

Given the importance of family to ADF members, particularly those who have served for over 5 years, it is important to investigate the extent of the impact of the Service lifestyle on families. Data collected from the most recent Defence Census in 2003 is able to provide some indication of this. Table 17 summarises the status of ADF members with dependants as at 2003.

As indicated in Table 17, 51% of Navy, 57% of Army and 62% of Air Force members were in a married or de facto relationship (either recognised or non-recognised) in 2003. The proportions of those separated or divorced in the Navy and Army are almost identical, whereas the Air Force proportion is slightly lower (6.4%, 6.3% and 5.8% respectively).

Other research³² has indicated that ‘family issues’, particularly ‘support from partner/spouse’ are important influences on retention for Service members aged 30 years or over. At the 30-34 age range, through to 50 and above, ‘support from family/spouse’ is among the top 15 influences on retention/separation decisions.³³ This is a significant finding given that over half of all Service members are in a committed relationship.

Table 17 Marital status by Service – Defence Census 2003.

Marital Status	Navy	Army	Air Force	ADF
Married	4,559 (36.0%)	9,985 (41.0%)	6,456 (47.3%)	21,000 (41%)
ADF recognised de facto	1,022 (8.1%)	2,525 (10.4%)	1,344 (9.8%)	4,891 (9.6%)
De facto not recognised by ADF	921 (7.3%)	1,425 (5.9%)	643 (4.7%)	2,989 (5.8%)
Separated	399 (3.1%)	738 (3.0%)	351 (2.6%)	1,488 (2.9%)
Divorced	412 (3.3%)	798 (3.3%)	438 (3.2%)	1,648 (3.2%)
Widowed	17 (0.1%)	26 (0.1%)	15 (0.1%)	58 (0.1%)
Single (never married)	5,151 (40.6%)	8,526 (35.0%)	4,281 (31.4%)	17,958 (35%)
No answer	199 (1.6%)	314 (1.3%)	124 (0.9%)	637 (1.2%)
Total	12,680	24,337	13,652	50,669

Source: Defence Census 2003.

32. McKinnon, A. and Gorny, E. (2003). *What Motivates You? July 2003 Your Say Survey - Analysis of Topical Issue*. Directorate of Strategic Personnel Planning and Research, Research Report 13/2003.

33. Johnston, K. (2005). *2004 Australian Defence Force Exit Survey Report: Reasons for Leaving*. Directorate of Strategic Personnel Planning and Research, Research Report 26/2005.

A review was commissioned in 2001³⁴ to obtain feedback from ADF members on the current levels of posting turbulence and geographical stability, and their perceptions of where and what improvements could be made. Based on their findings, the review team made a number of strong recommendations in relation to retention measures. These included conditions of service, postings, leadership, ADF housing policy, Defence estate, and family support. An implementation plan was developed with a number of key objectives and time frames. Monitoring of the success of the initiatives that have been introduced is conducted through the annual Defence Attitude Surveys.



34. *Australian Defence Force Posting Turbulence Review Report*. Posting Turbulence Review Team, June 2001.

Critical Categories

There are a number of ADF employment categories in which there are significant difficulties recruiting, training and retaining sufficient personnel. These categories are commonly referred to as critical trades and professions. Prior to 2004, each of the three Services was responsible for identifying and managing their critical employment categories. In 2004, an ADF-wide approach was taken to identify the critical categories across the three Services and plan a consistent methodology to manage the recruitment and retention of personnel within these categories.

It should be noted that critical employment categories are often in specialised fields that are also in short supply in the broader Australian labour market. Strong employment prospects outside Defence together with internal pressure brought about by staff shortages has amplified the separation rates for these employment categories.

