

Australian Defence Force Families research 2019

July 2020

Findings from the ADF Families Survey 2019 covering:

- Support for ADF transition
- Support during deployments and absences from home
 - Family support services and information
 - Relocations and housing
- Members With Dependants (Unaccompanied)
 - Civilian partner employment
 - Defence health services

DIRECTORATE OF PEOPLE INTELLIGENCE & RESEARCH

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More information about the ADF Families Survey is available from the Directorate of People Intelligence & Research intranet site (<http://drnet.defence.gov.au/People/WP/People-Intelligence-and-Research/pages/People-Intelligence-and-Research.aspx>)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) Families research project measures the impact of ADF conditions of service on family members' satisfaction with service life and commitment to service. The research comprised an attitudinal survey developed in collaboration with Defence stakeholders, including the Defence Community Organisation (DCO) and Defence Families of Australia (DFA). The survey was administered online in June 2019 and 3,652 responses were retained for analysis.

Children's education, housing quality and location, and partner employment were the most important considerations for ADF families. Partner employment, together with the ADF member's employment, were the most predominant considerations in families' decisions to be on Member With Dependent Unaccompanied (MWD(U)) arrangements.

ADF conditions of service impact multiple aspects of a family's lifestyle. Relocations due to postings can restrict a family's ability to settle in a location, and negatively affect partner employment and children's education. The potential variability in the quality of housing provided to families at each posting may also impact family life. ADF members' work demands and absences affect a family's ability to share household and caring responsibilities, which can in turn hamper partner employment, and long or repeated absences can be detrimental to family relationships. Families perceiving that Defence does not consider their family circumstances in postings and work demands or believing that they are not adequately supported are likely to feel negatively towards Defence. Both military units and family support services have a role in assisting families to navigate the Defence lifestyle.

Families' use of support services was generally low, and for most services, use has decreased since 2017. Awareness and use of Defence's information sources has transitioned to online media; however, the perceived usefulness of websites has decreased. The findings within this report can help to further improve the reach and quality of services by better understanding families' needs and where they have difficulties.

Contact with ADF families during members' deployment and absences could be improved. The majority of families were unaware of pre-deployment briefings and education sessions. The demand for contact by the ADF partner's unit during deployments has remained constant between 2015 and 2019, while the proportion of families contacted has reduced over the same period.

Approximately half of Defence families would choose to live in Service Residence if given the choice, indicating an ongoing demand for Defence housing. ADF members choose Service Residence due to the easier administrative process compared to private accommodation. The predominant reason for members not utilising Service Residence is due to location, indicating the importance of Service Residence in desirable locations.

The proportion of families that require special needs support services is relatively small. However, access to special needs support services was the most difficult aspect to re-establish following a relocation. As families with special needs require more support, engagement targeted to support these families would be beneficial.

In order to tailor services to the requirements of ADF families, further exploration may be required to gain deeper insights into the nature of some of the challenges facing ADF families. Some of these topics include transition to the Reserves, the impacts of unaccompanied postings, and the motivating factors for civilian partner education.

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Background

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) Families research program measures the impact of ADF conditions of service on family members' satisfaction with service life and commitment to service. The project was developed to meet the needs of a range of Defence stakeholders, including the Defence Community Organisation (DCO) and Defence Families of Australia (DFA).

The research comprised an attitudinal survey, and the Directorate of People Intelligence and Research (DPIR) previously conducted the survey in 2008-09, 2012, 2015, and 2017. This report provides information from the survey administered in June 2019.

The Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee granted ethical approval for this research on 31 May 2019.

Research method

Survey instrument

The 2019 administration focused on topics of current relevance and priority for Defence. Survey content was based on previous iterations, where topics of long-term interest to the organisation were again studied to understand changes and to investigate emerging dimensions of the topic. Some topics previously studied as part of the ADF Families research program were given greater context in 2019 through additional questions or comparisons to broader populations. A Quality of Life measurement was included in the survey for the first time although methodological problems, including sampling, and utility with a military family sample, limit the reliability and validity of these results. It is proposed the results may be released when the ADF Family Research program has addressed this measurement gap in the future through a thorough analysis and choice of a family measurement instrument.

Occupational group

The Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) groups all occupations into hierarchical levels. The highest level is the 'major group' and the second highest level is the 'sub-major group'. Employed civilian partners in the ADF Families Survey were asked their major and sub-major occupational groups. Caution should be applied when interpreting these results, as the ANZSCO structure is not intended to be used by respondents to self-classify (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013). The Australian Bureau of Statistics recommends collecting this information through a standard module of five open-ended questions to enable consistent and accurate coding (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018). This was not feasible in the ADF Families Survey due to the large amount of time and specialised resources necessary to code responses if the standard module had been used.

Scope

Family types are defined below. A 'permanent ADF member' includes members of the permanent force (Service Categories 6 and 7) as well as Reservists on continuous full-time service (Service Option C).

Civilian partner: An ADF-recognised spouse or interdependent partner of a permanent ADF member and not a permanent member themselves.

ADF partner: An ADF-recognised spouse or interdependent partner of a permanent ADF member who is also a permanent ADF member.

ADF single parent: A permanent ADF member who is a single parent, either with full or shared custody.

ADF member with other dependants: A permanent ADF member who has 'other' Defence-recognised dependants that would not usually be considered a dependant. 'Other' dependants exclude partners and children.

Other family member: A parent, sibling, aunt/uncle, guardian or other parental figure, or another type of family member (aged 18 years or above) to a permanent ADF member.

Some sections of the survey were tailored to partners of ADF members, which included both civilian and ADF partners. Where the term 'partners' is used in the report, this refers to both civilian and ADF partners unless otherwise specified.

Some sections of the survey were tailored to all family types excluding 'other family members'. Where the term 'ADF members and civilian partners' is used in the report, this refers to civilian and ADF partners, ADF single parents, and ADF members with other dependants.

Administration process

The survey was administered online in June 2019 and accessed via the DCO and DFA websites and social media pages. ADF members were also sent a link to the online questionnaire for distribution to their family members. Respondents self-selected to participate in the survey and there was no ability to ensure that the sample was representative of the population of ADF families.

Comparative data

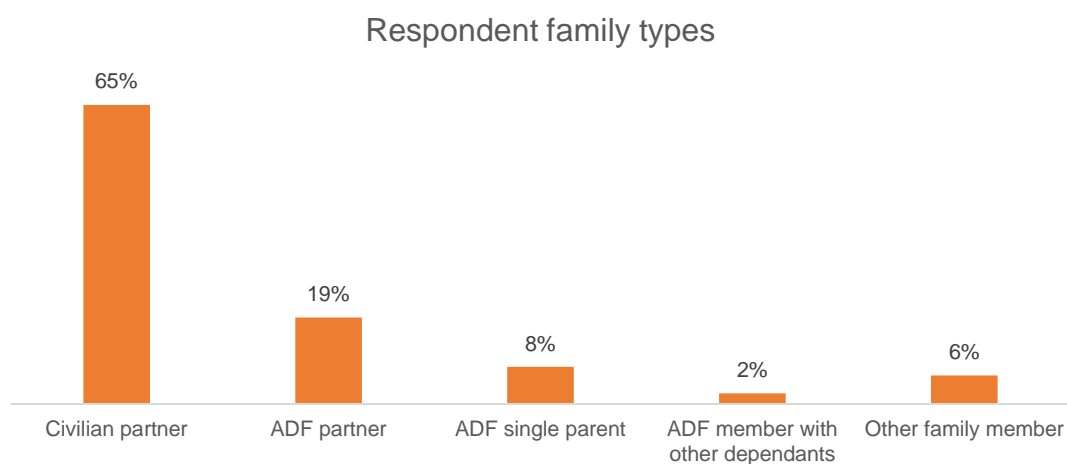
The survey findings were qualitatively and quantitatively compared to other data sources, where appropriate. ADF families' experiences are compared over time, and also compared to the experiences of families in other militaries or people in the Australian civilian population.

Respondents

In 2019, 2,927 respondents completed the survey to the end. A further 725 respondents provided at least some demographic and attitudinal data and were included in analysis, for a total of 3,652 respondents.¹

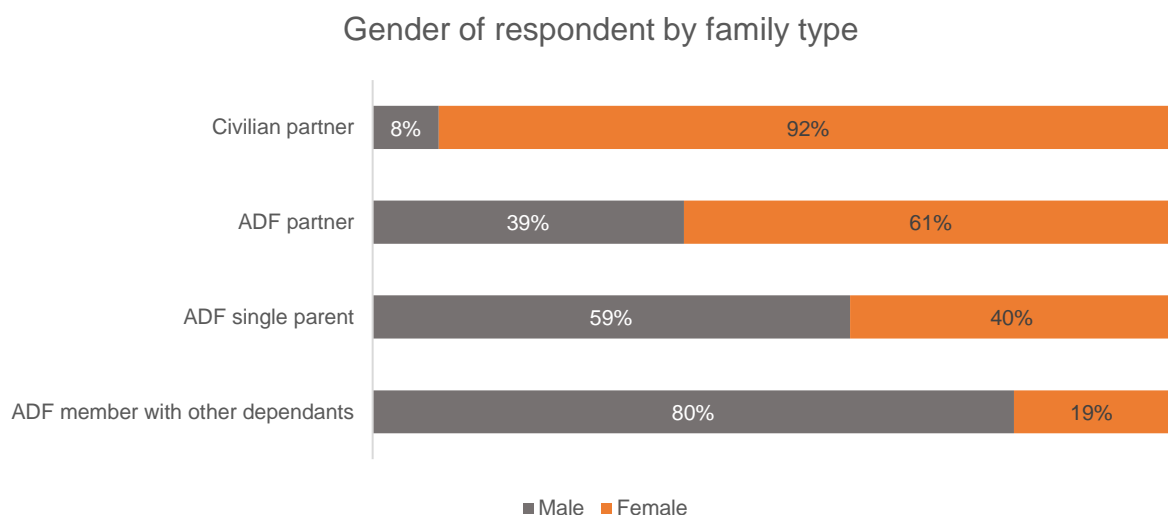
Family composition

Sixty-five per cent of the 3,652 respondents were civilian partners. Six per cent of respondents were 'other family members', and 75 per cent of those were parents of ADF members.



Gender

The gender breakdown varies between family types.



'Other family members' were not asked their gender.

Male and female percentages do not sum to 100 per cent if there are some respondents reporting their gender as other than male or female.

¹ In comparison, 4,649 people responded to the 2017 survey and 3,457 people responded to the 2015 survey.

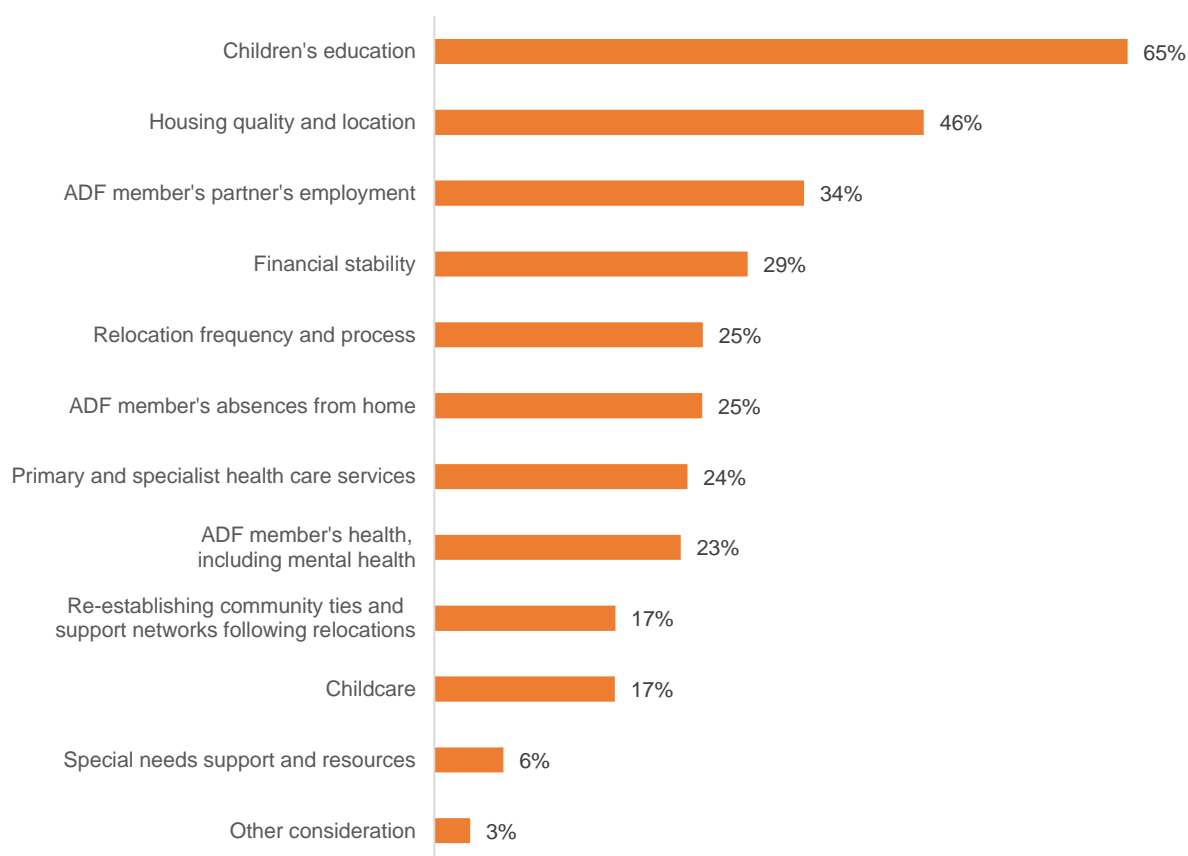
RESULTS

Most important considerations for Defence families

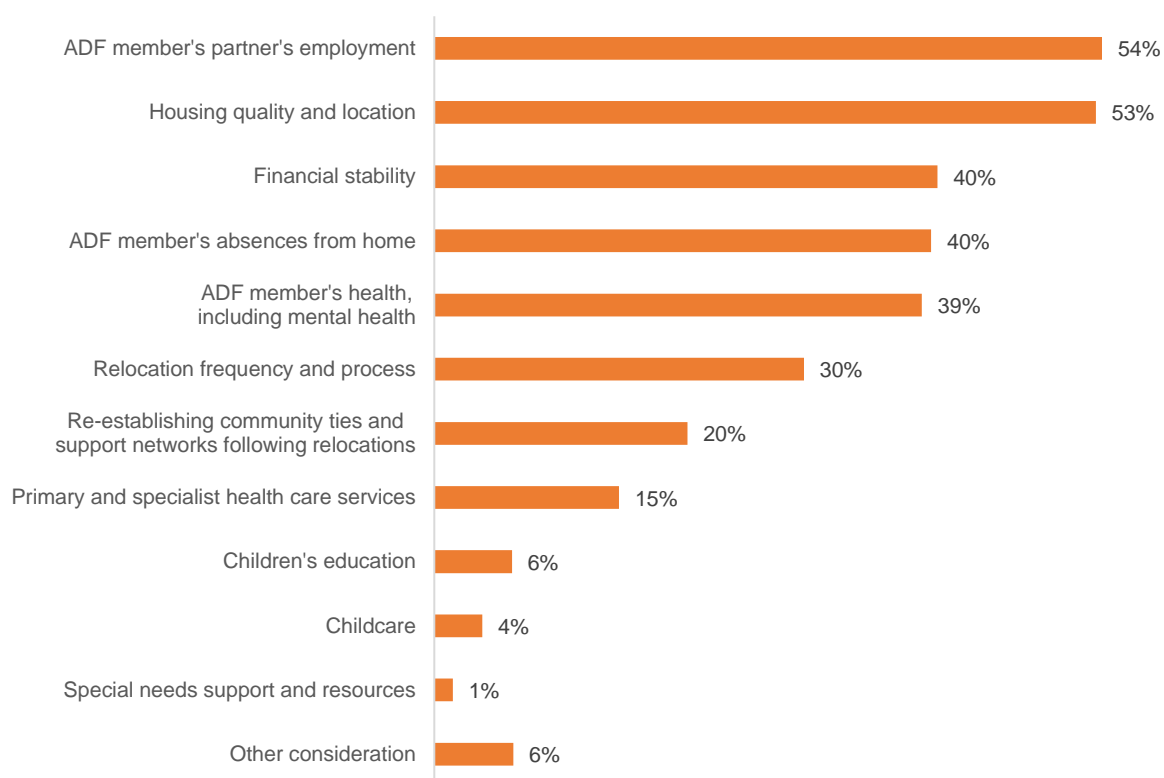
Having a family member in the ADF can impact many aspects of family life, such as housing and relocations, the member's and their partner's employment, children's needs, and health support. These, in turn, can impact the member's posting and deployment decisions or decision to stay in or leave the ADF.

To better understand the influences of those decisions, all partners were asked to select the three most important considerations for them as a Defence family. For families with dependent children, children's education was the most important consideration. In contrast, childcare was a primary consideration for only 17 per cent of these families.

Most important considerations for families
with dependent children regarding the Defence lifestyle



Most important considerations for families without dependent children regarding the Defence lifestyle



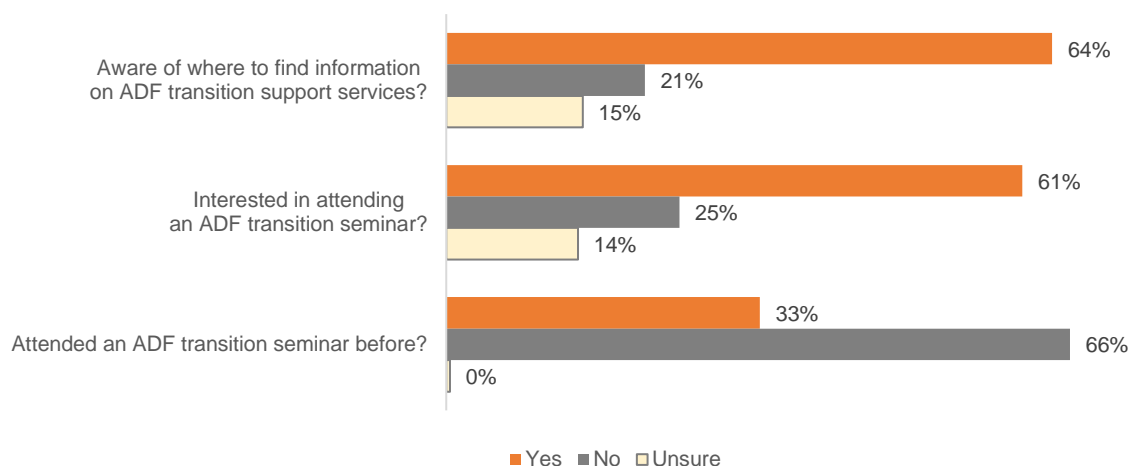
Partner employment, housing quality and location, and financial stability were important considerations for families both with and without dependent children.

Awareness of support for ADF transition

An ADF member's decision to transition out of the permanent ADF is a significant decision that also impacts the member's family. DCO provides support to assist the member and their family through the transition experience.

Seventy-seven per cent of respondents were not currently transitioning or considering transitioning out of the permanent ADF. Of the 23 per cent of respondents transitioning or considering transitioning out of the permanent ADF, 64 per cent knew where to find information on transition support services. While 61 per cent were interested in attending a transition seminar, only 33 per cent had attended one before.

ADF members' and civilian partners'
interest in and awareness of ADF transition support services



Most respondents who were considering transition wanted more assistance preparing for civilian work. They suggested opportunities for work placements while still employed in the ADF, Defence-sponsored training courses and re-qualification, more clarification of how ADF skills and qualifications relate to the civilian work environment, and assistance with writing resumes and building interview skills. Respondents also expressed that greater liaison with civilian Defence job networks or veterans' employment organisations such as WithYouWithMe would be beneficial.²

The current ADF transition process was also noted to be a hindrance to transitioning to civilian work.

'Assistance in developing resumes or preparation for job interviews [would be helpful]. Currently, access to this support is only available to members that have submitted a discharge/SERCAT transfer application, which places a significant time limit on the member, adding to the stress already experienced in preparation for transition. An ability to access services such as these to prepare for transition would allow members to look to secure post-Defence employment – prior to committing to a defined separation date.'
- male Army member who is a single parent

Some respondents described difficulties finding or accessing information about transition. They noted that transition seminars should be scheduled for times more convenient to working families, should be more frequent and offered in more locations. They also noted that access to information should be available outside of seminars, and desired more information on websites or other easily accessible platforms. They suggested transition process checklists for the member and their family, with points of contact in the ADF to assist

² More information on WithYouWithMe is available at www.withyouwithme.com.

with enquiries outside of seminar times. The types of information that respondents desired to know more about included financial advice such as financial entitlements with the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and superannuation, the process of transferring to the Reserves, and housing support.

Some respondents identified issues with the current transition process that negatively affected their transition experience, such as unsupportive chains of command and uncoordinated administrative processes. These responses highlight the importance of ensuring that all areas of Defence, from support services to military units, provide consistent and coherent support to members who are considering transition.

'Be clear about the process for discharging and what the forms are and then advise unit staff accordingly... the transition documents are clear about what is required. However, units then demand all sorts of additional documents and even within the unit, the different ranks require different things. Unfortunately, as my husband is planning to stay in the Reserves, he is hesitant to escalate this as he may have to deal with these people again.'
- female civilian partner of an Army member

'Registering attendance for a transition seminar should not require lodgement/approval through chain of command. If the member is looking to transition out due to workplace bullying or similar, they may elect not to attend (and miss out on opportunities for information) because they are hesitant to have it seen/recorded.'
- female civilian partner of an Army member

Some respondents wanted increased involvement from DVA at every stage of the transition. They desired an easier process of transferring the member's service record and medical records to DVA and establishing civilian health care (Medicare), and desired more information about veteran support services and entitlements. Other suggested opportunities for improvement included assigning an individual transition case manager to departing members to provide advice and monitor the progress of the transition, and for the ADF to offer Reserve Service Days to all transitioning members to ease the process of returning to civilian life and work.

