



## Questions and Answers about Military Families: A Sloan Work and Family Research Network Fact Sheet

### Introduction

The Sloan Work and Family Research Network has prepared Fact Sheets which provide statistical answers to some important questions about work–family and work–life issues. This Fact Sheet includes statistics about Military Families. (Last updated: February 2009)



#### Do military personnel have families?

- ✔ **Fact 1** “43.2% of the Active Duty force and 43.1% of the Selected Reserves have one or more children” (Department of Defense, 2006, p. 42, 96).
- ✔ **Fact 2** “Four–fifths (79%) of all spouses say they and their Soldier spouse have dependent children living with them and the Soldier. Of those who have dependent children living with them, 67% have children ages 2 and under; 62% have children ages 3 to 5, 65% have children ages 6 to 10, 37% have children ages 11 to 12, 38% have children ages 13 to 15 27% have children ages 16 to 18, and 13% have children ages 19 and older” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 6).
- ✔ **Fact 3** More than half (56.6%) of the Active Duty force and 57.7% of the Selected Reserve have family responsibilities, defined as having “a spouse, one or more children and/or one or more adult dependents” (Department of Defense, 2006, p. 31, 95).
- ✔ **Fact 4** More than half (56.6%) of the Active Duty force and 57.7% of the Selected Reserve have family responsibilities, defined as having “a spouse, one or more children and/or one or more adult dependents” (Department of Defense, 2006, p. 31, 95).
- ✔ **Fact 5** “Out of the 750,320 Active Duty members who are married, 12.7% are in dual–military marriages” while “out of the 426,296 Selected Reserve members who are married, 5% are in a dual–military marriage” (Department of Defense, 2006, p. 31, 86).



#### How does family composition compare between U.S. military families and mainstream U.S. families?

- ✔ **Fact 1** In 2005, 54.6% of the Active Duty and 51.4% of the Selected Reserve reported being married, as compared to 56.4% of the US population. (Department of Defense, 2006)



✔ **Fact 2** 5.4% of Active Duty members and 8.2% of the Selected Reserve are single parents, compared with 11.4% of US households. (Department of Defense, 2006)



### Do spouses of military personnel work?

✔ **Fact 1** “According to the 2000 Census data, military wives are less likely to be employed than civilian wives...military wives also earn less than civilian wives” (Lim, Golinelli, & Cho, 2007, p. 14).

✔ **Fact 2** Of the spouses of Active Duty Military Officers, 41% are employed in the civilian labor force, 10% are Armed Forces members, and 7% are actively seeking work. (Department of Defense, 2006)

✔ **Fact 3** Of the spouses of Active Duty Enlisted members, 46% are employed in the civilian labor force, 14% are Armed Forces members, and 10% are actively seeking work. (Department of Defense, 2006)

✔ **Fact 4** “*Spouses of currently deployed Soldiers and deployed and returned Soldiers* are more likely than *spouses of not deployed Soldiers* to be dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with: their own employment opportunities (CD 30%, DR 32%, ND 27%), affordable child care (CD 44%, DR 47%, ND 41%), and availability of child care (CD 36%, DR 36%, ND 32%)” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 2).



### Are military personnel's spouses satisfied with their marriages?

✔ **Fact 1** “Overall, four-fifths of all spouses (82%) are satisfied with their marriage at the present time, one-tenth (10%) are neutral, and less than one-tenth (8%) are dissatisfied” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 6).

✔ **Fact 2** “The level of satisfaction with their marriage is similar to spouses’ responses in 2001 and 1995 (83% in 2001, 84% in 1995) and is an increase in satisfaction over their responses in 1991/2 (76% in 1991/2; 82% in 2004/5)” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 6).



### How often and for how long are military personnel deployed?

✔ **Fact 1** “Over one-half (51%) of spouses who have recently experienced deployment were separated for 12 or more months, with the majority of Soldiers being deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 4).

✔ **Fact 2** “Of those whose Soldier spouse had been away on a military operation, 8% said the Soldier was away for six to 11 months, 38% said 12 to 17 months, and 13% said 18 to 36 months” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 4).