Employment categories become critical for a range of different reasons. Whilst there is some overlap between the categories in the causes for them becoming critical, there are often unique needs of personnel within each of these categories that must be understood. Examples of these are as follows:

Medical Officers (all three Services)

Whilst the Navy is able to recruit sufficient numbers of Medical Officers to meet the initial demand, it is unable to retain sufficient numbers to meet the demand at the higher ranks (LCDRs and CMDRs). The Army, on the other hand, is having difficulties recruiting sufficient numbers to meet initial demand, and also in retaining sufficient numbers at the higher ranks. The Air Force is also experiencing difficulty in retaining sufficient numbers of Medical Officers through to SQNLDR.^{1,2}

Army General Service Officers (GSO)

A recent report on the current shortage of GSO Captains³ indicated increasing levels of difficulty in recruiting officer trainees for both RMC and ADFA entry (Table 18), coupled with progressively declining graduation rates (Table 19). The combined effect of only around 85% recruiting achievement since 2000 and around 60% graduation rate from ADFA and RMC has resulted in a significantly lower number of graduating officers (around 180) compared with the numbers of graduates in the mid-1990s (around 250).

1. Sigma Consultancy (2005). *HRDSS Project for Retention of ADF Health Services Officers - Interim Report: Focus Group Findings and Recommendations for next steps*. Directorate of Strategic Personnel Planning and Research, Discussion Paper 4/2005.
2. ADF Medical Officer Recovery Strategies. Briefing Paper 2005.
3. ADFA and RMC Recruiting Achievement and Graduation Rates FY 95/96 - 04/05. Brief for DWMA.

Table 18 ADFA and RMC Recruiting Targets and Achievement.

FY	ADFA			RMC				
	Target	Achieved	%	Target	Achieved			%
					Ab Initio	Other	Total	
95/96	155	156	100	180			188	104
96/97	155	167	108	150			144	96
97/98	155	158	102	125	130	4	134	107
98/99	155	150	97	135	104	22	126	93
99/00	155	99	64	140	92	15	107	76
00/01	155	133	86	180	105	35	140	78
01/02	155	117	75	180	110	30	140	78
02/03	155	140	90	180	116	37	153	85
03/04	155	141	90	180	117	30	147	82
04/05	155	128	83	190	107	37	144	76
05/06	155			100				

Source: ADFA and RMC Recruiting Achievement and Graduation Rates FY 95/96 - 04/05. Brief for DWMA.
 Note 1: Ab Initio = Civilian candidates.

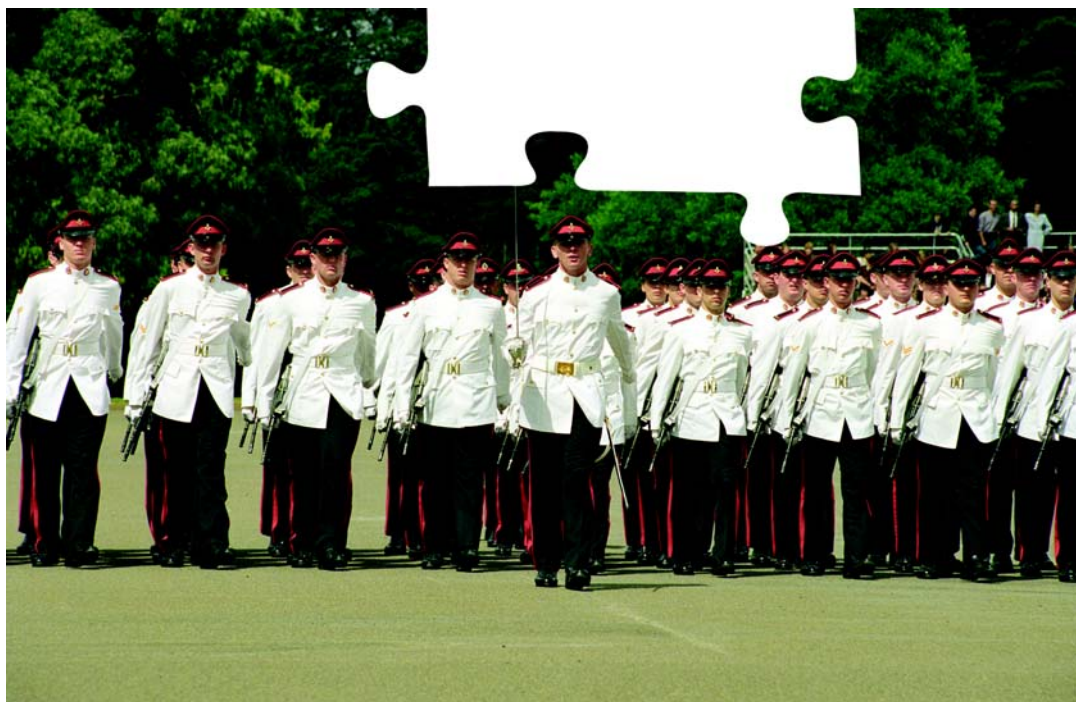


Table 19 ADFA and RMC graduation rates.