DVA commissioned the Australian Institute of Family Studies to undertake a qualitative research study to understand how families manage ADF members' transition into civilian life. That study noted that respondents appreciated ADF transition seminars as sources of information and ideas, but felt that they were sometimes too general to meet the specific needs of families with significant health issues or felt that the seminars did not address families' desire to know the benefits and support the transitioning member would be entitled to once they left the ADF (Muir 2018). Since this study, over the 2019-20 financial year, DVA is boosting the grants to not-for-profit organisations to support veterans gain meaningful employment.

That study also found that families with a transitioning member in poor physical or mental health tended to face more transition-related challenges, including strained family relationships, and difficulty finding stable or satisfactory employment outside of the ADF (Muir 2018). In contrast, those respondents who reported being in good health reported having financially secure post-ADF employment or retirement, fewer challenges in post-transition life, or reported being able to better manage the challenges they did face. Over the 2019-20 financial year, DVA is extending the provisional access to medical treatment trial to reduce the time taken to approve claims and shape the future of service delivery. DVA are also supporting Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling to provide mental health training for volunteers who work with veterans, enhancing their capability to recognise people at risk, and provide intervention and support.

The Blue Star Families' Military Family Lifestyle Survey studies US military families and veterans transitioning fully to civilian life. In 2017, this study found the aspects of civilian life that veterans felt they were unprepared for included not having a job search plan (which they

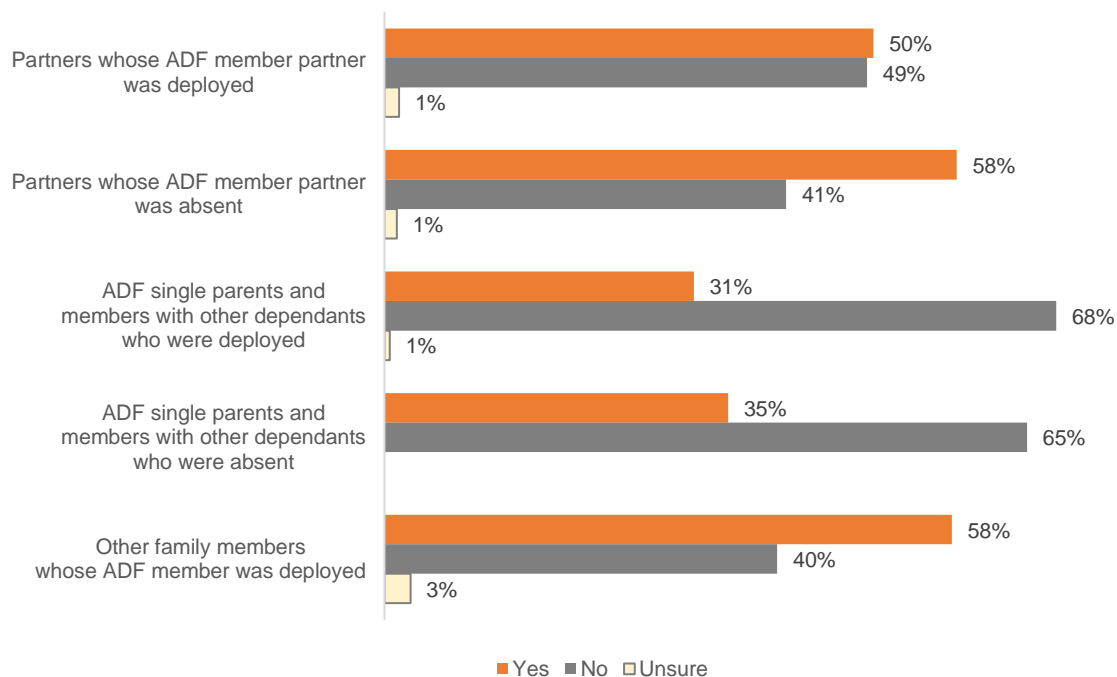
are assisted with in 2020), not knowing how to access health care, and not having a permanent place to live once they left the military (Shiffer et al. 2017). The US study also found a relationship between veterans' mental health and a smooth transition process, although causality and direction are unclear. For Canadian veterans who reported an easy transition process, the following factors contributed to the transition's success: satisfying employment, mental health, family relationships, and other social networks that support the member's new civilian identity and connection to the community (Manser 2018).

There appear to be factors both within and outside of Defence's control affecting the likelihood of an ADF member experiencing a successful transition. Groups at a higher risk of an unsuccessful transition are those in poorer physical and mental health and those with less financial security; these groups are likely to require more support and engagement.

Support during deployments and absences from home

Defence recognises that an ADF member's deployments or other work-related absences are disruptive to the member's family, and the organisation provides information and support to families before, during, and after the absence. At least half of partners and 'other family members' reported that the ADF member was deployed between 2015 and 2019 or absent between 2018 and 2019. ADF members who were single parents or who had 'other' dependants were less likely to be deployed or absent in the respective time periods.

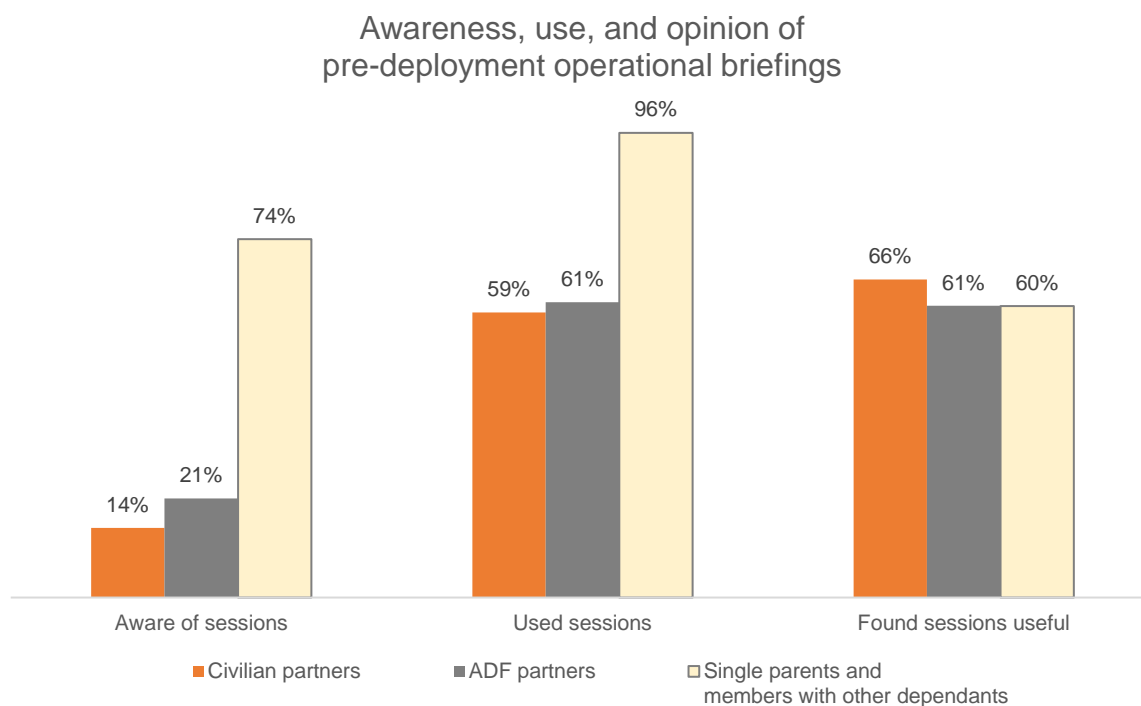
Percentage of respondents whose ADF member deployed between 2015-19 or was absent between 2018-19



Pre-deployment information sessions

Awareness and use of pre-deployment operational briefings and DCO education sessions varied between family types. ADF members who were single parents or who had 'other' dependants were most likely to be aware of and use these sessions, compared to other family types. In these cases, the survey respondent was the person deploying. Awareness and use of these sessions was much lower among partners, even for those partners who were also ADF members. This suggests that awareness is largely limited to the person deploying.

Of those who attended pre-deployment operational briefings, a similar percentage of respondents across family types found them useful.



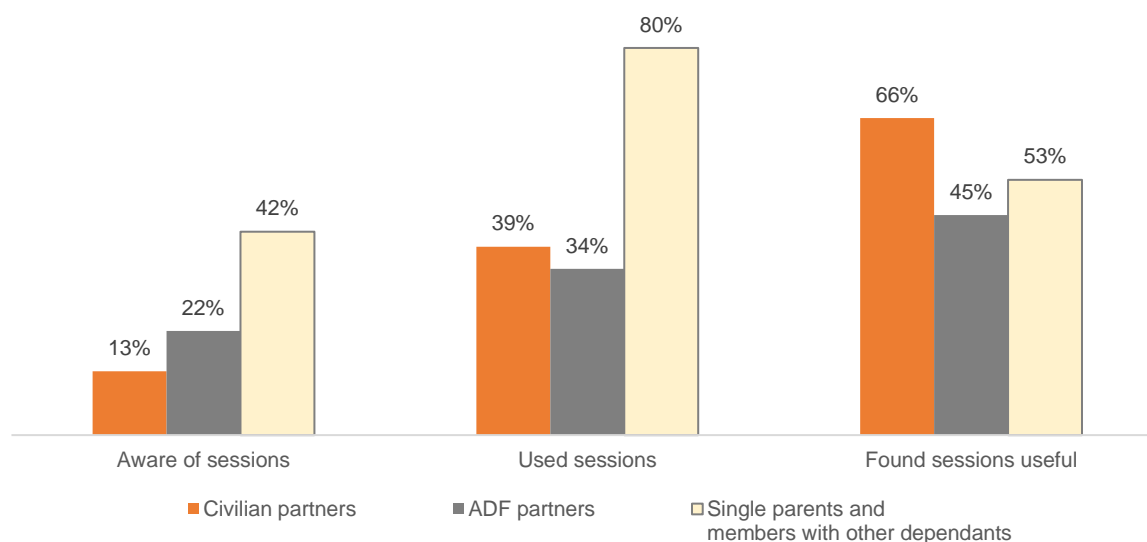
Use of these sessions is expressed as a percentage of those respondents who were aware of them. The proportion of respondents who found the session useful is expressed as a percentage of those who used them.

'Other family members' were not asked about these sessions.

Fewer than 100 respondents in each family type used these sessions, so the percentages of respondents who found the sessions useful correspond to very small numbers.

The percentage of respondents who found DCO education sessions useful varied between family types. A higher proportion of civilian partners found the sessions useful than did other family types.

Awareness, use, and opinion of
DCO education sessions (including FamilySMART)



Use of these sessions is expressed as a percentage of those respondents who were aware of them. The proportion of respondents who found the session useful is expressed as a percentage of those who used them.

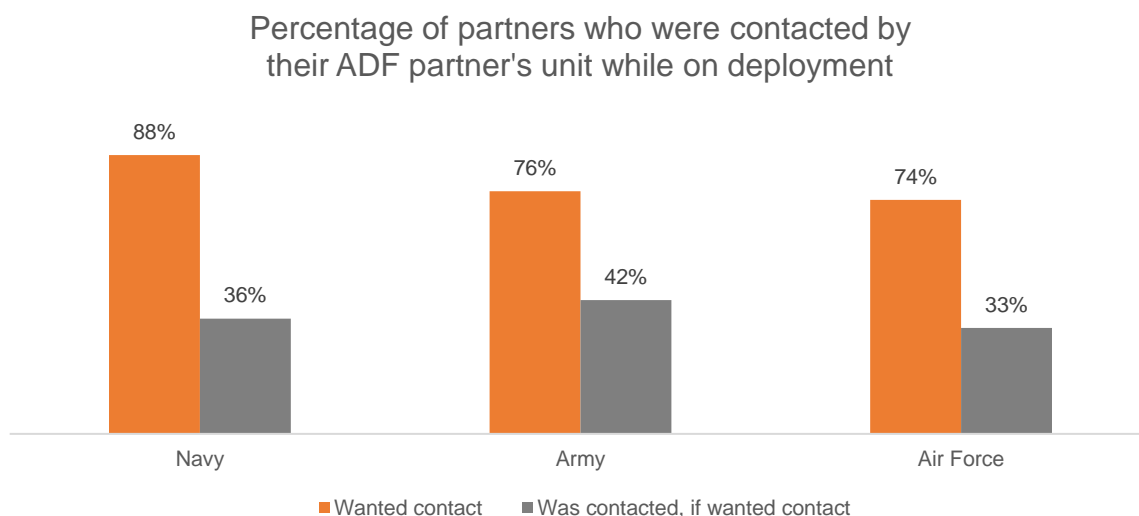
'Other family members' were not asked about these sessions.

Fewer than 60 respondents in each family type used these sessions, so the percentages of respondents who found the sessions useful correspond to very small numbers.

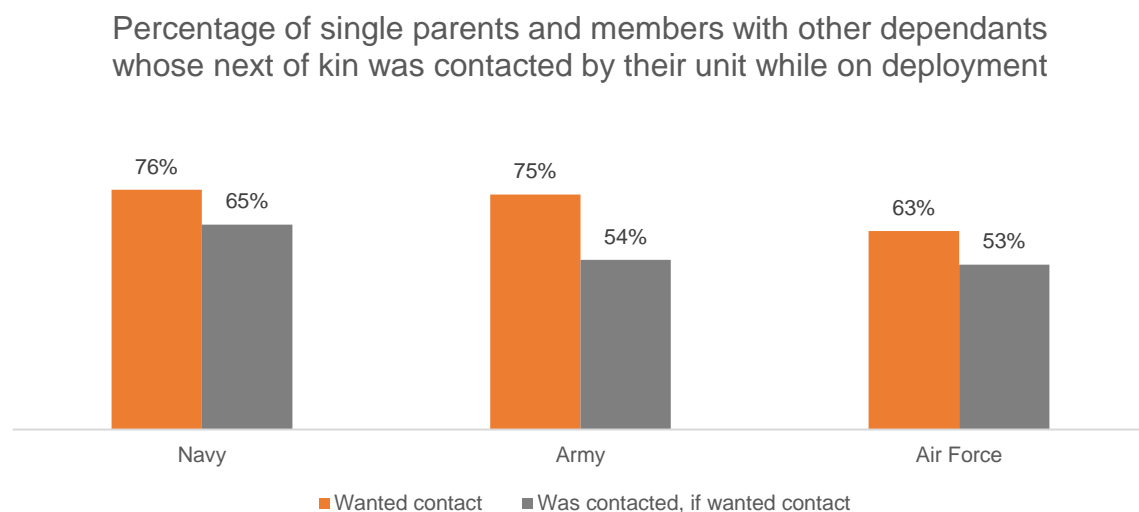
Awareness of pre-deployment operational briefings among civilian partners and ADF partners decreased from 2015 to 2019. ADF partners' use of these briefings increased, and the proportion of single parents and members with 'other' dependants who found these briefings useful decreased. Awareness of DCO education sessions among civilian partners decreased since 2015, but awareness among single parents and members with 'other' dependants increased. The proportion of families who used and found these sessions useful were not statistically significantly different between the two years. Tables showing the percentages and changes from 2015 to 2019 are available in Annex B.

Contact by ADF unit while on deployment

Some ADF members' units contacted partners while the ADF member was on deployment. Less than half of partners who wanted contact received it, and this was consistent across Services.



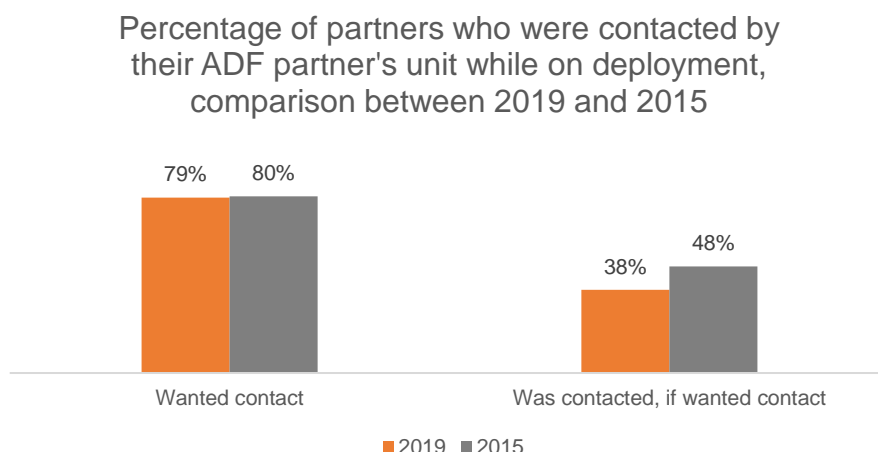
For ADF members who were single parents or who had 'other' dependants, some of their units contacted their next of kin while they were on deployment. Compared to partners, a higher proportion of ADF single parents and members with 'other' dependants reported that their unit contacted their next of kin.³



Just over 100 respondents answered this question, so all percentages in the graph above correspond to very small numbers.

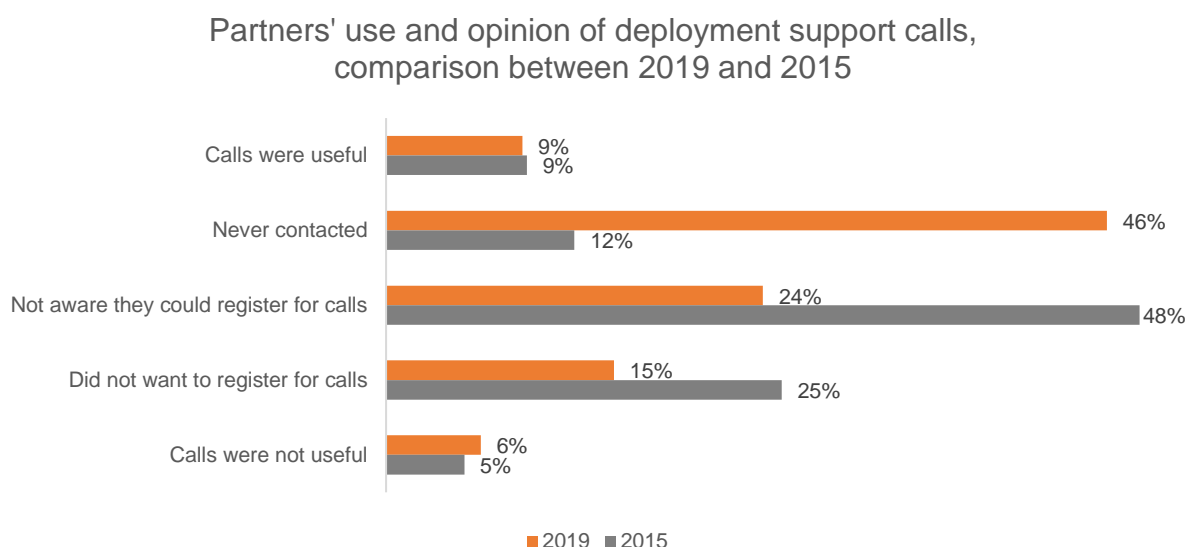
³ Data related to next-of-kin contact may be less reliable as respondents report on behalf of others.

A similar proportion of partners in 2019 as 2015 wanted contact by the ADF member's unit. However, a smaller proportion of partners in 2019 reported that they were contacted.



Deployment support calls

Only 15 per cent of partners in 2019 and 14 per cent in 2015 received deployment support calls; most were not contacted or did not register for calls. While proportionally more partners in 2019 were aware they could register for calls than in 2015, a higher proportion reported that they were never contacted. This suggests that efforts to increase awareness since 2015 have been effective, but greater follow-through in contacting partners is needed.



Some respondents reported that the calls were not useful because they felt they were a token gesture without any real concern for the family's wellbeing or they perceived that adequate support was achieved only through practical, physical assistance and not phone calls.

'When calling, they struggled to deal with crisis... I had to tell them what I needed and then they'd say no they didn't offer that. Was very frustrating'

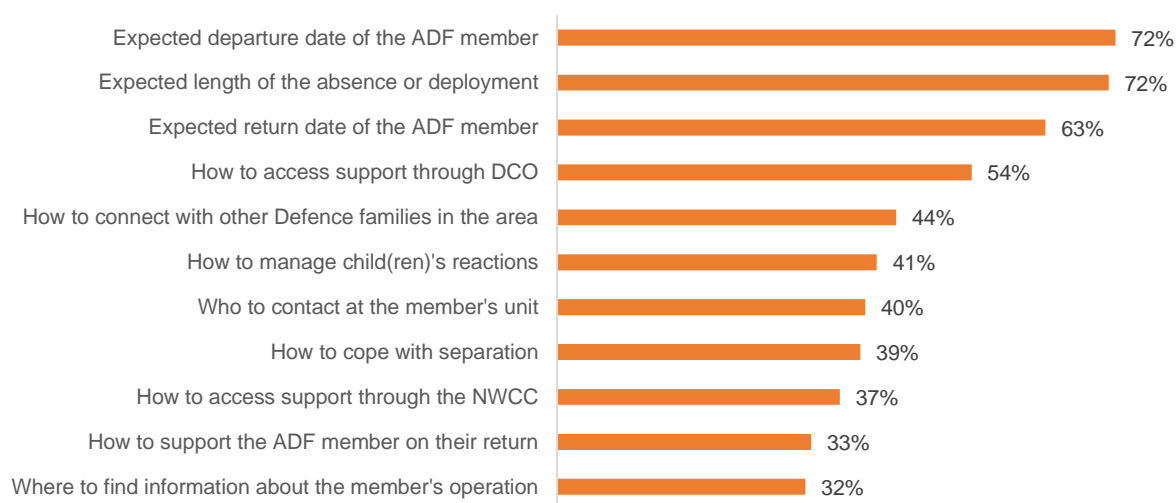
- female civilian partner of an Army member

Information regarding the ADF member's deployment or absence

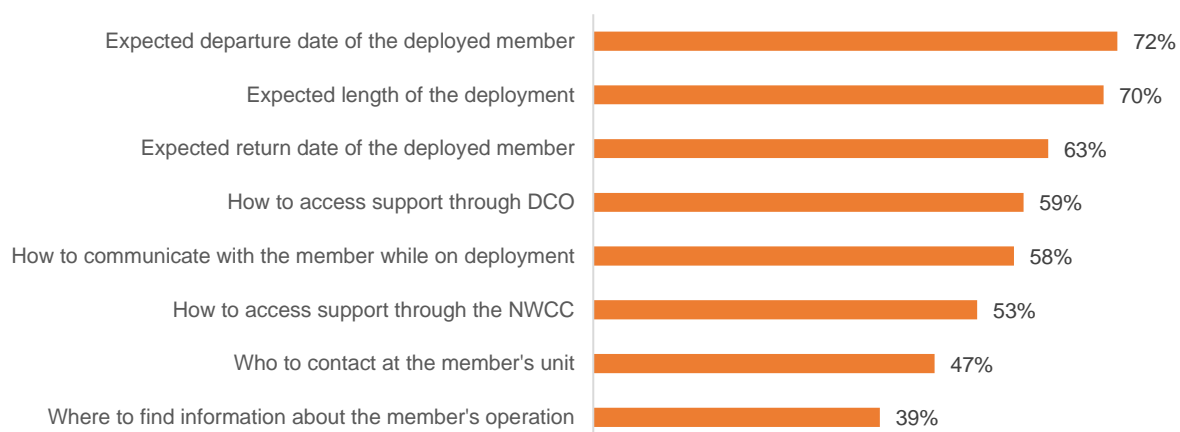
Of the information regarding ADF deployments or absences, respondents found information about logistics – such as dates and length of deployment – to be most adequate. Only a small proportion of respondents felt that the information they received regarding the member's operation was adequate; this may be expected as some information about ADF operations is classified.