### How does deployment affect marriages?

- ✔ **Fact 1** “Among enlisted members and officers, of the Air Force, the more days that married service members spent deployed, the greater their risk of dissolving their marriages after they returned” (Karney & Crown, 2007, p. xxiii).
- ✔ **Fact 2** “For enlisted members in the active Army, Navy, and Marines, and for officers in the active Navy and Marines, the longer that a service member is deployed while married, the lower the subsequent risk of marital dissolution” (Karney & Crown, 2007, p. xxiii).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “Among enlisted members and officers in the Army Reserve, officers in the Navy Reserve, enlisted members of the Air Force Reserve, and all ranks of the Army and Air National Guard... deployment appears to enhance the stability of the marriage, and the longer the deployment, the greater the benefit” (Karney & Crown, 2007, p. xxiii).
- ✔ **Fact 4** “Overall, one-half of spouses reported the possibility the Soldier may re-deploy after returning from deployment (52%) is a very serious/serious problem; and two-fifths reported the possibility that the Soldier may be involved in combat (41%) is a very serious/serious problem” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 4).
- ✔ **Fact 5** “The 41% who have a very serious/serious problem with the possibility that the Soldier may be involved in combat has increased from 31% in 2001 and from 27% in 1991/2” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 4).



### How well do soldier’s spouses cope with having their spouse deployed?

- ✔ **Fact 1** While 95% of Army spouses report confidence in their ability to manage separations of less than a month and 87% report confidence in their ability to manage separations of up to 2 months, only 43% reported confidence in their ability to manage separations of 7 months to a year. For separations of over a year, only 30% reported confidence in their ability to manage the separation. (Orthner, 2002)
- ✔ **Fact 2** “Since 2001, there has been a decline in the percent of spouses who believe they can cope well with separations of 7 months to a year (43% in 2001; 38% in 2004/5), more than a year (30% in 2001; 24% in 2004/5), and overseas for an undetermined length (23% in 2001; 16% in 2004/5)” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 4).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “Overall, more than half (52%) of spouses feel that they are coping or did cope very well/well with the Soldier’s absence during their most recent deployment. Almost one-fifth (17%) feel they are coping or did cope poorly/very poorly” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 4).



✔ **Fact 4** “During the last 12 months or during their Soldier spouse’s most recent deployment, over one-half of all spouses were able to manage the following personal tasks very well/well: Working at your paid job (70%), Doing daily household tasks (66%), Taking care of own health (57%), and Doing regular volunteer work (55%)” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, p. 2005, 2).

✔ **Fact 5** “Slightly more than one-third (34%) [of spouses] were able to manage handling their own loneliness very well/well. These results are similar to the results from 1991 /2 except that in 2004/5 higher percentages of spouses were handling doing regular volunteer work well (47% in 1991 /2; 55% in 2004/5)” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 2).

✔ **Fact 6** “Among spouses with the fewest personal and social assets, only 10% are adjusting well to separations. In contrast, over 82% of the spouses with nearly all of the assets listed (Army-related assets, family assets, personal assets, financial assets, social support, and leader support) reported that they adjusted well to separations in the past year” (Orthner, 2002, p. 6).



#### How well do soldier’s children cope while the soldier is deployed?

✔ **Fact 1** “Almost half of the spouses surveyed (49%) reported their oldest child is coping or has coped very well/well with the Soldier spouse being deployed and away from home. One-fifth (20%) reported their oldest child is coping or has coped poorly/very poorly” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 6).

✔ **Fact 2** “One-tenth to one-fifth of spouses of currently deployed and deployed and returned Soldiers with children reported the following to be a serious/very serious problem with the oldest dependent child’s reaction to the Soldier spouse’s deployment: Fears about what could happen to his/her parent, Sadness, Lack of concentration, and Aggressive behavior” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 7).