Intake year	ADFA						RMC		
	Intake	Separations at ADFA	ADFA grad rate	Separations at RMC	Grad from RMC	Overall grad rate	Intake	Graduates	Grad rate
1992	151	45	70%	12	94	62%	193	169	88%
1993	161	57	65%	1	103	64%	121	109	90%
1994	133	26	80%	1	106	80%	209	185	89%
1995	164	43	74%	4	117	73%	129	99	77%
1996	156	39	75%	8	109	70%	130	99	76%
1997	167	45	73%	13	109	65%	150	120	80%
1998	158	55	65%	15	88	56%	133	102	77%
1999	150	50	67%	10	90	60%	94	64	68%
2000	99	40	60%	6	53	54%	132	84	64%
2001	133	51	62%	12	70	53%	138	83	60%
2002	117	44	62%	2	70	60%	136	79	58%
2003	140						144	99	64%
2004	141						149	56	

Source: ADFA and RMC Recruiting Achievement and Graduation Rates FY 95/96 - 04/05. Brief for DWMA.



Occupational Analyses (OAs) have also recently been conducted to investigate and gain an understanding of the issues underlying the shortfalls for a number of the critical trades. Examples of recent OAs are as follows:

Navy Marine Technicians (MTs)

The Navy could potentially lose 40% of the MT population inside the next three years and 58% within the next 6 years, as an Occupational Analysis in 2005 indicated that these proportions of MT personnel reported that they intended to separate from the Navy within this time frame.¹

Army Linguist Intelligence Special Duties (LISD)

A 2005 Occupational Analysis indicated that the Army could potentially lose 46% of its LISD personnel in the next three years, with 64% of LISD SGTs expressing intentions to leave within this period.²

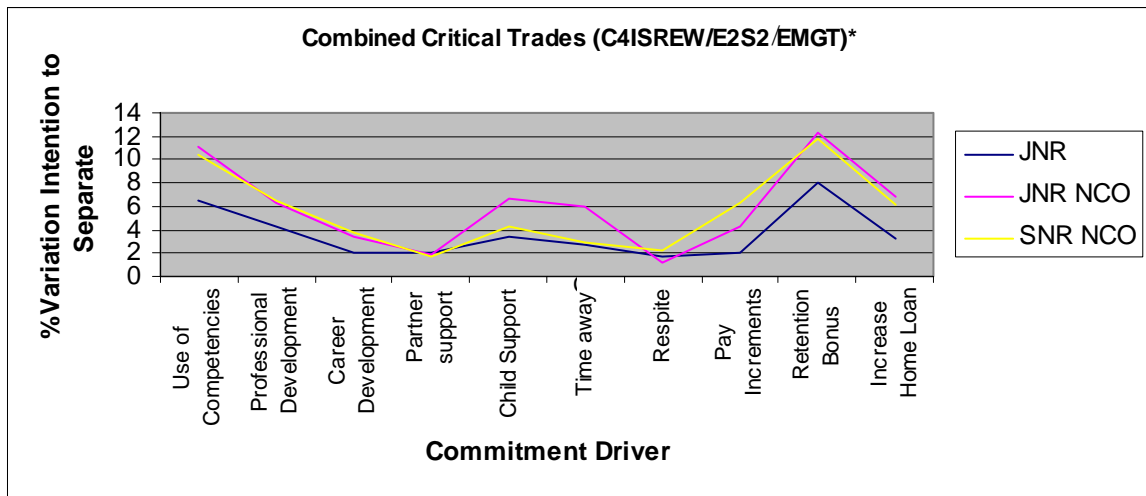
1. Dowrick, K. (2005). *Royal Australian Navy Marine Technicians: Occupational Analysis Report*. Directorate of Strategic Personnel Planning and Research Occupational Analysis N295/05.
2. Sturrock, A. (2005). *Australian Army Linguist Intelligence Special Duties ECN 002: Occupational Analysis Report*. Directorate of Strategic Personnel Planning and Research Occupational Analysis A297/05.