Less than half of partners felt that information about managing their relationship with their ADF member and their children during the member's absence was adequate. Partners also were less likely to rate information as adequate compared to 'other family members', suggesting that they have higher expectations of the amount of information they should receive. It may be beneficial to explore why expectations are not being met.

Percentage of partners who found information about the member's deployment or absence to be adequate



Percentage of other family members who found information about the member's deployment to be adequate



Just over 100 respondents answered this question, so all percentages in the graph above correspond to very small numbers.

Some respondents suggested improvements to access of information about deployments and absences, noting that a central hub or online portal for families with information and links to available support services would be beneficial.

Many partners indicated that a lack of adequate notice of a member's upcoming absences was disruptive to family life and that the family needed to delay their planning of holidays, work schedules, and other activities until Defence provided confirmed dates of the member's absence. Changes to confirmed absence dates were also stressful to respondents. This indicates that both military units and Defence support services play a role in ensuring the member's absence causes minimal disruption to the family.

'Where possible, [provide] more notice of dates so appropriate care and arrangements can be made to support families living away from their support networks. We often get final dates of exercises a week before leaving which is too late to organise for our support network to fly in and help with the dependants.'

- female civilian partner of an Air Force member

'More fidelity regarding the details of proposed deployments [is needed]. The lack of information regarding the confirmation of [my wife's] deployment resulted in us having to cancel leave and flights at a major financial loss so she could attend her force prep[aration]. Even more frustrating was that her deployment was cancelled, therefore the financial loss regarding the change of leave plans was for nothing.'

- male respondent in a dual-ADF relationship with an Army member

Partners also suggested that the scheduling of absences should be family-focused and consider the amount of time that a member has already spent away from home. Postings or absences scheduled shortly after other deployments or absences were not seen to be family-friendly.

Respondents perceived that there was limited support from the ADF in granting leave or providing flexibility in work arrangements while a member was absent. This was especially pronounced for partners who were also ADF members.

'When my wife had to attend her military course for nine weeks, the Army wanted to put me on restrictive service over that period because I was unable to do duties because I was [effectively] a single parent. Not only was I struggling with maintaining a family life and working full time, they want to take [our] service allowance away to create financial hardship. My wife was trying to develop her career.'

- male respondent in a dual-ADF relationship with an Air Force member

Some partners desired more contact from Defence while the ADF member was absent, either from the unit or from Defence support services. Types of contact mentioned were welfare checks on the family, updates from the unit about the work the member is involved in, and points of contact in the unit for emergencies for either the family or the ADF member.

Respondents also suggested that allowing increased contact between the absent ADF member and their family would be helpful. This was especially the case where some members were not entitled to the same benefits for dependants as others, as Defence policy requires dependants to be living with the member for over 90 nights a year to be categorised as a Member With Dependants. For those members, the financial and administrative burden of taking additional leave at their own expense prevented them from seeing their family.

'There is no support whatsoever for me as a single parent, due to being financially burdened following a separation, I have no real choice other than to live on base which means I can't have [my children] overnight for 90 days or more... they lost reunion travel, every other ADF member I deploy with get to see their children but not me. [They also] lost ADF Family Health [Program], carer's leave (can't look after them when they're sick now), relocation assistance if I get posted.'

- male Navy member who is a single parent

'As a single parent, you don't have the option [offered to] de facto [partners] where they can be covered for flights to bring children down to see you when in training. But as a single parent with 2 children under the age of 5, they cannot fly down on their own and need to be accompanied by the guardian/carer. This should be covered [financially by Defence].'

- female Army member who is a single parent

'Phone usage during exercises [would be useful], [I] understand that we can't all be walking around on exercise with mobile phones in our hands... but when there is downtime, a little text home is all that is needed to boost morale and keep relations informed.'

- male Army member with 'other' dependants

Many respondents indicated that practical or financial assistance would be more beneficial than information during a deployment or absence. They referred to increased access to subsidised childcare, home maintenance services, and counselling and other emotional support services while the ADF member is away.

'[Provide] assistance with childcare or even cleaning or lawn maintenance. Home responsibilities [are] usually split between partners, was such a struggle when lumped on one person. Since we're currently living away from family support and I am also working full-time, 45 hours a week, I feel that my partner's career takes precedent over my own because he is away with work and cannot help around the house or help raise our child.'

- female civilian partner of an Army member

'Help with supporting and guiding our children who are not yet of primary school age [would assist]. Toddlers can suffer just as much as older children [during a parent's absence] but I have not yet been able to find support from the ADF or DCO regarding this challenge.'

- female civilian partner of an Air Force member

Some respondents desired improvements to the current suite of support networks and services. While they were aware of existing support provided by DCO, they felt that the scope of this support excluded them. Suggestions included more activities and support services for families without children and networks for male partners of female ADF members.

'DCO do not recognise that ADF partners are not necessarily stay-at-home mums. When my husband deployed I was working full-time Monday-Friday and DCO were unable to provide any support whatsoever, because I couldn't attend one of their facilities between the hours of 9am-5pm Mon-Fri. After-hours or weekend support is necessary.'

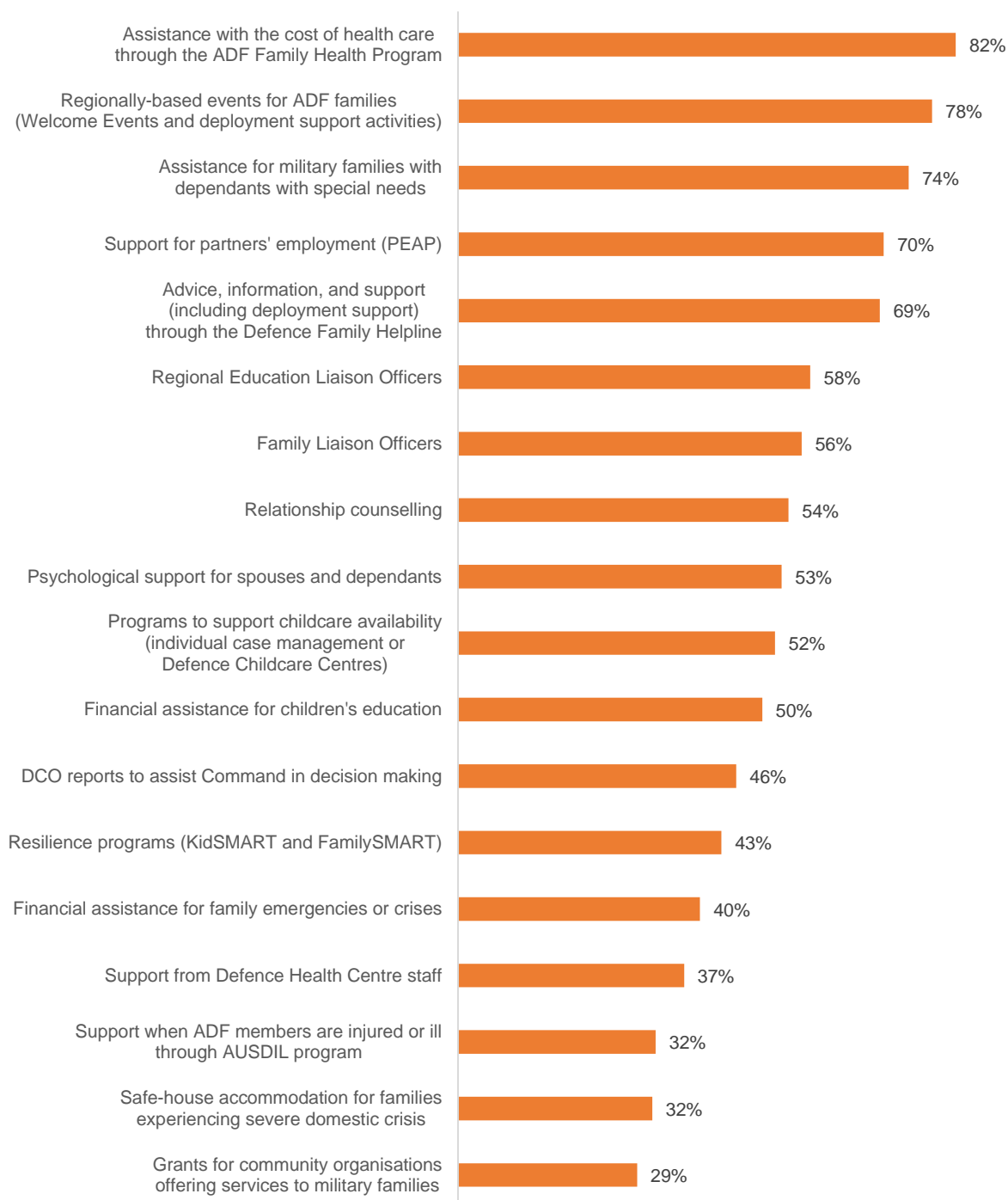
- female civilian partner of a Navy member

Evaluation of family support services and information

Awareness, use, and opinion of Defence support services

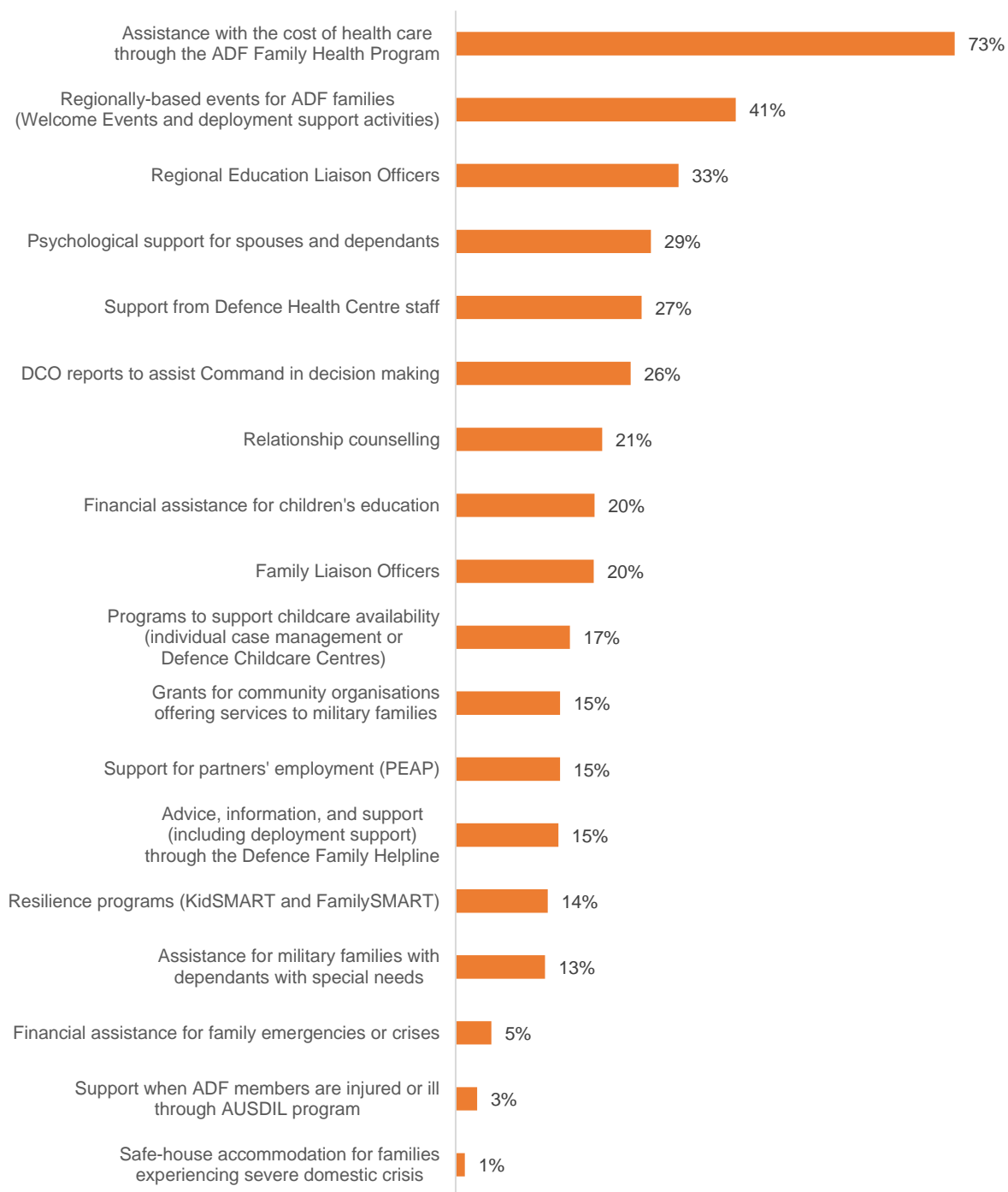
Defence offers a broad range of support services and awareness of these varies. The variation may reflect that some services support general needs and others are more specialised. Not all families will need to be aware of the lesser-known services.

Percentage of ADF members and civilian partners who were aware of Defence services



Use of support services was low. Apart from the ADF Family Health Program, less than half of the respondents who were aware of a service actually used it.

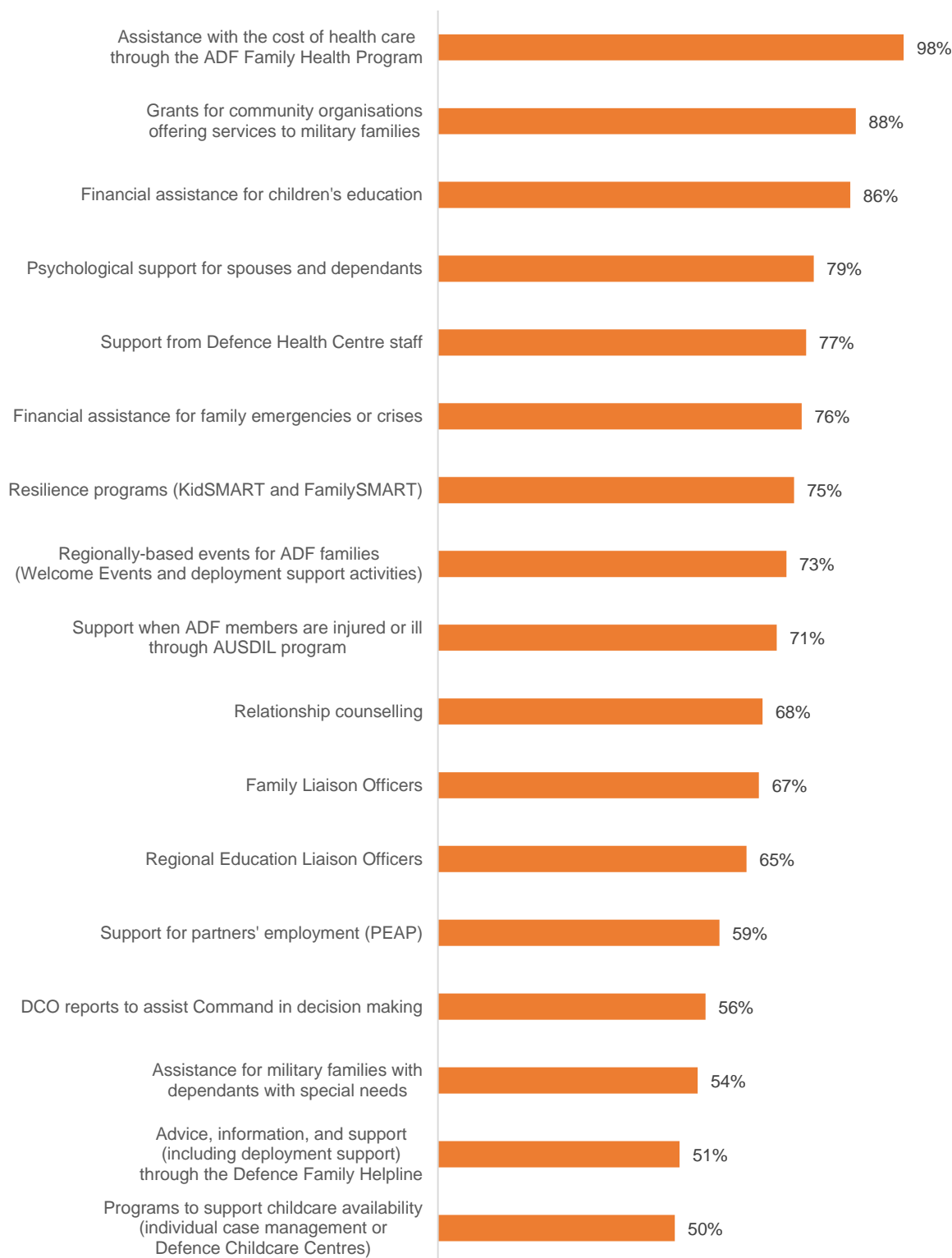
Percentage of ADF members and civilian partners who used Defence services



Use is expressed as a percentage of those respondents who were aware of the service.

Of the respondents who used a service, at least half found the service useful.

Percentage of ADF members and civilian partners who found Defence services useful



The proportion of respondents who found a service useful is expressed as a percentage of those respondents who used the service.

The percentage for safe-house accommodation is not shown as there were fewer than 10 respondents in at least one of the two opinion categories.

The following tables compare awareness, use, and perceived usefulness of services between 2017 and 2019.⁴ Interestingly, awareness of support services increased overall, while their use decreased.

Change in awareness of support services from 2017 to 2019

Services where awareness increased from 2017 to 2019	Services where awareness decreased from 2017 to 2019
Support for partners' employment (PEAP)	Defence Family Helpline
Resilience programs (KidSMART and FamilySMART)	Regionally-based events for ADF families
Programs to support childcare availability	Family Liaison Officers
Support when ADF members are injured or ill through AUSDIL program	
Financial assistance for children's education	
Grants for community organisations offering services to military families	
Safe-house accommodation for families experiencing severe domestic crisis	

A full table showing the respective percentages and changes from 2017 to 2019 is available in Annex B.

Change in use of support services from 2017 to 2019

Services that were used more in 2019 than in 2017	Services that were used less in 2019 than in 2017
Programs to support childcare availability	Defence Family Helpline
	Support when ADF members are injured or ill through AUSDIL program
	DCO reports to assist Command in decision making
	Regionally-based events for ADF families
	Support for partners' employment (PEAP)
	Safe-house accommodation for families experiencing severe domestic crisis

A full table showing the respective percentages and changes from 2017 to 2019 is available in Annex B.

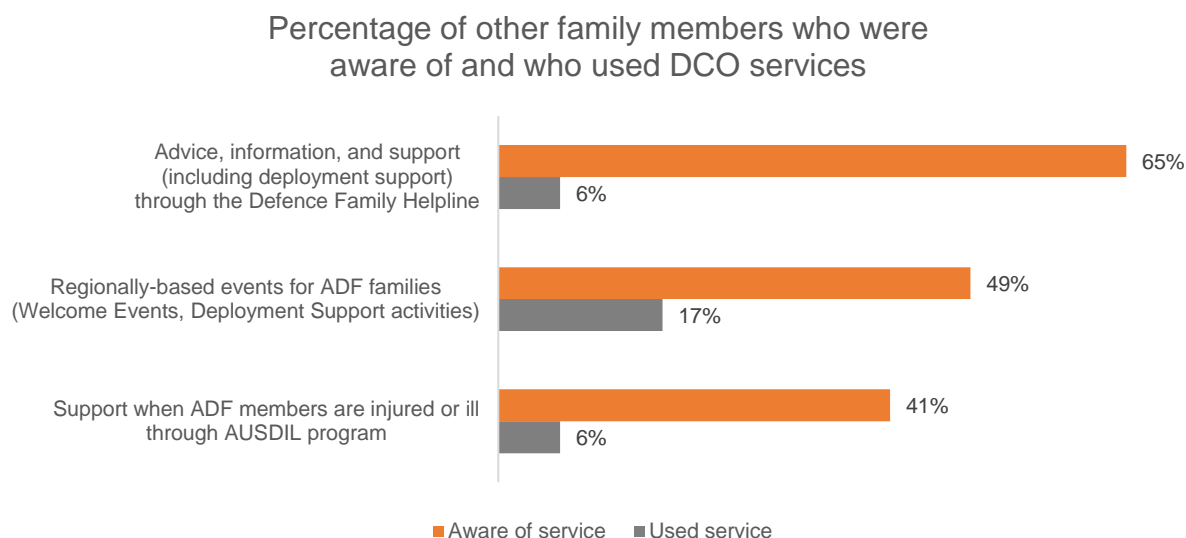
Change in perceived usefulness of support services from 2017 to 2019

Services where perceived usefulness increased from 2017 to 2019	Services where perceived usefulness decreased from 2017 to 2019
Support for partners' employment (PEAP)	Regionally-based events for ADF families
	Assistance for military families with dependants with special needs

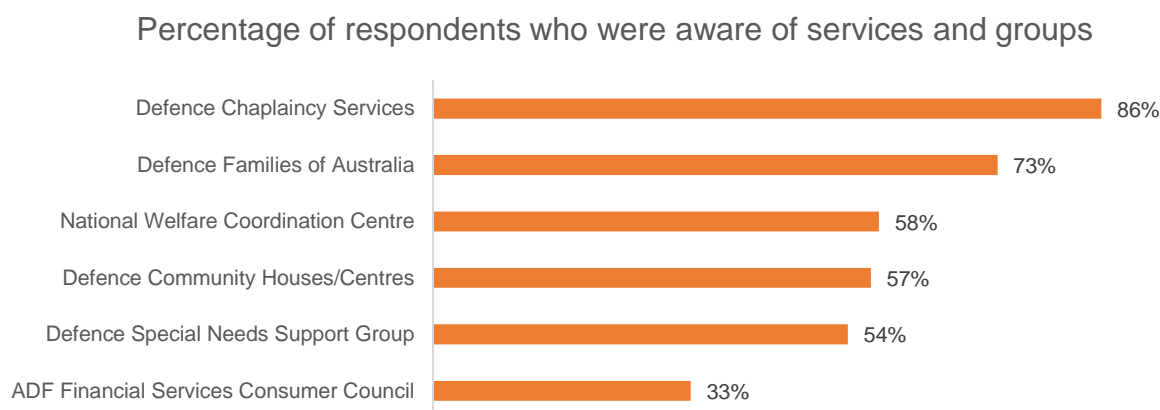
A full table showing the respective percentages and changes from 2017 to 2019 is available in Annex B.

