living in their home location to care for their children was the most common type of arrangement reported (26.7% of all arrangements reported). Sending children to another location to be cared for by former spouses/partners, relatives and friends was the second most common arrangement made (20.2% of all arrangements reported). ‘Other’ responses included leaving older teenage children on their own, and that the children were in the primary custody of the other parent.

All respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt they were living comfortably on their present income. Their responses are displayed in Figure 11.

Figure 11 Responses to Question 34 Section A: Respondents' perception of how well they are coping on their present income.



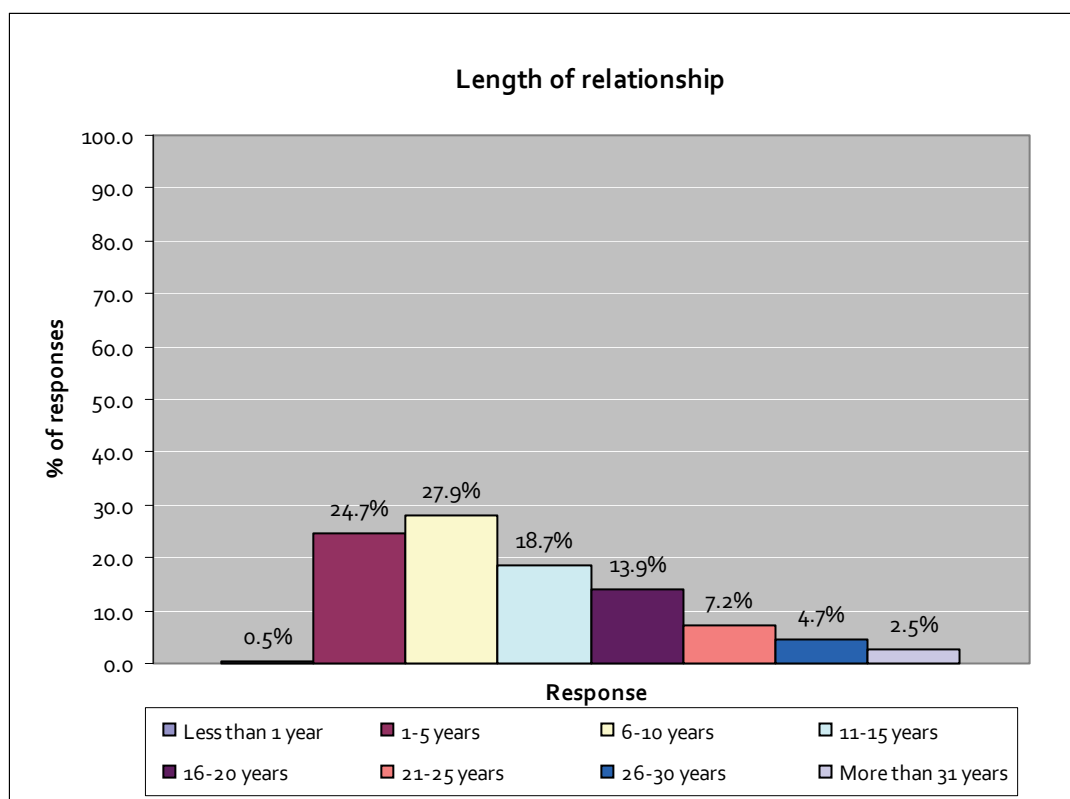
Note: 60 of the respondents did not answer this question.

Figure 11 shows that almost half (47.8%) of the respondents reported that they were coping on their present income, and a minority (17.3%) reported that they were finding it difficult or very difficult to cope on their present income.

There were differences in perceptions relating to income across the different respondent types. For example, dual ADF couples were more likely to report that they were living comfortably on their present income (48.3%, compared to 33.8% of spouses and partners and 21.3% of single parent respondents). Likewise, dual ADF couples were less likely to report that they were finding it difficult to cope on their present income, when compared to other respondents (7.6%, compared to 14.3% of spouses and partners and 20.8% of single parent respondents).

All married/partnered respondents were asked to indicate the length of their current relationship. Their responses are displayed in Figure 12.

Figure 12 Responses to Question 1 Section B: Length of relationship for those respondents who are married or in an interdependent partnership.



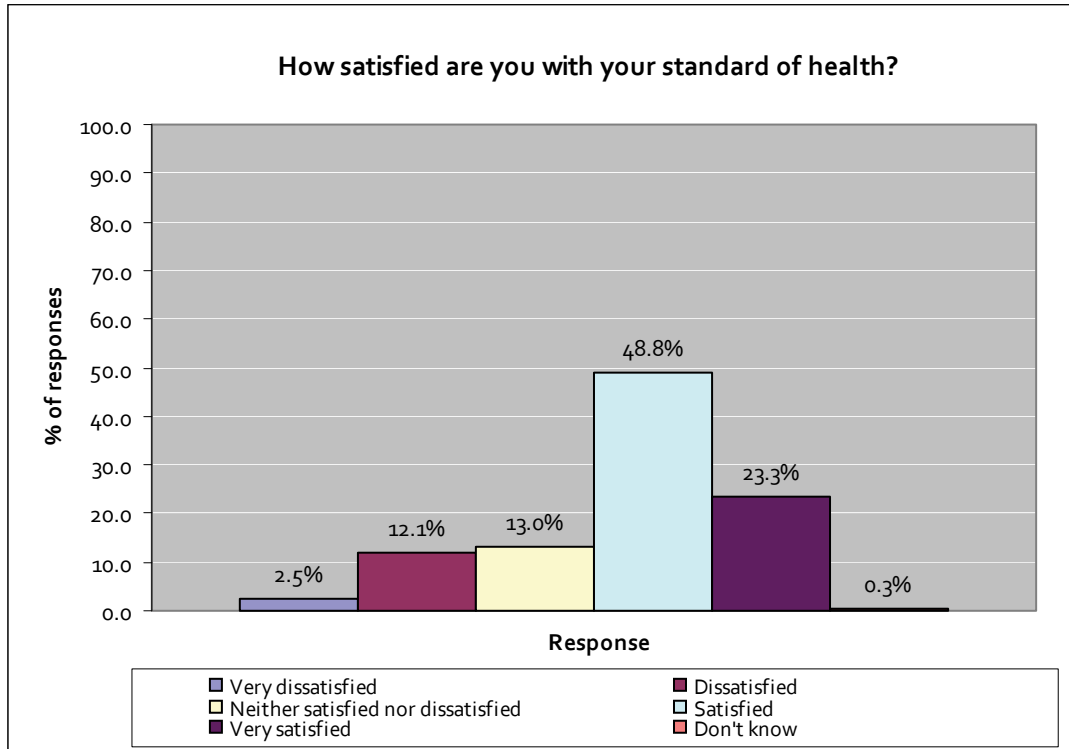
Note: 93 of the respondents did not answer this question.

Figure 12 shows that for the 5509 respondents who reported that they were married or in an interdependent partnership, more than one-quarter (27.9%) were in their relationship for between six and ten years. A further one-quarter (24.7%) had been in the relationship for between one and five years. The proportion of respondents who reported being together for 21 or more years was 14.4%.

Life satisfaction

All respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements relating to their satisfaction with life in general. Their responses to these items are displayed in Figures 13 to 19.

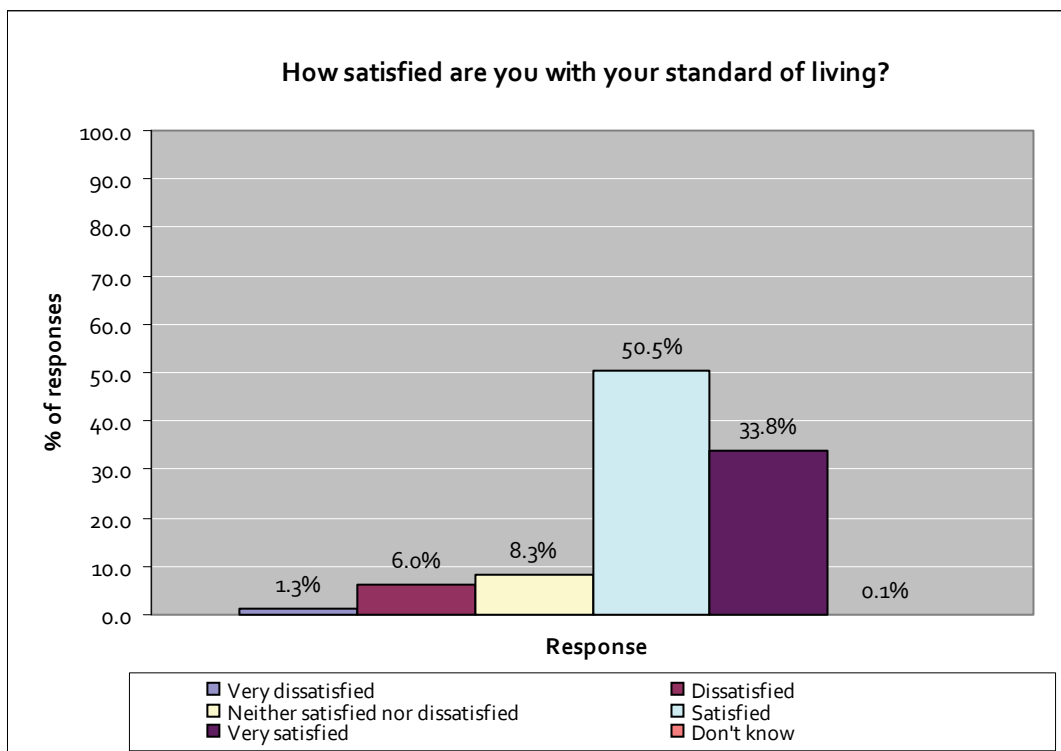
Figure 13 Responses to Question 33 Section A: Respondents' satisfaction with their standard of health.



Note: 52 of the respondents did not answer this question.

Figure 13 shows that 72.1% of the respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with their standard of health, while 14.6% of the respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Employed respondents were somewhat more likely to report being satisfied or very satisfied with their standard of health (74.2% of employed respondents), compared to non-employed respondents (66.4%). Spouses and partners of officers were more likely to report being satisfied or very satisfied with their health, when compared to spouses and partners of enlisted respondents. For example, 76.9% of spouses and partners of officers reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their health, compared to 69.2% of spouses and partners of enlisted members.

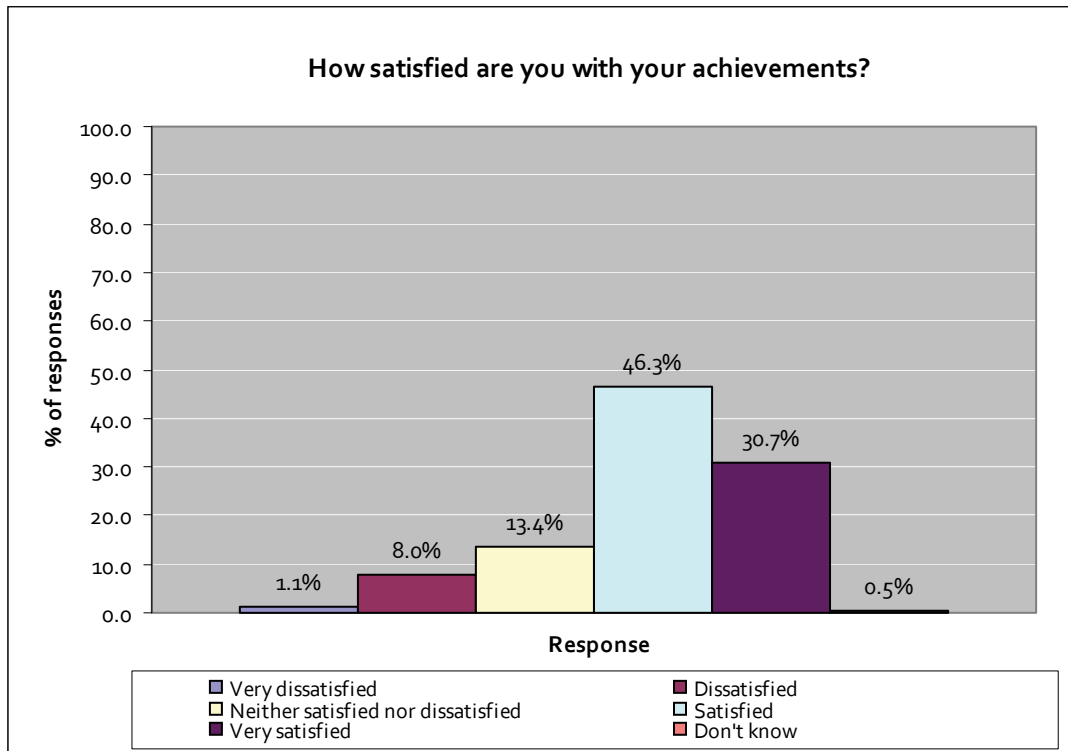
Figure 14 Responses to Question 33 Section A: Respondents' satisfaction with their standard of living.



Note: 39 of the respondents did not respond to this item.

Figure 14 shows that 84.3% of the respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their standard of living, while 7.3% of the respondents reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their standard of living. Spouses and partners of officers and officer respondents themselves were more likely to report being satisfied or very satisfied with their standard of living, when compared to the spouses and partners of enlisted members and enlisted respondents themselves. For example, while 89.8% of spouses and partners of officers and 92.9% of officer respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their standard of living, this compared to 81.2% of the spouses and partners of enlisted members, and 82.0% of enlisted respondents.

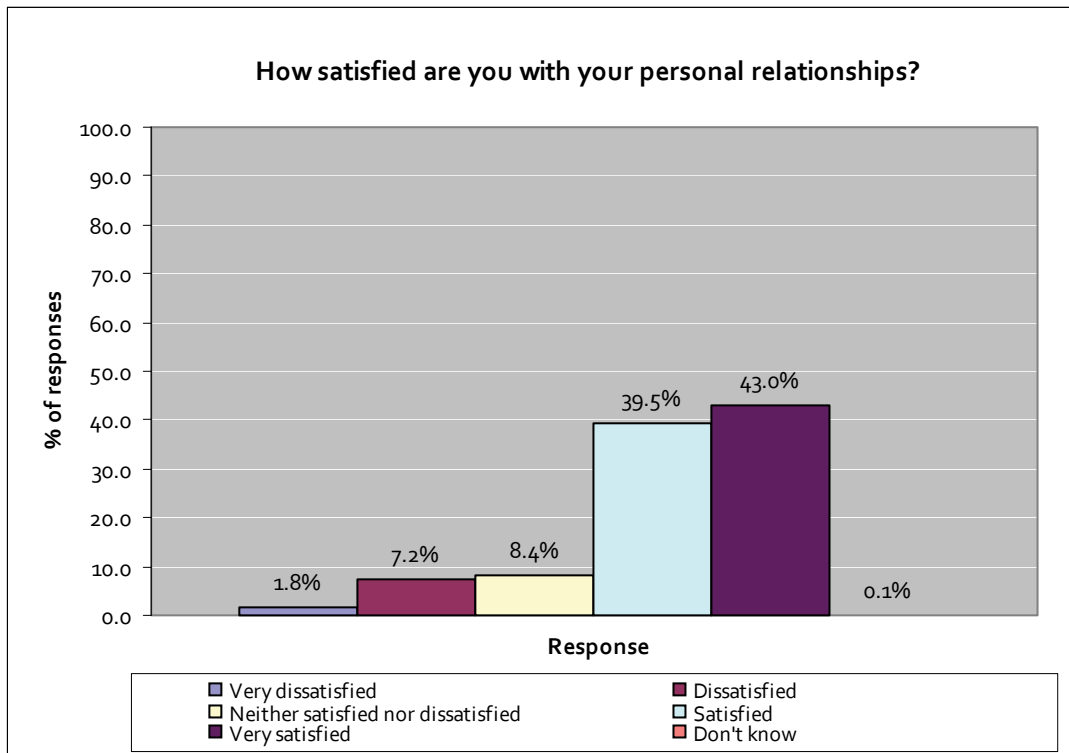
Figure 15 Responses to Question 33 Section A: Respondents' satisfaction with their achievements.



Note: 58 of the respondents did not respond to this item.

Figure 15 shows that 77.0% of the respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their achievements, compared to the 9.1% of respondents who reported that they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their achievements. Dual ADF couples were somewhat more likely to report being satisfied or very satisfied with their achievements than the other respondents (84.0% compared to 76.8% of spouses and partners and 73.3% of single parent respondents). Employed respondents were somewhat more likely to report being satisfied or very satisfied with their achievements (80.4% of employed respondents), compared to non-employed respondents (68.2%). Respondents who were officers in the ADF were more likely to report being satisfied with their achievements, when compared to respondents who were of enlisted ranks (86.2% of officers were satisfied, compared to 77.2% of enlisted respondents who were satisfied).

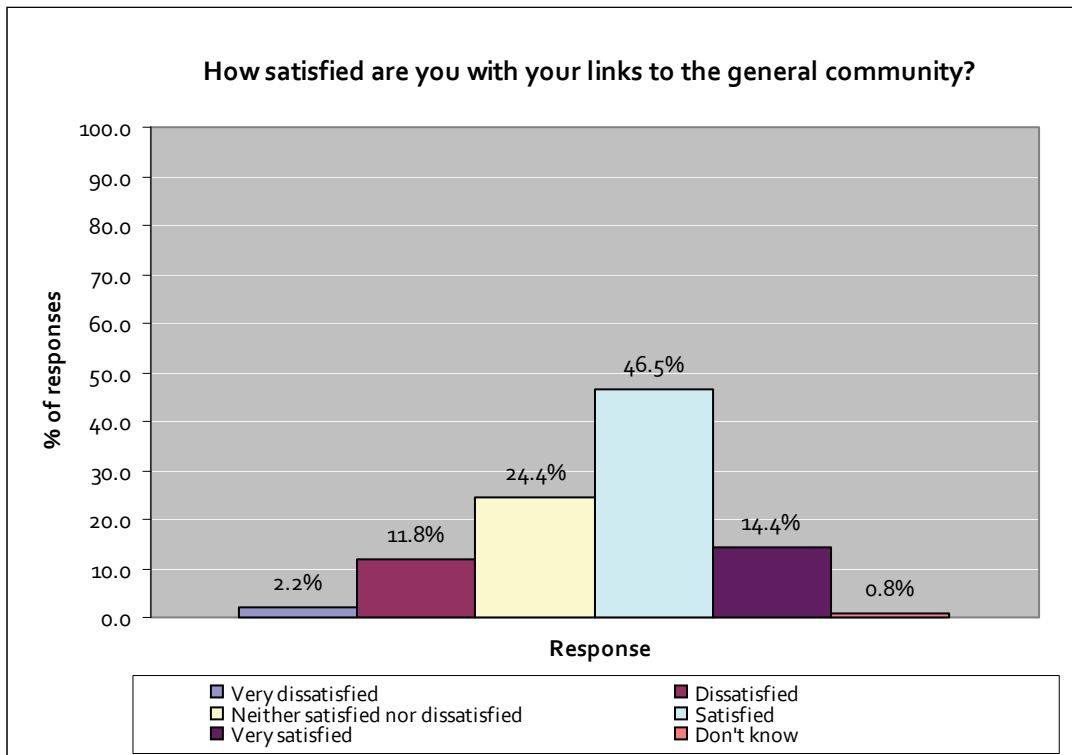
Figure 16 Responses to Question 33 Section A: Respondents' satisfaction with their personal relationships.



Note: 54 of the respondents did not respond to this item.

Figure 16 shows that 82.5% of the respondents reported being satisfied with their personal relationships. In contrast, 9.0% of the respondents reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their personal relationships. While 47.9% of single parent respondents reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their relationships, this was compared to 83.8% of spouses and partners, and 86.2% of dual ADF couples.

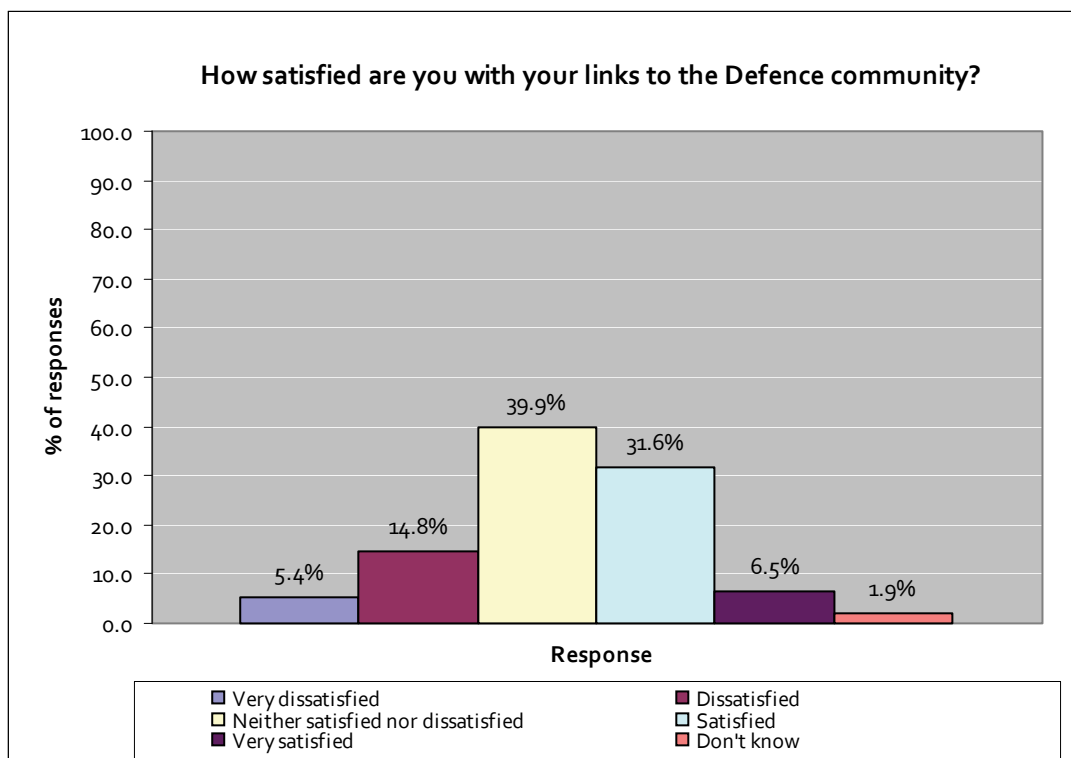
Figure 17 Responses to Question 33 Section A: Respondents' satisfaction with their links to the general community.



Note: 45 of the respondents did not respond to this item.

Figure 17 shows that 60.9% of the respondents reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their links to the general community, while 14.0% of the respondents reported that they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Single parents were less likely to report being satisfied or very satisfied with their links to the general community when compared to other respondents (46.8% of single parents, compared to 62.5% of spouses and partners, and 57.6% of the dual ADF couples).