The process of researching ways of managing critical trades and professions has been further enhanced with the recent introduction of the Human Resource Decision Support System (HRDSS) program. HRDSS is a tool which identifies personal retention drivers for discreet trade or professional segments at a number of career stages. This approach forms a framework that informs policy alignment with these factors in the Defence Strategic Workforce Plan (DSWP).

An example of the use of HRDSS in assisting in planning retention strategies is given in Figure 11. The chart indicates the influence that a number of attributes have on the intentions of members within a particular work group, to separate from Defence as a consequence of policy change. In Figure 11, those attributes with the higher percentage scores have greater influence in members' decisions to remain in that trade.

As indicated in this example, an increase in the use of competencies and the introduction of a retention bonus are relatively significant factors in retention for all three rank levels, whereas partner support and respite postings appear to have relatively less influence. In addition, For Junior Non-Commissioned Officers (Jnr NCOs), child support and time away from their families are more significant factors in retention, relative to more junior Service members and Snr NCOs. For Jnr NCOs, changes in policy with regard to these two attributes could have a significant impact on their decision to separate.

Figure 11 The Relative Impact of Attributes on Critical Trade Members' Intentions to Separate.



Source: Sigma Consultancy. (2005). *HR DSS project for the retention of critical category personnel research report: Getting on the front foot in the war or talent - a four-step strategy*. Directorate of Strategic Personnel Planning and Research Discussion Paper 6/2005.

Note 1: C4ISREW/E2S2/EMGT - Command, Control, Communications, Computer, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Electronic Warfare Trades/Electronic and Electrical Systems Specialists Trades and Engineering and Mechanical General Trades.

The combination of these levers can potentially have a multiplying effect on separation. For example, the combined effect of increasing partner support and child support may have an equitable outcome to that of professional development or use of competencies. This indicates that altering policies on a number of relatively low-cost levers may prove to be more effective and efficient in improving retention, than changing the policy for another single but more expensive lever.³⁵



35. Sigma Consultancy. (2005). *HR DSS project for the retention of critical category personnel research report: Getting on the front foot in the war or talent - a four-step strategy*. Directorate of Strategic Personnel Planning and Research Discussion Paper 6/2005.

Whilst some factors causing retention shortfalls are unique to specific critical trade categories, there are a number of themes that are common across critical ADF trades. These themes are summarised in Table 20.

Table 20 Most Common Reasons Cited for Leaving Critical Trade Categories.

1.	Unhappiness with conditions of service (such as length of time spent away from family at sea or on deployments) and remuneration.
2.	A perception of poor career development and career prospects relative to their civilian counterparts.
3.	A perception that the work performed in their current job does not use the skills the person has gained, and is therefore not beneficial to their career or professional development.
4.	Insufficient financial and materiel resources to do their job effectively.
5.	Inadequate training and preparation for their current position
6.	Poor work/life balance (that is, excessive hours worked and inadequate staffing for the amount of work).
7.	A perception that skills gained in the course of their training are likely to be attractive to civilian employers.

Source: Sigma Consultancy. (2005). *Faith, Hope and Technology: Issues in the commitment and retention of 'Critical Category' personnel*. Directorate of Strategic Personnel Planning and Research Discussion Paper 1/2005.



The themes identified in Table 20 can be broadly summarised under two main headings:

Family/individual factors and social change

Such changes include the tendency for dual-income families and a trend for young Australians to defer their career choice until their late 20s or early 30s. A recent study of Service partners¹ found that most partners believe their prospects for employment had worsened in recent years. Given the importance that many couples place on partner employment in terms of both personal fulfilment and contributing to the household income, factors that limit or restrict partner employment opportunities can be a source of stress.