⁴ Comparisons were only able to be made between services evaluated at both time points, and the tables only show services where the difference between the two years was statistically significant. Services are listed in order from the greatest difference to the least difference between the two years.

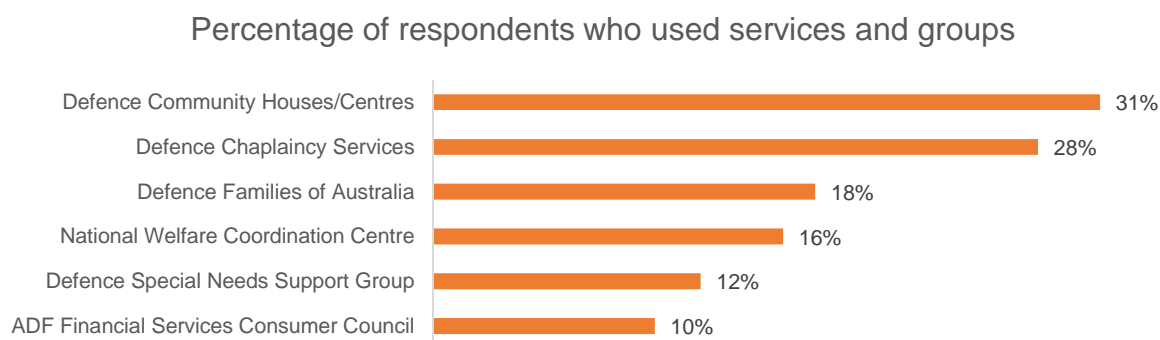
For 'other family members', awareness of DCO services varied, but the proportion of respondents using these services was too small to reliably evaluate the usefulness of these services.⁵ The awareness and use of all three services below decreased since 2017. A full table showing the respective percentages and changes from 2017 to 2019 is available in Annex B.



For respondents of all family types, awareness of services and groups varied from very high awareness to fairly low awareness.



Use of services and groups was low for respondents of all family types.

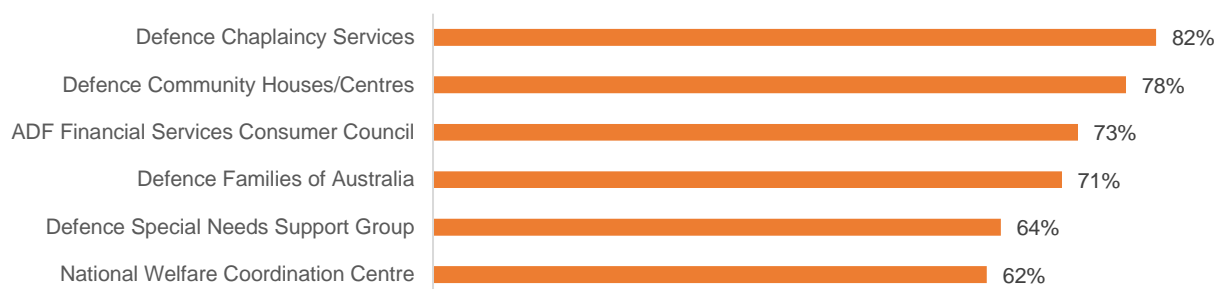


Use is expressed as a percentage of those respondents who were aware of the service or group.

⁵ This information would be more reliable if collected at the time of service provision.

Of the respondents who used a service or group, over half found them to be useful.

Percentage of respondents who found services and groups useful



The proportion of respondents who found a service or group useful is expressed as a percentage of those respondents who used the service or group.

The following tables compare awareness, use, and perceived usefulness of services and groups between 2017 and 2019.⁶ The use of Defence Community Houses/Centres increased while their perceived usefulness decreased. Awareness, use, and perceived usefulness of the Defence Chaplaincy Services decreased.

Change in awareness of services and groups from 2017 to 2019

Services where awareness increased from 2017 to 2019	Services where awareness decreased from 2017 to 2019
Defence Families of Australia	Defence Chaplaincy Services
National Welfare Coordination Centre	

A full table showing the respective percentages and changes from 2017 to 2019 is available in Annex B.

Change in use of services and groups from 2017 to 2019

Services that were used more in 2019 than in 2017	Services that were used less in 2019 than in 2017
Defence Community Houses/Centres	Defence Chaplaincy Services
	National Welfare Coordination Centre

A full table showing the respective percentages and changes from 2017 to 2019 is available in Annex B.

Change in perceived usefulness of services and groups from 2017 to 2019

Services where perceived usefulness increased from 2017 to 2019	Services where perceived usefulness decreased from 2017 to 2019
	Defence Community Houses/Centres
	Defence Chaplaincy Services

A full table showing the respective percentages and changes from 2017 to 2019 is available in Annex B.

Respondents who were unaware of some or all of the available family support noted that Defence should proactively reach out to family members themselves to advertise the

⁶ Comparisons were only able to be made between services and groups evaluated at both time points, and the tables only show services and groups where the difference between the two years was statistically significant. Services and groups are listed in order from the greatest difference to the least difference between the two years.

information and services available to assist with postings and relocations, deployments and absences, and emotional support.

'I have found [that] information is not communicated with spouses. I rely on my partner to share information... too many times I have [found] that we are entitled to more supports (e.g. \$20,000 back-pay on rental assistance). This isn't because my partner is withholding information, [but] they are so used to health care/employment/finances being streamlined within the ADF and they trust the system will provide... could a single portal that both members and dependants [can] access (like myGov) directing to different services be possible?'

- female civilian partner of an Air Force member

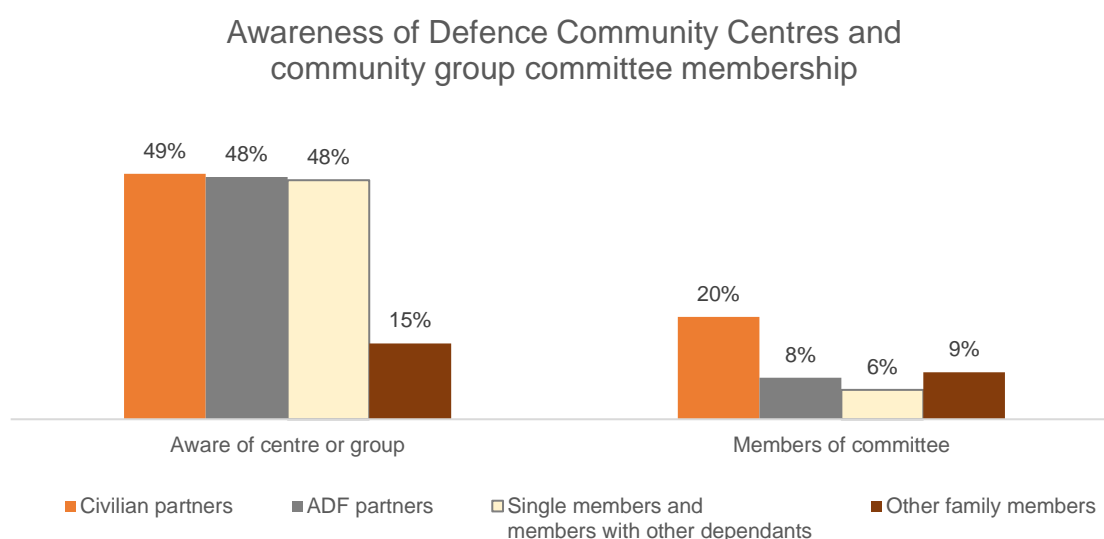
As with support during deployments and absences, some respondents felt that the scope of family support services excluded their own circumstances. Some families without children felt that support services were only designed to assist children, and noted that events scheduled for normal business hours excluded working families.

'As a Defence partner without children, I feel invisible... all of the DCO events [in] my area I'm aware of are conducted during work hours, which automatically excludes me from being able to build networks with others going through the same relocation experiences. I don't even bother opening the Defence magazine now, because every single article is related to supporting children through Defence life. There has never been any acknowledgement of the barriers and struggles I experience as a Defence partner relocating, how to find work, how to build new friendships and support networks. Because I don't have kids, I can't use the doctors that were recommended, etc., so what do I do?'

- female civilian partner of an Air Force member

Community support and committee membership

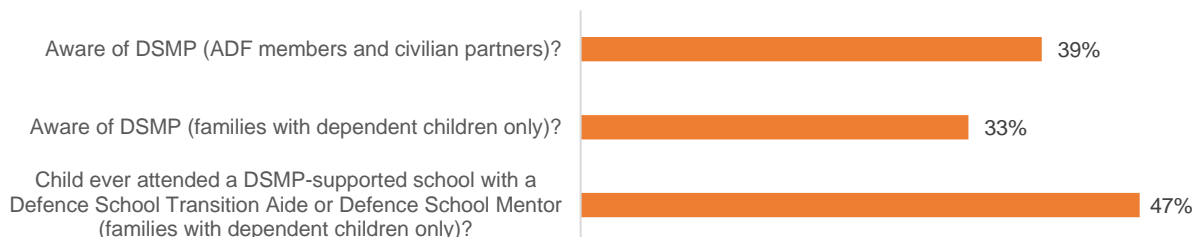
Slightly less than half of ADF members and civilian partners were aware of their local Defence Community Centre or group. Awareness of local centres and groups among 'other family members' was much lower. Committee membership was low for all family types, but civilian partners were more likely to be committee members than other family types. A sizable proportion of 'other family members' had been committee members of a community group, given that so few were aware of their local centre or group. This suggests that targeting 'other family members' may be an effective way to increase committee membership.



Defence School Mentor Program

Less than half of ADF members and civilian partners were aware of the Defence School Mentor Program (DSMP), and awareness was lower among families with dependent children. Interestingly, while 33 per cent of families with dependent children were aware of the program, 47 per cent reported that their child attended a school supported by this program. It is possible that the families who reported they were unaware but that their child attended such a school were only aware of particular aspects of the program, such as Defence School Transition Aides (DSTAs).

Awareness of DCO's Defence School Mentor Program and attendance at a supported school



Families with dependent children rated children's education as the most important consideration for them. Many respondents felt that the DSMP was invaluable to their children's education. DSTAs were praised for providing emotional support to the child and proactively supporting their welfare, helping the child settle into the new location, and facilitating communication between the child and the absent ADF member parent. DSTAs were seen as less useful if they were not a partner of an ADF member themselves, or if schools utilised DSTAs as general teachers' aides instead of to support only Defence children. Respondents also desired more DSTAs and DSMs to cover schools that currently do not have this support. They also noted that DSMP staff allocated to too many schools did not allow adequate support to be provided to individual children.

Some families acknowledged that not all schools had capacity for the DSMP, but perceived that Defence could have provided more information and written resources as an alternative solution.

'We received no assistance from talking to the school about a 6-month deployment during [my child's time at] kindergarten. I contacted DFA/DCO and there were no resources available to take to the school to outline what to expect [about my child's feelings and behaviour during the deployment] etc. I feel this could be a valuable resource, at little effort, and would be particularly useful in areas of Sydney where the number of students does not support a DSTA or mentor.'

- female civilian partner of an Army member

Selecting a school within a new posting location was a broader education issue for ADF families. The choice of school was limited to those near Defence housing, and those schools sometimes had no vacancies or did not meet families' expected standard of education. This was also exacerbated by the lack of notice in posting orders. In some cases, the family was also required to accept housing in a location that did not offer the DSMP.

'With a child who will start school I'm anxious about what to do. We never know where we will be. We can't put him down on wait lists, I don't want his schooling to suffer based on where we have been able to get a house due to zoning and affordability. We can't refuse a house based on location so what? Do we just have to suck it up? You can't forward plan or prepare.'

- female civilian partner of an Army member

The Australian education curriculum differs by state, which can cause disruptions to education when moving between states. Children in ADF families may be especially impacted due to the frequency of ADF postings. Families also reported difficulties accessing tutoring.

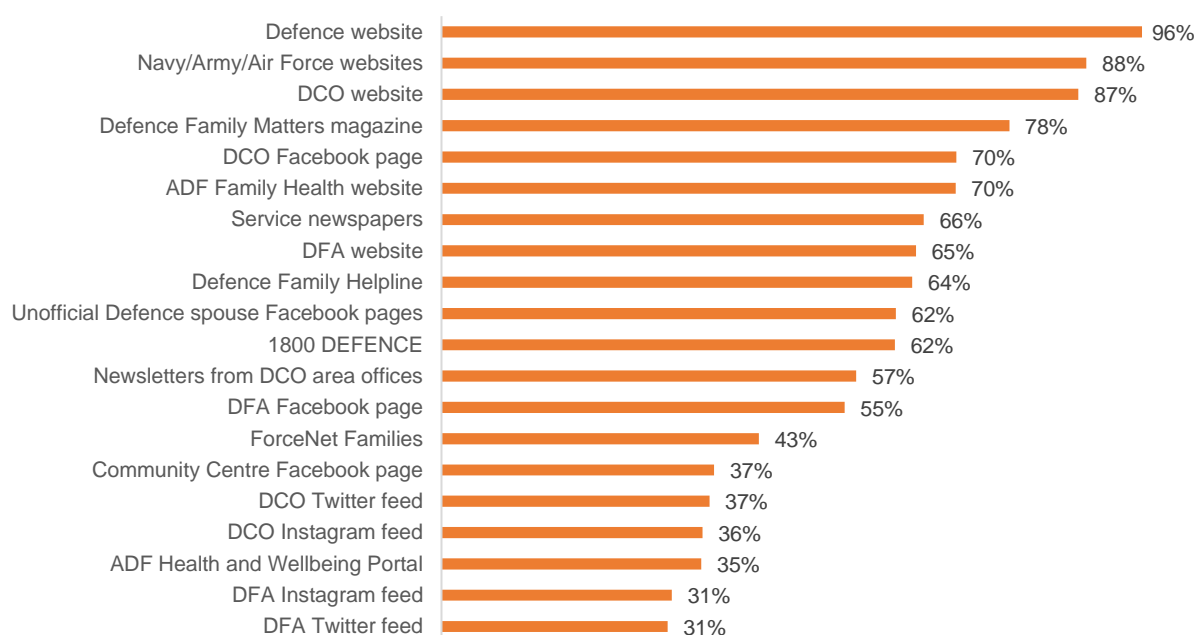
'The Defence liaison [officer] was trying to assist me in getting funding for my children, however, we weren't approved due to my children passing their subjects. I find it disappointing that children to fail and have their self-esteem depleted in order to receive funding... since moving to a new school is always hard on the children.'
- female civilian partner of an Army member

'My children's education has been very disrupted and they are behind their other classmates because of postings. Now the tutoring program has been changed to reimburse every 3 months rather than weekly/fortnightly it has put the program beyond our reach financially. We cannot afford to outlay 3 months' worth of tutoring fees at a time.'
- female civilian partner of an Air Force member

Communication methods

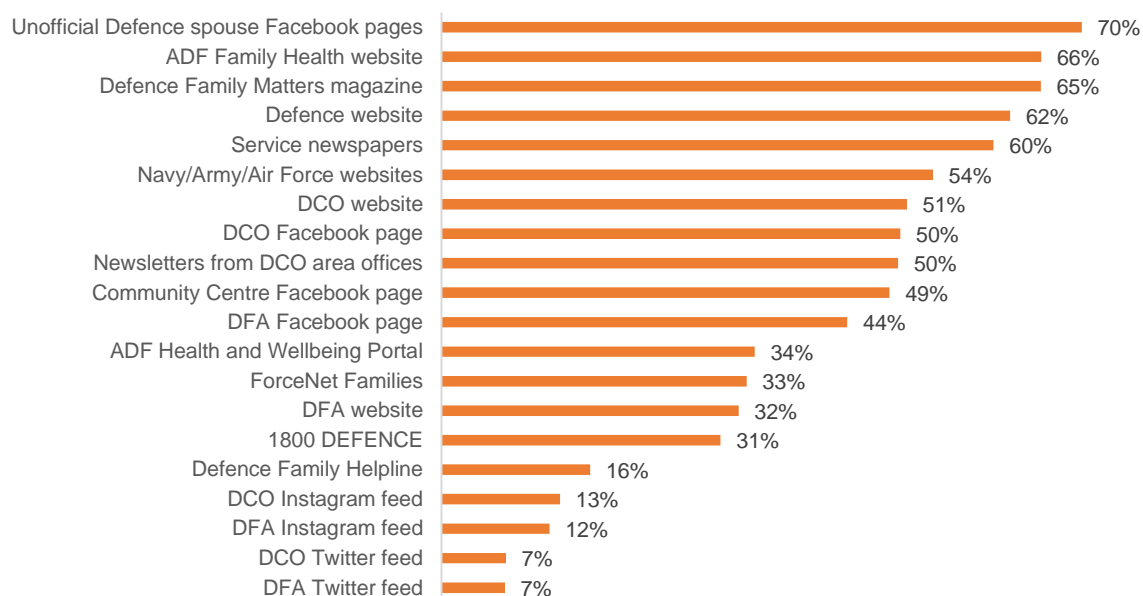
A large proportion of respondents were aware of organisational and Service websites and publications. There was also relatively high awareness of Facebook pages but not of Twitter or Instagram.

Percentage of ADF members and civilian partners who were aware of Defence communication methods



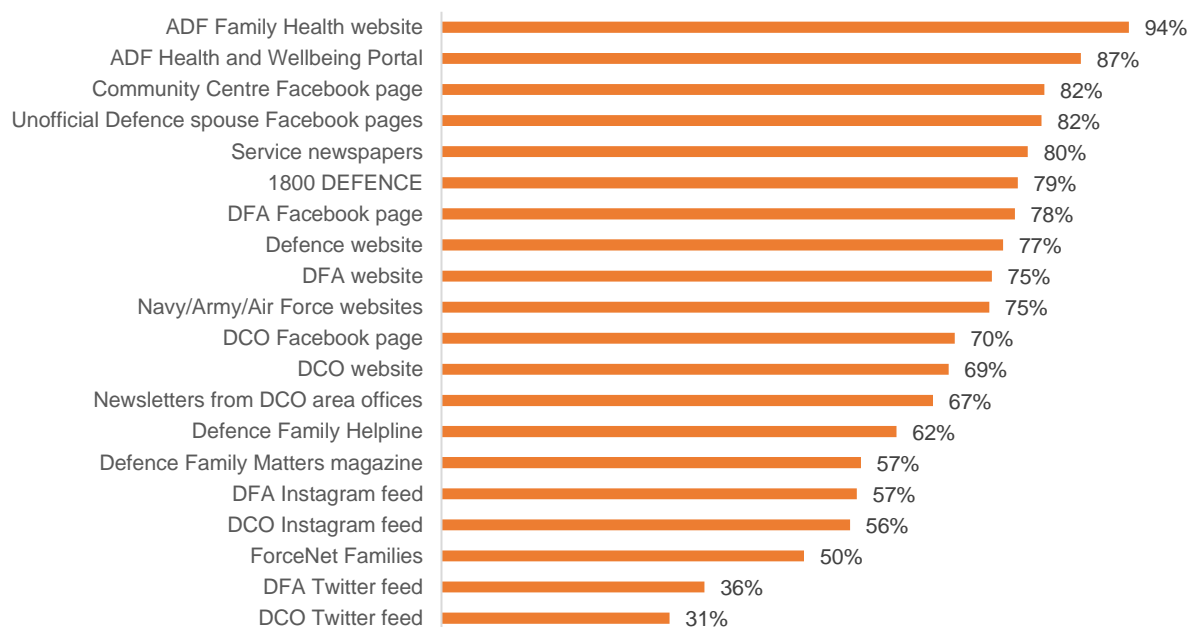
Use of Facebook was relatively high, but Twitter and Instagram were not greatly used nor did respondents find them useful, if they did use them.

Percentage of ADF members and civilian partners who used Defence communication methods



Use is expressed as a percentage of those respondents who were aware of the communication method.

Percentage of ADF members and civilian partners who found Defence communication methods useful



The proportion of respondents who found a communication method useful is expressed as a percentage of those respondents who used the communication method.

The following tables compare awareness, use, and perceived usefulness of communication methods between 2017 and 2019.⁷ Respondents' awareness of Defence's online information sources have increased while awareness of other sources decreased. Websites were also perceived to have decreased in usefulness, indicating that efforts to rectify online sources could be most beneficial.