Figure 18 Responses to Question 33 Section A: Respondents' satisfaction with their links to the Defence community.

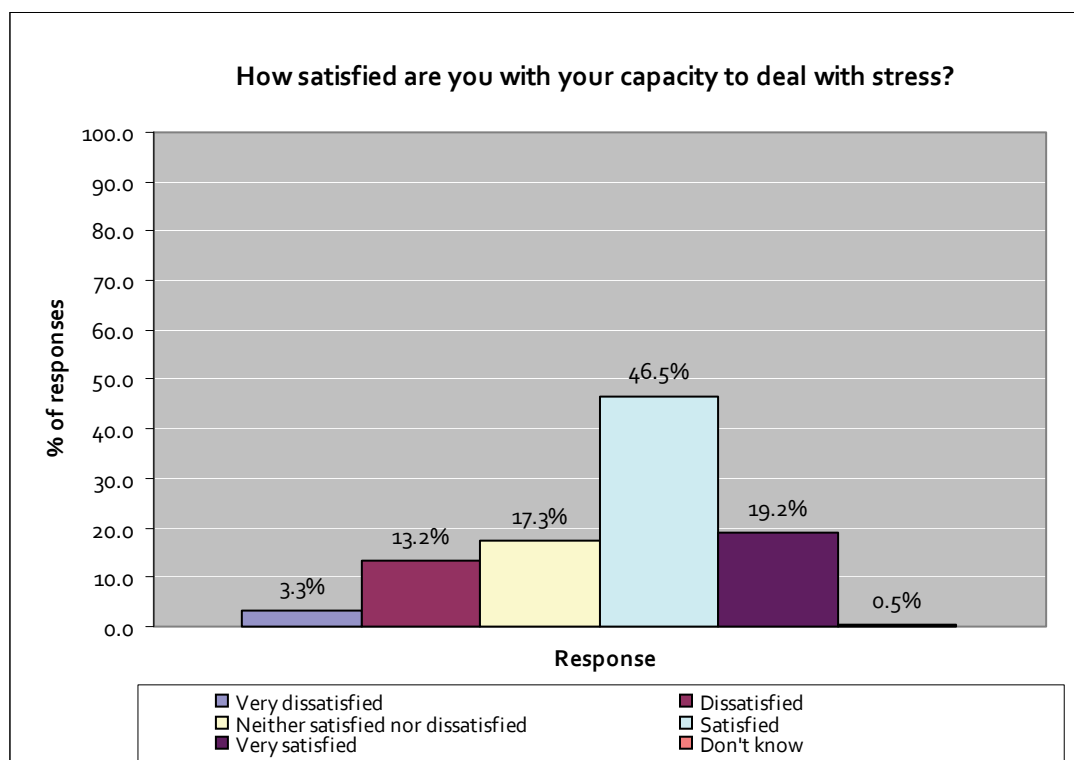


Note: 48 of the respondents did not respond to this item.

Figure 18 shows that 38.1% of the respondents reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their links to the Defence community. Around one-fifth (20.2%) of the respondents reported that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their links to the Defence community, while 39.9% of the respondents were unsure about this. Dual ADF couples were more likely to report being satisfied or very satisfied with their links to the Defence community, when compared to other respondents. While 62.9% of the dual ADF couples reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their links to the Defence community, this compared to 35.2% of the spouses and partners, and 48.3% of the single parents.

Employed respondents were somewhat more likely to report being satisfied or very satisfied with their links to the Defence community (40.2% of employed respondents), compared to non-employed respondents (34.9%). Spouses and partners of officers and officer respondents themselves were more likely to report being satisfied or very satisfied with their links to the Defence community, when compared to the spouses and partners of enlisted members and enlisted respondents themselves. For example, while 43.3% of spouses and partners of officers and 65.5% of officer respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their links to the Defence community, this compared to 35.0% of the spouses and partners of enlisted members, and 54.5% of enlisted respondents.

Figure 19 Responses to Question 22 Section A: Respondents' satisfaction with their capacity to deal with stress.



Note: 47 of the respondents did not respond to this item.

Figure 19 shows that 65.7% of the respondents reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their capacity to deal with stress, while 16.5% of the respondents reported that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their capacity to deal with stress. Dual ADF couples were more likely to report that they were satisfied with their capacity to deal with stress (76.5% of this group), compared to spouses and partners (64.7%) and single parent respondents (64.2%). Employed respondents were more likely to report being satisfied or very satisfied with their capacity to deal with stress (68.3% of employed respondents), compared to non-employed respondents (59.0%).

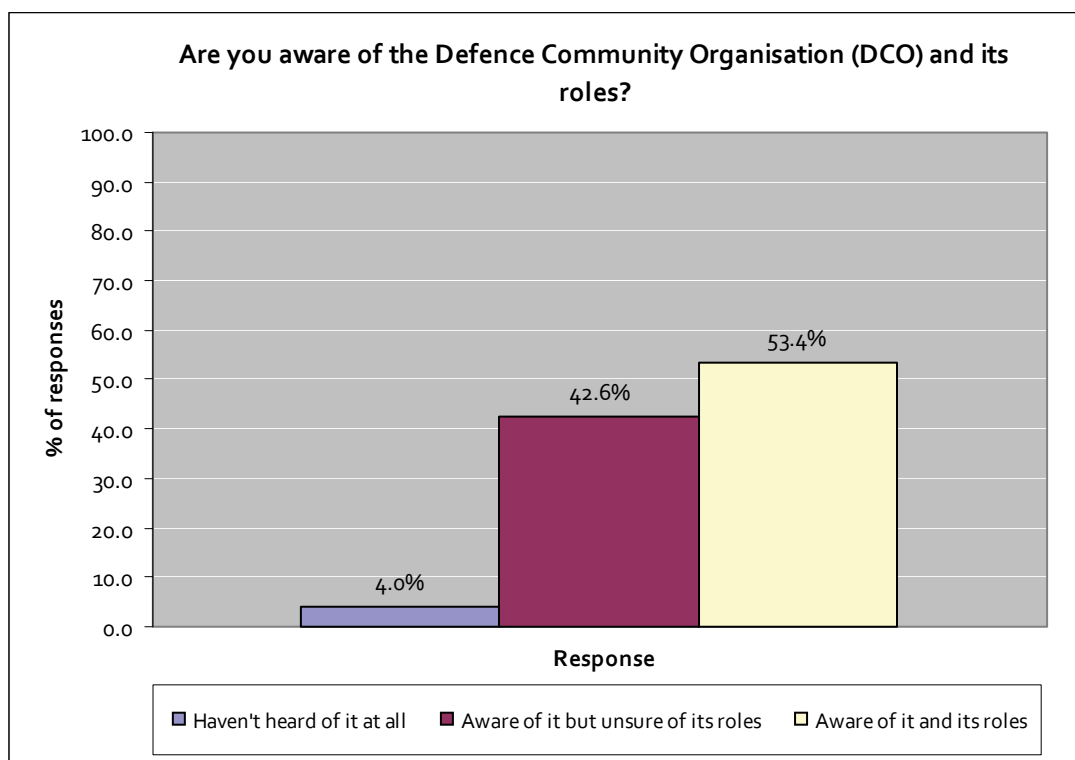
Spouses and partners of officers and officer respondents themselves were more likely to report being satisfied or very satisfied with their capacity to deal with stress, when compared to the spouses and partners of enlisted members and enlisted respondents themselves. For example, while 71.6% of spouses and partners of officers and 80.0% of officer respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their capacity to deal with stress, this compared to 62.3% of the spouses and partners of enlisted members, and 68.2% of enlisted respondents.

A general trend was also observed, in which those respondents with a university education were more likely than those with a secondary school education or trade/apprenticeship to report satisfaction with their health, standard of living, achievements, personal relationships, links to the general community, and capacity to deal with stress. There were no consistent nor pronounced differences in perceptions of life satisfaction according to length of service neither of the respondent and/or their spouse/partner, nor according to whether the respondents had dependants or not.

SECTION 3: DEFENCE SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES – EXPERIENCES AND ATTITUDES

All respondents were asked whether they were aware of the Defence Community Organisation (DCO) and its roles. Their responses are displayed in Figure 20.

Figure 20 Responses to Question 35 Section A: Awareness of DCO and its roles.



Note: 71 respondents did not answer this question.

Figure 20 shows that while 96.0% of respondents reported that they were aware of DCO, a high proportion of respondents (42.6%) were unsure of its roles.

Spouses and partners (who were not permanent ADF members themselves) were most likely to have not heard of DCO at all. While 4.6% of these respondents reported that they had not heard of DCO, this compared to 1.0% of dual ADF couple respondents and 0.9% of single parent respondents who reported the same.

There were no pronounced differences in awareness of DCO and its roles according to employment status and education level.

For spouses and partners (who were not permanent ADF members themselves), lack of awareness of DCO appears to be more common among spouses and partners of junior ranked ADF members. While 7.6% of those who were married to/partnered with a junior “Other rank” (Private or equivalent rank or recruit/apprentice) reported that they had not heard of DCO at all, the next highest proportion of respondents who had not heard of DCO at all was within the spouses and partners of Junior Non-Commissioned Officers (4.9%). In comparison, 3.8% of those married to/partnered with Senior Non-Commissioned officers/Warrant Officers, 4.2% of Junior Officers, and 3.5% of Senior Officers reported that they had not heard of DCO.

For spouses and partners (who were not permanent ADF members themselves), a trend was evident whereby awareness of DCO appeared to improve somewhat with increasing length of service (or length of experience as a military spouse/partner). For example, while 6.7% of respondents whose spouses/partners had served for two to five years reported that they had not heard of DCO, this compared to 3.3% of respondents whose spouses/partners had served for more than 20 years reporting the same.

Consistent with this, not having heard of DCO at all was more likely among those respondents (spouses and partners, dual ADF couples, and single parents) aged less than 30 years (5.7% of those aged between 21 and 30 years and 24.4% of those aged less than 20 years). Awareness of DCO and its roles was most common among respondents aged over 41 years (61.2% of respondents aged between 41 and 50 years and 57.4% of respondents aged 51 years or more).

Not having heard of DCO at all appeared to be more pronounced among respondents residing in the regions of Adelaide (6.9%) and Melbourne (6.3%).

Conversely, awareness of DCO and its roles appeared to be most widespread in Cairns (67.5%), Albury (66.7%), Townsville (62.0%) and Tindal (60.0%).

Respondents were asked to indicate their awareness, use and opinion of various DCO and other Defence family support services. Their responses are displayed in Table 19, in order of the services with which respondents were least familiar.

Table 19 Responses to Question 36 Section A: Awareness and opinion of DCO and other Defence family support services.

	Not aware of this	Aware of this but have not used it	Used this and found it useful	Used this but did not find it useful	Total	No response
DCO Services						
Australians dangerously ill scheme (AUSDILS)	78.4% (4417)	20.7% (1169)	0.7% (40)	0.1% (8)	100% (5634)	115
Stress reduction courses	77.6% (4376)	21.9% (1234)	0.3% (16)	0.2% (12)	100% (5638)	111
Defence Force emergency family funding	77.2% (4356)	22.0% (1242)	0.6% (32)	0.2% (9)	100% (5639)	110
Partners in Defence CD/DVD	76.5% (4316)	19.9% (1124)	2.1% (118)	1.5% (86)	100% (5644)	105
Family support funding program	75.0% (4231)	21.5% (1212)	3.1% (176)	0.4% (22)	100% (5641)	108
Special accommodation for emergencies (SAFE)	74.0% (4172)	25.0% (1411)	0.9% (48)	0.2% (9)	100% (5640)	109
Anger management workshops	73.5% (4136)	25.9% (1456)	0.3% (18)	0.3% (19)	100% (5629)	120
Digital Portfolio (DP) Builder	73.1% (4123)	24.6% (1389)	1.1% (60)	1.2% (65)	100% (5637)	112
Conflict resolution workshops	72.1% (4063)	26.8% (1510)	0.7% (42)	0.4% (20)	100% (5635)	114
Emergency support to families scheme (ESFS)	70.8% (3994)	27.5% (1550)	1.3% (72)	0.4% (25)	100% (5641)	108
Children's workshops on dealing with the absence of a parent	69.3% (3897)	28.6% (1611)	1.7% (96)	0.4% (23)	100% (5627)	122
Parenting workshops	69.0% (3881)	29.1% (1638)	1.4% (79)	0.4% (24)	100% (5622)	127
Relationship workshops	68.2% (3847)	29.3% (1653)	1.9% (106)	0.5% (31)	100% (5637)	112
State education booklets	67.2% (3790)	20.6% (1162)	11.0% (618)	1.2% (70)	100% (5640)	109
Next of kin monthly contacts during deployments	58.3% (3288)	28.4% (1600)	9.2% (520)	4.0% (227)	100% (5635)	114
Welcome basket/packs	55.9% (3158)	19.9% (1123)	21.9% (1238)	2.3% (131)	100% (5650)	99

	Not aware of this	Aware of this but have not used it	Used this and found it useful	Used this but did not find it useful	Total	No response
Deployment functions	53.4% (2993)	34.4% (1928)	9.5% (530)	2.8% (157)	100% (5608)	141
Family day care & occasional care program	50.3% (2828)	44.5% (2503)	4.6% (257)	0.7% (39)	100% (5627)	122
SWAPP - Resume Assistant	42.3% (2386)	51.6% (2911)	3.6% (201)	2.6% (145)	100% (5643)	106
Defence long day care program (ABC Corporate Care)	38.2% (2153)	49.7% (2803)	9.5% (535)	2.6% (144)	100.0% (5635)	114
Service workforce access program for partners (SWAPP) - Overall	38.0% (2141)	52.6% (2964)	5.4% (303)	4.0% (226)	100% (5634)	115
Defence school transition aide and mentor program	36.4% (2048)	46.4% (2610)	14.8% (832)	2.3% (132)	100% (5622)	127
Location welcome books	35.0% (1975)	20.9% (1183)	40.3% (2276)	3.8% (213)	100% (5647)	102
General DCO social work services such as counselling and assessments	35.0% (1972)	48.4% (2725)	11.8% (663)	4.9% (274)	100% (5634)	115
Families with special needs program	24.4% (1377)	68.6% (3872)	4.5% (252)	2.5% (142)	100.0% (5643)	106
Other Defence services/Groups						
Circle of friends respite program	84.8% (4971)	14.6% (822)	0.4% (22)	0.2% (12)	100% (5647)	102
Financial management workshops	74.4% (4202)	24.3% (1372)	1.1% (61)	0.2% (12)	100% (5647)	102
ADF Financial Services Consumer Council	72.9% (4112)	25.7% (1449)	1.2% (66)	0.3% (15)	100% (5642)	107
Education assistance program	54.7% (3082)	38.1% (2146)	6.7% (380)	0.5% (31)	100% (5639)	110
Defence community houses	47.7% (2691)	39.5% (2230)	11.6% (654)	1.2% (67)	100% (5642)	107
Defence Families of Australia (DFA)	45.8% (2588)	47.4% (2677)	5.6% (318)	1.2% (68)	100% (5651)	98

	Not aware of this	Aware of this but have not used it	Used this and found it useful	Used this but did not find it useful	Total	No response
Defence special needs support group (DSNSG)	43.1% (2432)	52.8% (2979)	2.9% (163)	1.2% (67)	100% (5641)	108
National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC)	42.4% (2393)	47.4% (2672)	7.2% (404)	3.0% (171)	100% (5640)	109
Defence Psychology services (services available to permanent ADF members only)	39.2% (2186)	49.0% (2731)	8.7% (488)	3.1% (174)	100% (5579)	170
Defence Chaplaincy services	11.7% (661)	64.8% (3662)	21.2% (1198)	2.2% (126)	100% (5647)	102
Other services	84.7% (1275)	12.7% (192)	2.0% (30)	0.6% (9)	100% (1506)	4243

As seen in Table 19, the top five services with which respondents were the least familiar with were:

- Circle of friends respite program (84.8% of respondents were unaware of this).
- Australians Dangerously Ill Scheme (AUSDIL) (78.4% of respondents were unaware of this).
- Stress reduction courses (77.6% of respondents were unaware of this).
- Defence Force Emergency Family Funding (77.2% of respondents were unaware of this).
- Partners in Defence CD/DVD (76.5% of respondents were unaware of this).

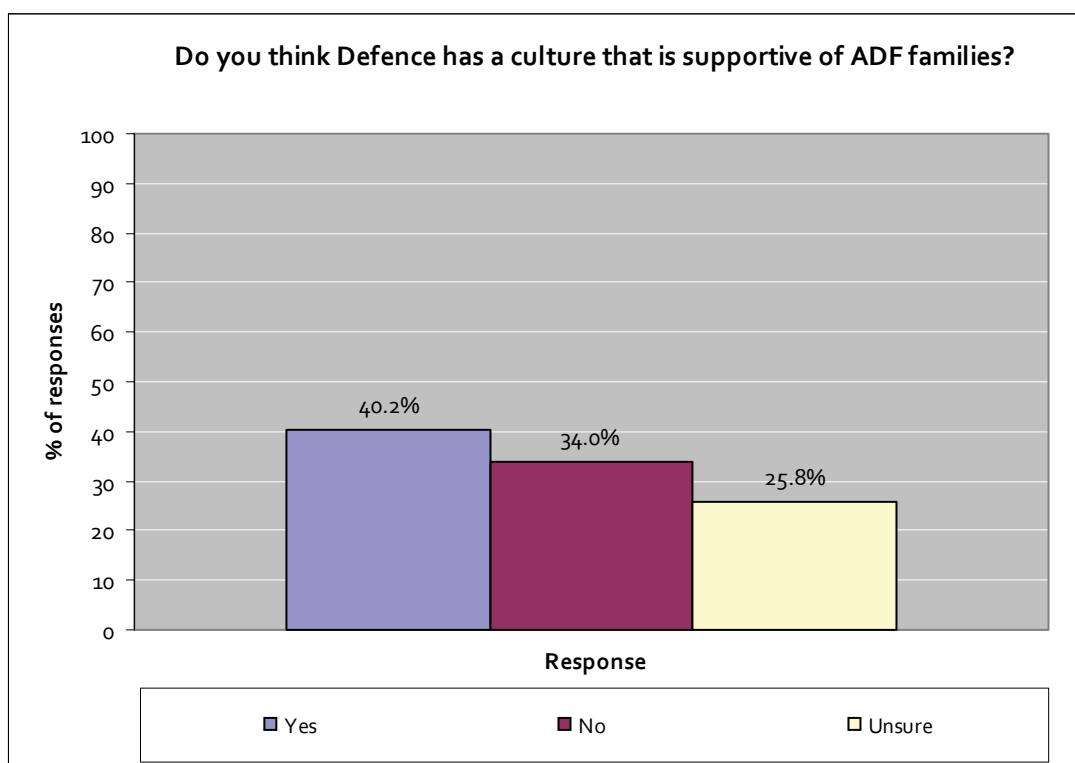
Table 19 also shows the top five services most valued by respondents were:

- Location welcome books (40.3% of respondents used these and found them useful).
- Welcome baskets/packs (21.9% of respondents used these and found them useful).
- Defence Chaplaincy service (21.2% of respondents used these and found them useful).
- Defence school transition aide and mentor program (14.8% of respondents used these and found them useful).
- General DCO social work services such as counselling and assessments (11.8% of respondents used these and found them useful).

While nearly 12% of respondents found general DCO social work services such as counselling and assessments useful, these services were also the most frequently rated as ‘not useful’ (4.9% of all respondents). The other services most frequently rated as ‘not useful’ by respondents were:

- Service workforce access program for partners (SWAPP) – Overall (4.0% of respondents used these and did not find them useful).
- Next of kin monthly contacts during deployments (4.0% of respondents used these and did not find them useful).
- Location welcome books (3.8% of respondents used these and did not find them useful).
- Defence Psychology services (3.1% of respondents used these and did not find them useful).

Figure 21 Responses to Question 37 Section A: Perception of whether Defence has a culture that is supportive of ADF families.



Note: 256 respondents did not answer this question

Figure 21 illustrates that just over-one-third (34.0%) of respondents did not think that Defence is supportive of ADF families, while a further one-quarter (25.8%) were unsure about this. Dual ADF couples (52.2%) and single parents (53.3%) were more likely to respond 'Yes' to this item than spouses and partners who are not permanent ADF members themselves (38.0%). There were no pronounced differences in responses to this item according to Service.

Some differences are noted among the married/partnered respondents (excluding the dual ADF couples) according to the rank and length of service of their spouse or partner. While 46.4% of spouses and partners of officers responded 'Yes' to this item, 33.0% of spouses and partners of enlisted personnel responded 'Yes'. Also, the likelihood of responding 'Yes' to this item tended to increase with increasing length of service. For those respondents whose spouse or partner had served for two to five years, 28.6% responded 'Yes' to this item, compared to 47.8% of respondents whose spouse or partner had served for 20 years or more.

A similar pattern was observed among the dual ADF couple and single parent respondents. While 61.8% of officer respondents responded 'Yes' to this item, this compared to 46.7% of enlisted respondents who reported the same. Likewise, while 41.4% of respondents who had served for 2-5 years responded 'Yes', this compared to 61.0% of respondents who had served for 20 years or more who reported the same.

Another trend was observed in which older respondents were more likely to respond 'Yes' to this item than younger respondents. For example, while 31.2% of respondents aged 21-30 years responded 'Yes', this compared to 48.5% of respondents aged 41-50 years who reported the same.

Compared to all other respondents, respondents residing in Melbourne were most likely to report 'Yes' to this item (52.2%) and least likely to respond 'No' (21.7%). Respondents residing in the Canberra region were the next most likely to respond 'Yes' to this item (47.7% of all respondents in the Canberra region). In contrast, respondents residing in the Perth region were the most likely to respond 'No' to this item (39.6% of all respondents who were in Perth region).

Perceptions of Defence's support for families

Respondents were invited to explain in what way/s they think Defence is or is not supportive of families.

Overall, 79.7% (4581) of the respondents provided comments. There was a highly varied range of opinions and experiences reported, although, based both on positive and negative comments, some trends were evident.

A very common positive perception, particularly among older and more experienced ADF spouses and partners, was the improvement in the quality and amount of support provided to families, compared to around 20 or more years ago. Many respondents expressed a view that they could see that the ADF is 'trying' to support families more. However, while this was acknowledged, it seems that some respondents felt that this improvement had been offset by greater work demands being placed on ADF members.

There were also many comments reflecting a view that while the level of support is good, more could be done to communicate the support services and range of information available to ADF families. Many respondents expressed satisfaction with the quality of support, but expressed a view that families had to be proactive in accessing the support and being responsible for themselves. Other respondents reported that they were very happy with the knowledge that the support services were there if they needed them, and that information and help was easy to find and access.