✔ **Fact 3** “Over four-fifths of spouses with children reported the following to be a slight/no problem in their oldest dependent child’s reaction to the Soldier spouse’s deployment: Behavior trouble at school (90%), Academic trouble at school (86%), Depression (83%), Distress over rumors about the war (83%), and Distress over media coverage of the war (82%)” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 6).



#### How successful are military families at adjusting to the soldier’s return after deployment?

✔ **Fact 1** “Fifty-three percent of spouses rated their reunion adjustment as easy or very easy. In contrast, 22% of spouses rated their adjustment as difficult or very difficult. Another 25% of spouses considered this adjustment neither easy nor difficult. In other words, about 47% did not consider the adjustment easy” (Orthner & Rose, 2005, p. 3).

✔ **Fact 2** “The spouses most likely to consider their reunion adjustment difficult included: Enlisted spouses (23%) compared to officers’ (16%), OCONUS spouses (25%) compared to CONUS (21%), Male spouses (35%) compared to female spouses (22%)” (Orthner & Rose, 2005, p. 3).



✔ **Fact 3** “Among those spouses who considered themselves now adjusted (See Figure 2), the majority (73%) indicated that this adjustment occurred in the first month after reunion. Only 4% considered this adjustment to take at least 3 or more months” (Orthner & Rose, 2005, p. 3).



### What parts of life were most easy and difficult to adjust to after deployment?

✔ **Fact 1** “About one-half (54%) rated their reunion adjustment [after deployment] as easy and one-fifth (22%) rated it as difficult. The most difficult adjustments concerned: Changes to their spouse’s [Soldier’s] personality/moods (43%), Restoring co-parenting (23 – 36%), and Communicating with one another (32%)” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 7).

✔ **Fact 2** When adjusting to their reunion after deployment, “marital intimacy’ was reported to be easy for both enlisted (61%) and officer (69%) spouses” (Orthner & Rose, 2005, p. 3).

✔ **Fact 3** When adjusting to their reunion after deployment 47% of enlisted and 59% of officer spouses rated their ability to “communicate with one another” as easy. (Orthner & Rose, 2005, p. 3)

✔ **Fact 4** “Adjustment to the Soldier’s personality and moods was the most difficult transition for spouses especially among enlisted families (45%)” (Orthner & Rose, 2005, p. 3).



### What factors made it easier to adjust to life after deployment?

✔ **Fact 1** “Ease of reunion was more likely among those who had frequent communication... Frequent use of telephone contacts [during deployment] increased the percentage of families with easy adjustments by 9%. Frequent use of video teleconferencing increased the percentage of families with easy adjustments by 7%” (Orthner & Rose, 2005, p. 4).

✔ **Fact 2** “The greatest difference scores between those who had an easy or difficult reunion adjustment resulted from having a strong marriage before (20% improvement) and after the deployment (37% improvement)” (Orthner & Rose, 2005, p. 5).

✔ **Fact 3** “Among spouses experiencing a recent deployment, 37% of those who rated their reunion as easy consider the Army supportive of spouses. Among those with difficult reunions, satisfaction with Army respect for families is 21%” (Orthner & Rose, 2005, p. 6).

✔ **Fact 4** “The only area of social support with a substantial contribution to reunion adjustment is having a person that is always available to talk to outside the home (+13%). Still, this is not a common pattern, with 59% of those with easy adjustments having such a relationship compared to 47% with difficult adjustments” (Orthner & Rose, 2005, p. 6).



### Are military families aware of the support the military makes available to them?

- ✔ **Fact 1** While the Army provides Family Readiness Support Groups (FRGs) to assist family members, only half of Army spouses reported that they knew about the FRG in their spouse's unit. (Orthner, 2002)
- ✔ **Fact 2** "Overall, about one-half (53%) of all spouses reported that the FRG (Family Readiness Group) in the Soldier's unit is active, about one-tenth (13%) reported that the FRG was not active, and one-third (34%) did not know if it is active" (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 5).
- ✔ **Fact 3** "Overall, of those spouses who reported an active FRG (Family Readiness Group) in their Soldier spouse's unit, almost three-fourths (72%) participated by attending FRG meetings and about one-fifth (19%) served as FRG leaders" (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 5).