Change in awareness of communication methods from 2017 to 2019

Communication methods where awareness increased from 2017 to 2019	Communication methods where awareness decreased from 2017 to 2019
DCO Facebook page	Defence Family Helpline
DFA Facebook page	Service newspapers
DFA website	Defence Family Matters magazine
DCO website	1800 DEFENCE
Defence website	Newsletters from DCO area offices
Navy/Army/Air Force websites	

A full table showing the respective percentages and changes from 2017 to 2019 is available in Annex B.

Change in use of communication methods from 2017 to 2019

Communication methods that were used more in 2019 than in 2017	Communication methods that were used less in 2019 than in 2017
DFA Facebook page	
DCO Facebook page	
DCO website	
Defence website	
Newsletters from DCO area offices	
DCO Instagram feed	
Navy/Army/Air Force websites	
DFA website	

A full table showing the respective percentages and changes from 2017 to 2019 is available in Annex B.

Change in perceived usefulness of communication methods from 2017 to 2019

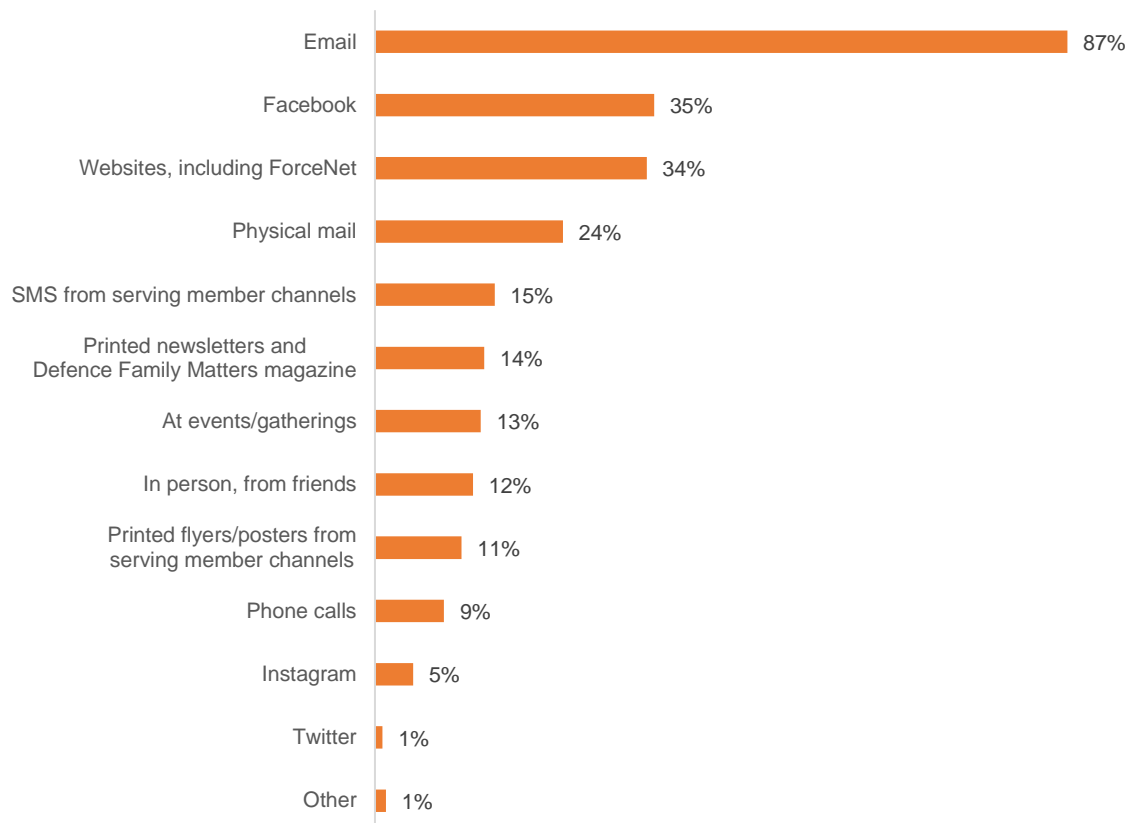
Communication methods where perceived usefulness increased from 2017 to 2019	Communication methods where perceived usefulness decreased from 2017 to 2019
DCO Instagram feed	Defence Family Matters magazine
	Navy/Army/Air Force websites
	Defence website
	Service newspapers
	Newsletters from DCO area offices
	DCO website

A full table showing the respective percentages and changes from 2017 to 2019 is available in Annex B.

⁷ Comparisons were only able to be made between communication methods evaluated at both time points, and the tables only show methods where the difference between the two years was statistically significant. Communication methods are listed in order from the greatest difference to the least difference between the two years.

Email was a preferred method of communication for most respondents. Social media platforms apart from Facebook were not a preferred method of receiving information about support services for most ADF members and civilian partners. This may reflect that platforms such as Twitter or Instagram are still primarily used in broader society for recreational purposes, rather than to convey important information, and that the general take-up of Facebook is likely higher than for other social media.

ADF members' and civilian partners' preferred method of receiving information about support services



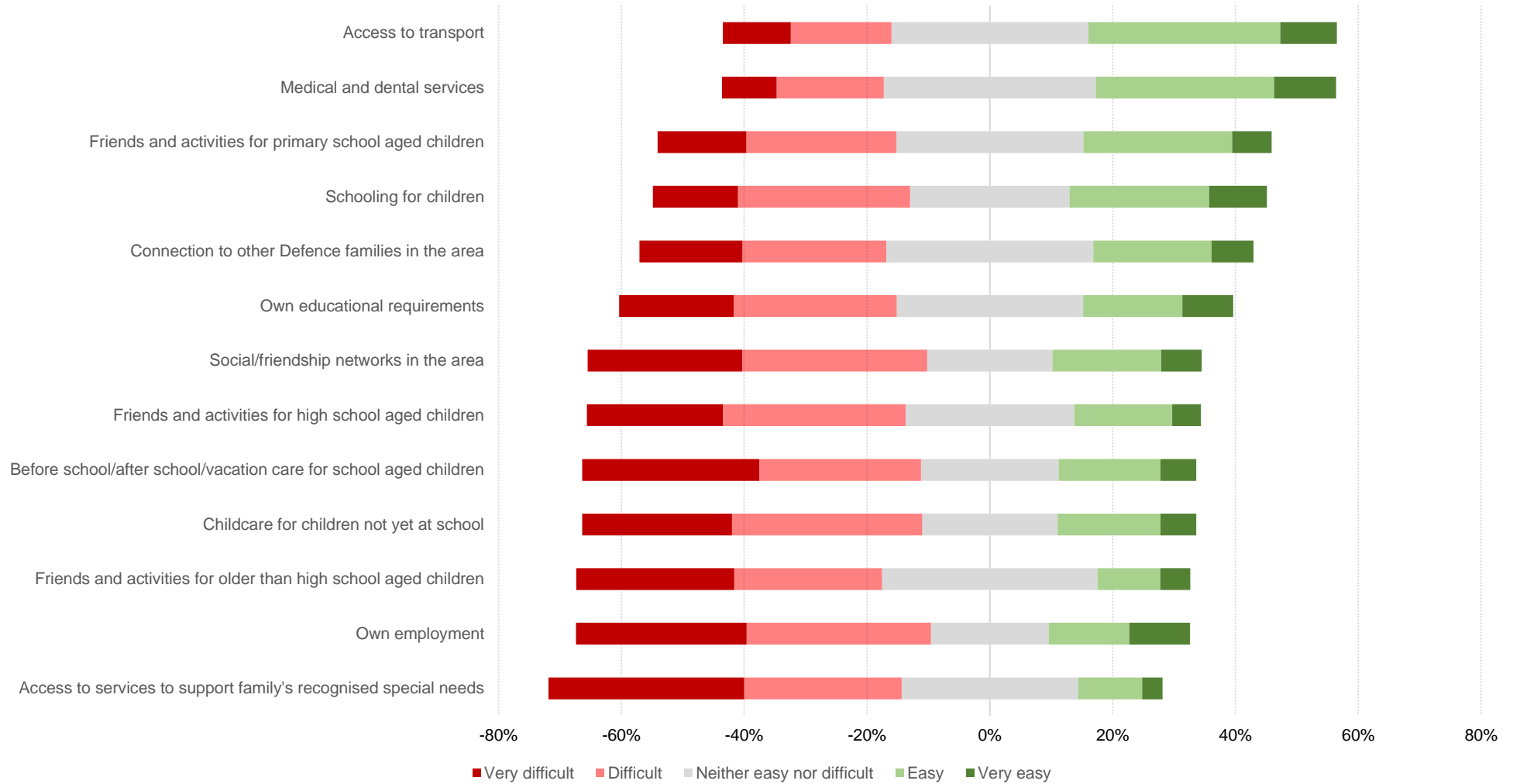
Families' experiences with relocations and housing

In 2019, ADF families reported housing quality and location as a key consideration in regard to the Defence lifestyle (see chapter 'Most important considerations for Defence families'). Relocations due to an ADF member's new posting can also have significant impacts on family life and stability. Seventy-eight per cent of respondents had relocated at least once between 2015 and 2019 (see Annex A).

Re-establishing lifestyle after relocations

Some lifestyle aspects were easy for families to re-establish following relocation and others were more difficult. The easier aspects included re-establishing transport, medical and dental services. The more difficult aspects to re-establish included specific services such as special needs support, various forms of childcare and activities for children, and employment.

Ease or difficulty re-establishing lifestyle following relocation



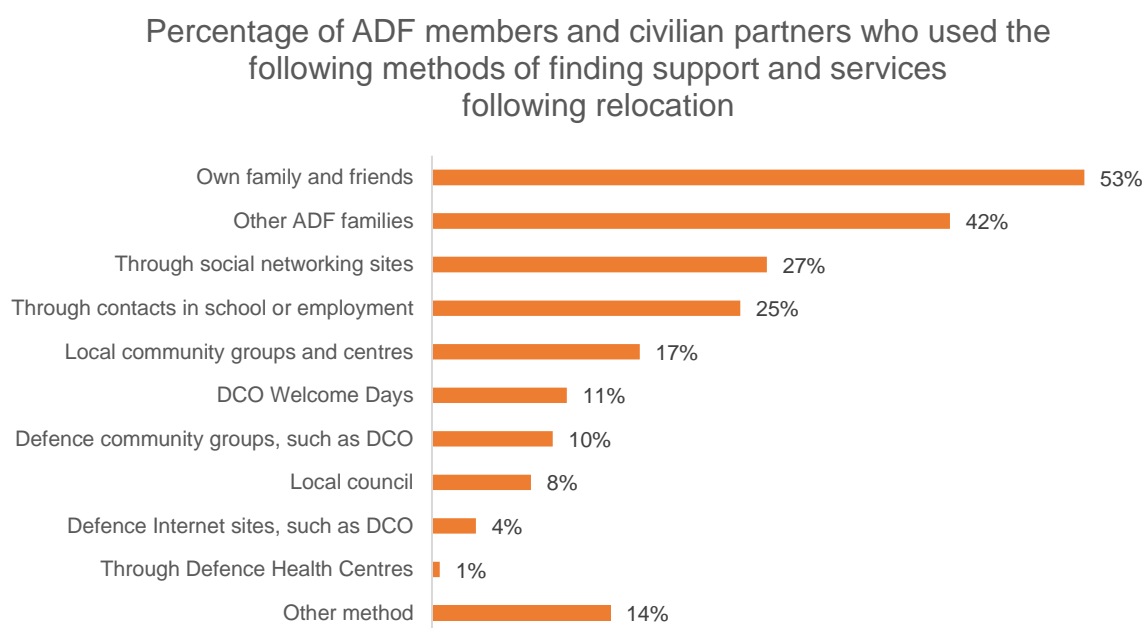
The percentages in each category are available in Annex B.

Access to special needs support services was the most difficult aspect to re-establish (58 per cent difficult or very difficult). The number of ADF families with special needs is small; while not many families will require special needs support services, those that do have difficulty doing so following a move. This area would benefit from a more targeted focus, as families with special needs are a small population but require more support than other families.

Respondents also indicated that their own employment was very difficult to re-establish following a relocation (58 per cent difficult or very difficult). This is explored further for civilian partners in the chapter 'Impact of the Defence lifestyle on civilian partner employment', and is consistent with broader literature on Canadian and US military families that found that partner employment was one of the most frequently mentioned negative aspects of relocations (Wang and Aitken 2016, Tong et al. 2018).

A major difference between the ADF Families Survey findings and broader literature was that for Canadian military families, access to medical services was the most difficult aspect to re-establish, whereas it was among the easiest aspects to re-establish for ADF families (Wang and Aitken 2016). Defence, or the broader Australian community, may have administrative structures in place that make access to medical services easier for ADF families compared to Canadian military families. Research on Canadian military families suggested that the issue of health care access may be limited to the period of moving and is not necessarily an ongoing problem after the relocation (Manser 2018).

ADF families primarily used personal or unofficial means of finding support following a relocation, rather than Defence-sponsored methods.



It is not known which other methods were used to find support and services for respondents who selected 'Other method'.

A study of US military families noted that lifestyle disruptions following relocations can also impact retention intentions, mental health, school performance and engagement for children, and marital and familial relationships (Tong et al. 2018). However, these adverse impacts should be contextualised by the positive effects of relocations, including enhancing the military member's career and improving family resilience.

Some families felt that some posting requirements were unnecessary and that the ADF member could have achieved both Defence objectives and family stability if they had not

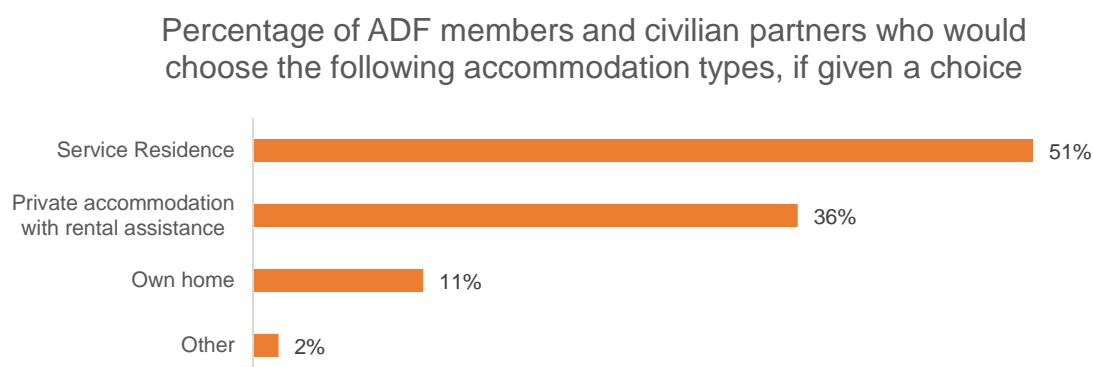
relocated. Those respondents perceived that the ADF's insistence on postings demonstrated a lack of consideration of family circumstances in postings.

'We did not want to post from our previous location, however, Defence was unwilling to compromise. We want to stay in Defence but Defence makes it hard when [they] will not come into the modern age... stop posting people who do not [want] to post. Stop hiding behind false reasons such as Service requirements (important positions are gapped every day), broadening/career advancement (if promotion was tied to experience then why are non-broadened people promoted?), too long in location (heaven forbid that people find community and friends in a location). Let people nominate or apply for positions. Every other business in the world does this. Just because people don't want to move or be promoted, that does not make them worthless to the organisation, perhaps they just like their current job and location. Stop punishing families for Defence's unwillingness to change or evolve. Defence won't need half the support services if people are allowed to connect with communities and remain there. There are solutions... [such as to] telecommute or work remotely.'

- female civilian partner of an Air Force member

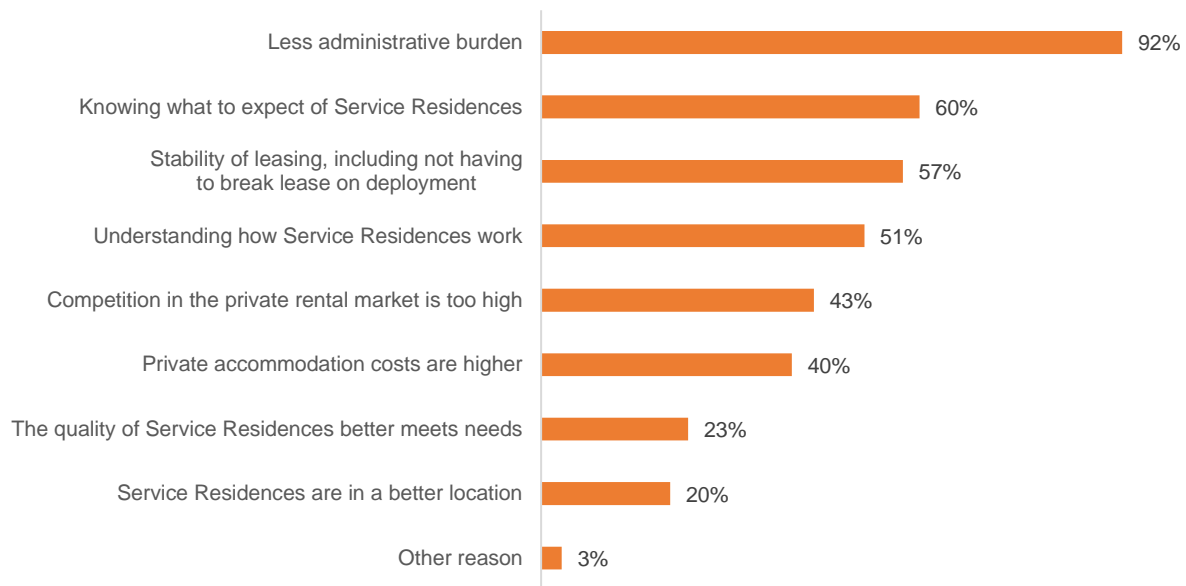
Accommodation preferences

To better understand ADF families' accommodation preferences, a hypothetical scenario where ADF members and civilian partners could choose their own accommodation type was explored. Their choices are graphed below.



Nearly all of the respondents choosing a Service Residence reported that the reduced administrative burden was a factor in their choice; this included not having to liaise with landlords or having to clean the property before vacating, being able to secure accommodation early in the relocation process (allowing other services to be secured early), and easier and faster processes to secure home maintenance services. All of the top four reasons – chosen by more than half of the respondents – indicate a perceived easier administrative process or having a better understanding of the process of using Service Residences compared to private accommodation.

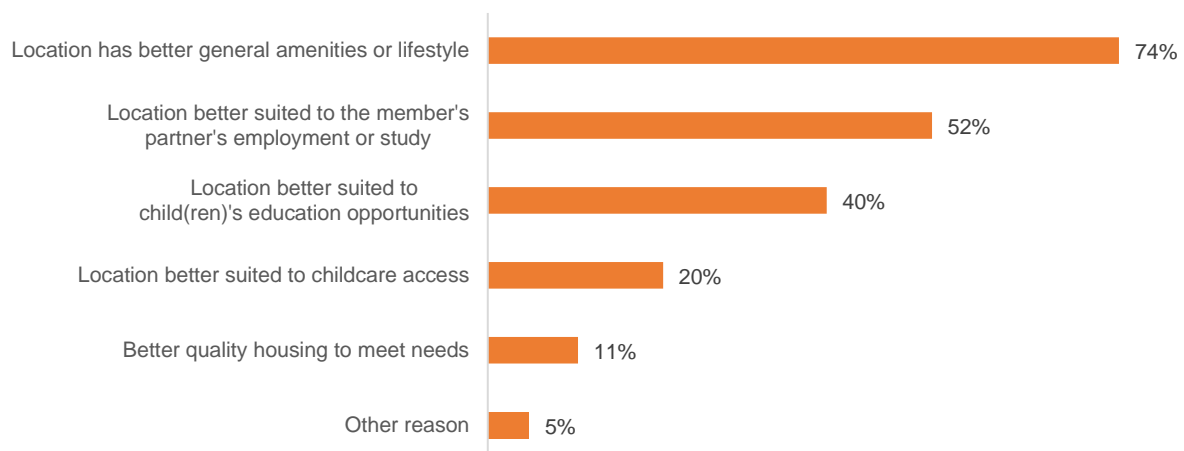
Reasons why ADF members and civilian partners would choose to live in a Service Residence



However, not all families found the process of securing a Service Residence easy. Some respondents noted that they were unable to view Service Residences in the new posting location prior to relocating and were required to accept a house based only on online photographs in order to secure accommodation in a highly competitive process. The timing of posting orders did not allow adequate time to secure housing, and any further setbacks in the process caused more stress to those respondents.

The graph below shows that 74 per cent of respondents who would choose private accommodation with rental assistance perceived their housing would be in a better location for their preferred lifestyle. Childcare access was not a reason chosen by most respondents, which is consistent with its low ranking among the most important considerations for ADF families.

Reasons why ADF members and civilian partners would choose to live in private accommodation with rental assistance



The quality of housing was not a major reason for either living in a Service Residence or housing with rental assistance. Respondents commented that the quality of both options

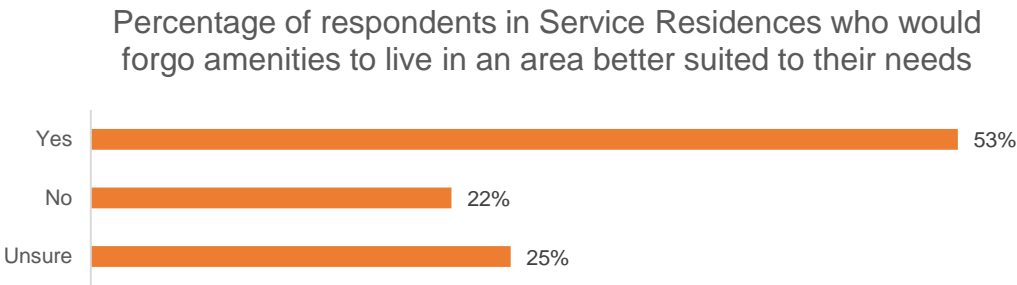
was not adequate. Some families also perceived restrictions in housing choices to be detrimental to their lifestyle. This included a lack of available houses in desired locations, financial assistance amounts not reflecting the real cost of living in particular areas, and unsuitability of the accommodation for the family’s size, pets, or employment.