It was also commonly reported by respondents that their sense of feeling supported and acknowledged was often dependant on unit – level leadership and commanders' attitudes. This view is reinforced in that many respondents felt particularly positive about unit family days, flexible work hours, provision of part-time leave without pay, carer's leave and other time off for important family commitments. Information disseminated by the unit, in the form of briefings, and written communications to families about unit activities and operational commitments also appeared to be highly valued. Some respondents reported a view that Defence-wide support was good but needs to be expressed at the regional level by commanders and also DCO.

Some respondents reported that they feel that support services are focused on families with children or spouses and partners who don't work, and the interests of spouses and partners with no children and/or who work full-time are overlooked.

For the respondents, unpredictable deployment dates, requirements to be away for other duties at short notice, lack of flexibility in work arrangements and excessive work demands were considered to be the main sources of dissatisfaction with military life.

In addition to the above observations, ways in which the respondents thought Defence was supportive of families included:

Positive perceptions of Defence's support for families - Relating to conditions of service and operational tempo

- Opportunity for respite postings
- Opportunity to take part-time leave without pay
- Longer posting tenures
- Introduction of the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme
- Minimising separation of families through postings
- Option to apply for Member with Dependants (Unaccompanied) status

Positive perceptions of Defence's support for families - Relating to Defence housing and removals policy and DHA service delivery

- Supportive and responsive services from Defence Housing Australia (DHA)
- Improvements in housing quality

Positive perceptions of Defence's support for families - Relating to DCO policy and service delivery

- Employment assistance for spouses/partners
- Community houses and family centres on Defence establishments
- DCO service delivery in Tindal (good quality)
- Next of kin monthly contacts during deployments
- Newsletters from DCO
- Defence playgroups
- Regular phone calls from DCO while spouse is deployed

Positive perceptions of Defence's support for families - Relating to leadership at senior Defence and regional levels

- Good family oriented activities at Puckapunyal
- Good unit level and community support in smaller regional Defence establishments
- Being made to feel welcome to visit units and use the facilities on Defence establishments
- Unit Family days
- Good family-oriented services at HMAS Cerberus
- Opportunity to have flexible working hours
- Encouragement and support for members to keep in contact with their families when away
- Invitations from unit commanders every six months to families to inform them of the unit's activities and operational commitments
- Being able to return home during a deployment for the birth of a baby
- Communications (letters etc) to families from commanders of deployed personnel providing information about operations.

Positive perceptions of Defence's support for families - Relating to ADF culture

- Unsolicited offers of contact and support from a network of spouses/and partners in the same unit

- A sense of community with other ADF families. Some respondents, however, expressed concern about the wide distribution of ADF families, especially in capital cities and the impact that this has on their ability to form relationships with other ADF families

Positive perceptions of Defence's support for families - Relating to other initiatives, forms of support and benefits to ADF families

- The Families Survey
- All of the services listed in the survey was an indication of the scope of the support available
- Availability of Relief Trust Fund loans
- The provision of a corporate child care arrangement
- Trial of provision of healthcare to ADF dependants
- The Defence Family Matters publication

Ways in which the respondents thought Defence was not supportive of families included:

Negative perceptions of Defence's support for families - Relating to conditions of service and operational tempo

- Frequent relocations
- Insufficient support for families who are separated due to MWD(U) status
- Extending the deployment duration to eight months
- For single parent members, 90 nights of residence to have child recognised as a dependant is difficult to achieve, unless there is provision of reunion travel for those members so that they can meet the required nights of residence a year
- Individual posting preferences are not given enough weight in posting decisions
- Co-location of both members of a dual ADF couple being very difficult to negotiate
- Lack of advance warning of deployments and other absences and lack of time for the family to prepare
- Lack of ability for spouses and partners to have some influence over posting decisions, particularly when their employment and careers are likely to be disrupted due to relocation

Negative perceptions of Defence's support for families - Relating to Defence housing and removals policy and DHA service delivery

- Housing allocation policy is unworkable and not flexible enough for people with children. Late allocation of housing makes schooling arrangements difficult
- Paying the same contribution for houses that don't have air conditioning as those that do
- Dispersion of families and impact on the development of ADF communities
- Poor quality customer service and case management at DHA
- Lack of air conditioning in all Defence houses
- Extremely poor service delivery from ACT based DHA staff

Negative perceptions of Defence's support for families - Relating to DCO policy and service delivery

- Lack of regional-based support
- Lack of DCO contact when spouse or partner is deployed
- Support services too localised to those families that reside close to the Defence establishment area

- Services and activities too oriented towards spouses/partners who don't work and have children
- Not enough communication of what assistance is available.
- Good services but not enough people to deliver them
- When support services foster dependence. Support should focus on helping people to be less dependant on the ADF
- Insufficient support and services available in remote locations
- Superficial offers of support, and no support available when families try to access it during times of genuine need
- No response from DCO when telephone inquiries are made
- Support services are focused on crisis care for those with chronic coping problems and not focused enough on supporting those who have infrequent or intermittent needs.

Negative perceptions of Defence's support for families - Relating to leadership at senior Defence and regional levels

- Not advising deployment return dates early enough
- Unit/DCO information sessions for deployments held during work hours
- Lack of communication from units
- Units not including families in social functions
- Condoning of excessive drinking in many units
- Lack of predictability with regard to advising of deployment dates and return dates
- Long working hours
- No flexibility to adjust work hours to attend family commitments
- Compulsory social events after normal work hours, especially when cheap alcohol is supplied

Negative perceptions of Defence's support for families - Relating to ADF culture

- Members of dual ADF couples are expected to cope when their spouse/partner is away: A different expectation to that of civilian spouses/partners
- Serving members not informing their families enough about what services are available, Defence policies, conditions of service and entitlements
- Lack of unit-based community in the ACT
- Little acknowledgement of male spouses, spouses who are full-time employed professionals and childless couples
- Superficial messages that Defence values families that are inconsistent with actual experiences of Defence not being prepared to put family needs first
- Perceptions that a member lacks commitment to the ADF if they base career decisions on the interests of their family
- Assumptions that the non-ADF spouses and partners don't work and are available to stay home and care for sick children

Negative perceptions of Defence's support for families - Relating to other initiatives, forms of support and benefits to ADF families

- Removal of transfer clause for ADF spouses/partners in the Public Service Act – makes finding employment on relocation more difficult
- Spouses and partners not being able to attend psychology consultations when a member presents for relationship issues or issues that are impacting on the family

Perceptions of communication during deployments and other absences

All respondents excluding the single parent ADF member respondents were asked if they had any views in relation to the quality and quantity of communication between them and Defence while their spouse or partner has been away. This was asked to gain insight into perceptions of what forms of contact and support are preferred by spouses and partners while members are deployed or absent from the home for other forms of duty. Overall 47.2% (2599) of the respondents provided a response to this item, and most related to communication when members were absent on deployment.

Many respondents reported that they would like more communication from DCO, and their spouse/partner's unit (and not just when it is asked for). In contrast, many others reported that they only need to be reassured that they would be able to reliably contact DCO, NWCC, their spouse/partner, or their unit if there is an urgent need, and that they would receive assistance when it was sought.

Despite this, the majority of the comments provided indicate that no monthly next-of-kin contact from DCO and other contact from units during deployments were highly common, and that this was a significant source of dissatisfaction for the respondents.

Respondents appeared to highly value having contact from their spouse/partner's unit while they are deployed and liked to be provided with up to date information about their movements, the mission and dates of return. Respondents expressed frustration over the unpredictability of deployment and return dates.

Other comments from the respondents about communication related to the following issues:

- Some perceptions that “rear detail” members of deployed units tasked with contacting spouses and partners to offer information and support were untrained or unprepared for the task. However, other respondents expressed satisfaction with the support provided by Unit Welfare/Liaison Officers.
- Nature and quality of communication was very inconsistent across Services, regions and according to the reason for the absence.
- Little acknowledgement from DCO or unit of the stressors faced by spouses or partners who undergo pregnancy and childbirth while members are deployed.
- Spouses and partners of members who did not deploy with their posted unit (i.e. are seconded from elsewhere) or who were living in a location different to a member's posted unit reported feeling overlooked.
- Deployment information was often received by spouses and partners very late into the deployment.
- A few respondents expressed an expectation that Defence should provide practical help for domestic work such as gardening and appeared to be unaware of allowances during deployment that are provided to cover costs of paying for domestic services.

Despite the wording of the item relating to communication between spouses/partners and Defence, many respondents commented on the quality and quantity of their communication with their spouses and partners during deployments. The following issues were raised in relation to this:

- Satisfaction with the quality and quantity of communications during deployment appeared to differ according to the means of communication available (e.g. satellite phones, email, mobile phones, webcams, SKYPE¹), its reliability, the predictability of phone call timings, the expectations and preparedness of members and families, and individual preferences for various communication means.
- Some comments indicated that families who are more experienced with deployment may have more realistic expectations about communications and may therefore engage in more pre-deployment preparation (e.g. arranging internet access, budgeting for increased mobile phone costs, taking webcams or trying to normalise the expectation that communication may be short, infrequent and unreliable).

In brief, the comments from the respondents indicate that they value the following with regard to communicating with members who are deployed:

- Options with regard to means of communication
- Reliable communications technology, especially for members at sea
- Predictability of phone calls
- Increased time to talk on the phone
- Equity of access to satellite phones while at sea
- Reliable means of contacting a unit or other Defence representative for information for reassurance if families are unable to contact members on deployment

1. SKYPE is software that allows users to make telephone calls over the Internet.

SECTION 4: ABSENCE DUE TO DEPLOYMENT

Analysis of the patterns of responses relating to deployments indicates that between 66.1% (3694) and 68.6% (3838) of spouse/partner respondents (including dual ADF couples) had some experience of deployment. For single parent respondents, 62.1% (149) reported having some experience of deployment.

Of the 5509 married/partnered respondents, 9.8% (540) reported that their spouse or partner was deployed at the time of the survey.

Respondents were asked to indicate how many deployments of 30 days or longer their spouse or partner had been on, or how many they had been on (for single parents). The distribution of responses is displayed in Table 20.

Table 20 Responses to Question 4 Section B and Question 2 Section C: Number of deployments reported by spouses and partners¹ or single parents.

	Spouses and partners		Single parents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No deployments of 30 days or longer	119	3.2%	3	2.0%
1-5 deployments	2,614	69.2%	108	72.5%
6-10 deployments	530	14.0%	15	10.1%
11-15 deployments	179	4.7%	5	3.4%
16-20 deployments	113	3.0%	6	4.0%
More than 20 deployments	222	5.9%	12	8.1%
Total	3,777	100.0%	149	100.0%

Table 20 shows that over two-thirds (69.2%) of spouse and partner respondents and almost three-quarters (72.5%) of single parent respondents have experienced between one and five deployments. Experience of more than ten deployments was not uncommon, with 13.6% of spouse and partner respondents, and 15.5% of single parent respondents reporting experience of 11 or more deployments.

Married/partnered respondents (including dual ADF couples) were then asked to indicate how many nights their spouse or partner had been away as a result of deployment from September 2007 to September 2008 (the 12 months just passed). Single parents were also asked to indicate how many nights they had been away over the same time period as a result of deployment. Their responses are displayed in Table 21.

1. Throughout this section, 'spouses and partners' also includes dual ADF couples.

Table 21 Responses to Question 5 Section B and Question 3 Section C: Number of nights spent away as a result of deployment between September 2007 and September 2008

	Spouses and partners		Single parents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0 nights	1,635	44.3%	74	53.6%
1 night to 3 weeks	211	5.7%	11	8.0%
3-6 weeks	264	7.1%	5	3.6%
6-12 weeks	326	8.8%	8	5.8%
12-18 weeks	420	11.4%	10	7.2%
18-24 weeks	254	6.9%	3	2.2%
24-30 weeks	370	10.0%	24	17.4%
30-36 weeks	117	3.2%	Nil	Nil
36-42 weeks	52	1.4%	3	2.2%
42-52 weeks	45	1.2%	Nil	Nil
Total	3,694	100.0%	138	100.0%

Note: 11 of the single parent respondents did not answer this question. This may have been because they had not spent any time away from home during the specified period as a result of deployment.

Table 21 shows that while almost half (44.3%) of the spouse and partner respondents did not experience absence due to deployment over the previous year, around one-third (34.1%) reported that their spouse or partner had been away for between three and 12 months over the past year. Similar amounts of absence from home as a result of deployment was reported by the single parent respondents, with 29.0% reporting that they had been away for between three and 12 months over the past 12 months.

Differences in amount of time spent away from home for deployment from September 2007 to September 2008 according to Service were not pronounced.

In relation to the most recent, completed deployment they or their spouse/partner had been on, respondents were asked to indicate how much formal notice they were given prior to a deployment departure date. The distribution of responses is displayed in Table 22.

Table 22 Responses to Question 6 Section B and Question 4 Section C: Amount of notice given for most recent deployment.

	Spouses and partners		Single parents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than 2 weeks	756	20.0%	27	18.2%
Between 2 and 4 weeks	940	24.9%	28	18.9%
Between 5 weeks and 3 months	1,546	41.0%	72	48.6%
More than 3 months	530	14.1%	21	14.2%
Total	3,772	100.0%	148	100.0%

Note: One single parent respondent did not answer this question

Table 22 shows that 44.9% of the spouse/partner respondents reported that they received four or less weeks of notice before their spouse or partner's most recent deployment. For single parent respondents, 37.1% reported having four or less weeks' notice.

For the spouse/partner respondents, there were no pronounced differences between the reported amounts of notice prior to deployment according to Service.

Respondents with experience of deployments were also asked if they (for spouses and partners) or their next-of-kin had participated in a pre-deployment operational briefing (including a DCO education session). Their responses to this item are displayed in Table 23.

Table 23 Responses to Question 7 Section B and Question 5 Section C: Responses to whether respondents or their next-of-kin participated in a pre-deployment briefing.

	Spouses and partners		Next-of-kin of single parents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes - found it useful	564	15.2%	18	12.1%
Yes - did not find it useful	187	5.0%	3	2.0%
No - was not aware that I/ they could go	2,430	65.4%	122	81.9%
No - although was aware that I/they could go	535	14.4%	6	4.0%
Total	3,716	100.0%	149	100.0%

As displayed in Table 23, the majority of respondents reported that they (64.5%), or their next-of-kin (81.9%) had not participated in a pre-deployment operational briefing as they were not aware that they were able to attend. Of those respondents who did attend a pre-deployment briefing, 75.1% reported that they found it useful.

Respondents were subsequently asked if they or their next of kin had been contacted by their spouse/partner's unit or their unit during their absence on deployment. Their responses are displayed in Table 24.

Table 24 Responses to Question 8 Section B and Question 6 Section C: Responses to whether spouses/partners or next of kin had received contact from the relevant ADF unit during a deployment.

	Spouses and partners		Next-of-kin of single parents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	1,927	50.4%	44	29.5%
No	1,900	49.6%	93	62.4%
Unsure	N/A	N/A	12	8.1%
Total	3,827	100.0%	149	100.0%

Table 24 shows that while around half (50.4%) of the spouse/partner respondents were contacted by their spouse/partner's unit during a deployment, a further 49.6% of the spouse and partner respondents reported that they received no such contact. For the single parent respondents, 62.4% reported that their next-of-kin had not been contacted by their unit during their absence on deployment.

Respondents were asked about whether they or their next-of-kin had received any contact from DCO during the most recent deployment. Their responses are displayed in Table 25.

Table 25 Responses to Question 9 Section B and Question 7 Section C: Responses to whether spouses/partners or next of kin had received contact from DCO during a deployment.

	Spouses and partners		Single parents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	1,076	28.1%	29	19.5%
No	2,302	60.2%	78	52.3%
Unsure	258	6.7%	26	17.4%
No - At my spouse/partner's or NOK's request	28	0.7%	4	2.7%
No - At my request	91	2.4%	9	6.0%
No - At my spouse/partner's or NOK's AND my request	69	1.8%	3	2.0%
Total	3,824	100.0%	149	100.0%

Table 25 shows that 65.1% of the spouse and partner respondents reported not receiving contact from DCO during the most recent deployment. Of those who did not have any contact with DCO, 7.5% reported that this was at their or their spouse/partner's request. At least 4.2% of all the spouse and partner respondents requested no contact from DCO. For single parent respondents, 63.0% reported that their next-of-kin received no contact from DCO during their most recent deployment. The responses from the single parents indicate that 4.7% of the next-of-kin of these respondents did not wish to be contacted, while 6.0% of the single parent respondents reported that they did not want DCO to contact their next-of-kin.

Relating to pre-deployment preparation, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they had undertaken any financial and legal (e.g. wills) planning prior to deployment. Their responses are displayed in Table 26.

Table 26 Responses to Question 10 Section B and Question 8 Section C: Responses to whether respondents had undertaken financial and legal planning prior to deployment.

	Spouses and partners		Single parents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	2,458	64.0%	86	57.7%
No	1,380	36.0%	63	42.3%
Total	3,838	100.0%	149	100.0%

As displayed in Table 26, 64.0% of the spouse and partner respondents, and 57.7% of the single parent respondents had undertaken some financial and/or legal planning prior to a deployment.

Attitudes to operational tempo

All respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that their spouse/partner's or their unit's operational commitments were too high. The distribution of their responses is displayed in Figures 22 and 23.

Figure 22 Responses to Question 11 Section B: Spouse/partner attitudes toward current operational tempo.

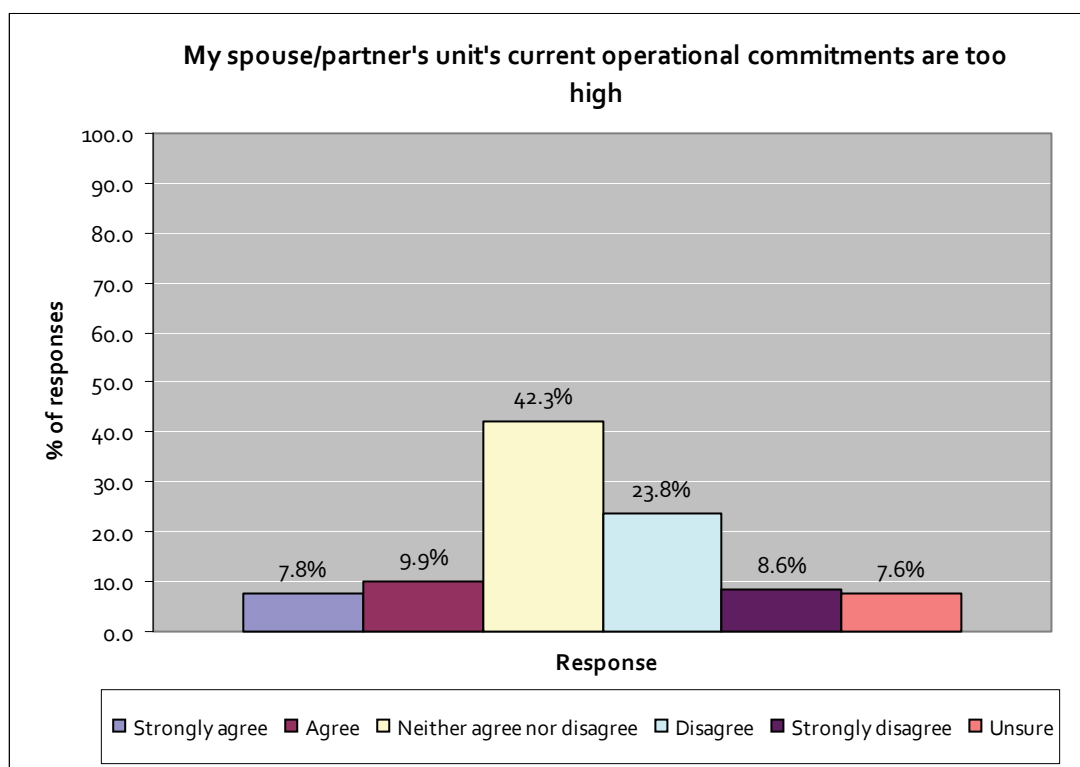


Figure 22 shows that 42.3% of the spouse and partner respondents appeared to be ambivalent about operational tempo, as distinct from the 7.6% of respondents who reported being unsure of their views. Almost one-third (32.4%) of the respondents disagreed that operational commitments were too high, while 17.7% agreed or strongly agreed that operational commitments were too high.

Figure 23 Responses to Question 13 Section C: Single parent respondent attitudes towards current operational tempo.

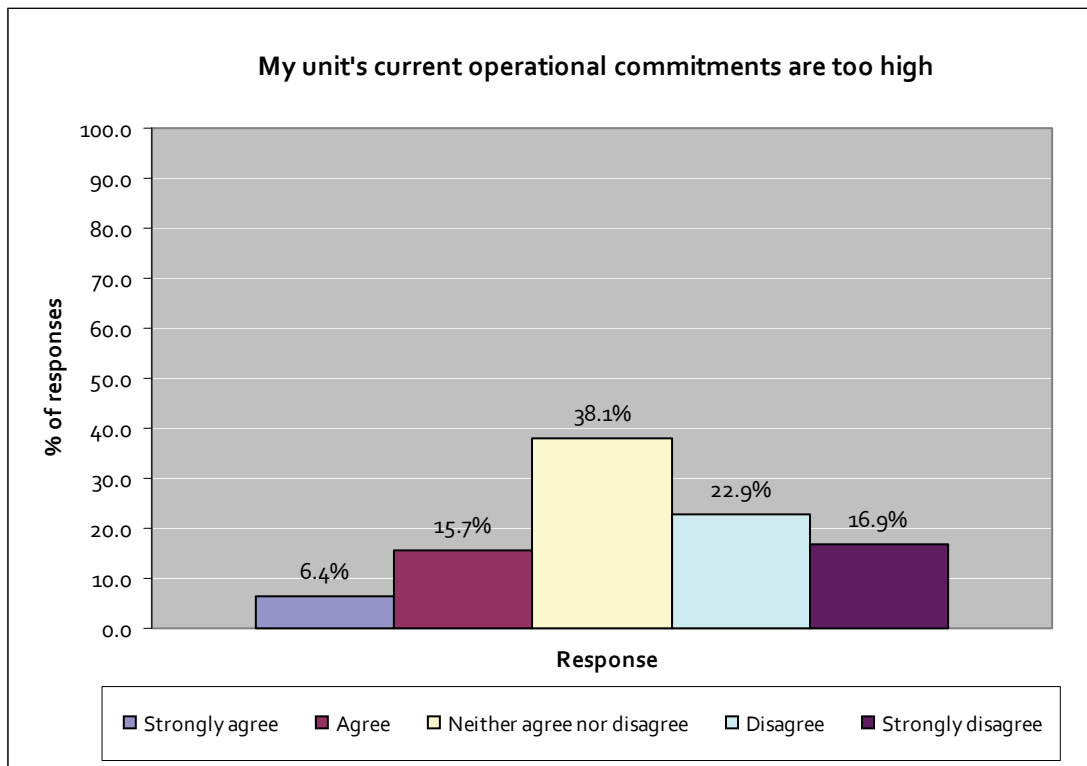


Figure 23 indicates that for the single parent respondents, ambivalence over operational tempo was also common, with 38.1% of single parent respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing that their unit's operational commitments were too high. A further 39.8% of the single parent respondents disagreed that their unit's operational commitments were too high.