A large number of factors tend to influence the degree of support that families provide to ADF members, and these tend to start impacting at around 6-10 years of service when the family unit has matured. These factors include desire to remain in one location, with the associated desire for less family separation, access to both childcare facilities and childrens' education needs, and the availability of employment for spouses.

Operational/organisational factors

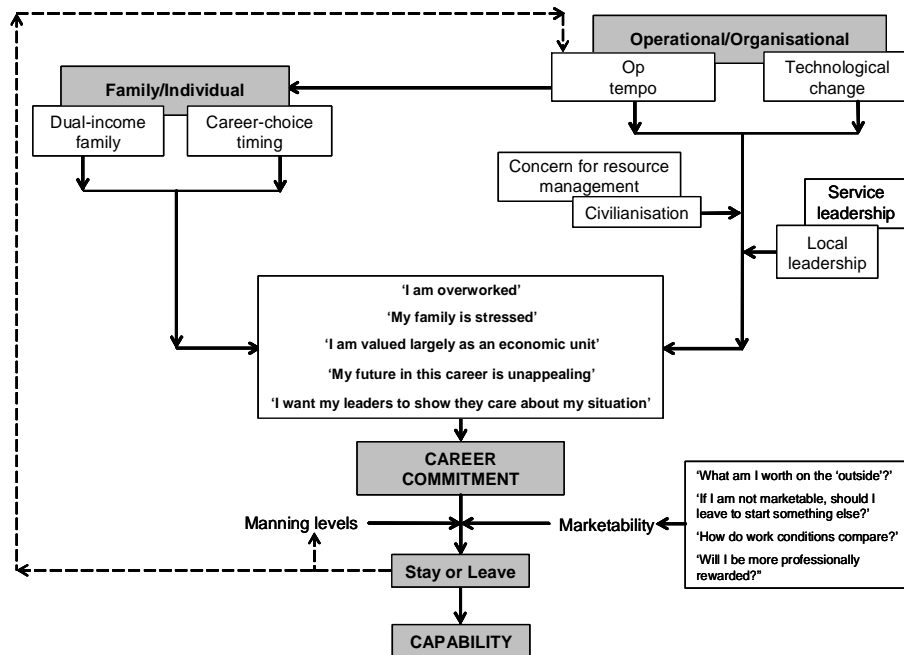
There has been a considerable decline in the number of respite postings for some ADF personnel. This is exacerbated by frequent absences from home of the service member as a consequence of the requirement to attend training courses and exercises in addition to a higher operational tempo. Frustration with career management and development practices, particularly skill utilisation are commonly reported as sources of dissatisfaction. There is also a perception that there are limited rewards relative to the amount of work performed. These factors in turn, have effects on relationships, particularly in regard to supporting partners in maintaining the family, finding employment and developing a career.

1. Sigma Consultancy. (1998). *Defying Gravity*. Report submitted to Head Defence Personnel Executive.

As a consequence of the above factors, there is potential for many members to lose trust in the ADF as an employer, and to seriously consider options for employment outside the organisation. This is reinforced by a perception that 'outside work' will provide greater satisfaction and rewards.

Figure 12 schematically highlights the interactions between these factors in the individuals' decision making process to either remain in the military, or to separate.

Figure 12 Factors Affecting Retention.



Source: Sigma Consultancy. (2005). *Faith, Hope and Technology: Issues in the commitment and retention of 'Critical Category' personnel*. Directorate of Strategic Personnel Planning and Research Discussion Paper 1/2005.

The risks to defence capability from critical category shortfalls are currently at levels that require awareness and management by the most senior ADF officers. Recovery plans have been implemented for each of the critical trade categories, and as recovery initiatives are implemented and evaluated, it is expected that the strategies will be refined and further developed.³⁶

Such a recovery process takes considerable time with the Services expecting to recover the critical categories over the next three to five years in most cases. Given the complex interplay of factors causing a trade category to be critical, in some cases, the recovery process may take longer than anticipated.³⁷



36. Critical Category Recovery Strategies. DGWPRR Briefing Paper, October 2005.

37. Critical Category Recovery Strategies. DGWPRR Briefing Paper, October 2005.