Respondents also spoke negatively of the customer service when contacting Defence Housing Australia (DHA), Toll, or DCO in relation to housing and relocations.

Trading Service Residence amenities for a better location

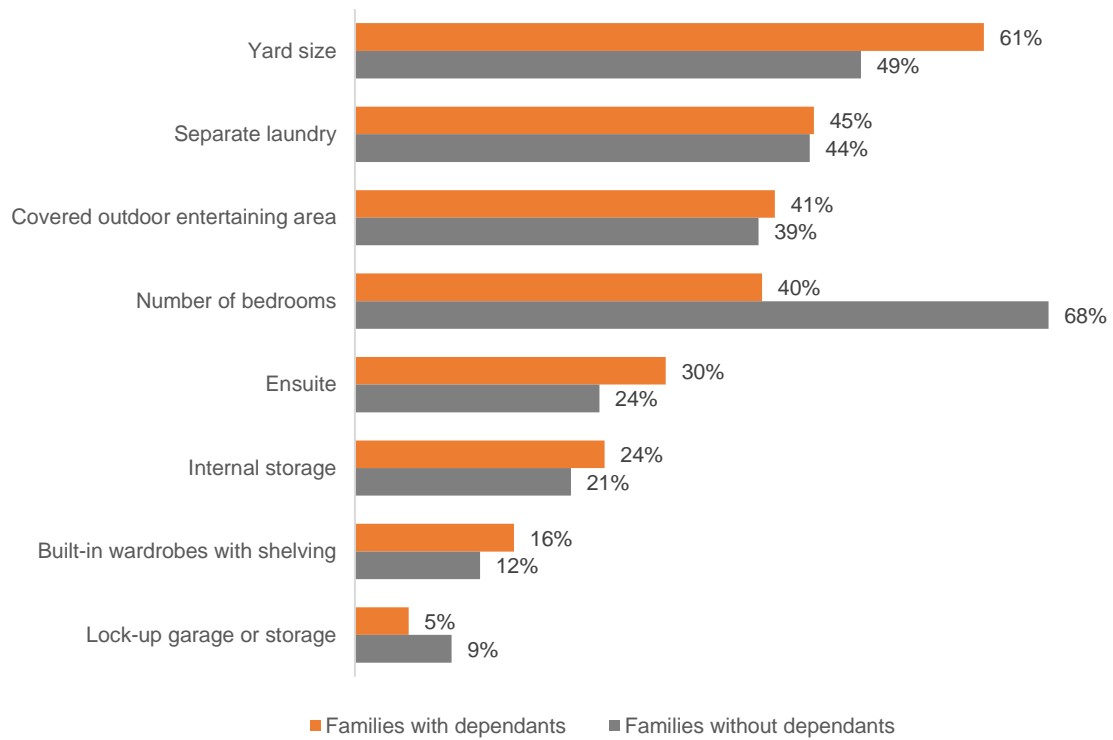
Nearly half of the surveyed ADF members and civilian partners lived in a Service Residence (see Annex A). Service Residences are located on or near Defence bases and, while they provide many amenities and are in a convenient location for the ADF member’s work, their location may be less convenient for the family. Of the respondents who would choose to live in a Service Residence rather than private accommodation, only 20 per cent indicated that the Service Residence’s location was a reason for their choice (see section ‘Accommodation preferences’ above).

To better understand ADF families’ preferences in Service Residences, respondents living in a Service Residence were asked to consider a hypothetical scenario where they could forgo some of the amenities provided in Service Residences in return for housing in a location better suited to meet their family’s needs. Fifty-three per cent of these respondents would consider forgoing some amenities, although a substantial proportion were unsure.



The percentage of respondents who were willing to reduce or forgo each amenity is graphed below, in descending order for families with dependants. Percentages for families without dependants are graphed alongside. The main difference between families with and without dependants is that families without dependants were most willing to reduce the number of bedrooms over other amenities, whereas this was an acceptable reduction for only 40 per cent of families with dependants. The order of preference for all other amenities is the same for families both with and without dependants.

Percentage of respondents living in Service Residences who are willing to reduce or forgo amenities to live in a location better suited to their needs



Families' experiences of Member With Dependants (Unaccompanied) arrangements

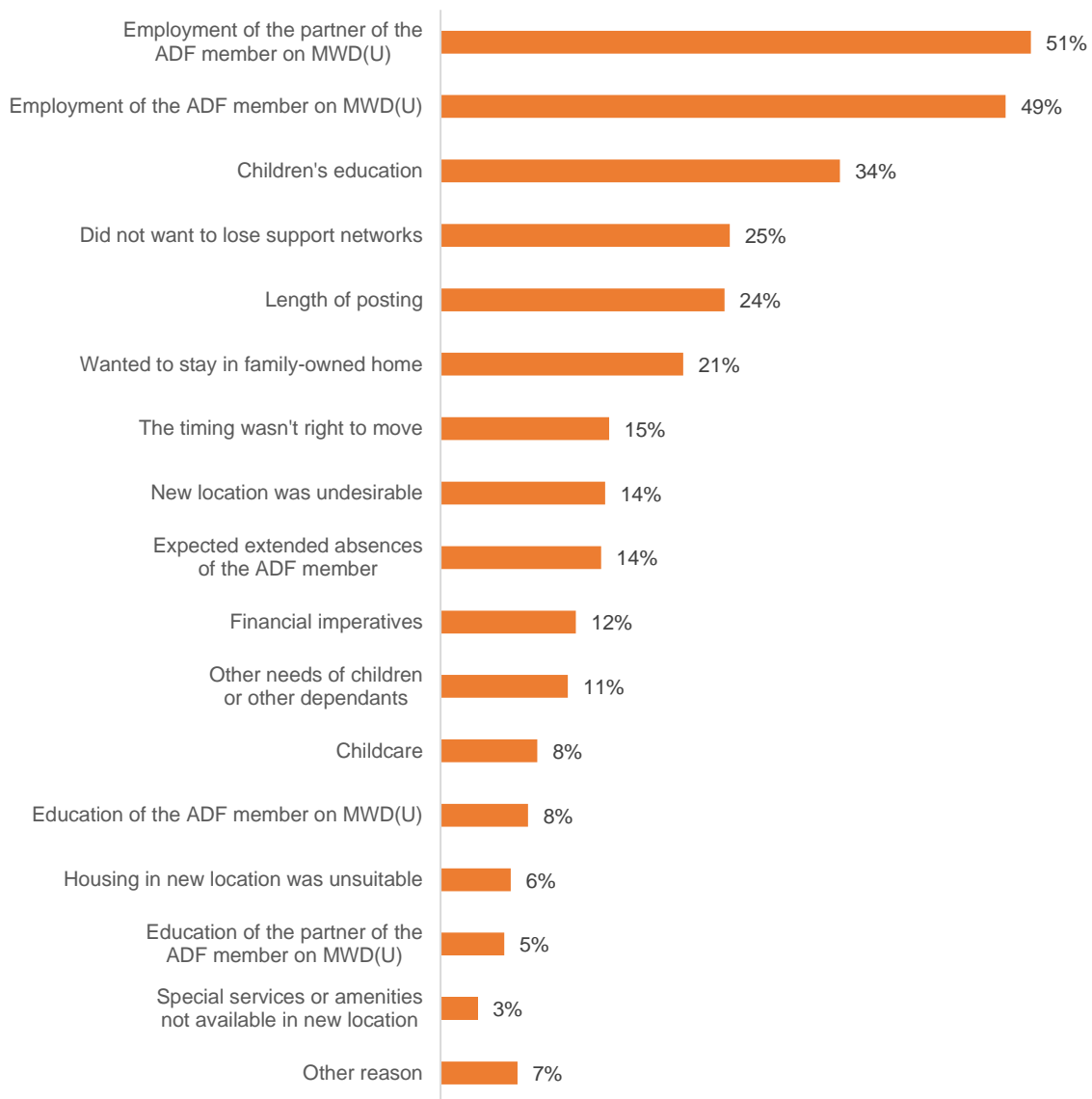
When an ADF member is posted, their family may either relocate to the member's new location or remain in their current location using an arrangement called 'Member With Dependants (Unaccompanied)' or MWD(U). Only 13 per cent of surveyed partners (slightly fewer than 400 respondents) reported being currently on MWD(U) (see Annex A), so the findings in this section may not be representative of all members on MWD(U). To better understand the prevalence and nature of issues facing those currently using MWD(U) arrangements, a targeted study would be beneficial.

Considerations for families in their decision to use MWD(U) arrangements

Thirty-four per cent of partners reported that their family was classified as MWD(U) sometime between 2015 and 2019. The employment of both the ADF member on MWD(U) and their partner were considerations for about half of these respondents. Length of posting was a factor for 24 per cent of partners and included deployments or training where the family cannot move to the ADF member's location, or short-term postings where the family may have preferred to use MWD(U) arrangements than to relocate for a short period of time.

The high rank for children's education and low rank for childcare are consistent with respondents' perceived importance of these considerations in the context of the overall Defence lifestyle (see chapter 'Most important considerations for Defence families').

Considerations for partners in their family's decision to be on MWD(U) arrangements

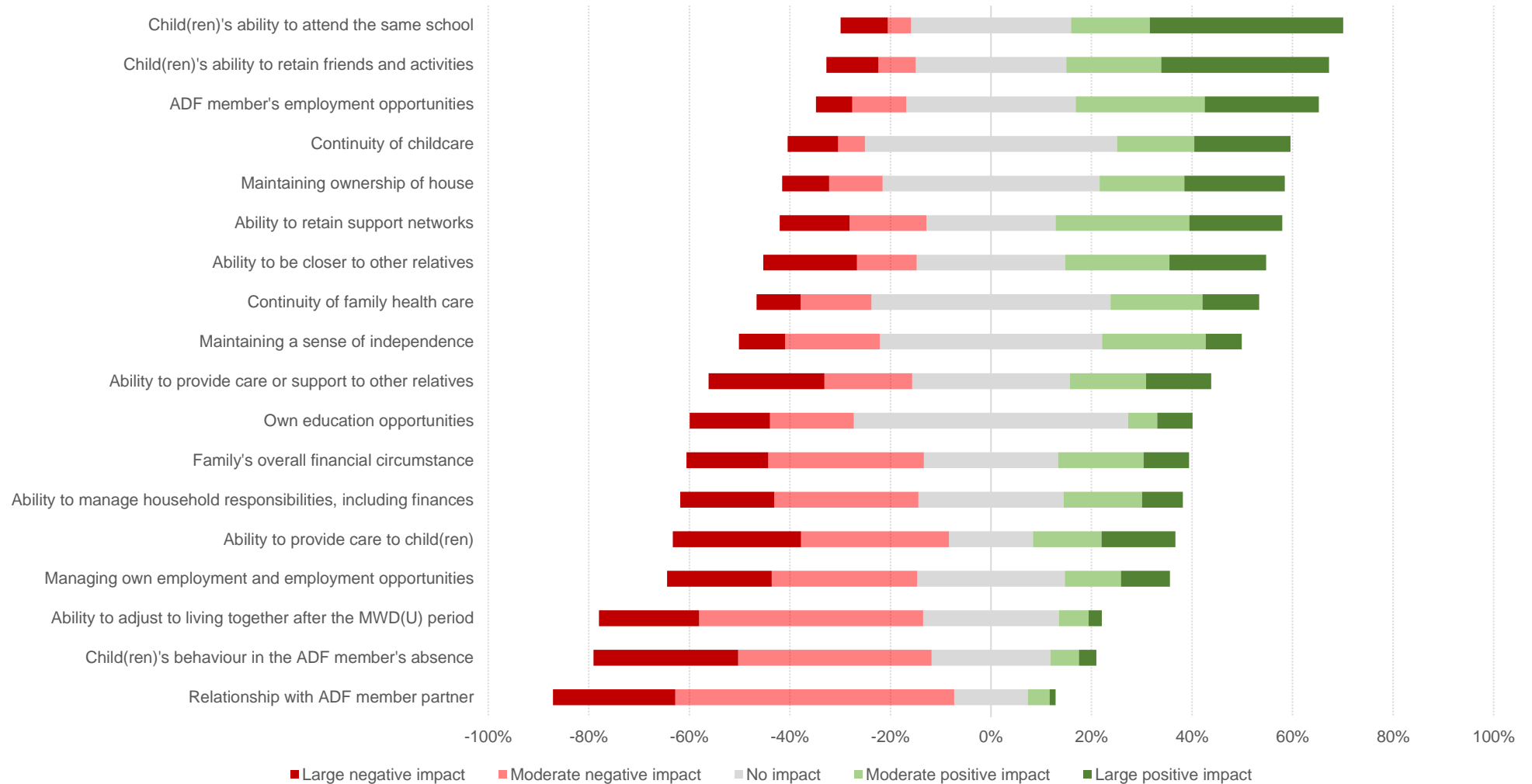


Most of the respondents who selected 'Other reason' indicated that they felt that they had no choice in the MWD(U) decision.

Impacts of MWD(U) arrangements on families' lifestyle

The lifestyle aspects where MWD(U) impacted most positively related to maintaining stability in the ADF member's employment, children's education, and community or social links, including retaining family support services. The aspects that were impacted most negatively related to managing the relationship with the ADF member on MWD(U) and children. Overall, MWD(U) can present both benefits and challenges to ADF families.

Impacts of MWD(U) arrangements on families' lifestyle



The percentages in each category are available in Annex B.

Comparing the impacts of MWD(U) to families' ability to re-establish their lifestyle after relocation (see section 'Re-establishing lifestyle after relocations'), some difficulties of relocating appear to be mitigated by using MWD(U). While children's social networks, childcare, and the respondent's own social and support networks were mostly difficult to re-establish, the ability to retain these when using MWD(U) was positively viewed.

'MWD(U), put in perspective, is a lot better [than] a 9-month deployment or even 3 months of Hamel... it meant that the kids and I have had 4 years of the same house, networks, schools, etc. after 4 x 1-year postings before the kids started school.'
- female civilian partner of an Army member

'Separation is always hard, but it was a fantastic decision. He was absent most of the time anyway, and [me] being in a stable job, with good pay, a real career path, financial security and a shorter commute made a world of difference. I couldn't have managed full-time work in [his posting location] while he was posted to a ship – it would have meant juggling childcare and an excessively long commute with no support, in a job with fewer career opportunities.'

- female civilian partner of a Navy member

Fifty per cent of partners reported that MWD(U) had a moderate or large negative impact on their ability to manage their own employment and employment opportunities, although this was one of the major considerations in their family's decision to use MWD(U) arrangements. Civilian partner employment in the context of MWD(U) is explored further in the section 'Consideration of civilian partner employment in families' decision to use MWD(U) arrangements'.

Of particular note is that 80 per cent of respondents stated that MWD(U) had a moderate or large negative impact on their relationship with their ADF member partner, with 65 per cent also reporting at least some negative impact on their ability to adjust to living together after the MWD(U) period. Respondents indicated that relationships deteriorated as a result of spending a considerable amount of time apart during MWD(U). This is consistent with previous ADF Families Survey findings that showed that relationship difficulties pertained to the member and partner missing each other and the perception that they lived separated lives (Brown and Wensing 2016). The negative impacts of spending so much time apart were exacerbated by limited opportunities for reunions.

'When the member does have time off, it has to come out of the leave book... when the member has to travel to see family this is greatly impacted e.g. if the person has to travel 3 hrs to arrive home on a Friday, very little time is left for that day, then all day Saturday, then Sunday is not much time left as the member has to leave, this can also be distressing to the family. And the reunion [travel entitlement] of only every 2 months is not good for keeping a family united.'

- female civilian partner of an Army member

The broader literature relating to military separations and relationships focuses on deployments. Deployments are different from MWD(U) postings because they are typically shorter in duration and have a specific mission objective. However, both deployments and MWD(U) postings involve an extended period of separation of the ADF member from their family. In the ADF Families research program, ADF families discussing the impacts of MWD(U) on relationships mainly referred to spending more time apart from their partner than they would have liked and the difficulty of re-adjusting to living together after becoming accustomed to living apart. The literature about deployments provides a broader perspective on the effect that separations have on military families. MWD(U) postings may impact ADF family relationships in other different ways to deployments; this is an area that would benefit from further research.

One study of Canadian military families showed that while 60 per cent of respondents felt that an 'Imposed Restriction' (unaccompanied posting) strained family relationships, 78 per

cent felt that their family relationship improved after reunion (Manser 2018b). A review of Canadian research on military families noted that while absences appeared to increase family members' stress levels during a deployment, the majority of families returned to regular functioning following the member's return without requiring external formal support (Manser 2018). A longitudinal study of deployment impacts on US military families showed that marital satisfaction during and after a deployment did not significantly differ between couples where the military member deployed and where the member did not deploy, and satisfaction increased following reunion (Meadows et al. 2016).

A study of UK military personnel's romantic relationships identified that factors both within and outside of the military's control affect the quality of the member's relationship with their partner, although that study only collected data from members and not their partners (Keeling et al. 2015). The most prevalent personal factors (outside of the military's control) associated with relationship difficulties were the military member having experienced childhood family relationship adversity or perceived a lack of support from their family while deployed. Military-related factors that negatively affected relationships included where the member felt they were deployed for too long, too frequently, doing work that does not suit them, and the risk of danger or trauma while on deployment.

Research in both the UK and US observed that one way for the military to facilitate positive partner relationships during and after deployments is to enable frequent communication between the couple while one is absent. The UK study noted that where communication is not possible on a particular deployment, the military should ensure that families have realistic expectations about the level of communication the partner can expect to have (Keeling et al. 2015). In the US study, partners who reported more frequent communication with the military member and who reported higher satisfaction with this frequency also reported higher marital satisfaction after the deployment (Meadows et al. 2016). However, those researchers noted that this may be most effective for couples who already have a positive relationship, and troubled relationships may not benefit from increased communication.

The negative impact of military-induced separations on partner relationships can be minimised through careful management and support from Defence. As MWD(U) is different to deployments in that the member is typically away for much longer and may set up another household away from their family, support services and resources for deployment absences may not be appropriate for families on MWD(U). Further understanding the particular aspects of MWD(U) that are drivers of relationship stress would be beneficial.

The Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs commissioned a Family Wellbeing Study in 2015 to investigate the health and wellbeing of ADF families and the impact of military service on ADF families. Partners were asked to rate the influence of military service on aspects of their lives, and 29 per cent stated that military service had a negative influence on their relationship with their partner and 19 per cent stated a negative influence on their relationship with their children (Daraganova et al. 2018). As this relates to the general military lifestyle and not to MWD(U) or other military-induced separations specifically, there is a knowledge gap preventing a full understanding of the reported negative impact of MWD(U) on partner relationships. From studies of other militaries, this appears to be a complex and nuanced issue that warrants further research. Further studies should explore the severity and nature of impacts of MWD(U) on partner relationships and whether this is enduring or temporary. It should also be noted that deployments can particularly negatively impact partner relationships if the member's mental health is significantly affected by the deployment or absence.

Sixty-seven per cent of respondents in the ADF Families Survey stated that MWD(U) had a moderate or large negative impact on their children's behaviour in the ADF member's absence. This is self-reported and further research is needed to evaluate the extent that children's behavioural problems are due to MWD(U) and not to other factors. A review of Canadian research on military families noted that children identified parental deployment as

the main stressor of military life, which included lack of parental support from the absent member, concerns about the member's safety, and a lack of knowledge or understanding of the deployment and the deployed parent's role (Manser 2018). It suggested that educating children about the deployment in ways appropriate for their age would mitigate this anxiety. The Family Wellbeing Study on ADF families found that a similar proportion of children aged 2-17 years had behavioural problems compared to their peers with civilian parents, but had higher than expected incidence of peer problems, emotional symptoms, and hyperactivity (Daraganova et al. 2018). The Family Wellbeing Study related to the general military lifestyle and not specifically to MWD(U) or other military-induced separations. This is another area that may benefit from more targeted research.

Some ADF members who were single parents reported not being able to be categorised as a Member With Dependants, and therefore were unable to access the MWD(U) entitlements granted to other families. These members emphasised that they still financially supported the child, even if Defence did not recognise the child as a dependant. To them, Defence policy around categorisation appeared to discriminate against single-parent families, and they desired for family support benefits to be offered to all family types.

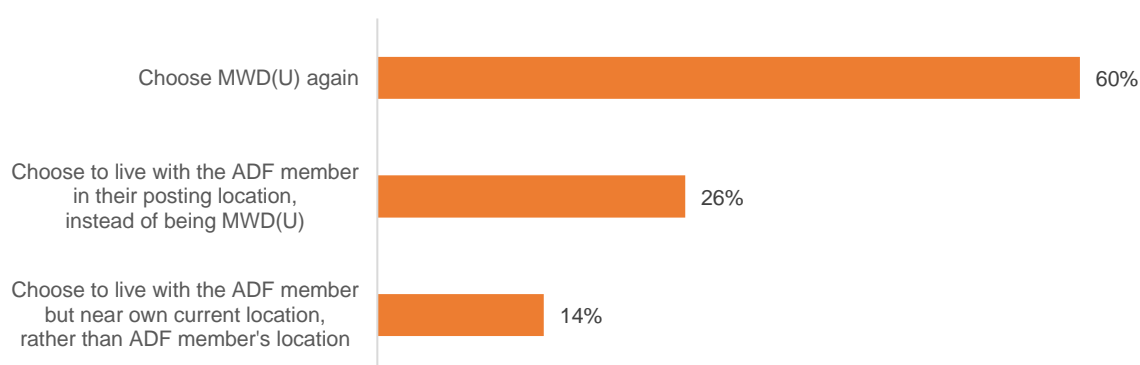
Exploring an alternative to MWD(U) living arrangements

Although MWD(U) arrangements separate members from their families, they can also offer stability to the member's family. Families may choose MWD(U) if they perceive their current location to be more favourable to their established lifestyle than the member's new posting location would be.

To better understand partners' living arrangement decisions, partners currently on MWD(U) considered a hypothetical alternative where the family could live with the ADF member but closer to their current location, rather than moving to the member's location. Fewer than 330 respondents answered this question owing to the small proportion of families currently on MWD(U), limiting how generalisable these results are.