Survey respondents were asked what they considered to be an acceptable length of time, in months, for any deployment to last (regardless of whether there was mid-deployment leave or not). Their responses to this item are displayed in Figure 24.

Figure 24 Responses to Question 27 Section A: Respondent preference for length of deployments.

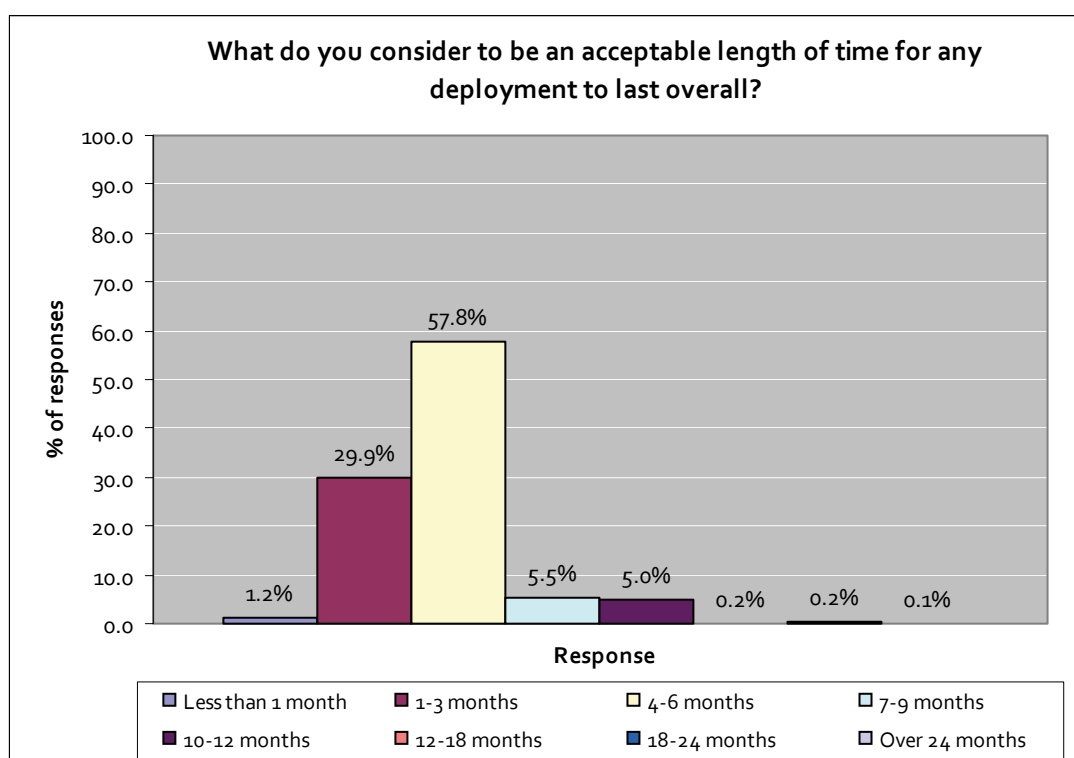


Figure 24 shows that over one-quarter (29.9%) of the respondents believed one to three months was an acceptable, continuous length of time for ADF members to be absent from the family for operational service. A further 57.8% believed four to six months was an acceptable length of time for ADF members to be away on operational service. A small proportion (10.5%) of the respondents reported that seven to 12 months was an acceptable length of deployment. While not displayed in Figure 24, a total of 6.2% (358) of the respondents reported that they were unsure about their preference for deployment length.

For spouses and partners who were not permanent ADF members themselves, 56.0% reported a preference for deployment length to be between four and six months. This compared to 68.1% of dual ADF couple respondents and 65.6% of single parent respondents who reported the same.

For respondents who were spouses and partners of Air Force members (excluding dual ADF couples), 48.5% reported a preference that deployments last between one and three months. For respondents who were spouses and partners of Navy members 40.4% also reported a preference that deployments last between one and three months. This is in contrast to the 19.1% of respondents who were spouses and partners of Army members who reported the same. Also, while 65.9% of respondents who were spouses/partners of Army members reported a preference for four to six month deployments, this compared to 49.0% for Navy spouse/partner respondents and 44.3% of Air Force spouse/partner respondents.

Dual ADF couples (68.1%) and single parent respondents (65.6%) were more likely to demonstrate a preference for deployments of four to six months than spouses and partners who were not ADF members themselves (56.0%).

Those respondents who were permanent Army members themselves (dual ADF couples and single parents) were less likely to report one to three months as their preferred length of deployment (7.5% of these respondents), when compared to Navy and Air Force respondents (26.1% and 26.4% respectively).

This data demonstrates that spouses and partners of Navy and Air Force members (excluding dual ADF couples) were more likely to prefer deployment lengths of between one to three months than their Army counterparts. Additionally, the spouses and partners of Army members were more likely to prefer four to six month deployments than both the spouses and partners of Navy and Air Force members.

There were no systematic differences in preference for length of deployment according to employment status, length of service, age, and whether respondents have dependants or not.

In order to obtain an indication of preferences for operational tempo, respondents were asked what they considered to be an acceptable length of time that should pass between returning from a deployment of at least three months' duration, and a subsequent deployment. Their responses are displayed in Figure 25.

Figure 25 Responses to Question 28 Section A: Respondent preference for length of time between deployments.

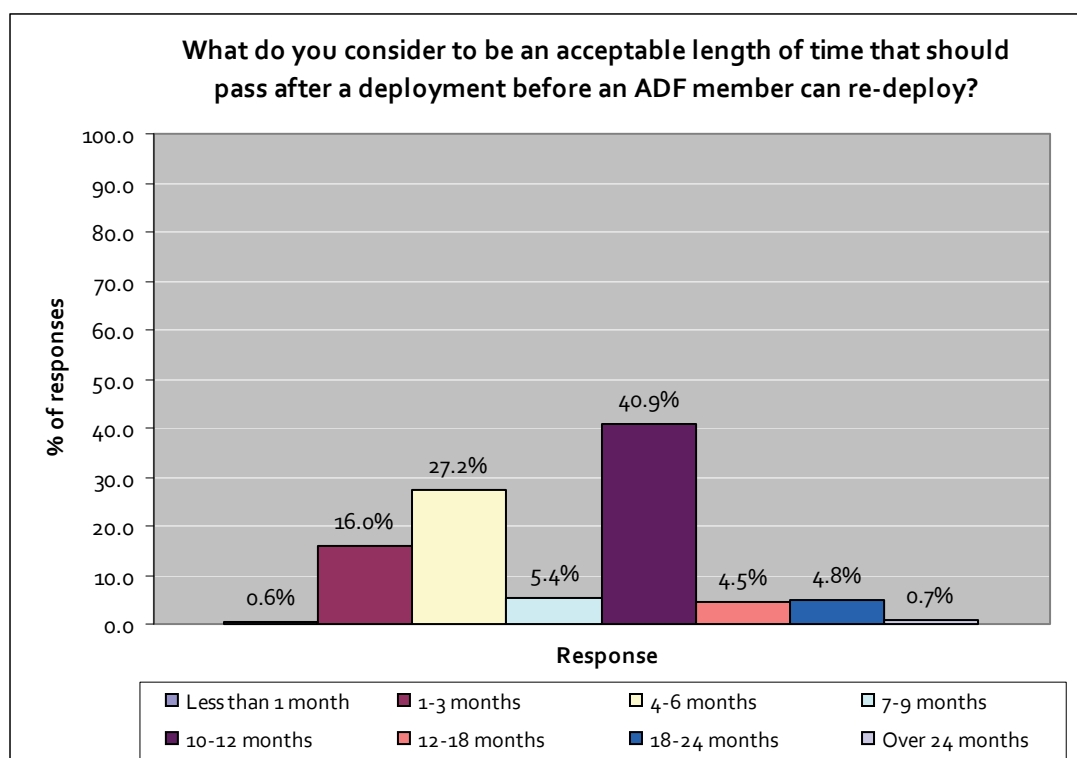


Figure 25 indicates that the majority of respondents (40.9%) believed ten to 12 months was an acceptable length of time that should pass between deployments. A further 27.2% believed four to six months was an acceptable length of time between deployments. While not shown in Figure 25, a total of 5.2% (297) of the respondents reported that they were unsure about their preference for length of time between deployments.

For respondents who were spouses and partners of Navy members (excluding dual ADF couples), 37.8% reported a preference for a minimum of one to three months to pass between deployments. This is in contrast to the 10.8 % of respondents who were spouses and partners of Army members, and the 13.4% of spouses and partners of Air Force members who reported the same. Spouses and partners of Navy respondents (excluding dual ADF couples) also were less likely to report 10-12 months as an acceptable length of time between deployments than other respondents. While 22.7% of Navy spouse/partner respondents indicated 10-12 months, this compared to 46.4% of Army spouse/partner respondents, and 41.0% of Air Force spouse/partner respondents.

There were no pronounced differences in responses to this item according to rank group, employment status, length of service, age and whether respondents had dependants or not.

Respondents with experience of deployments were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt that they had enough information about aspects of deployment. The proportion of the respondents who indicated 'Yes' or 'No' to these items are displayed in Table 27, listed in order of the highest to lowest proportion of 'No' responses.

Table 27 Responses to Question 29 Section A: Whether respondents feel that they have enough information in regard to aspects of deployment.

	Yes-Enough information	No-Not enough information
	Percent	Percent
Date of return from deployment	46.2%	47.6%
Where to find information about the operation in which your spouse/partner is involved	39.1%	47.2%
Who to contact at your spouse/partner's unit	50.2%	40.9%
How to cope with separation	55.2%	34.9%
Role of the National Welfare Coordination Centre	48.6%	34.2%
Pay and deployment related allowances	57.0%	33.7%
How to get access to support	57.4%	31.8%
Date of deployment	63.5%	30.8%
Date/s of mid deployment leave	32.9%	30.2%
Role of the unit/ship on deployment	60.3%	28.4%
Role of the Defence Community Organisation	60.0%	28.0%
How to manage your children's reactions	39.0%	25.8%
Location of unit/ship	66.4%	24.4%
Other	5.1%	10.1%

Table 27 shows that, date of return from deployment was the most common aspect of deployment about which respondents did not feel that they had enough information (47.6% of respondents reporting 'No' for this item). However, 46.2% of respondents reported that they felt they had enough information about this. Also, a high proportion of respondents did not feel that they had enough information regarding how to contact their spouse/partner's unit (40.9%). Respondents appeared to feel most well-informed about the location of units/ships (66.4%), date of deployment (63.5%), role of the unit/ship (60.3%), and role of DCO (60.0%).

'Other' things about which respondents wanted more information included the following:

- Access to practical help around the home
- Welfare and safety of ADF members on deployment
- How to contact spouse/partner on deployment
- Knowing rights with regard to housing policies and dealing with DHA
- Entitlements for families of deployed personnel, especially when on extended deployments
- Psychological adjustment post-deployment, and post-operational psychological support policies and practices
- How to contact spouse/partner's unit, and emergency contact procedures
- Who to contact to resolve pay issues

'Other' things about which respondents felt informed included:

- Developing a relationship with spouse/partner's unit
- How to develop a network of ADF families

SECTION 5: ABSENCE FOR OTHER MILITARY DUTIES

Married/partnered respondents (including dual ADF couples) were asked to indicate how many nights their spouse or partner had been away as a result of all military duties (excluding deployments) from September 2007 to September 2008. Single parents were also asked to indicate how many nights they had been away over the same time period as a result of all military duties except for deployments. These lengths of absence represented total amount of time spent away from home for continuous and/or non-continuous periods. Their responses are displayed in Table 28.

Table 28 Responses to Question 2 Section B and Question 1 Section C: Number of nights spent away as a result of all military duties excluding deployments between September 2007 and September 2008.

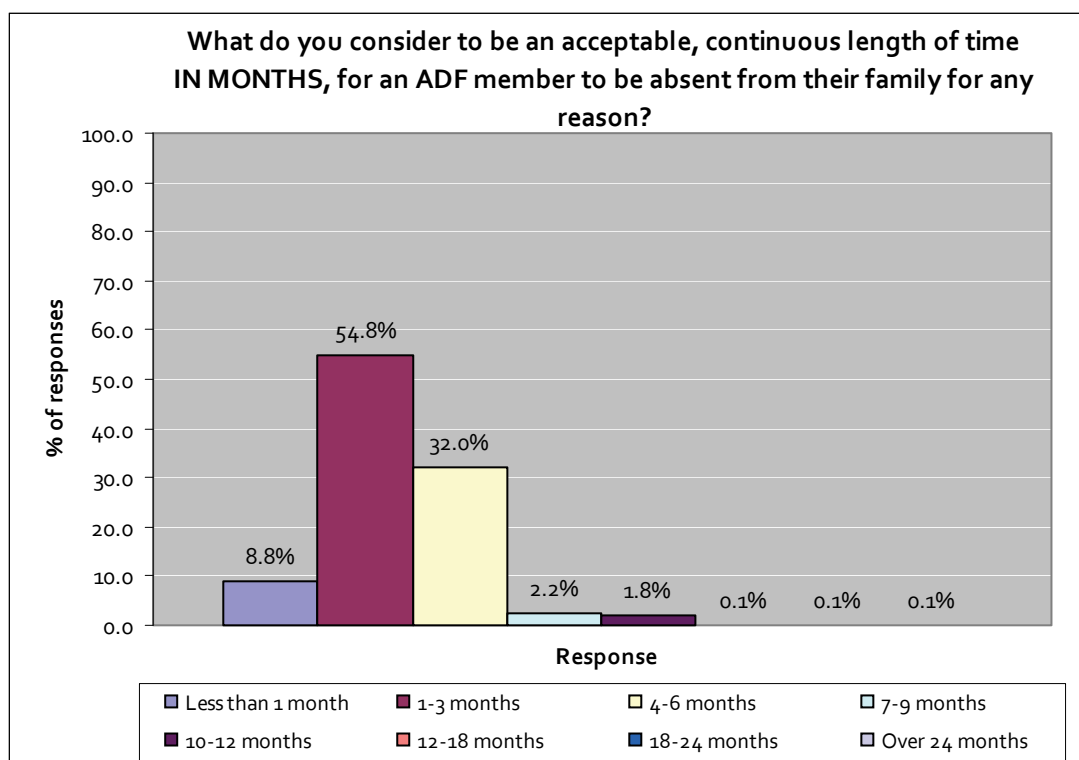
	Spouses and partners		Single parents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0 Nights	226	4.3%	18	7.7%
1 night to 3 weeks	1,152	21.8%	78	33.5%
3-6 weeks	1,014	19.2%	44	18.9%
6-12 weeks	1,191	22.5%	52	22.3%
12-18 weeks	845	16.0%	22	9.4%
18-24 weeks	339	6.4%	5	2.1%
24-30 weeks	292	5.5%	6	2.6%
30-36 weeks	109	2.1%	3	1.3%
36-42 weeks	52	1.0%	3	1.3%
42-52 weeks	74	1.4%	2	0.9%
Total	5,294	100.0%	233	100.0%

Note: 215 of the married/partnered respondents and seven of the single parent respondents did not answer this question

Table 28 shows that for married/partnered respondents, 63.5% reported that their spouses and partners had been away from home for between one night and 12 weeks from September 2007 to September 2008 (the year just passed). A total of 10.0% of the spouse/partner respondents reported that over the course of that year, their spouses and partners had spent six months or more away from home. For single parent respondents, 74.7% reported that they had been absent from home for 12 weeks or less over the previous year.

Survey respondents were asked what they considered to be an acceptable, continuous length of time, in months, for any ADF member to be absent from their family, for any reason. Their responses to this item are displayed in Figure 26.

Figure 26 Responses to Question 26 Section A: Respondents' attitude as to acceptable continuous length of time ADF members are absent from home for any reason.



Note: 391 respondents did not answer this question

Figure 26 shows that over one-half (54.8%) of the respondents reported one to three months as an acceptable, continuous length of time for ADF members to be away from home on military duties. Almost one-third (32.0%) reported that four to six months was acceptable to them.

While 57.2% of spouse/partner respondents (excluding dual ADF couples) reported they would accept one to three months continuous absence for any type of duty, this compared to 43.3% of dual ADF couples and 38.5% of single parent respondents who reported the same. A higher proportion (42.7%) of dual ADF couple respondents reported between four and six months as an acceptable length of time for continuous absences, when compared to spouse/partner and single parent respondents (30.2% and 38.5% respectively).

For those respondents who were spouses/partners of Army members (excluding dual ADF couples), 50.5% reported they would accept continuous absences of between one and three months, compared to 63.9% of both Navy and Air Force spouse/partner respondents. Conversely, while 36.3% of respondents who were spouses/partners of Army members (excluding dual ADF couples) reported a preference that continuous absences be no longer than four to six months, this compared to 26.7% for Navy and 22.6% for Air Force spouse/partner respondents.

For respondents who were dual ADF couples and single parents, a mostly similar pattern of responses according to Service was observed. For respondents who were permanent Army members, 33.9% reported a continuous absence of between one and three months was acceptable, compared to 52.7% of the Navy respondents and 45.1% of Air Force respondents. In contrast, while 32.1% of Navy respondents reported they would accept between four and six months' continuous absence, this compared to 45.6% of Army respondents and 44.8% of Air Force respondents who reported the same.

Differences in acceptability of length of continuous absence for any type or military duty according to rank group, length of service, employment status and whether respondents had dependants or not were not pronounced.

SECTION 6: REACTIONS AND COPING STRATEGIES WHEN ADF MEMBERS ARE ABSENT FROM HOME

Reactions of spouses and partners during absences of six weeks or more for military duties

Those respondents who indicated that their spouse or partner had ever been absent for six weeks or more were asked to identify up to three main stressors or challenges that they experienced at any stage of the most recent period of absence (before, during or after). Of these respondents, 19.3% indicated that they had not experienced anything that they would consider to have been stressful or challenging.

Analysis of the types of stressors and challenges reported by spouses and partners did not indicate clear qualitative differences between those respondents whose spouse/partner had been absent for deployment, or absent for other types of military duty.

The types of stressors and challenges reported by spouse/partner respondents were varied. However, there was a clear theme that dealing with stressors and everyday demands alone, without the emotional and practical support of spouses and partners was the most common stressor. While loneliness itself was reported as a source of stress for many respondents, it appeared that having to cope with both typical everyday demands and acute life stressors alone magnified the impact of those demands and stressors.

The following everyday demands and acute stressors were reported by respondents as being exacerbated by the absence of their spouse/partner:

- Pregnancy and birth
- Maintain the home while juggling work and other commitments
- Maintaining a routine
- Dealing with major events (e.g. deaths, car accidents)
- Making important decision by oneself
- Having to plan major events like weddings alone
- Everyday tasks (e.g. shopping)
- Financial concerns
- Not feeling safe in the house at night by self
- Having to deal with employment issues alone and feeling as though they can't worry their spouses and partners about them while they are on operations
- Moving, selling, or buying houses
- Spouse/partner pay not being allotted on time
- Dealing with inflexible work arrangements
- Managing DHA requirements
- Having to deal with contracts (e.g. phones, insurance, internet) that are in spouse or partners' name and not being able to do something that needs to be done as their signature/approval is needed
- Lack of communication and intimacy with deployed spouse/partner
- Coping with the feeling that the absence is undermining trust in the relationship

Along with from the overriding theme of having to adjust to being alone, respondents reported a host of other aspects of being separated from their spouse/partner that they found to be stressful or challenging. The general themes and specific issues are described in the following paragraphs.

Respondent comments about coping with absence - Social Networks

- Getting posted just before deployment leaving the spouse or partner with no social network
- Feelings of alienation, a sense that non-military people just don't understand
- Loneliness and isolation. Being alone at night magnified this
- No family or friends in posted location to rely on, especially when pregnant
- Boredom

Respondent comments about coping with absence - Health related issues

- Pregnancy
- Dealing with ill parents and/or children
- Depression and stress
- Separation anxiety
- Self being injured/ill and coping alone
- Being unable to relax and sleep well at night
- Having to be "everything" placing a strain on one's health

Respondent comments about coping with absence - Fears for partner

- Safety/welfare
- Their location
- Their workload
- Generally just missing them
- Hearing about deaths and not getting information soon enough
- Not being allowed to know anything

Respondent comments about coping with absence - Communication

- Worrying about how to contact them if needed
- Unreliable communication or lack of communication
- Emails stopped/delayed suddenly without any notice
- Hearing about deaths in spouse/partner's unit in the media and wondering how their deployed spouse/partner is coping
- Not enough communication from Defence/feelings of alienation from Defence
- Media reports about action in spouses vicinity and not being told anything by Defence

Respondent comments about coping with absence - Pre-absence

- Requirement to work long hours prior to deployment, leaving little time for family time and family preparation
- Deployments being advised at very short notice and having to rearrange or cancel important events
- Lack of time to prepare and plan

Respondent comments about coping with absence - Unpredictability of departure and return dates

- Lack of reliable information about dates of departure, return and Relief out of Country leave (ROCL)
- Having to cancel trips because of changes to ROCL
- Constant changes of return dates and impact on family's ability to prepare for the return

Respondent comments about coping with absence - Returning home

- Coping with own readjustment while spouse/partner is also readjusting
- Lack of adequate time off work upon return
- Getting used to having them home again
- Ambivalent feelings from the ADF member about being home again
- Re-establishing the spouse/partner relationship
- Learning how to prepare children and self mentally and emotionally
- Uncertainty as to how long they are home for this time – worry as to when they will need to go away again
- Understanding the psychological adjustment process for ADF members and worry about how they have changed psychologically
- Disruption to the routine that had been established by spouses/partners and children during the absence

Respondent comments about coping with absence - Children's reactions and parenting

- Dealing with the demands of parenting alone
- Childcare – financial strain of increased childcare costs as its needed more often when parenting alone
- Lack of time to self
- Children miss deployed parent and wont sleep alone
- Behavioural changes in children as a reaction to sudden departure of a parent
- Negative impact on children's performance and behaviour at school
- Telling children the number or days until parent comes home but the date of return keeps changing

For those respondents who reported stressors or challenges during an absence of their spouse or partner, they were asked to rate each as to how difficult or easy they found it to cope with them.