### How successful are most military families at adjusting to the military life style?

- ✔ **Fact 1** "When asked how well their family has adjusted to the demands of being an Army family, 70% of spouses reported that their family has adjusted well and 7% reported that their family has adjusted badly. These findings are similar to those reported in 2001, when 71% reported that their family has adjusted well and 6% reported that they have adjusted badly" (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 3).
- ✔ **Fact 2** "A higher percentage of *spouses of not deployed Soldiers* (73%) than *spouses of currently deployed* (66%) or *deployed and returned Soldiers* (65%) reported that their family has adjusted well to the demands of being an Army family" (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 3).
- ✔ **Fact 3** "During the last 6 months, 11% to 15% of all spouses reported that they or their families have experienced the following problems to a very great/great extent: Emotional/nervous problem (15%), Marital problem (11%), and Financial difficulty (11%)" (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 3).



### Are military families satisfied with the military life style?

- ✔ **Fact 1** "Of all spouses, more than half (57%) are very satisfied/satisfied with the Army as a way of life and slightly less than one-fifth (16%) are dissatisfied/very dissatisfied" (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 2).
- ✔ **Fact 2** "*Spouses of not deployed Soldiers* (61%) are more likely than *spouses of currently deployed* (50%) and *deployed but returned Soldiers* (50%) to be very satisfied/satisfied with the Army as a way of life" (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 2).
- ✔ **Fact 3** "Three- to four-fifths of spouses reported that they and their Soldier spouse are very satisfied/satisfied with the following aspects of the Soldier's Army job: Security and stability of Soldier's job





(80%), Opportunity for Soldier to serve his/her country (80%), Opportunity for Soldier to develop job skills (68%), and Soldier's Army job (62%)” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 2).

❑ **Fact 4** “One-third to almost one-half of spouses reported that they or their Soldier spouse are dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with: Deployments/amount of time the Soldier is away from home (49%), and Soldier's pay and allowances (32%)” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 3).

❑ **Fact 5** “Compared to 2001, spouses in 2004/5 are slightly more likely to report being very satisfied/satisfied with the Army as a way of life (53% in 2001; 57% in 2004/5). Compared to 1991/2, they are slightly less likely to be very satisfied/satisfied (61% in 1991/2; 57% in 2004/5)” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 2).

❑ **Fact 6** “Since 2001, the percentages of all spouses reporting that the Soldier plans to stay in the Army until retirement has increased (60% in 2001; 65% in 2004/5) and the percentage reporting the Soldier plans to stay beyond their present obligation but not until retirement has decreased slightly (18% in 2001, 15% in 2004/5)” (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 2005, p. 8).

The Network has additional resources related to this topic.

1. Visit a topic page on Military Families at: <http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/topic.php?id=38>  
Topic pages provide resources and information, including statistics, definitions, overviews & briefs, bills & statutes, interviews, teaching resources, audio/video, suggested readings, and links.
2. Visit our database of academic literature with citations and annotations of literature related to the issue of Military Families. You can connect to this database at: [http://library.bc.edu/F?func=find-b-0&local\\_base=BCL\\_WF](http://library.bc.edu/F?func=find-b-0&local_base=BCL_WF)



## References

Karney, B., & Crown, J. (2007). *Families under stress: An assessment of data, theory, and research, on marriage and divorce in the military*. Arlington, VA: National Defense Research Institute (RAND). Retrieved from [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND\\_MG599.sum.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG599.sum.pdf)

“For our analyses, we drew from the quarterly personnel summaries provided by DMDC to create a longitudinal data set that linked information from individual service members across quarters. This .le was then linked with a separate .le provided by DMDC that contained deployment histories for all service members deployed since FY2002 when the current operations began. Although we could have analyzed the data in terms of either incidence of deployment or cumulative number of days deployed, we decided to examine the cumulative days deployed, to account for possible differences between longer or shorter deployments. To control for prior marital status, we conducted analyses only on individuals who entered into marriages after the current operations began. The result was a .le containing data from 48 consecutive quarters that allowed us to map, from FY2002 through FY2005, the timing and cumulative length of time spent deployed against the timing of individual marriages and marital dissolutions” (p. xxii).