Sixty per cent of partners would choose MWD(U) arrangements again for their current posting.

Preferred living arrangements regarding MWD(U),
if partners could choose for their current posting



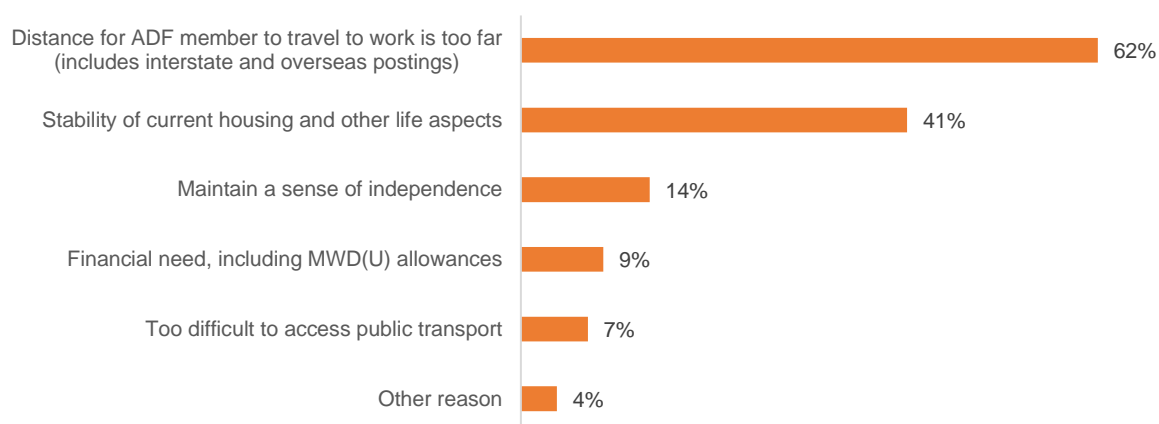
Fewer than 330 respondents answered this question, so all percentages in the graph above correspond to very small numbers.

For 62 per cent of the respondents who would choose MWD(U) again, it would not be feasible for the family to live together closer to the family's location, as the distance for the ADF member to travel to work would then become too far. This includes if the member was posted interstate or overseas. Because these respondents chose MWD(U) instead of relocating the family to the ADF member's posting location, it is likely that the distance for the

ADF member to travel is not the only reason for their choice – rather, the family also has other location or lifestyle considerations, or the member may be on deployment or short-term training.

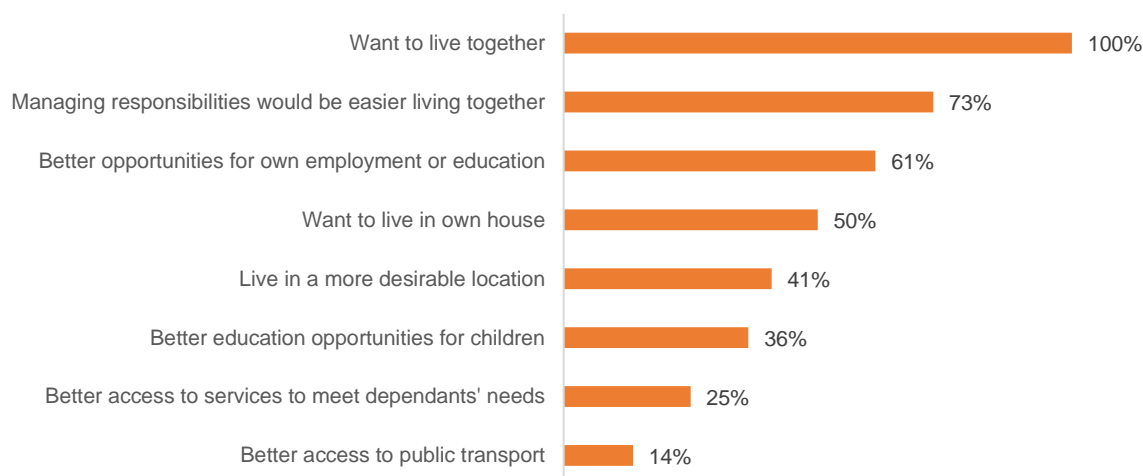
Stability of current housing and lifestyle was a reason to remain MWD(U) for 41 per cent of partners. This may relate to being able to stay in the family's own home and maintaining support networks there. In those cases, relocating at all would not be preferable, even to a location that is nearer to them than to the ADF member's location. Note that some respondents who chose the third living arrangement (explored below) also gave the reason that they would be able to live in their own home.

Reasons why partners would choose MWD(U) arrangements again for their current posting



Only a small number of respondents chose the third alternative of living with the ADF member closer to their current location and further from the member's posting location. All of these respondents wanted to be able to live with the ADF member and other benefits of co-habitation were also reasons for their choice.

Reasons why partners would choose to live with their ADF partner but closer to their own location, for their current posting



Fewer than 50 respondents answered this question, so all percentages in the graph above correspond to very small numbers.

Quality of life for partners classified as MWD(U) and not MWD(U)

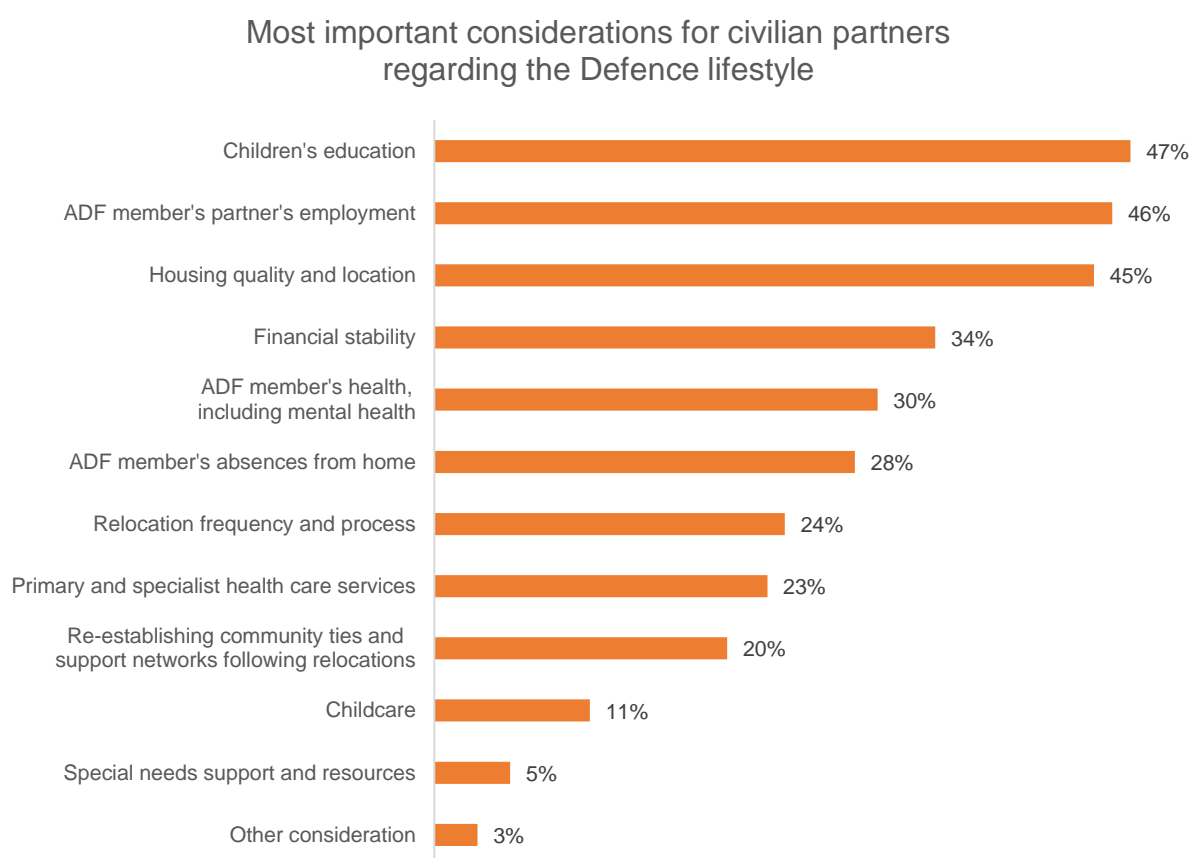
While there are measurement and methodological considerations impacting the reliability and validity of these results, it appears that MWD(U) is a driver of lower life satisfaction.

Surveyed families currently on MWD(U) reported both positive and negative impacts of these arrangements on their lives, and over half of these families would choose MWD(U) again for their current living arrangements. Some life aspects that were difficult to re-establish following relocations were also reported as being positively impacted by the ability to stay in the same location with MWD(U) arrangements. Further research on MWD(U) would be beneficial to better understand the positive and negative impacts of MWD(U) on quality of life. Given that MWD(U) may be perceived as the only option to allow the ADF member to progress in their career while offering some stability to families, it is important to minimise their negative effects on families or reduce the need for members to use MWD(U) to achieve ADF outcomes.

Impact of the Defence lifestyle on civilian partner employment

The demands of an ADF member's work or posting cycle can impact their civilian partner's employment. This has been widely explored in studies of military families in other countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. These studies mainly relate to military wives. In the ADF Families Survey 2019, 92 per cent of civilian partners were female and survey findings are compared to the broader literature on military wives, where appropriate.

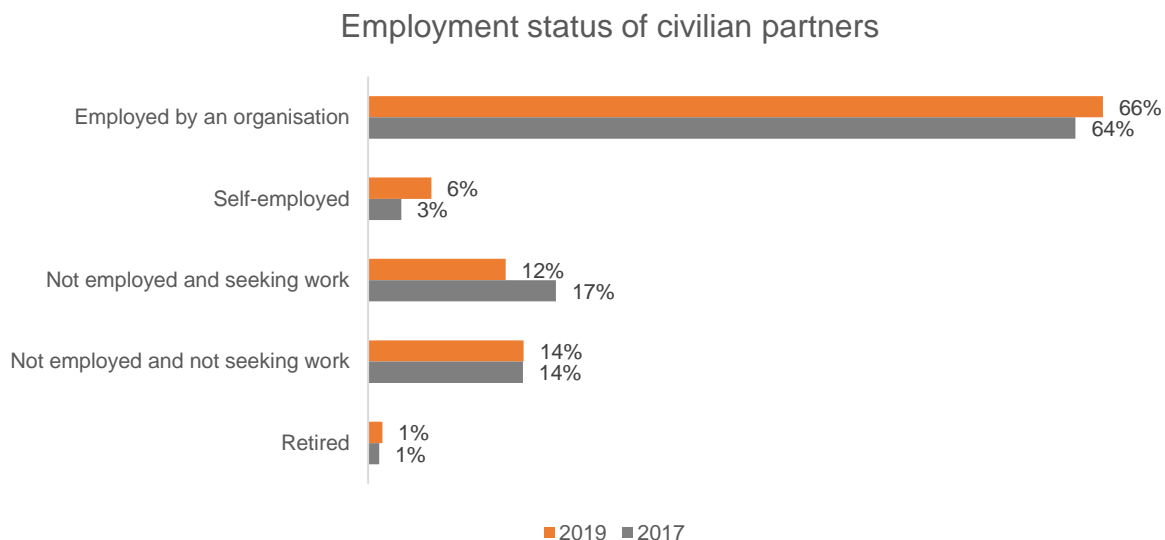
Civilian partner employment was among the most important considerations for civilian partners regarding the Defence lifestyle, with children's education and housing quality and location also being important.



The Blue Star Families' Military Family Lifestyle Survey studies the families of United States military personnel, and found in 2017 that partner employment was a concern for 43 per cent of military partners (Shiffer et al. 2017). While this was one of the most important concerns for US partners and affected a similar proportion of US and Australian partners, it was not one of the top five stressors for US military families. This suggests that while partner employment is a primary consideration for US military families, importance does not always equate to difficulties causing stress. US programs supporting military partners' employment may offer some lessons for Defence.

Of ADF Families Survey respondents, a slightly higher proportion of civilian partners in 2019 were working than in 2017, and a lower proportion were unemployed but seeking work. However, people self-select to participate in the ADF Families Survey and the sample does not necessarily represent the full Defence population in other demographic respects. The findings from this section should be used in conjunction with the Defence Census 2019 results, set to be released in 2020. Civilian partner employment status as reported in the

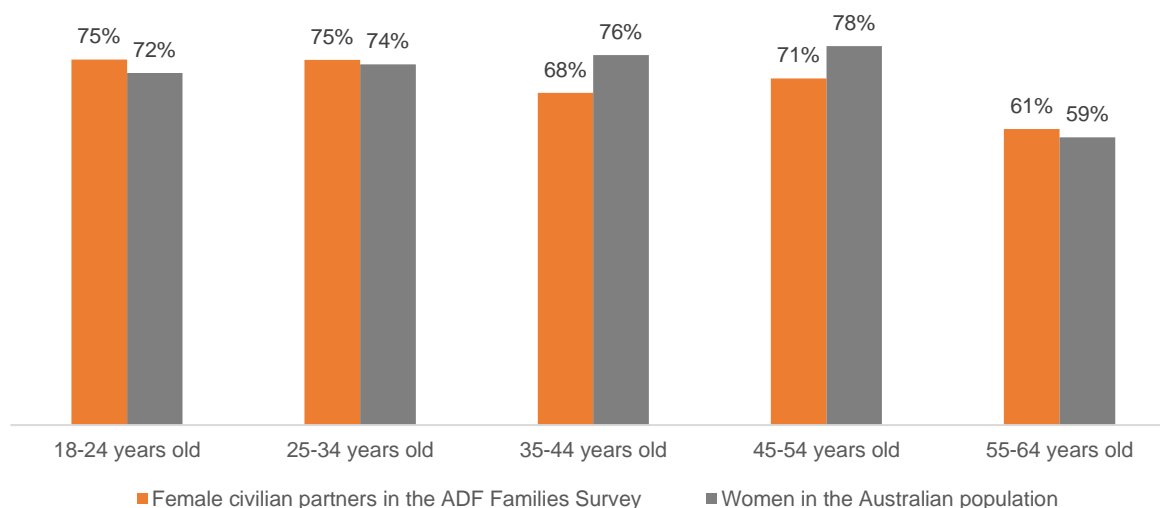
Defence Census will be more representative than the distribution reported from the ADF Families Survey. The Defence Census also provides additional partner employment information, such as reasons for partner unemployment, the locations of partners who are unemployed but seeking work, the average distance of civilian partners' work commute, and Census information can also be used to identify any relationship between qualifications and employment status.



Nearly all civilian partners in the ADF Families Survey were female (92 per cent). Comparing just female civilian partners to women in the broader Australian population contextualises survey findings about employment status.

Female civilian partners between 18 and 34 and between 55 and 64 years old were employed at a similar rate as women in the broader Australian population.

Comparison of
employed female civilian partners in the ADF Families Survey to
employed women in Australia, by age range



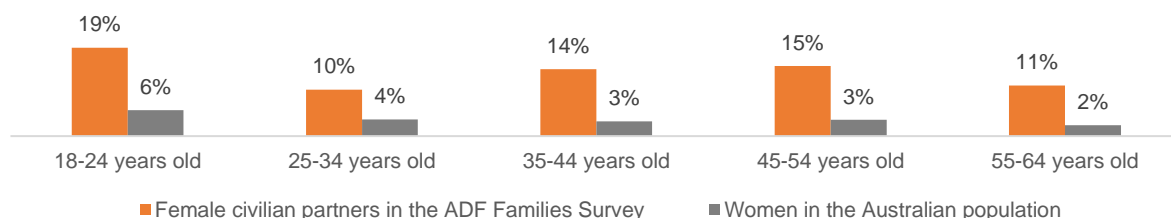
Data for women in the Australian population is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed – Electronic Delivery, June 2019 (cat. 6291.0.55.001).

Percentages are expressed out of the total number of women in each employment category for that cohort and age range. The percentages for employment, unemployment, and not in the labour force for a specific cohort and age range sum to 100 per cent. The percentages for employment are therefore not an 'employment rate', which excludes persons not in the labour force, and cannot be compared to broader employment figures.

The youngest age group for the ADF Families Survey includes women between 18-24 years of age, but for the broader Australian population only includes women between 20-24 years of age. The number of female civilian partner respondents in the ADF Families Survey between 18-20 years of age is negligible.

Female civilian partners of all ages were more likely to be unemployed (compared to employed or not in the labour force) than women in the broader population.

Comparison of unemployed female civilian partners in the ADF Families Survey to unemployed women in Australia, by age range



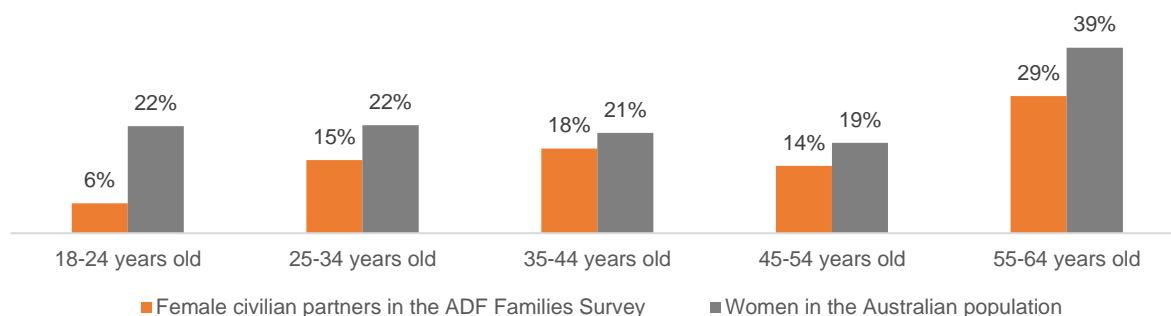
Data for women in the Australian population is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed – Electronic Delivery, June 2019 (cat. 6291.0.55.001).

Percentages are expressed out of the total number of women in each employment category for that cohort and age range. The percentages for employment, unemployment, and not in the labour force for a specific cohort and age range sum to 100 per cent. The percentages for unemployment are therefore not an 'unemployment rate', which excludes persons not in the labour force, and cannot be compared to broader unemployment figures.

The youngest age group for the ADF Families Survey includes women between 18-24 years of age, but for the broader Australian population only includes women between 20-24 years of age. The number of female civilian partner respondents in the ADF Families Survey between 18-20 years of age is negligible.

A smaller proportion of female civilian partners than women in the broader population were not in the labour force (retired or not seeking work) for all age ranges.

Comparison of female civilian partners not in the labour force in the ADF Families Survey to women not in the labour force in Australia, by age range



Data for women in the Australian population is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed – Electronic Delivery, June 2019 (cat. 6291.0.55.001).

Percentages are expressed out of the total number of women in each employment category for that cohort and age range. The percentages for employment, unemployment, and not in the labour force for a specific cohort and age range sum to 100 per cent. The percentages for women not in the labour force cannot be compared to broader employment and unemployment figures.

The youngest age group for the ADF Families Survey includes women between 18-24 years of age, but for the broader Australian population only includes women between 20-24 years of age. The number of female civilian partner respondents in the ADF Families Survey between 18-20 years of age is negligible.

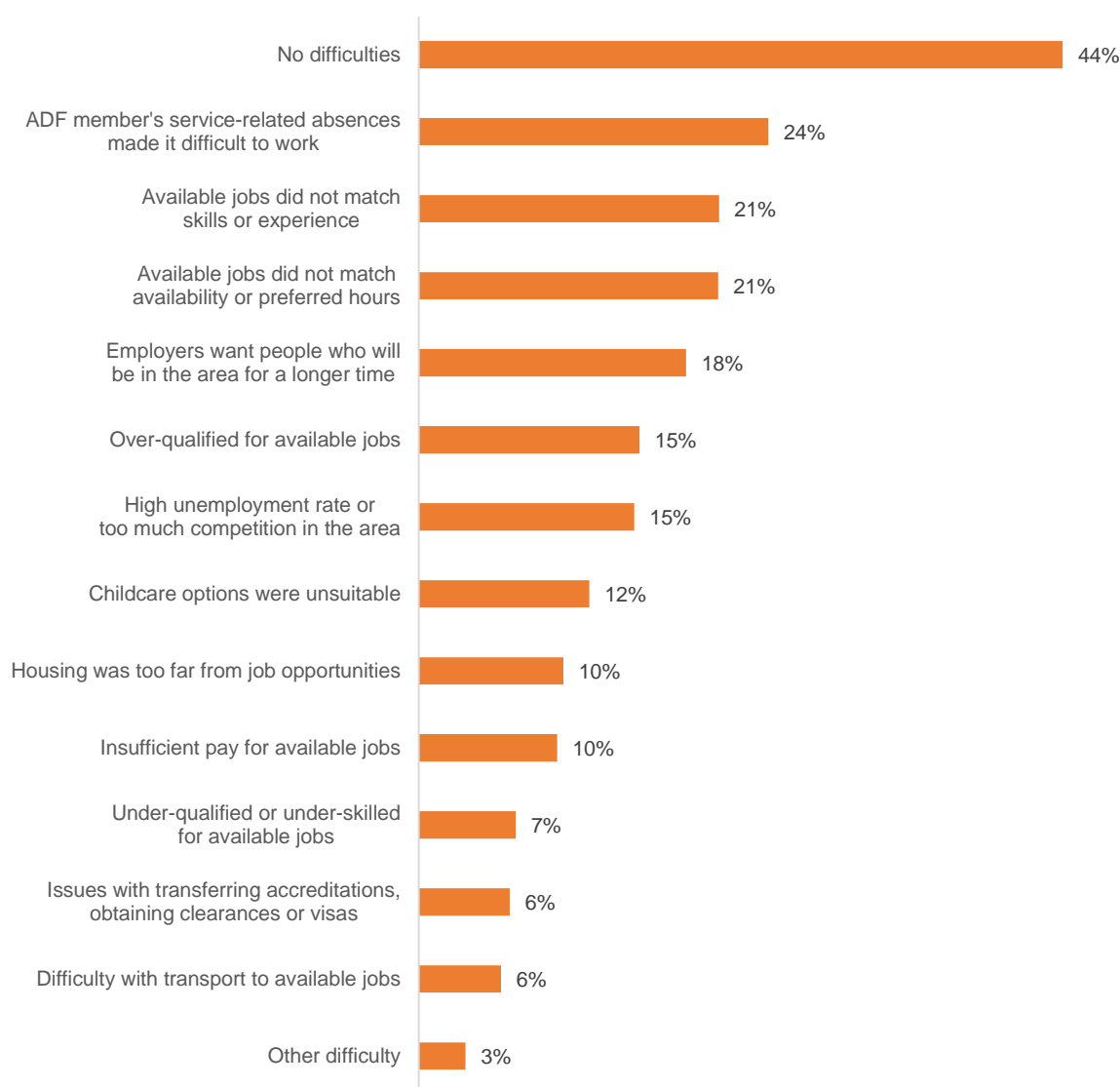
A higher proportion of female civilian partners than women in the broader population are unemployed and seeking work. Proportionally fewer female civilian partners are not in the labour force, suggesting that they are less inclined to want to work.