Of the respondents who reported experiencing things that they considered to be stressful or challenging, overall, over 80.0% rated them as either 'difficult' or 'very difficult' with which to cope.¹ For those spouse/partner respondents who reported that their spouse or partner was deployed at the time of the survey, their ratings of the ease or difficulty of coping were virtually the same as those for all other spouse/partner respondents. Among the respondents who reported that they found it either 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to cope, lack of predictability in timing, length of absences, and feelings of isolation appeared to exacerbate their adjustment difficulties.

Coping while ADF members are away – What differentiates those spouses/partners who find it difficult or easy?

A series of analyses were conducted to examine whether differences existed between those respondents who reported that they had found it difficult to cope, and those that had found it easy to cope with the stressors and challenges associated with the absence of their spouse/partner for military duties.

Respondents who provided a rating of how they coped with stressors or challenges relating to the absence of their ADF spouse/partner for military duties were classified into one of three categories; high coping, moderate coping and low coping. This was based on their aggregated ratings of how easy or difficult it was for them to cope with stressors and challenges associated with the absence of their spouse/partner.

- Those respondents who were permanent ADF members themselves (dual ADF couples) were significantly more likely to report that coping was easy, whereas non-ADF member respondents were more likely to report difficulty coping².
- Respondents in full-time employment were significantly more likely to report that coping was easy, and respondents in part-time employment were more likely to report that coping was difficult³.
- Respondents with dependants were significantly more likely to report difficulty coping, while respondents with no dependants were more likely to report that coping was easy⁴.

1. Readers should note that this figure represents respondent ratings of things that they considered to be challenging or stressful, rather than a rating of how they coped with absence in general. Therefore, they are not necessarily a global indicator of how respondents coped with absence. This caveat should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings on differences between respondents who coped easily with stressors and challenges and those who found it difficult to cope with stressors and challenges.

2. $\chi^2(2) = 10.72, p=0.005$

3. $\chi^2(4) = 15.97, p=0.003$

4. $\chi^2(2) = 22.60, p=0.000$

- Respondents aged over 40 years were significantly more likely to report that they found it easy to cope with the stressors and challenges of absence than respondents aged under 40 years¹.
- Compared to other respondents, those who reported that they didn't go to a pre-deployment briefing even though they knew they could, and respondents who attended a briefing and found it useful were significantly more likely to report that they found it easy to cope with the stressors of absence. In contrast, respondents who reported that they attended a briefing but did not find it useful, and respondents who reported that they did not attend a briefing as they were unaware they could attend were significantly more likely to report difficulty coping².
- Those respondents who reported that they did not attend pre-deployment briefings even though they knew they could, yet still reported that they coped easily with absence are likely to have developed coping skills, possibly from greater experience of military life and from life experience in general. This is reinforced by the finding that respondents aged over 40 were more likely to report coping easily with absence.

How the spouse and partner respondents coped

Spouse and partner respondents (including those who had reported that they had not experienced anything that they considered to be stressful or challenging during a recent absence of their spouse/partner for six weeks), were asked to list up to three of the most useful strategies that they had employed to help them cope when their spouse or partner was away. Analysis of their responses indicates that the majority of respondents reported adaptive strategies, while others acknowledged that they didn't cope well emotionally or that they engaged in maladaptive activities.

Adaptive strategies reported by the respondents included:

- Counselling
- Spending more time with friends and family
- Physical exercise with and without children
- Arranging more social contact with existing and new friends
- Having a challenging and busy occupation
- Maintaining routines
- Taking up further education
- Changing priorities in life, seeking flexibility at work and assistance from extended family to attend to issues otherwise attended to by deployed spouse
- Arranging for friends to stay
- Concentrating on hobbies
- Taking trips home to see family
- Using the time to give pets more attention
- Making contact with supportive Defence members, social groups, friends who also had partner on deployment at the same time
- Participation in social activities such as informal sports
- Routine weekly telephone calls with spouse with a written list of family issues to discuss

1. $\chi^2(2) = 7.91, p=0.019$

2. $\chi^2(6) = 21.60, p=0.001$

- Accessing support from DCO
- Taking the time to focus on personal goals and projects
- Planning and preparing to manage family finances and other personal administration on own
- Arranging to visit and stay with family
- Focus on work and professional development, doing overtime
- Focusing on spiritual development, support from a church and spiritualism as a way to cope
- Using Defence funded reunion travel as well as being prepared to self fund travel
- Attending Defence run information nights
- Writing lists and organising home responsibilities
- Becoming well-informed about spouse/partner's activities, location, mission
- Being positive about ability to get used to the absence
- Being prepared to make sacrifices to have reunion visits
- Seeking formal mental health support
- Counting down the 'sleeps' until return home
- Talking to friends/family and Defence liaison teacher at school
- Getting extra home help for cleaning and ironing
- Switching to part-time or flexible work hours
- Accessing Veterans' Affairs support division
- Going to the regular (fortnightly), information briefs offered by the unit
- Taking time off work for personal time and arranging more quality time with children
- Cleaning and re-organising the home
- Arranging occasional care for children for personal respite
- Craft activities
- Journal writing
- 'Retail therapy'
- Asking spouse/partner's chain of command for help in understanding housing and relocation policies
- Acknowledging and expressing negative emotions as normal
- Avoiding media reports about operations overseas
- Encouraging the children to adopt more responsibility around the home
- Giving the spouse or partner space when they arrived home
- Taking steps to improve physical security at home

Many respondents reported that having regular and reliable communication, via email, phone, SKYPE, with the deployed spouse/partner was helpful.

Some respondents reported that they 'scaled down' their commitments by delaying or cancelling activities, travel, domestic work, or other personal administration, in order to reduce the demands on their time or sense of burden about managing their lives alone.

Strategies reported by the respondents likely to have been maladaptive in the short and/or long term included excessive (binge drinking) while out with friends, drinking alcohol to aid sleep and reduce stress, smoking cigarettes, and taking sedatives to aid sleep.

Reactions of single parents during absences of six weeks or more for military duties

Those single parent respondents who indicated that they had ever been absent for six weeks or more were asked to identify up to three main stressors or challenges that they experienced at any stage of the most recent period of absence (before, during or after). Of these respondents, 36.0% indicated that they had not experienced anything that they would consider to have been stressful or challenging.

Analysis of the types of stressors and challenges reported by single parents did not reveal that there were differences between those respondents whose most recent absence was for deployment, or for other types of military duty.

The types of stressors and challenges reported by single parents represented six broad themes, as described below.

Single parent respondent comments about coping with absence - Preparation for the absence

- Lack of time to prepare self and children before leaving

Single parent respondent comments about coping with absence - Welfare of Child

- Impact of parent's absence on children's schooling/education
- Concern about how they are coping with the other parent
- Concern about how they are coping with other people
- Emotional security of children
- Maintaining contact with child
- Stressful phone calls
- Time to make calls and finding appropriate time to make the calls
- Providing for them financially
- Worry about children growing up too much during the absence
- Not being able to discuss daily work with children
- Separation anxiety
- Not being able to be classed as MWD(U) so not being able to get Defence entitlements
- Worry about disruptions to the child's routine
- Worry about children's general health and safety
- Feelings of guilt at leaving child alone

Single parent respondent comments about coping with absence - Welfare of self and those caring for children

- Worried about the other parent's ability to cope with the child
- Worried about friends/family's ability to cope with the child
- Having parents die while away
- Extended family go through something (natural disaster/death) and not being able to do anything to help
- Being in a dangerous place/personal security
- Marriage breakdown while away

Single parent respondent comments about coping with absence - Concern for house and finances

- Security of the house and the people in it (not being able to do anything if something went wrong)
- Maintenance of the home in absence
- Making arrangements for mail, garbage collection
- Making arrangements for others to pay bills and conduct personal administration
- Concerns about the availability of money to pay for school and childcare fees

Single parent respondent comments about coping with absence - Returning Home

- Changes in children during absence
- Worry that their children will not recognise them
- Worry that their children may reject them or lose their attachment to them
- Concerns about readjusting to the parenting role alone again
- Finding their place and role in family unit and extended family again
- Having to work immediately following return home

For those single parent respondents who reported stressors or challenges during their most recent absence of six weeks or more, they were asked to rate each as to how difficult or easy they found it to cope with them.

Of the single parent respondents who reported experiencing things that they considered to be stressful or challenging, overall, over three-quarters rated them as either 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to cope with¹.

1. Readers should note that these figures represent respondent ratings of things that they considered to be challenging or stressful, rather than a rating of how they coped with absence in general. Therefore, they are not necessarily a global indicator of how respondents coped with absence. This caveat should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings on differences between respondents who coped easily with stressors and challenges and those who found it difficult to cope with stressors and challenges.

The high proportion of respondents who reported that the stressors and challenges they experienced while absent from home highlights the salience of the single parents' concerns about the welfare of their children and the stability and quality of care arrangements for their children while they are away. It is reasonable to infer from the comments made by single parent respondents that, apart from worrying about the impact of the absence on their children, they also have the added concerns arising from whether their children will adapt to temporary care arrangements if they are different to what their children have experienced before. Their worries may also be associated with having no-one caring for their house or personal administration during their absence.

Coping with being away – What differentiates those single parents who find it difficult or easy?

A series of analyses were conducted to examine whether differences existed between those respondents who reported that they had found it difficult to cope, and those that had found it easy to cope with the stressors and challenges associated with being away from their children/families for military duties.

Respondents who provided a rating of how they coped with stressors or challenges relating to being away were classified into one of three categories; high coping, moderate coping and low coping. This was based on their aggregated ratings of how easy or difficult it was for them to cope with stressors and challenges associated with being away.

These analyses did not reveal any significant associations between ease or difficulty of coping with absence, and Service, rank group, age group, length of service, gender, education level and number of deployments.

How the single parent respondents coped

Respondents (including those who had reported that they had not experienced anything that they considered to be stressful or challenging during a recent absence for duty for six weeks or more), were asked to list up to three of the most useful strategies that they had employed to help them cope when required to be away from home. Analysis of their responses indicates that the majority of respondents reported proactive strategies, while a minority reported that they engaged in maladaptive coping methods.

Adaptive strategies reported by the single parent respondents included:

- Discussing their thoughts and feelings with other ADF members
- Taking photos of children away with them
- Consoling oneself with thoughts that time away from children will be limited
- Exercise
- Socialising and spending time with other people
- Maintaining a sense of humour and having realistic expectations
- Getting enough sleep
- Taking time for rest
- Maintaining lots of contact with family and friends
- Listening to music
- Meditation

- Doing as much pre-absence planning as possible to ensure needs of child are met
- Anger management training
- Seeking formal assistance and counselling before the problem gets worse
- Taking children's drawings and artwork
- Planning family holidays
- Reading
- Prioritising family time over everything whenever possible
- Discussing plans openly with children
- Doing a 'count down' of days away
- Dealing with one problem at a time
- Seeking help from chaplains
- Taking time to spend on hobbies and sports
- Taking a hard but loving line on return and stepping back into that role slowly
- Having back up plan in place for as many contingencies as possible to reduce uncertainty
- Not worrying about things outside of one's control
- Acceptance of the circumstances
- Email, phone, SKYPE¹ and written correspondence
- Keeping in contact no matter how brief and keeping all communication positive
- Sending gifts to children

Some respondents reported that smoking, and binge drinking were used to cope with absence from their children. Another respondent reported that they would try to avoid going on deployments if possible, while another reported that their plans to leave the ADF was their solution to the problem of being away from their children too often.

Some respondents reported that they would avoid thinking of their children by focusing on their work, and trying to ignore worries or other negative emotions. One respondent reported that they gained benefit from having courses being offered locally. This highlights that flexible training and education options, and decentralisation of training are likely to be of benefit to many single parent ADF members.

1. SKYPE is software that allows users to make telephone calls over the Internet.

Respondent views on what Defence can do to support families during periods of absence

Respondents were asked to describe any additional information or assistance that might assist them in coping with absence due to military duties. Their responses generally fell into seven broad themes, although there were other comments that fell outside of these broad categorisations. The themes, content of comments and some quotes are provided below.

Views on what Defence could do to help during periods of absence - Accessing practical help for domestic work and home maintenance

- Assistance with handy-man jobs, especially installation of a security system
- Mowing/gardening assistance
- Access to help/contacts for 'male' chores around house - car maintenance, lawns/gardens etc. Not necessarily funded, but who to contact if not in service residence
- Better DHA response to maintenance issues

Views on what Defence could do to help during periods of absence - Parenting support and Childcare

- Playgroups/morning teas
- Improving access to and affordability of childcare so spouses/partners can work
- Establish support groups for the children as this allows them to identify with others that are in the same situation
- Babysitting services within the home for 'alone time' for caring parents
- Education as to how to help children adjust to a parent being away
- An anonymous parent support line (24 hours) with a purely Defence focus
- Defence sponsored activities for children such as movie nights
- Deployment information packs for children with age appropriate activities and information
- Improving access to occasional and respite care. Provision of better information to help people find occasional care services
- Provision of Defence sponsored occasional care centres near major Defence establishments
- Emergency childcare for when lone parents are too unwell to care for their children
- Recognition that mothers go away and that fathers are often the lone parents at home
- Provision of more communications suitable for children about what their parents are doing on operations

Views on what Defence could do to help during periods of absence - Defence family support policies, practices and programs

- Specific support programs and funding for spouses/partners who live in areas with no families.
- More contact from Unit Welfare Officers or Liaison Officers
- More opportunities to engage with spouse/partner's posted unit
- Resilience training/development for families - proactively from joining the ADF or marrying an ADF member.
- Offers of discounted access to children's attractions
- Access to free or inexpensive individual counselling services for spouses/partners and children
- Increased pay and allowances

- Defence and unit sponsored Family Days where information about current operations, support services and programs are offered, especially in remote localities
- Improved access to relationship counselling
- Shorter deployments
- Tax and financial advice
- Calls returned from DHA
- More acknowledgement to families from COs about the sacrifice they make
- Regular funded reunion travel - funding for spouse/partner to visit relatives family for additional support

Views on what Defence could do to help during periods of absence - Support from DCO and ADF units

- Contact from DCO and units when spouse or partner is deployed. Removing the option for ADF members to have their spouses/partners removed from DCO's contact list.
- DCO to host events that are not focused on families with children
- Calls returned from DCO
- More opportunities to attend seminars on coping with separation/deployment
- Avenues for meaningful and emotional support from welfare/DCO staff. Offering more than referral services, brief phone calls and self-help information
- DCO scheduling activities after normal work hours to accommodate those spouses and partners who are employed
- Better marketing of DCO services
- DCO need counsellors qualified to speak with children
- Recognition from DCO and units that spouses and partners may be male

Views on what Defence could do to help during periods of absence - Provision of accurate information about deployments

- Dates of mid-deployment leave
- Clearer information about allowances, pay and tax
- Correct information about departure and return dates
- Pre and post psychological assessment of deploying members
- More notice prior to deployments (more time to plan and prepare)
- Timely provision of information (before member departs)

Views on what Defence could do to help during periods of absence - Communication with the absent ADF member

- More reliable internet services while on deployment
- Allowances to increase to reflect increased communications costs
- Better Defence facilities for maintaining contact with families
- Emails and newsletters from COs about unit and ship location and activities
- Regular and sincere contact from spouse/partner's unit

Views on what Defence could do to help during periods of absence - Social support networks

- Defence and non-Defence affiliated social activities and resources to help spouses, partners and children to support each other

Views on what Defence could do to help during periods of absence - Other comments

- Importance of families learning to be more resourceful and self-reliant
- Many respondents reported that they felt that they did not need assistance or had learned to cope in their own way
- Concerns about cultural barriers to asking for help in the ADF

Children's reactions to the absence of their ADF parents

Respondents with children were invited to report as to how their child or children reacted when a parent was absent for military duties for six weeks or more. Respondents were advised that completion of this item was optional only, and were asked to only report reactions if they were confident they were related to the absence of a parent. Responses to this item are displayed in Table 29.

Table 29 Responses to Question 30 Section A: Children’s reactions to the absence of a parent for periods of six weeks or more for military duties.

	Number and percent of respondents with dependent children who reported this behaviour occurred ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’ when a parent was absent for 6 weeks or more	Number and percent who reported ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’ that behaviour ceased on return of absent parent	Number and proportion who reported ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’ that behaviour did not cease on return of absent parent	Proportion who did not indicate whether it ceased or not
More clingy	58.2% (2262)	65.5% (1481)	17.8% (402)	16.7%
Unhappiness/sadness	57.7% (2241)	74.7% (1675)	6.1% (138)	19.2%
Constantly thinking about the absent parent	52.3% (2031)	57.7% (1173)	17.6% (358)	24.7%
Anxiety/fear	44.8% (1740)	67.2% (1170)	14.1% (245)	18.7%
Young children sleeping with parent	44.5% (1730)	67.3% (1164)	15.7% (272)	17.0%
Accepts more responsibility	39.6% (1538)	32.4% (499)	42.8% (658)	24.8%
Pride in absent parent	38.9% (1511)	11.4% (172)	61.5% (929)	27.1%
Aggression/anger	35.2% (1368)	58.6% (802)	21.3% (291)	20.4%
Greater independence	30.6% (1191)	22.3% (266)	51.7% (616)	26.0%
Increase in sibling rivalry	29.1% (1132)	48.7% (551)	31.7% (359)	19.6%
Contributes more to cleaning and maintaining house	29.1% (1129)	37.6% (425)	36.2% (409)	26.2%
Decline in school performance	26.5% (1028)	72.4% (744)	13.2% (136)	14.4%
Nightmares	25.5% (990)	63.2% (626)	18.9% (187)	17.9%
Disruption in friendships	16.7% (648)	48.3% (313)	24.4% (158)	27.3%
More outgoing	12.5% (485)	16.9% (82)	48.9% (237)	34.2%
Onset or recurrence of bedwetting	11.5% (448)	65.8% (295)	23.7% (106)	10.5%
Refusal to attend school	11.1% (431)	63.8% (275)	16.5% (71)	19.7%
Violence	10.5% (407)	61.9% (252)	18.2% (74)	19.9%
Feelings of guilt	8.5% (332)	62.9% (209)	15.1% (50)	22.0%
Improvement in school performance	6.6% (255)	31.0% (79)	40.0% (102)	29.0%
Running away	3.3% (128)	60.9% (78)	18.7% (24)	20.4%
Minor crime	1.3% (52)	61.5% (32)	19.2% (10)	19.3%
Serious crime	0.2% (10)	70.0% (7)	10.0% (1)	20.0%
Other	3.3% (128)	44.5% (57)	14.8% (19)	40.7%

Table 29 shows that the most commonly reported ways that children react to the absence of ADF members from home are:

- Being more ‘clingy’ (reported by 58.2% of all respondents with dependent children);
- Unhappiness and sadness (reported by 57.7% of all respondents with dependent children);
- Constantly thinking of the absent parent (reported by 52.3% of all respondents with dependent children);
- Anxiety and/or fear (reported by 44.8% of all respondents with dependent children); and
- Co-sleeping with the parent (reported by 44.5% of all respondents with dependent children).

Table 29 shows that positive reactions to the absence of a parent were more likely to continue following the return of the absent parent than negative reactions. The reactions most likely to continue following return were:

- Pride in the absent parent (61.5% of respondents who reported that this behaviour occurred during a period of absence reported that it continued after the parent’s return);
- Greater independence (51.7% of respondents who reported that this behaviour occurred during a period of absence reported that it continued after the parent’s return);
- More outgoing (48.9% of respondents who reported that this behaviour occurred during a period of absence reported that it continued after the parent’s return);
- Accepting more responsibility (42.8% of respondents who reported that this behaviour occurred during a period of absence reported that it continued after the parent’s return); and
- Improvement in school performance (40.0% of respondents who reported that this behaviour occurred during a period of absence reported that it continued after the parent’s return).

Table 29 also shows that the reactions most often reported to cease following the return of an absent parent were:

- Unhappiness/sadness (74.7% of respondents who reported that this behaviour occurred during a period of absence reported that it ceased after the parent’s return)
- Decline in school performance (72.4% of respondents who reported that this behaviour occurred during a period of absence reported that it ceased after the parent’s return)
- Anxiety/fear (67.2% of respondents who reported that this behaviour occurred during a period of absence reported that it ceased after the parent’s return)
- Children co-sleeping with a parent (67.3% of respondents who reported that this behaviour occurred during a period of absence reported that it ceased after the parent’s return)
- Refusal to attend school (63.8% of respondents who reported that this behaviour occurred during a period of absence reported that it ceased after the parent’s return)

Other key features of Table 29 include:

- Reactions of aggression and anger were commonly reported (by 35.2% of respondents with children). Over half (58.6%) of these respondents reported that the behaviour ceased upon the parent's return while 21.3% reported that the behaviour continued.
- Anxiety and fear were also commonly reported (by 44.8% of respondents with children). Two-thirds (67.2%) of these respondents reported that the behaviour ceased upon the parent's return while 14.1% reported that the behaviour continued.
- Declining school performance was a reaction that was reported by around one-quarter (26.5%) of respondents with children. Almost three-quarters (72.4%) reported that this reaction ceased on return of the absent parent, while 13.2% reported that this reaction continued.
- Nightmares were also reported by around one-quarter (25.5%) of the respondents with children. In the majority of cases (63.2%), the nightmares ceased on return of the absent parent, while 18.9% reported that the nightmares continued.

Helping children adapt to the absence of a parent

Respondents were asked to describe any strategies or services that had helped them to cope with changes in their child or children's behaviour during or after a period of absence. Their responses tended to fall under seven broad themes including Defence support and services, support sourced from outside of Defence and also self-help. Many respondents also responded with negative perceptions of Defence's support for families and children.