Lim, N., Golinelli, D., & Cho, M. (2007). "Working around the military" revisited: Spouse employment in the 2000 census data. Retrieved from [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND\\_MG566.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG566.pdf).

"Historically, the enumeration of the population has been a complete count. That is, an attempt is made to account for every person, for each person's residence, and for other characteristics (sex, age, family relationships, etc.). Since the 1940 census, in addition to the complete count information, some data have been obtained from representative samples of the population. In the 1990 and 2000 censuses, variable sampling rates were employed. For most of the country, 1 in every 6 households (about 17 percent) received the long form or sample questionnaire; in governmental units estimated to have fewer than 2,500 inhabitants, every other household (50 percent) received the sample questionnaire to enhance the reliability of sample data for small areas. Exact agreement is not to be expected between sample data and the 100-percent count. Sample data may be used with confidence where large numbers are involved and assumed to indicate trends and relationships where small numbers are involved." (U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States (2003). No. 605. Persons Doing Job-Related Work at Home: 2001. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/03statab/pop.pdf>, p. 1).

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Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy. (n.d.). *2005 Demographics Report*. Retrieved from [http://www.cfs.purdue.edu/mfri/pages/research/2005\\_demographics\\_report.html](http://www.cfs.purdue.edu/mfri/pages/research/2005_demographics_report.html).

Defense Manpower Data Center: Active Duty Master File (September 2005). "The Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) maintains the largest archive of personnel, manpower, training, and financial data in the Department of Defense (DoD). The personnel data holdings, in particular, are broad in scope and extend back to the early 1970s to cover all Military Services, all components of the Total Force (active duty, guard, Reserve, civilian), and all phases of the personnel life cycle (accession, separation, retirement)" (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2007).

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Orthner, D. K. (2002). Deployment and separation adjustment among Army civilian spouses. *SAF IV Survey Report, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*. Retrieved from <http://www.armymwr.com/>

Results were derived from the Surveys of Army Families IV. "The U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center (CFSC) sponsored and the Army Personnel Survey Office (APSO) conducted (this) survey of civilian spouses of active duty soldiers from 3 April to 19 July 2001. Survey questionnaires were mailed to a stratified, proportional sample of civilian spouses of Active Component soldiers. In December 2000, there were 253,966 active duty soldiers (not including officers who are generals) married to civilian spouses. The response rate for the survey was 33%. A total of 6,759 cases were included in the analysis sample, and were weighted to reflect the number of civilian spouses of soldiers at each rank in the U.S. Army" (Fafara & Peterson, 2002, p. 2).

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Orthner D. K., & Rose, R. (2005). *SAF V survey report: Reunion adjustment among army civilian spouses with returned soldiers*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved from <http://www.armymwr.biz/docs/saf5reunionreport.pdf>

"The U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center (CFSC), in conjunction with the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI), has conducted Surveys of Army Families (SAFs) every 4 years or so to examine areas important to Army families. The most recent survey (SAF V) was conducted between September 2004 and January 2005. A previous survey (SAF IV) was conducted in April through July of 2001. This survey is one way to assess the effectiveness of the Army's Well-being Initiative" (Orthner & Rose, 2005, p. 1).

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US Army Community and Family Support Center (2005). *Highlights: Survey of Army Families V*. Retrieved from <http://www.army.mil/cfsc/documents/research/safv/SAFVSummary.doc>

"Surveys were mailed in August 2004 to a stratified sample, by rank and deployment status of civilian/non-military spouses of Active component Soldiers. Data collection was closed on 18 January 2005. Usable responses were received from a total of 24,793 spouses of Soldiers (8,988 officers and 15,805 enlisted), for a 43% response rate. Almost 60% of the completed questionnaires were returned by postal mail and about 40% were completed online as web surveys" (p. 10).