Things that helped - Formal Defence Support

- Use of the Defence Transition Aide at school
- Support offered by an ADF Chaplain
- Consulting with an ADF psychologist
- 'Triple P' Positive Parenting Program provided by Defence
- Attending Defence playgroups
- Contact and advice from DCO
- Deployed family functions.
- Accessing counselling via DCO
- Partner reunion workshop
- Defence publications
- Attending unit information nights
- Community house events
- Books for children about deployments
- Defence Families of Australia website
- Deployment packs for children

Things that helped - Informal Defence support

- Being friends with older former ADF partners
- Contact with spouse/partner's unit and colleagues
- Internet forums for ADF spouses and partners

Things that helped – Other services and sources of support

- School and community youth counsellor
- Having reliable means of communicating with deployed member – reassuring for children
- Seeking GP help for bedwetting
- Accessing early childhood health nurses/clinics
- Using information at www.raisingchildren.net.au and the discussion forums
- Accessing counselling services both privately and through school
- After school activities i.e. netball/football/athletics/Brownies/Guides/Cadets
- Additional child care arrangements
- Local church/parish involvement
- Seeking support from YMCA, school teacher and school community
- Seeking support from a child psychologist, school social worker, Defence representative at school
- Counselling at a child mental health unit
- Support from people at a local community centre
- Information and support from Department of Veterans Affairs
- Maintaining close contact with teachers at school
- Getting support from other parents
- Visiting grandparents/aunts and other family members as often as possible to promote the idea of a family unit and community
- Making video messages to children before departure
- Parenting workshops

Things that helped - Self coping strategies

- Patience
- Positive self talk
- Focusing on long term outlook
- Discipline and routine for the children
- Keeping busy, planning and being very organised
- Not making the older male child ‘the man of the house’
- Allowing children to cry and talk about their feelings
- Arrange for relatives who are a “tower of strength” to visit for practical help
- Being able to communicate with absent parent
- Being able to talk openly about feelings to others
- Availability of children to have regular contact with the absent parent
- Being positive in attitude to children about deployments
- Calendar - marking of days until parent returns
- Open communication with children about the absence, the reasons and what the absent parent is doing
- Distracting children by keeping them occupied with lots of activities
- Support from family and friends
- Gradual re-introduction of toddlers/babies to returned parent
- Not allowing children to use the absence of the parent as an excuse for bad behaviour
- Use of occasional child care
- Prayer
- Reducing work hours
- Sending presents to children in a letter and pretend it was from absent parent

Things that did not help

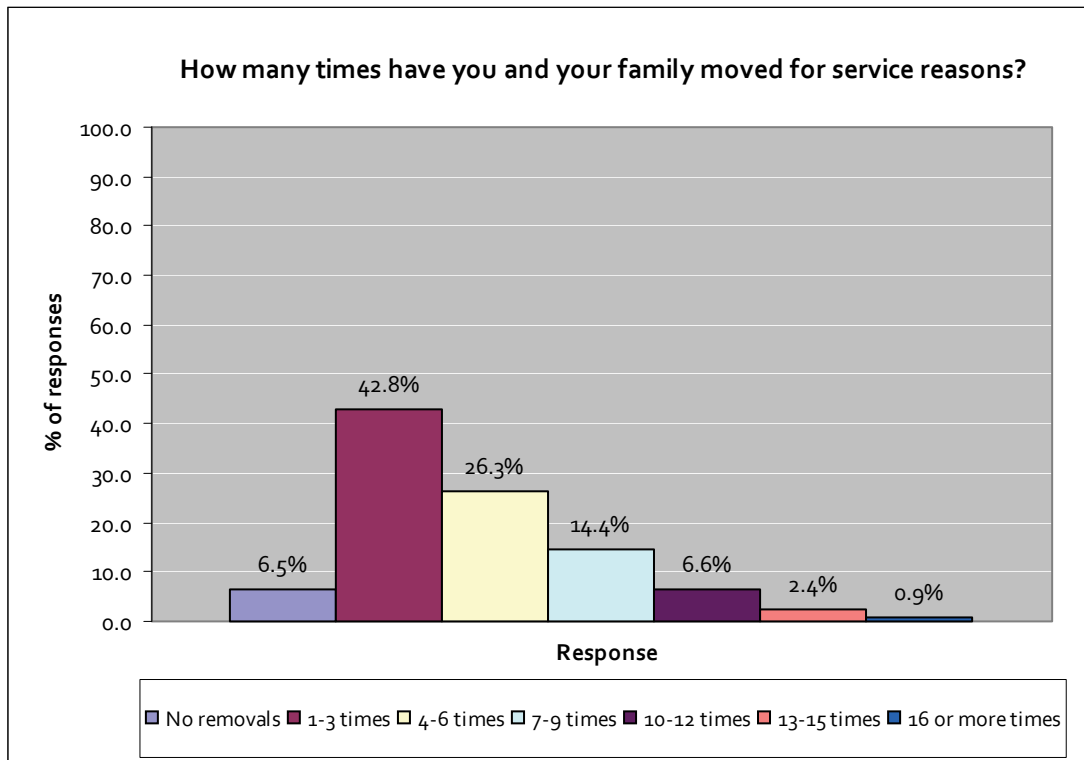
Some respondents reported that they had approached DCO for assistance with parenting but found that the assistance offered was not useful, or were disappointed that only referral or direction to other sources of support outside of Defence were offered.

SECTION 7: RELOCATIONS – EXPERIENCES AND ATTITUDES

Respondents were asked questions relating to their experiences of relocations as Defence families and their degree of satisfaction with service removals.

Respondents were asked how many times they and their families had moved for service reasons. Figure 27 below displays their responses to this item.

Figure 27 Responses to Question 21 Section A: Number of times respondents have relocated for service reasons.

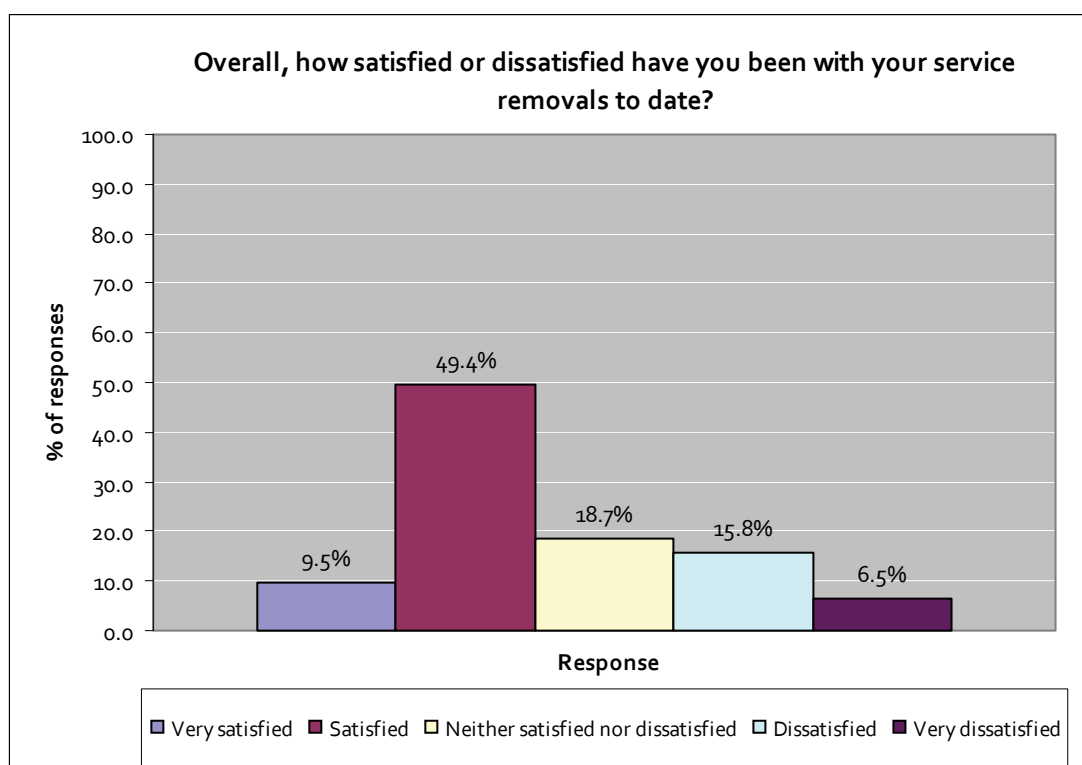


Note: 280 respondents did not answer this question

Figure 27 shows that 42.8% of respondents reported that they had moved between one and three times, while just over one-quarter (26.3%) reported that they had moved between four and six times. Overall, 9.9% of the respondents reported that they had moved ten or more times.

Respondents who reported that they had moved once or more for service reasons were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they have been with their service removals to date. Figure 28 below displays their responses to this item.

Figure 28 Responses to Question 24 Section A: Level of satisfaction with service removals to date.



Note: 120 respondents did not answer this question

Figure 28 shows that 58.9% of the respondents reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their service removals to date. A further 22.3% reported that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their removals.

A series of analyses were conducted to examine whether there was a significant statistical association or relationship between satisfaction with service removals and a range of other respondent characteristics. The findings of these analyses are described below.

- Dual ADF couples were significantly more likely to report that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with service removals when compared to all other respondents¹.
- For those respondents who were ADF members themselves, officer respondents were significantly more likely to report being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with service removals when compared to enlisted respondents².
- Those respondents married to/partnered with a member with more than 20 years of service were significantly more likely to be satisfied with removals than other respondents. In contrast, respondents married to/partnered with members with 11-15 years of service were more likely to be dissatisfied with removals³.

1. $\chi^2(4) = 33.83, p=0.000$

2. $\chi^2(2) = 6.12, p=0.047$

3. $\chi^2(10) = 24.26, p=0.007$

- A significant statistical association between satisfaction with removals and number of removals. Satisfaction with removals tended to decrease with increasing number of removals experienced¹.

Respondents were asked to rate how easy or difficult it was for them to re-establish a number of family needs following relocation. Their responses to these items are displayed in Table 30.

Table 30 Responses to Question 25 of Section A: Level of difficulty experienced with establishing family needs post relocation.

	Easy/very easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Difficult/ very difficult
Your support network	16.1%	23.5%	60.4%
Child care	25.8%	21.9%	52.3%
Your employment	32.8%	22.6%	44.5%
Access to services to support your family's recognised special needs	18.3%	41.1%	40.6%
Medial and dental services	39.9%	27.2%	32.9%
Your educational requirements	26.2%	42.7%	31.1%
Schooling for Children	48.5%	24.9%	26.6%
Access to transport	43.9%	35.8%	20.3%
Other	3.9%	15.3%	80.8%

Table 30 shows that re-establishing schooling for children (48.5%) and finding access to transport (43.9%) were most commonly regarded as easy or very easy. In contrast, re-establishing a support network (60.4%) and finding child care (52.3%) were most commonly regarded as difficult or very difficult.

‘Other’ aspects of their lives reported by respondents that were disrupted or required re-establishment following relocation included the following:

- Continuity of medical care
- Recognition and accreditation of prior work experience
- Access to sporting groups
- Accommodation for horses and pets
- Establishing broadband access or making do without it
- Finding new hairdressers, vets, mechanics, accountants
- Finding new services and activities for children
- Children’s friendships
- Changing of addresses and obtaining new licences
- Continuity of employment and workplace entitlements
- Career and employment continuity
- Missing access to preferred shops
- Obtaining suitable housing

1. $\chi^2(10) = 33.23, p=0.000$

- Mail redirections
- Lost income from disruption to spouse/partner's employment
- Being at the end of long wait lists for childcare and preferred schooling
- Electoral enrolments
- Disruption of support being provided by deployed member's unit if a family has to relocate while a member is deployed
- Length of waiting periods to obtain a work visa when posted outside of Australia

In terms of further analysis of responses about level of difficulty experienced following relocation, all nine of the items were summed to form a composite index of overall post relocation difficulties with three levels; Very easy/easy; Neither difficult nor easy and Very difficult/difficult. Analyses of the association between overall post relocation difficulties and a range of other respondent characteristics were conducted. The findings of these analyses are described below.

- Dual ADF couple respondents were significantly more likely to find overall post-relocation experiences easy or very easy than other respondents, particularly spouses/partners who were not ADF members themselves¹.
- Respondents married to/partnered with enlisted members were significantly more likely to find overall post relocation experiences easy or very easy than officer spouses/partners².
- There was a general trend whereby increasing length of service was significantly associated with experiencing greater difficulty with post relocation experiences³.
- Respondents with children were significantly more likely to report that their post relocation experiences were difficult/very difficult and least likely to report that they were easy/very easy⁴.
- There was a general trend whereby increasing numbers of service removals was significantly associated with experiencing greater overall difficulty with post relocation experiences⁵.

1. $\chi^2(4) = 144.34, p=0.000$
 2. $\chi^2(2) = 15.92, p=0.000$
 3. $\chi^2(10) = 117.49, p=0.000$
 4. $\chi^2(2) = 198.40, p=0.000$
 5. $\chi^2(8) = 196.02, p=0.000$

SECTION 8: WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

Respondents were asked whether their spouse/partner or they (for the single parent respondents) were able to take advantage of flexible work arrangements. Their responses are displayed in Table 31.

Table 31 Responses to Question 17 Section B and Question 15 Section C: Number and percent of respondents taking advantage of flexible work arrangements.

Can your spouse/partner take advantage of flexible work arrangements?		Can you take advantage of flexible work arrangements?	
Spouse/partner respondents (including dual ADF couples)		Single parent respondents	
No			
Number	Percent (of all spouse/partner respondents)	Number	Percent (of all single parent respondents)
2,816	51.1%	92	38.3%
Don't know			
Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1,115	20.2%	33	13.8%
Yes - Can have flexible start and finish times for work			
Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1,080	19.6%	99	41.3%
Yes - Can work from home or from another non-workplace location			
Number	Percent	Number	Percent
211	3.8%	16	6.7%
Yes - Can take Part-time Leave Without Pay (PTLWOP)			
Number	Percent	Number	Percent
196	3.6%	10	4.2%
Yes - Can 'condense' the work week (e.g. Work a standard week in 4 days instead of 5 days)			
Number	Percent	Number	Percent
88	1.6%	5	2.1%
Yes - Other types of flexible arrangements			
Number	Percent	Number	Percent
251	4.6%	9	3.8%

Note: Column percentages do not equal 100%, given that respondents could indicate more than one type of flexible work arrangement.

Table 31 shows that 71.3% of the spouse and partner respondents and 51.2% of the single parent respondents reported either that their spouse/partner or they could not take advantage of flexible work arrangements, or they did not know whether they could or not. For single parent respondents, 41.3% reported that they could have flexible start and finish times for work, compared to 19.6% of spouse and partner respondents who reported the same. Apart from the 6.7% of single parent respondents who reported that they could work from home or another non-work location, less than five per cent of the respondents reported that other types of flexible work arrangements were available.

Across all the different types of flexible work arrangements, for the spouse/partner respondents (including dual ADF couples), there were no pronounced differences in responses according to Service.

For the single parent respondents, the following differences according to Service were observed:

- For flexible start and finish times for work, 46.4% of Navy respondents reported that they had access to this, compared to 36.8% of Army and 40.8% of Air Force respondents.
- For working from home or another location, 14.3% of Navy respondents reported that they could do this, compared to 3.2% of Army respondents and 4.2% of Air Force respondents.

‘Other’ types of flexible work arrangements reported by the respondents were predominantly the capacity to negotiate flexibility of work arrangements with supervisors on an ‘as required’ basis.

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements relating to work-family conflict. Spouse/partner and single parent responses to these items are displayed in Table 32.

Table 32 Responses to Question 18 Section B and Question 16 Section C: Respondent perceptions of their work-family conflict.

The demands of the military interfere with my home and family life				
	Spouse/partner respondents (including dual ADF couples)		Single parent respondents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree/disagree	742	14.0%	36	15.2%
Neutral	1288	24.3%	80	33.8%
Strongly agree/agree	3276	61.7%	121	51.1%
Total	5306	100.0%	237	100.0%
The amount of time my spouse/partner's work takes up makes it difficult for him/her to fulfil family responsibilities				
	Spouse/partner respondents (including dual ADF couples)		Single parent respondents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree/disagree	1498	28.2%	75	31.9%
Neutral	1407	26.5%	64	27.2%
Strongly agree/agree	2405	45.3%	96	40.9%
Total	5310	100.0%	235	100.0%
Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my spouse/partner's military service puts on me				
	Spouse/partner respondents (including dual ADF couples)		Single parent respondents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree/disagree	2053	38.7%	73	30.9%
Neutral	1475	27.8%	66	28.0%
Strongly agree/agree	1782	33.6%	97	41.1%
Total	5310	100.0%	236	100.0%
My spouse/partner's job produces strain that makes it difficult for him/her to fulfil family duties				
	Spouse/partner respondents (including dual ADF couples)		Single parent respondents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree/disagree	1874	35.3%	79	33.5%
Neutral	1417	26.7%	67	28.4%
Strongly agree/agree	2016	38.0%	90	38.1%
Total	5307	100.0%	236	100.0%

The demands of the military interfere with my home and family life

	My family life has suffered as a result of my spouse/partner's work commitments		My family life has suffered as a result of my work commitments	
	Spouse/partner respondents (including dual ADF couples)		Single parent respondents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree/disagree	2073	39.0%	69	29.1%
Neutral	1203	22.6%	42	17.7%
Strongly agree/agree	2037	38.3%	126	53.2%
Total	5313	100.0%	237	100.0%

	Things my spouse/partner wants to do at work do not get done because of family stresses/demands		Things I want to do at work do not get done because of family stresses/demands	
	Spouse/partner respondents (including dual ADF couples)		Single parent respondents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree/disagree	3885	73.3%	138	58.2%
Neutral	944	17.8%	51	21.5%
Strongly agree/agree	473	8.9%	48	20.3%
Total	5302	100.0%	237	100.0%

	My spouse/partner's home life interferes with their responsibilities at work such as getting to work on time, accomplishing daily tasks, and working extended/irregular hours		My home life interferes with my responsibilities at work such as getting to work on time, accomplishing daily tasks, and working extended/irregular hours	
	Spouse/partner respondents (including dual ADF couples)		Single parent respondents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree/disagree	4281	80.7%	128	54.0%
Neutral	638	12.0%	42	17.7%
Strongly agree/agree	389	7.3%	67	28.3%
Total	5308	100.0%	237	100.0%

The demands of the military interfere with my home and family life

	Family-related strain interferes with my spouse/partner's ability to perform work-related duties		Family-related strain interferes with my ability to perform work-related duties	
	Spouse/partner respondents (including dual ADF couples)		Single parent respondents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree/disagree	4278	80.6%	124	52.3%
Neutral	723	13.6%	60	25.3%
Strongly agree/agree	308	5.8%	53	22.4%
Total	5309	100.0%	237	100.0%

Table 32 shows that respondents generally believed that military duties were having a greater impact on their families than families were having on military duties.

In terms of perceptions of the impact of military duties on their families, the data displayed in Table 32 indicates a clear lack of consensus in the respondents' views. This is evident from the relatively even distribution of responses across the three aggregated response categories, and the trend for around one-quarter of respondents to report that they had neutral views. Other key features in the Table include:

- Of the spouse/partner respondents, 61.7% agreed or strongly agreed that the demands of the military interfere with home and family life, while 51.1% of single parent respondents reported the same.
- One-third (33.6%) of spouse/partner respondents and 41.1% of single parent respondents agreed or strongly agreed that things they wanted to do at home did not get done because of the demands of military service commitments.
- Over half (53.2%) of single parent respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their family life has suffered as a result of their work commitments.
- While 38.1% of single parent respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their job produced strain that made it difficult for them to fulfil family responsibilities, a further 33.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this.

Most spouse/partner respondents disagreed that that their family was impacting on their spouse/partner's or their military service. Notably, 80.6% of the spouse/partner respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that family-related strain was interfering with their or their spouse/partner's ability to perform work related duties.

Single parent respondents were generally more likely to report that their family lives were impacting on their work. For example, 28.3% of the single parent respondents reported that their home life interfered with their responsibilities at work, getting tasks done and being able to work irregular or extended hours.

A series of analyses were conducted to examine whether a significant statistical association between work-family conflict and other respondent characteristics and experiences existed. The five items relating to the impact of the military on families were summed to form a composite index of **impact of work on families**. The three items relating to the impact of families on the military were also summed to form a composite index of **impact of families on work** with the following three levels:

- Low impact of work on family/family on work
- Moderate impact of work on family/family on work
- High impact of work on family/family on work

Work impacting on the family - Which respondents were most affected?

Spouses and partners (including dual ADF couples)

The findings of these analyses are described below.

- Spouses/partners of Air Force members were most likely to report a low impact of work on family and least likely to report a high impact of work on family, compared to the other two Services¹.
- Spouses/partners of members with 20 or more years of service were significantly more likely to report a low impact of work on family than other respondents. Spouses/partners of members with 11-15 years of service were significantly more likely to report a high impact of work on family than other respondents².
- Respondents separated from their spouse/partners due to unaccompanied postings were significantly more likely to report a high impact of work on family than other respondents³.
- Respondents with dependants were significantly more likely to report a high impact of work on family than respondents without dependants (other than a spouse/partner)⁴.
- Increasing number of removals was significantly associated with a greater likelihood of reporting high impact of work on family⁵.
- Increasing amount of time that ADF members spent away from their families was significantly associated with a greater likelihood of spouses/partners reporting a high impact of work on family⁶.

1. $\chi^2(4) = 118.007, p=0.000$

2. $\chi^2(10) = 70.562, p=0.000$

3. $\chi^2(4) = 27.583, p=0.000$

4. $\chi^2(2) = 31.279, p=0.000$

5. $\chi^2(10) = 19.74, p=0.032$

6. $\chi^2(6) = 186.72, p=0.000$.

- Those respondents whose spouse or partner was deployed at the time of the survey reported a significantly higher impact of work on family than other respondents¹.
- Increasing amount of time spent away for deployments was significantly associated with a greater likelihood of spouse/partners reporting high impact of work on family².

Single parent respondents

In relation to single parent respondents' overall perceptions of how their work was impacting on their families, analyses found that:

- Officer respondents were significantly more likely to report a high impact of work on family than enlisted respondents³.

Family impacting on work – When is this most likely to occur?

Spouses and partners (including dual ADF couples)

In relation to married/partnered respondents' overall perceptions of how their families were impacting on their spouse/partner's work, it was found that:

- Dual ADF couples were significantly more likely to report a high impact of family on work than other spouses and partners⁴.
- Respondents with dependants other than spouses/partners were significantly more likely to report a high impact of family on work than respondents without dependants other than a spouse/partner⁵.
- Respondents who reported that their spouse/partner had spent between 30 and 52 weeks away were significantly more likely to report a high impact of family on work than other respondents⁶.

Single parent respondents

In relation to single parent respondents' overall perceptions of how their families were impacting on their work, it was found that:

- Officer respondents were significantly more likely to report a high impact of family on work, compared to enlisted respondents⁷.

1. $\chi^2(4) = 29.07, p=0.000$

2. $\chi^2(6) = 55.33, p=0.000$

3. $\chi^2(2) = 7.60, p=0.022$

4. $\chi^2(2) = 47.16, p=0.000$

5. $\chi^2(2) = 27.46, p=0.000$

6. $\chi^2(6) = 13.45, p=0.036$

7. $\chi^2(2) = 7.31, p=0.026$

Spouse and partner respondents were asked to respond to a number of items about the impact that their spouse or partner's military career has had on their own employment and career. Their responses are displayed in Table 33.

Table 33 Responses to Question 19 Section B and Question 15 Section C: Number and percent of respondents taking advantage of flexible work arrangements.

My employment or career has not been affected by my spouse/partner's military career			
	Spouses/partners	Dual ADF couples	Total
Number	1,019	260	1,279
% who reported 'Yes'	20.9%	40.7%	23.2%
I have made some employment or career sacrifices because of my spouse/partner's military career			
	Spouses/partners	Dual ADF couples	Total
Number	2,460	319	2,779
% who reported 'Yes'	50.5%	49.9%	50.4%
I am 'under employed' or am over qualified for the work that I am doing because of my spouse/partner's military career			
	Spouses/partners	Dual ADF couples	Total
Number	666	20	686
% who reported 'Yes'	13.7%	3.1%	12.5%
I am unemployed or my career has been severely affected by the demands of my spouse/partner's military career			
	Spouses/partners	Dual ADF couples	Total
Number	706	13	719
% who reported 'Yes'	14.5%	2.0%	13.1%
Frequent changes of employers or employment status have impaired my capacity to accrue maternity leave and/or long service leave			
	Spouses/partners	Dual ADF couples	Total
Number	1,023	8	1,031
% who reported 'Yes'	21.0%	1.3%	18.7%
N/A - I have not sought employment since being with my military spouse/partner			
	Spouses/partners	Dual ADF couples	Total
Number	296	9	305
% who reported 'Yes'	6.1%	1.4%	5.5%

Note: Column percentages do not equal 100%, given that respondents could answer more than one item.

Table 33 shows that around half of the respondents have made some sacrifices to their own employment or careers due to their military spouse/partner's career (50.5% for spouses/partners and 49.9% for dual ADF couples). Reports that their career or employment had not been affected by their spouse/partner's military career were not uncommon, with 20.9% of spouses/partners and 40.7% of dual ADF couple respondents reporting this. Of the spouse and partner respondents, 21.0% also reported that their spouse/partner's military career was impairing their capacity to accrue maternity and long service leave entitlements.

SECTION 9: FAMILIES AND RETENTION

Members' service intentions

Respondents were asked what their spouse/partners', or their intentions were with regard to staying in the ADF. Their responses are displayed in Table 34.

Table 34 Responses to Question 20 Section B and Question 17 Section C: Service intentions of respondents' spouse/partner and single parent respondents.

	Based on your understanding, what are your spouse/partner's intentions in regards to staying in the ADF?		What are your current intentions in regards to staying in the ADF?	
	Spouse/partner/dual ADF couples respondents		Single parent respondents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No intent to leave	1521	28.7%	49	20.7%
Intend to stay for less than 1 year	385	7.3%	25	10.5%
Intend to stay for a specific number of years	1409	26.6%	77	32.5%
Undecided about intentions to stay or leave	1738	32.8%	86	36.3%
Unsure about intentions	241	4.6%	N/A	N/A
Total	5294	100.0%	237	100.0%

Note: 215 of the spouse/partner respondents and three of the single parent respondents did not answer this question.

Table 34 shows that over one-quarter (28.7%) of the married/partnered respondents reported that their spouse/partner had no intention to leave the ADF, while around one-third (32.8%) reported that their spouse/partner was unsure about their intentions. For single parent respondents, 20.7% expressed no intent to leave, while a further 10.5% reported that they intended to stay for less than one year. Around one-quarter (26.6%) of the spouse/partner respondents and one-third (32.5%) of the single parent respondents reported a specific timeframe for which their spouse/partner or they intended to stay. For these respondents, the timeframes they reported are displayed in Table 35.

Table 35 Responses to Question 20 Section B and Question 17 Section C: Length of time that respondents' spouses/partners and single parent respondents intend to stay in the ADF.

	How many years does your spouse/ partner intend to stay for?		How many years do you intend on staying in the ADF?	
	Spouse/partner/dual ADF couple respondents		Single parent respondents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1-3 years	538	38.4%	33	42.9%
4-6 years	466	33.3%	22	28.6%
7-9 years	83	5.9%	5	6.5%
10-12 years	149	10.6%	9	11.7%
13-15 years	44	3.1%	N/A	N/A
16-20 years	74	5.3%	8	10.4%
21-25 years	16	1.1%	N/A	N/A
26-30 years	14	1.0%	N/A	N/A
More than 31 years	16	1.1%	N/A	N/A
Total	1400	100.0%	77	100.0%

Note: Nine of the spouse/partner respondents who indicated that their spouse/partner intended to stay in the ADF for a set number of years did not respond to this question

Table 35 shows that for the married/partnered respondents who reported that their spouse/partner intended to stay for a specified number of years, 71.7% reported that their spouse/partner intended to stay in the ADF for between one and six years. For the single parent respondents, 71.5% reported the same.

A series of analyses were conducted to examine whether significant statistical associations between service intentions and other characteristics existed.

In relation to married/partnered respondents' (including dual ADF couples) reports of their spouse/partner's service intentions, the findings of these analyses are described below.

- ADF members being away from their families for 30 to 52 weeks in the prior year for military duties (deployment and other types of duties) was significantly associated with reported intent to leave the ADF within a year¹.
- Respondent preference for their spouse/partner to leave the ADF was significantly associated with an intention of their spouse/partner to leave within a year². (The data for the items relating to spouse/partner support for members' ADF service can be found in the next part of this section).
-

1. $\chi^2(3) = 16.19$, $p=0.001$ (30 to 52 weeks away for duties other than deployment); $\chi^2(3) = 8.32$, $p=0.040$ (30 to 52 weeks away for deployments)

2. $\chi^2(1) = 858.47$, $p=0.000$

- Pressure applied “often” or “very often” by married/partnered respondents on ADF members to leave the ADF was significantly associated with an intention of their spouse/partner to leave within a year¹.
- Reported intentions to leave the ADF within a year were significantly associated with high levels of reported impact of work on family² and high levels of reported impact of family on work³.

A small proportion (5.4%; 287) of the married/partnered respondents indicated that their spouse/partner had submitted an application for discharge/resignation/transfer to the Reserves in the past six months. For the single parent respondents, 8.1% (19) had reported the same.

Further analyses were conducted to examine whether there were significant statistical associations between whether the spouses/partners of respondents had applied for discharge/resignation/transfer in the past six months and other characteristics.

In relation to married/partnered respondents’ reports of whether their spouse/partner had sought to separate from the ADF, analyses revealed that:

- A preference expressed by the spouse/partner respondents for their serving spouse/partner to leave the ADF was significantly associated with the member applying for separation⁴.
- Married/partnered respondents who applied pressure on ADF members to leave ‘often’ or ‘very often’ was significantly associated with the act of applying for separation⁵.
- Respondent reports of a high impact of work on family were associated with applying for separation from the ADF⁶.
- Respondent reports of a high impact of family on work were also associated with applying for separation from the ADF⁷.

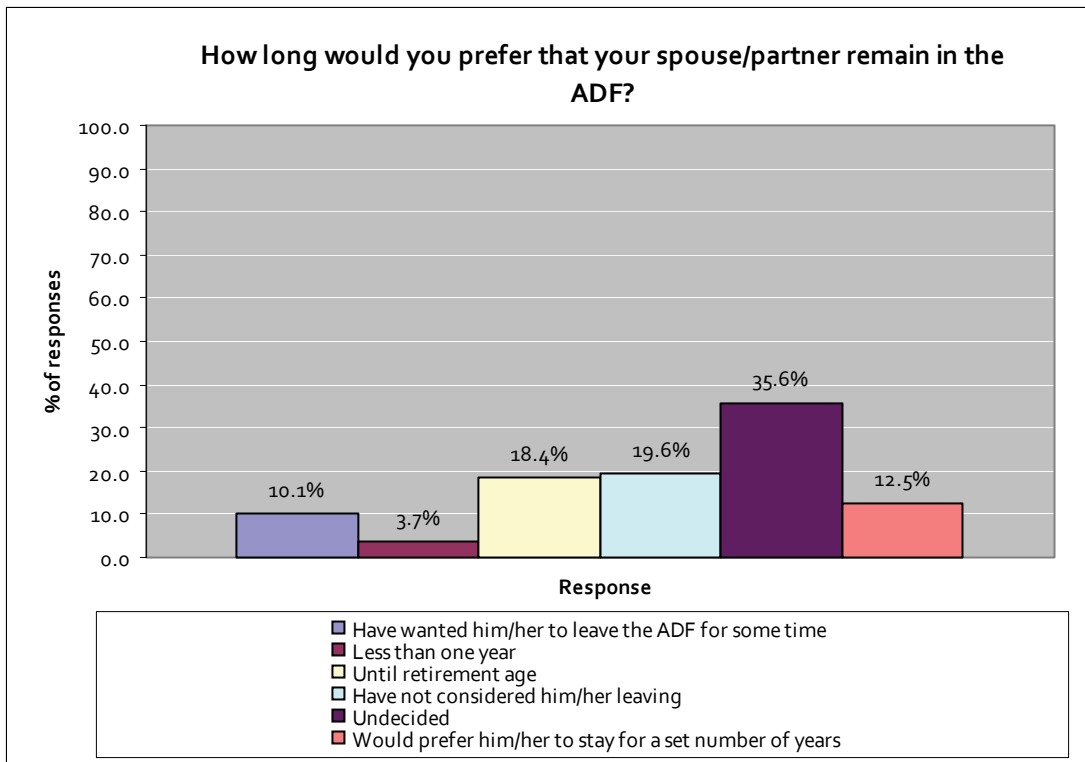
Single parent respondents who reported that they had applied to separate or transfer were more likely to report a high impact of work on family (10.0% of all single parent respondents who had applied to separate/transfer), than a low impact of work on family (4.3% of single parent respondents who had applied to separate/transfer).

1. $\chi^2(2) = 285.41, p=0.000$
 2. $\chi^2(2) = 96.14, p=0.000$
 3. $\chi^2(2) = 50.48, p=0.000$
 4. $\chi^2(1) = 285.55, p=0.000$
 5. $\chi^2(2) = 48.99, p=0.000$
 6. $\chi^2(2) = 35.07, p=0.000$
 7. $\chi^2(2) = 7.77, p=0.021$

Spouses and partner's influence on retention

The spouse/partner respondents were asked to indicate their preferences for how long their spouse/partner should remain in the ADF. Their responses are displayed in Figure 29.

Figure 29 Responses to Question 22 Section B: Spouse/partner respondents' preferences for length of time their spouses/partners remain in the ADF.



Note: 224 of the spouse/partner respondents did not answer this question

Figure 29 shows that over half (55.2%) of the respondents had not considered the idea of their spouse/partner leaving the ADF or were undecided about the issue. A minority (13.8%) reported that they had wanted their spouse/partner to leave the ADF for some time, or wanted them to leave in less than a year.

For those respondents who indicated a preference that their spouse/partner remain in the ADF for a specific number of years, the number of years for which they had a preference is displayed in Table 36.

Table 36 Response to Question 22 Section B: Length of time that respondents preferred their spouses/partners to stay in the ADF.

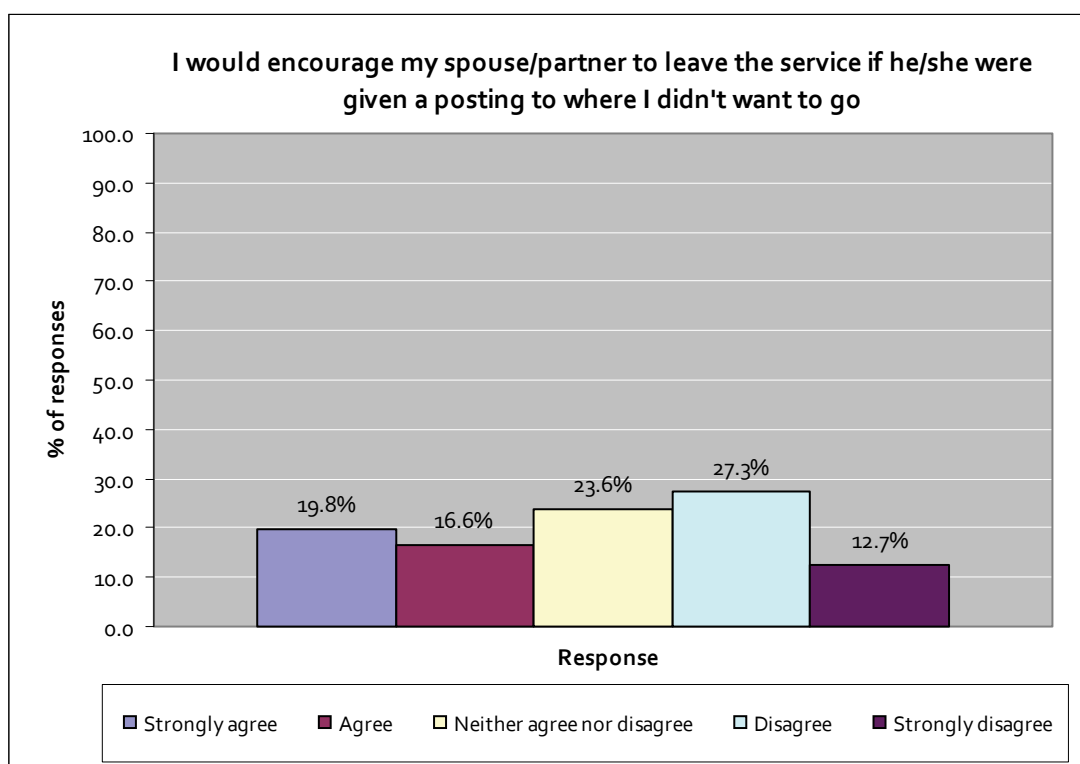
	Number	Percent
1-3 years	248	37.9%
4-6 years	250	38.2%
7-9 years	38	5.8%
10-12 years	80	12.2%
13-15 years	15	2.3%
16-20 years	17	2.6%
21-25 years	2	0.3%
26-30 years	2	0.3%
More than 31 years	3	0.5%
Total	655	100.0%

Note: Seven of the spouse/partner respondents who indicated a preference for their spouse/partner to stay in the ADF for a specific number of years did not respond to this question.

Table 36 shows that 76.1% of the respondents who expressed a preference for their spouse/partner to remain in the ADF for a specific number of years specified between one and six years as their preferred timeframe.

Spouse/partner respondents were also asked whether they agreed or disagreed that they 'would encourage my spouse/partner to leave the ADF if he/she were given a posting to where I didn't want to go'. Their responses to this item are displayed in Figure 30.

Figure 30 Responses to Question 23 Section B: Whether spouse/partner respondents would encourage their spouses/partners to leave the ADF if they were given a posting to where they did not want to go.



Note: 223 of the spouse/partner respondents did not answer this question

Figure 30 shows that 36.4% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would encourage their spouse/partner to leave the ADF if they were given a posting to a location to which they did not want to go. In contrast, 40.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this.

Further analyses were conducted to examine whether significant associations between whether respondents would encourage their spouse/partner to leave the ADF if posted to a location to which they did not want to go, and other characteristics.

The findings of these analyses are described below.

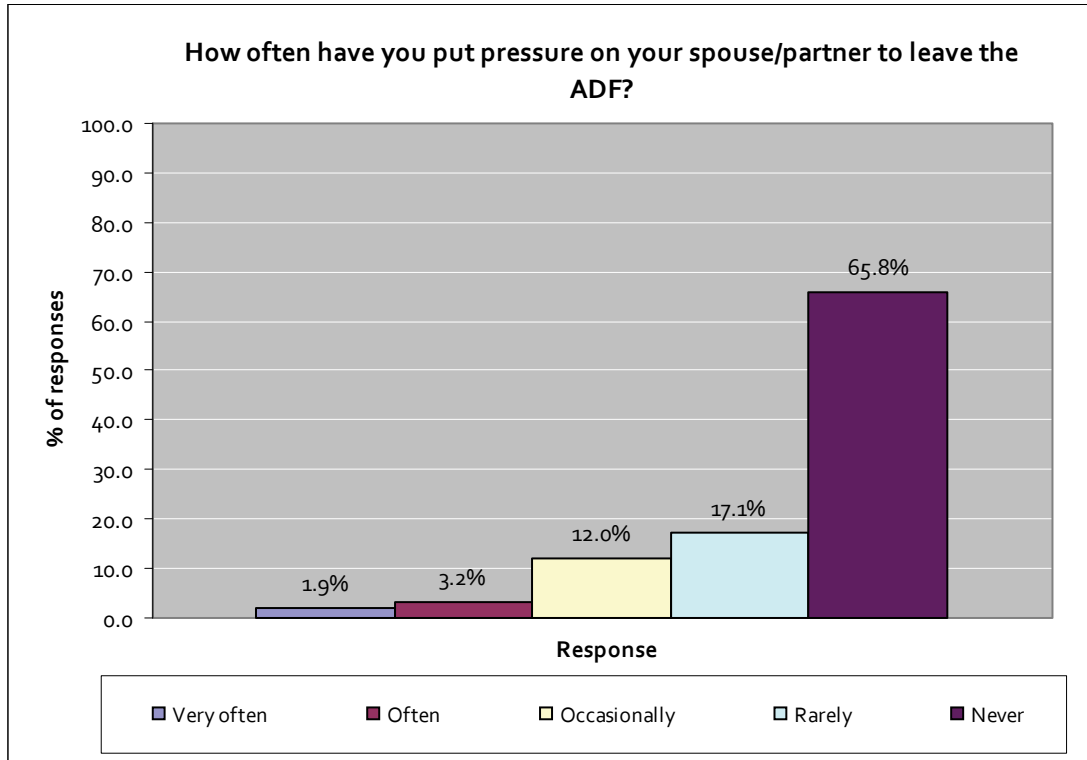
- Compared to other respondents, spouse/partner respondents of Air Force members were significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree that they would encourage their spouses/partners to leave if posted to a location to where they did not want to go¹.
- Compared to other respondents, spouse/partner respondents who were in full-time employment were significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree that they would encourage their spouses/partners to leave if posted to a location to where they did not want to go².

1. $\chi^2(4) = 39.89, p=0.000$

2. $\chi^2(4) = 21.19, p=0.000$

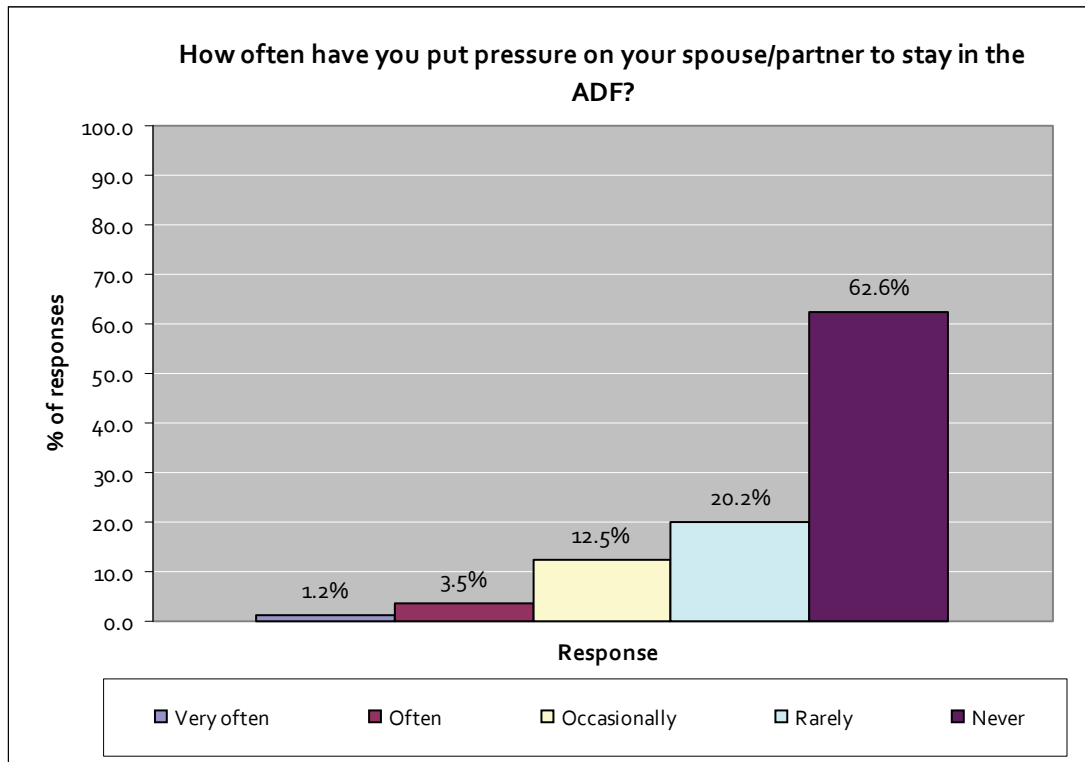
Respondents were then asked to what extent they put pressure on their spouse/partner to stay in the ADF or leave the ADF. Their responses to these two items are displayed in Figures 31 and 32.

Figure 31 Responses to Question 24 Section B: Whether spouse/partner respondents have put pressure on their spouse/partner to leave the ADF.



Note: 220 respondents did not answer this question

Figure 32 Responses to Question 25 Section B: Whether spouse/partner respondents have put pressure on their spouse/partner to stay in the ADF.



Note: 226 respondents did not answer this question

Figures 31 and 32 show that most respondents were not pressuring their ADF member spouses and partners to stay in or leave the ADF. Specifically, 82.9% of respondents reported that they had rarely or never put pressure on their ADF member spouses and partners to leave the ADF. Also, 82.8% of respondents report that they had rarely or never put pressure on their ADF member spouses and partners to stay in the ADF.

Pressure to leave the ADF

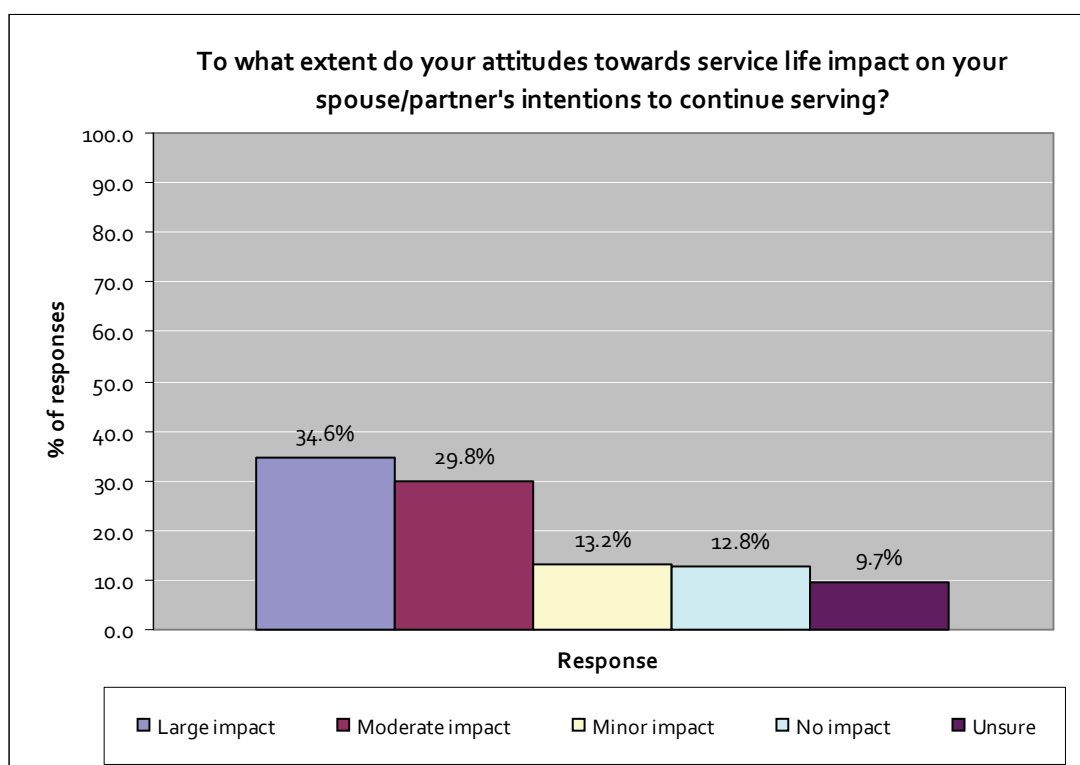
Further analyses were conducted to examine whether significant associations between amount of pressure married/partnered respondents' place on their spouse/partner to leave the ADF and other characteristics existed.

The findings of these analyses are described below.

- Spouses/partners who reported that they had applied pressure on ADF members to leave “often” or “very often” were significantly more likely to have experienced separation from their spouse/partner for 30-52 weeks in the previous year. They were also just as likely to have not experienced any periods of separation at all¹.
- Respondents who reported a high impact of work on family and a high impact of family on work were significantly more likely to apply pressure on ADF members to leave ‘often’ or ‘very often’².

Married/partnered respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which their attitudes towards service life impact on their spouse/partner’s intentions to continue serving. Their responses are displayed in Figure 33.

Figure 33 Responses to Question 26 Section B: Extent to which spouse/partner respondents attitudes impact on spouse/partner’s service intentions..



Note: 234 respondents did not answer this question

1. $\chi^2(6) = 25.28, p=0.000$

2. High impact of work on family, $\chi^2(4) = 321.91, p=0.000$; High impact of family on work, $\chi^2(4) = 238.08, p=0.000$

Figure 33 shows that 64.4% of respondents reported that their attitudes towards service life have a large or moderate impact on their ADF spouse/partner's intention to serve. Conversely, 26.0% of the respondents felt that they had a minor impact or no impact on their spouse/partner's service intentions.

Further analyses were conducted to examine whether significant associations between the amount of impact respondents had over their spouse/partner's service intentions and other characteristics existed.

The findings of these analyses are described below.

- Compared to other respondents, respondents who were dual ADF couples were significantly more likely to report that they had a large or moderate impact on their spouse/partner's service intentions¹.
- Compared to other respondents, respondents with dependants other than a spouse/partner were significantly more likely to report a large or moderate influence on their spouse/partner's service intentions².
- Compared to other respondents, respondents who reported that family was having a high impact on work were significantly more likely to report a large or moderate influence on their spouse/partner's service intentions³.

1. $\chi^2(1) = 17.22, p=0.000$

2. $\chi^2(1) = 7.75, p=0.005$

3. $\chi^2(2) = 10.19, p=0.006$

The Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme and retention

Respondents were asked to indicate whether and/or when they intended to apply for the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme (DHOAS).¹ Their responses are displayed in Table 37.

Table 37 Responses to Question 22 Section A: Intention to apply for the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme.

	Number	Percent
Yes - In the next 12 months	957	16.9%
Yes - In the next 3 years	886	15.6%
Yes - But unsure of when	1926	34.0%
No	609	10.7%
Unsure about eligibility	302	5.3%
N/A - Have already applied and/or receiving benefits under the scheme	990	17.5%
Total	5670	100.0%

Note: 79 respondents did not answer this question

Table 37 shows that around one-third (32.5%) of the respondents expressed an intention to apply for the DHOAS within the next three years, while a further third (34.0%) reported that they intended to but were unsure of when.

Finally, respondents were asked their opinion as to whether the availability of the DHOAS influenced their spouse/partner's service intentions and/or their service intentions. Their responses are displayed in Table 38.

1. The DHOAS came into effect from 1 July 2008. It is a home loan subsidy scheme for eligible ADF members, and payment of the subsidies is conditional on a member and or their family occupying the home for an initial period of 12 months.

Table 38 Responses to Question 23 Section A: Opinion as to whether the DHOAS influences retention.

	Does the DHOAS influence your spouse/partner's decision to remain in the ADF?		Does the DHOAS influence your decision to remain in the ADF?	
	Spouse/partner/dual ADF couple respondents		Single parent/dual ADF couple respondents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	1751	32.7%	289	33.4%
No	2884	53.9%	512	59.1%
Unsure	714	13.3%	65	7.5%
Total	5349	100.0%	866	100.0%

Note: 160 of the spouse/partner/dual ADF couple respondents and 13 of the dual ADF couple/single parent respondents did not answer this question

Table 38 shows that for over half of the respondents (53.9% to 59.1%), the availability of the DHOAS did not influence their spouse/partner's and/or their service intentions. However, a third (32.7% to 33.4%) of the respondents reported that the DHOAS was an influence on their decision to stay in the ADF.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the results of the ADF Families Survey shows evidence of a link between conditions of service (specifically relocations, and long periods of absence) and work-family conflict. In turn, evidence was also found of a link between work-family conflict, spousal/partner pressure to leave, and intentions to leave and/or actual separation action.

The key message for Defence arising from these survey findings is that family support for and satisfaction with the ADF way of life are important to retention. Although Defence has a comprehensive range of services and personnel policies aimed at supporting families, it is apparent that more can be done to improve the way in which they are communicated and understood. This is needed to foster family confidence in, and trust of Defence and the ADF. While the survey findings should be used to review and evaluate policy and service delivery, Defence, through ADF commanders and DCO, needs to improve both quality and quantity of engagement with families, both at the strategic and regional levels.

Additionally, the results of the ADF Families Survey highlight that the following factors are important to ADF family adaptation:

- Availability of family-oriented facilities, activities and functions on Defence establishments and in units;
- Reliable and consistent communication from unit commanders to the families of their members, particularly when members of the unit are deployed;
- Reassurance that both empathy and practical support measures will be available to them from commanders and DCO if they are in genuine need;
- Unambiguous information about DCO services and realistic expectations of DCO's role and the purpose of specific services;
- An ADF culture in which commanders support and facilitate uptake of flexible work arrangements, and where members feel empowered to negotiate such arrangements;
- With regard to deployments and absence for other types of duties, predictability of departure and return dates, and time and opportunity for members to assist their families with mental and administrative preparation;
- Knowledge of their right to attend pre-deployment briefings and their potential benefit, and active promotion of these briefings to families from commanders and members;
- Accurate knowledge about Defence policies, member and family entitlements, and realistic expectations as to the *known* challenges of life for ADF families;
- Education about how to deal with ambiguity and unpredictability; and
- Support measures that account for the different needs of families at different life stages. Specifically, less experienced families with children or other dependants, and/or those with complex needs need greater help with preparation, knowledge and education.

In addition, the ADF Families Survey data shows evidence of a link between conditions of service (specifically relocations, and long periods of absence) and work-family conflict. In turn, evidence was also found of a link between work-family conflict, spousal/partner pressure to leave, and intentions to leave and/or actual separation action.

HOW DEFENCE IS RESPONDING TO THE SURVEY FINDINGS

The ADF Families Survey represents the first time Defence has asked ADF members and their spouses and partners about their experiences and opinions via a survey. This has provided ADF members, spouses and partners an unprecedented opportunity to influence Defence policy, and enables Defence to consider the interests of ADF families in its policy evaluation and development processes.

Across almost all of the survey results, the quality and quantity of communication between Defence and ADF families was a consistent source of concern among many respondents. The responses from ADF family members have highlighted to Defence that high levels of awareness and understanding among families about entitlements, services and the rationale behind personnel and operational policies is important for their self-reliance, and ability to plan and prepare for relocations and periods of separation.

The three Services and other areas of Defence are currently working on improved strategies for communicating with family members about the role of DCO, conditions of service and family support policies and initiatives. Such communication will also focus on the promotion of self-reliance and shared responsibility for family well-being and adjustment.

Feedback from respondents about Defence's practical and cultural support for ADF families reinforces Defence's obligation to minimise the impact of ADF service on families wherever possible. The results highlight that it is important for ADF commanders to enable and support members to fulfil their duty of care obligations to their families. Support for families is often best expressed when ADF commanders actively engage and communicate with ADF families, acknowledge the role that families play in ADF capability, enable access to flexible work arrangements and encourage family involvement in unit activities and use of facilities on Defence establishments. ADF commanders will be informed of these findings, including the need to encourage greater member and family access to the information and support services which are available to them.

It was evident from the findings that ADF families at different stages of life often have quite different needs. While older and more experienced ADF families appeared to be mostly self-reliant, others acknowledged that there are times when they have found that coping long periods of separation, relocations and balancing day-to-day family and service commitments has been difficult. These insights are being used to develop ADF work-life balance initiatives, and family support programs which promote self-reliance and community support. These findings are also being used to inform reviews of absence and deployment support practices for families. DCO in particular are working on ways of educating less experienced families about how to prepare for life in the ADF by using the insights of families who have developed good adjustment strategies.

All ADF senior leaders greatly appreciate the candour and commitment of respondents to the inaugural ADF Families Survey. They and other Defence stakeholders have considered the findings of the survey and have outlined their respective actions and intentions below. In some cases these refer to recent or new initiatives and in other respects to planned or intended measures. In relation to both, families should expect that it will take time for these responses to be implemented and evaluated as applicable. Nonetheless, families should be better able to monitor developments than has previously been the case, due to increased recognition by all stakeholders of the importance of enhanced communication.

Response from Navy

The Navy Strategy – Charting the Course to 2025 recognises that changing societal expectations about the nature of work do not always accord with essential aspects of Navy life that separates Navy people from family and friends for long periods while at sea - and often in hazardous circumstances. These basic requirements underlie the unique character of Navy service.

To offset these factors and meet differing expectations about lifestyle and work among current generations in Australian society the Navy has, over the past few years, introduced a broad range of initiatives to improve geographic stability, job satisfaction and balance workloads and family life. Recognising that these improvements are likely also to be significant attractors and motivators for Navy personnel into the future, the Chief of Navy launched the New Generation Navy (NGN) programme in April this year.

NGN is Chief of Navy's highest priority and is addressing through cultural, leadership and structural reform, the 'people' challenges Navy currently faces. Importantly in the context of the ADF Families Survey, NGN aims to enhance the Navy experience so that people choose to stay because they and their families want to. Dedicated NGN project teams are presently examining options for enhanced career planning and principles-based people management, increased location stability, family-friendly policies, greater access to flexible working arrangements and 'individual choice' focused employment. The results of this work, when effectively implemented and well communicated, should lead to significant improvement in family satisfaction with Navy as an employer.

Deployments and communication

Navy understands the vitally important role that families have on the morale and well-being of its serving personnel. Navy also recognises that its families must deal with many challenges.

Navy is working hard to improve employment conditions and to strengthen its communication with families. HMAS *Darwin*'s 'living newsletter' e-mailed to families while on deployment in the Gulf is an example of this effort. The newsletter featured people onboard doing their jobs proved to be very successful in maintaining a sense of connection with families and relatives. Work is underway to determine if similar concepts can be rolled out across the Navy, so that families can stay connected with Navy members serving at sea. Similarly, Navy has established (for HMA Ships *Sydney* and *Ballarat*, currently deployed on Exercise Northern Trident) a Facebook webpage and Twitter site, and has introduced a facility for families to receive fortnightly SMS messages from these ships. The provision of these and similar facilities/arrangements is being investigated by Navy with a view of providing them on an ongoing basis for all ships deployed or otherwise away from their home ports.

Navy continues to communicate with members and their families through use of *Sea Talk* which is posted to members' home addresses on a quarterly basis, Navy News which is freely available at members' work places and Scuttlebutt videos which are regularly produced and available for viewing by members and their families.

Navy also realises that some of its less experienced people might need assistance in preparing their families for deployments. In their pre-deployment letters to families, Commanding Officers will be advised to ensure information on the following is fully covered:

- The unpredictability of deployment dates.
- Support services available.
- Use of allowances to purchase additional domestic services and/or childcare.
- Strategies to support children to cope during deployment.
- Navy's strategy to assist people on return from deployment to settle back into 'normal life'.

Defence Community Organisation (DCO) and Defence Families of Australia (DFA) have vital roles to play in the support to Navy families. Hence, Navy will support any action to provide enhanced information on the services/support provided by these organisations. Navy will continue to explore avenues to improve collaboration with DCO and DFA, along with other relevant Defence and Government Groups, to ensure that resources that support Navy families are employed to best effect. In tandem with this, the content of Navy Commanding Officer's Courses will be reviewed to ensure that the most current information on DCO, DFA and other supporting agencies is available.

Support for members to meet both their family and service commitments

It is understood that Navy's people and their families seek greater levels of predictability with respect to sea time and return to home port. The unpredictability of Service life in the Navy will be stressed at initial entry courses in order to better prepare its people for this inevitable eventuality. Navy's Commanding Officers are well aware of the stress that uncertainty can bring and wherever possible will continue to provide the best information they can to their people.

Through Navy's NGN Bow Wave project 'deliver people focused work practices' Navy aims to achieve an appropriate balance between operational and 'home/ personnel' tempo. Intended outcomes include the Fleet Activity Schedule effectively delivering a balanced tempo, improved health and well-being of Navy people, increased time and predictability of time with families, and the reduction in the use of operational reliefs. The areas identified to investigate, and where appropriate to develop, include:

- Fleet Activity Schedule management (including crew mapping methodology, operational/home tempo, ship manning, sea/shore ratios);
- Performance management criteria for Commanding Officers to increase the focus on people;
- Systems and processes to monitor and manage the 'load' on individuals;
- Updated crewing models, potentially allowing redundancy and delinking crew from hulls, and seeking alternative practices; and
- Encouraging the use of flexible work arrangements where appropriate.
- Initiatives related to reducing the alongside out of hours work commitments of seagoing members when ships are in their home port.

Navy conducted a series of national focus groups in 2008 to address issues arising from work/life imbalance concerns expressed by members. While the strategy was primarily aimed at the retention of women, it was equally applicable to males and included consideration of flexible work options, improved certainty of posting location/duration and flexible access to training. Further work in all these areas continues under NGN programmes and Navy is confident that success in these areas will be reflected in the findings from subsequent surveys of ADF members and their families.

Response from Army

The findings from the ADF Families Survey are informing Army's strategic personnel direction, as set out in the *Army People Plan 2009-2018*. There are six strategic personnel themes which shape the priorities for personnel policies, initiatives and strategies. The Army People Plan acknowledges the important role families play in supporting Army personnel throughout their careers, and their influence on morale, recruitment and retention. The strategic personnel themes related to families include:

- Strategic Personnel Theme 2.2. *Provide an appropriate balance between work and a person's family and other interests.*
- Strategic Personnel Theme 4.3. *Support programs to improve the resilience of Army families.*

Communication

In mid 2008, Army created a communications officer position within Personnel Branch-Army. A key task is to improve the communication of personnel policies and initiatives to commanders and individuals, and to provide advice to commanders on how to improve communication to individuals and their families within their chain of command.

A key focus of this communications strategy will be to improve family attendance at pre-deployment briefings, and ensuring the information covers areas such as:

- The unpredictability of deployment dates.
- Support services available.
- Opportunity to use allowances to purchase additional domestic services and/or childcare.
- Strategies to support children to cope during deployment.

Communication with families will also highlight that the mandatory pre-deployment and Return to Australia psychological briefs already provide members with information (verbal and written) related to dealing with separation from family during deployment, support services available to families, and strategies to facilitate a smooth transition back into family life following deployment. ADF members are encouraged to share and discuss this information with their family.

Army is continuing to support the dissemination of information on the services and support valued by families to ADF commanders, ADF members and their families through the quarterly Personnel Update for Commanders, and during personnel presentations on Army promotion courses. This will include the importance of ensuring families are invited to attend relevant pre-deployment briefings, and actively encouraging their attendance.

Army highly recommends that families attend pre-deployment briefings so that they can gain a greater understanding that the predictability of deployment dates is constrained by operational contingencies that are often beyond the control or influence of commanders. The chain of command is aware of the requirement to keep individuals updated as soon as practical on any changes to dates.

Deployment lengths

Army has several initiatives in place to try to reduce the impact of deployments on family life. Although the standard time for deployments has recently increased from six to eight months, this change is designed to support individuals to be at home for longer periods between deployments. There is a requirement for at least a 12 month respite for individuals between deployments, and most individuals should have a respite of at least 16 months between deployments.

Furthermore, there is a requirement for there to be at least a three month period between return from operations and being moved from their home location on courses or exercises.

Monitoring and managing the impact of longer deployments on families is an important focus of the Army People Plan.

Support for members to meet both their family and service commitments

Army has acknowledged that to achieve a competitive employment offer, Army employment practices and policies must facilitate an appropriate balance between work commitments and family and other interests, and personnel policies should aim to reduce the impact of Service life on families.

Army is currently developing a *work-life balance strategy* which creates supportive, healthy work environments for members and assists them to maintain a balance between their paid work commitment and their personal, community and cultural responsibilities, interests and obligations. Key components of this strategy will include:

- Identifying and communicating the role and responsibilities of supervisors, the individual, and families in achieving acceptable work-life balance.
- Identifying and removing barriers (real and perceived) to the implementation of policies and initiatives which support the achievement of an acceptable work-life balance.
- Review of flexible work arrangements currently in place and how they are accessed, in order to evaluate their relevance and accessibility to Army personnel at all levels.

Response from Air Force

The feedback provided by Air Force families will contribute to the on-going implementation of the Air Force Personnel Strategy based on six strategic themes, including the principle of *partnering with our people to balance their needs and those of the Air Force*. In accordance with the responsibility to minimise the impact of service on families, the Air Force Personnel Strategy features a commitment to be *mindful of the implications that organisational decisions may have on Air Force members and their families*. The demonstration of this commitment is particularly noticeable in the way personnel managers within Personnel Branch - Air Force make decisions relating to member postings - fulfilling capability requirements while being mindful of the effect on members and their families.

Support for members to meet both their family and service commitments

Air Force senior leadership have noted the feedback from ADF Families Survey respondents relating to flexible work arrangements and work-family conflict, which indicates that greater awareness among members and commanders about member and family support policies may be needed.

Chief of Air Force Directive 16/08 - *Work-Life Balance in the Royal Australian Air Force* was released in December 2008. It reiterated that *Air Force is committed to supporting both genders to manage the impact of work on their dependant care responsibilities*. The Directive reminds Air Force members that they, their supervisors and their commanders all have a responsibility to balance the member's work and private lives, and there are many ways for members *to meet their personal and family commitments without affecting Air Force operational capability and sustainment*. Specifically, it directs members to understand and utilise suitable flexible work and leave options, supervisors to understand and demonstrate genuine concern and empathy for members' work-life balance requirements, and commanders to *ensure Air Force needs minimally impact on members' personal and family commitments*. Feedback indicates Air Force commanders, supervisors and members are finding more and more ways to fulfil the requirements of this Directive.

Communication

Of course, Air Force continues to support and contribute to Defence initiatives to improve communications with and positively impact on members and their families' needs. Also, recent Air Force initiatives include development of a concept to distribute a Maternity Pack (MatPac) to members going on maternity leave (plus a pack for members going on parental leave) to assist them to better prepare for the life changes associated with the new addition to their family, and then to help them transition back into the workplace more successfully. Furthermore, a new Deputy Directorate - Flexible Employment has recently been formed within Personnel Branch - Air Force to manage all forms of flexible employment within Air Force.

Air Force will continue to communicate with and attempt to assist members and their families in their efforts to meet both their service and family responsibilities.

Response from the Defence Community Organisation (DCO)

DCO is in the process of implementing a Self Reliance Strategy, which is a Defence White Paper endorsed action. The strategy features a Community Capacity Building Initiative that aims to help ADF families realise the potential that they have to develop social networks and systems of community support in their posted locations. Through a host of existing family education programs, the initiative also aims to empower families to make the necessary decisions and actions that enable them to assert control over their own wellbeing, quality of life and preparedness.

In recognition of clear feedback within the survey, DCO is employing a specialist communications officer to improve the reach and impact of its communication with ADF families. Key aims of DCO's communications strategy will be to:

- Enhance awareness among families regarding DCO's programs and services;
- Improve understanding of the scope of DCO's role;
- Promote awareness of how families can improve their preparedness and capacity to adapt to the ADF way of life; and
- Promote awareness of the roles that Defence, ADF commanders, ADF members, DCO and families have to play in supporting family resilience and preparedness.

Three of the communication products to be featured as part of this strategy include:

- Currently in DVD/CD format, the Partners in Defence resource is being updated and improved, and will be hosted on the DCO internet to enable increased access for current and prospective spouses and partners of ADF members. The availability of this resource will be communicated widely throughout Defence.
- A number of fact sheets and brochures to support the key communication messages will be developed in partnership with other organisations such as the National Welfare Coordination Centre and Defence Families of Australia. These will be made available on the DCO internet site, with a selection still being available in hard copy.
- A further feature of this initiative is a DVD Going Solo Dealing with Absence in Defence Families. This has been developed to educate ADF families about how to manage the challenges that may be experienced during a member's absence from home.

A separate DCO review of absence from home support is also currently underway. Responses to the ADF Families Survey are being used extensively to inform this review. This includes a review of the practice of DCO monthly contacts to families of deployed members. After Action Reviews on deployment support to families based in Darwin, Townsville and Brisbane are also being planned. Responses to the ADF Families Survey relating to deployment support have directly influenced the decision to conduct these activities.

DCO is also undertaking reviews of the following:

- The Defence Child Care Program
- National Families Week 2009
- The Special Needs Funding Model
- The Family Support Funding Program Model
- Practice standards and consistency under its new service delivery model

Each of these reviews has been influenced by the ADF Families Survey.

Response from Personnel Policy and Employment Conditions Branch

The Defence agencies responsible for housing and removals policy and service delivery have been provided with the survey information to inform reviews of housing and removals policy and how services to members and families are delivered.

The ADF Housing and Accommodation Strategy 2009-2029 aims to further tailor entitlements to account for the differing needs of families at various life stages. This is part of its short and medium term initiatives within a 20 year plan.

The Housing Strategy recommends the development and trial of more flexible options for ADF housing assistance, to allow members and families greater discretion in the form of assistance received.

The Housing Strategy also recommends a comprehensive strategic communication plan for housing to inform and educate members and their families about policies and their entitlements.