Difficulty finding meaningful employment

Just over half of civilian partners (of all genders) not currently using Member With Dependants (Unaccompanied) arrangements experienced some difficulties in finding meaningful employment between 2015 and 2019. Broken down by state, there were similar percentages of civilian partners with employment difficulties in each state (table available in Annex B). There is no evidence that some locations present more employment difficulties than others.

Difficulties finding meaningful employment most commonly related to problems managing work and the household in the ADF member's absence, the availability or suitability of jobs, and the regularity of postings which can make a civilian partner's employment temporary.

Reasons for civilian partners having difficulty finding meaningful employment between 2015-19



The Quality of Life Survey of Canadian Armed Forces Spouses found that 43 per cent of Canadian respondents identified partner employment as one of the top three challenges facing their family in regard to the military lifestyle (Wang and Aitken 2016). Year on year, the top reasons for US partners not working related to not being able to find work flexible enough to accommodate the military member's work demands, childcare cost or availability, and not being able to find work that matched the respondent's skill or education level (Maury and Stone 2014, Shiffer et al. 2017). For female partners of military members in the British Armed Forces, challenges associated with finding and maintaining a job were related to not being able to access or afford formal or informal childcare or were related to the military member's postings and deployments (Lyonette et al. 2018). Those researchers also found that the impacts of the member's work demands on the respondent's own employment included having to give up at least one job, not being able to continue working in their chosen field, and falling behind peers in the broader population in terms of career progression.

The findings from the ADF Families Survey and broader literature indicate that military demands negatively impact a civilian partner's employment and employment opportunities. The civilian partner's work is required to fit around the military member's expected frequent or long absences, unpredictable schedule, and regular posting cycle. Another common theme was caring obligations, suggesting that caring duties fall to the civilian partner in the member's absence, which may further restrict their own ability to work. If the military member is provided with more flexibility in their own work schedule to help with caring and household duties, this may positively impact their civilian partner's ability to maintain employment for the posting duration. Defence encourages its members to achieve work-life balance through formal and informal flexible work arrangements, and offers flexibility in service obligations through the Total Workforce Model. Use of these initiatives is expected to continue growing in future years and should be monitored to assess their impact on family life and civilian partner employment.

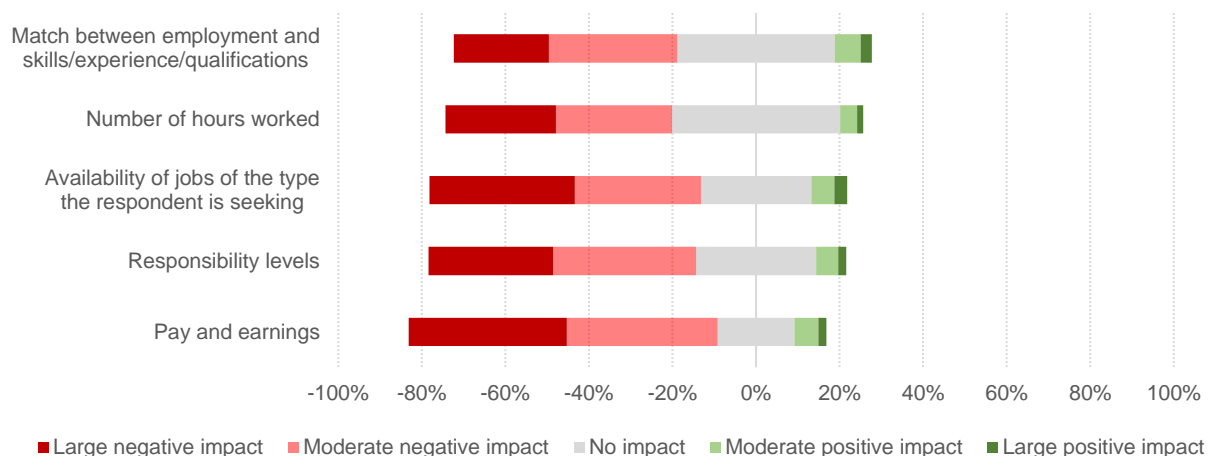
'My partner goes away a lot at the last minute, things seem to be cancelled and changed all the time so it makes it hard for us to plan anything – things as simple as who will pick up the kids. The sacrifices always come from me with my work as my partner isn't given flexibility, which has impacted my career and impacts our children not being able to participate in a lot of things as I can't be in more than one place at one time.'

- female civilian partner of an Army member

Impacts of relocations on civilian partner employment

Fifty-eight per cent of partners reported that it was difficult or very difficult to re-establish their own employment following a relocation (see section 'Re-establishing lifestyle after relocations'). The impacts of relocations on civilian partners' current employment were largely negative, with civilian partners reporting a moderate or large negative impact more often than reporting no impact or any positive impact.

Impacts of relocations on current employment for civilian partners



The percentages in each category are available in Annex B.

The finding that relocations greatly negatively impact civilian partner employment is consistent with a study of US military families which found that problems related to partner employment were the second-most frequently mentioned negative aspect of relocations, following problems caring for family members with special needs (Tong et al. 2018).

Seventy-four per cent of civilian partners in the ADF Families Survey reported a moderate or large negative impact to their pay and earnings. A US study comparing military families who had relocated to those who did not relocate found that moving accounts for a 14-24 per cent reduction in average earnings (Burke and Miller 2016). In a separate study of US military families, the biggest challenge to families' financial security was partner unemployment or underemployment (Shiffer et al. 2017). Reduced pay and earnings can have flow-on financial effects such as restricted pay progression or missing out on financial rewards for long service. Given that the proportion of dual-income households in Australia has been steadily increasing since 2001 (Wilkins et al. 2019), it is reasonable to expect that both the ADF member's and the civilian partner's employment are important to the family's financial security.

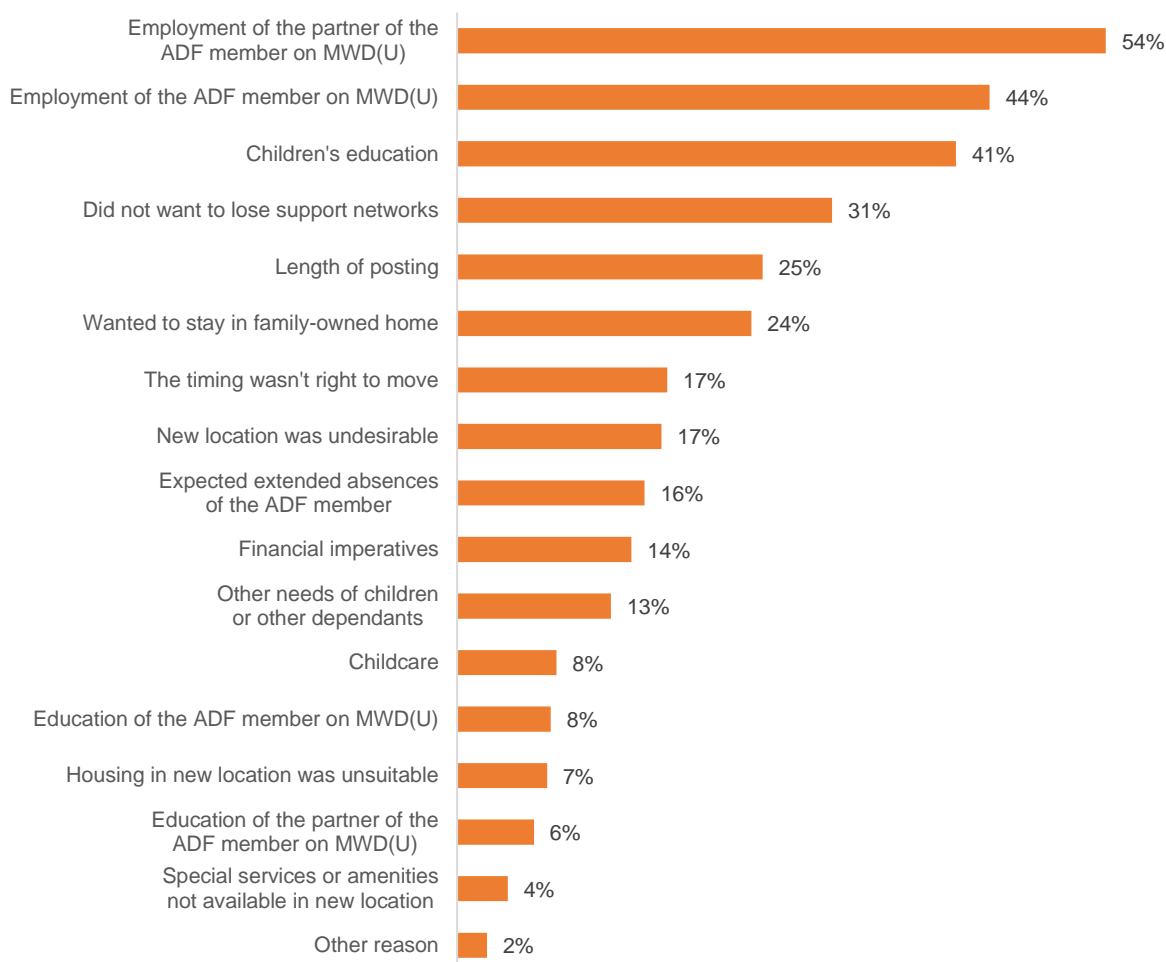
Consideration of civilian partner employment in families' decision to use MWD(U) arrangements

Families who do not relocate to their ADF member's new posting location can use Member With Dependants (Unaccompanied) (MWD(U)) arrangements, where the member posts separately and the family remains in their current location.

In 2019, 32 per cent of civilian partners reported that they had used MWD(U) arrangements sometime between 2015 and 2019. For 54 per cent of civilian partners, their own employment was a consideration in their family's decision to use MWD(U) arrangements. This proportion varies by state of posting, indicating that partner employment was more of a consideration for some posting locations, such as ACT and the Northern Territory, than for

other states, such as South Australia and Victoria (table available in Annex B); however, there are other factors that may affect these proportions. For example, a high proportion of postings to some states may be short-term, and in those cases, the family may prefer to be separated for that time rather than find new employment for only a short duration. Therefore, higher percentages of MWD(U) do not necessarily indicate increased difficulty finding employment in that posting state.

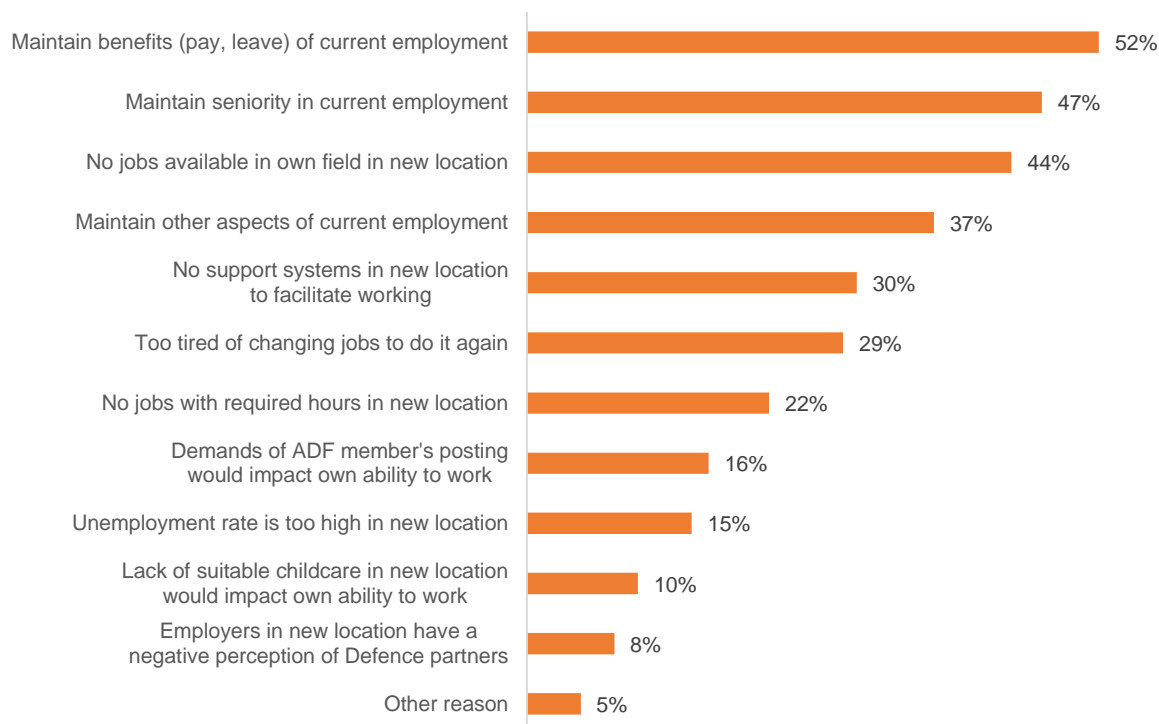
Considerations for civilian partners in their family's decision to use MWD(U) arrangements



Similar to the findings above, a study of US military families found that over 59 per cent of female partners had been geographically separated from the military member during their career, and approximately half of those stated the reason for the separation was to maintain or enhance their own employment or education (Maury and Stone 2014). Most of the remaining respondents in that study stated either deployments or familial obligations as their reason for choosing to reside in a different geographical location to their partner.

For civilian partners who chose MWD(U) for their employment, they most commonly wanted to maintain aspects of their existing employment. Civilian partners also had some uncertainty around the availability and suitability of future employment in the new posting location.

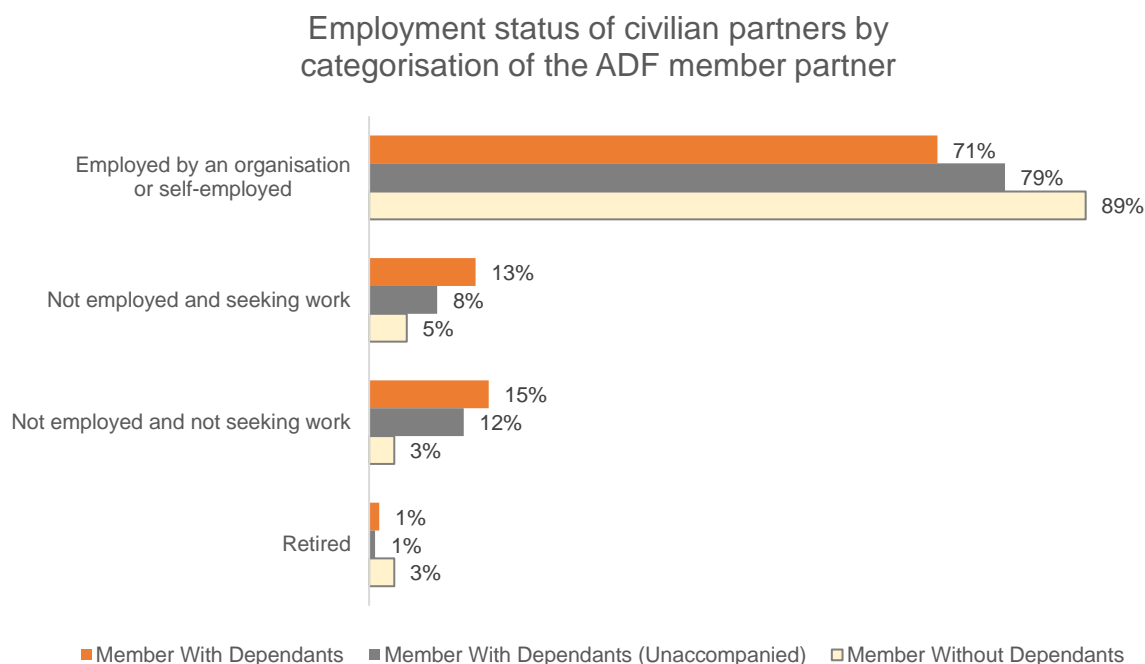
Aspects of employment that were considerations in civilian partners' decision to be on MWD(U) arrangements



The literature on civilian partner employment has tended to focus on facilitating the civilian partner finding new roles around the military member's work demands. While the importance of services or allowances to assist partners in finding similar or suitable new employment should not be understated, Defence should also recognise that some civilian partners do not consider their own employment to be 'negotiable', even if it may not be difficult to find a new role.

'My career is important too! I've worked hard to achieve seniority – I can't just relocate because a career manager decides to post my partner to another location'
 – female civilian partner of an Army member

MWD(U) can alleviate some of the challenges of maintaining stable employment and pursuing a long-term career by allowing the partner to remain in their location. Civilian partners on MWD(U) are more likely to be employed than civilian partners not on MWD(U).



The ADF member's categorisation is self-reported by the civilian partner in this survey. Respondents indicating a categorisation of 'Member Without Dependants' are likely referring to 'dependants' in the general sense, as ADF members with civilian partners are not classified as a Member Without Dependants (the civilian partner is known as a 'dependant' in the context of categorisation).

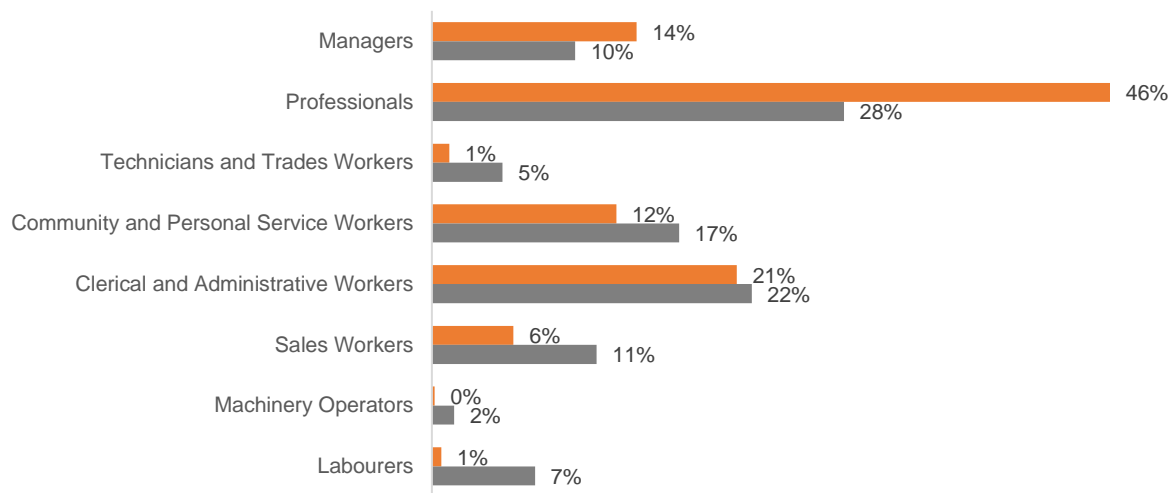
Despite partner employment being a consideration for over half of families in their decision to use MWD(U) arrangements, 50 per cent of partners felt that MWD(U) had a negative impact on their ability to manage their employment and employment opportunities (see section 'Impacts of MWD(U) arrangements on families' lifestyle'). This may relate to difficulties balancing work and the household in the ADF member's absence (as postulated in the section 'Difficulty finding meaningful employment'), but this is an area that would benefit from more targeted studies, given that both relocating and staying in the same location on MWD(U) appear to negatively impact civilian partner employment.

Occupational groups of employed civilian partners

The Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) groups all occupations into hierarchical levels. The highest level is the 'major group' and the second highest level is the 'sub-major group'. Employed civilian partners in the ADF Families Survey were asked their major and sub-major occupational groups. However, the ANZSCO structure is not intended to be used by respondents to self-classify (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013) which could adversely impact the reliability of the results.

Nearly all civilian partners in the survey were female (92 per cent), and the distribution of ANZSCO major occupational groups was compared between female civilian partners and women in the broader Australian population. Female civilian partners were more likely to be professionals than women in the general population, and were more concentrated in this group than any other group. This may reflect the nature of work that civilian partners perceive are best suited to the Defence lifestyle or that civilian partners of ADF members are likely to have different socio-economic characteristics and work preferences to the overall population.

Comparison of occupational groups for female civilian partners in the ADF Families Survey and for women in the Australian population



■ Female civilian partners in the ADF Families Survey (June 2019) ■ Women in the Australian population (May 2019)

Data for women in the Australian population is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force, Australia, Quarterly, May 2019 (cat. 6291.0.55.003).

The distribution of occupational groups for all civilian partner respondents (of all genders) was the same as for just female survey respondents.

For all civilian partners, the top 10 sub-major occupational groups are tabled below.

Top 10 sub-major occupational groups for civilian partners

	Major group	Sub-major group	Percentage (%)
1	Professionals	Health Professionals	13
2	Professionals	Education Professionals	11
3	Professionals	Business, Human Resource and Marketing Professionals	7
4	Managers	Other Managers	6
5	Professionals	Other Professionals	5
6	Community and Personal Service Workers	Carers and Aides	5
7	Clerical and Administrative Workers	Office Managers and Program Administrators	4
8	Clerical and Administrative Workers	Clerical and Office Support Workers	3
9	Professionals	Legal, Social and Welfare Professionals	3
10	Sales Workers	Sales Assistants and Salespersons	3

Health professionals include nurses, dentists, therapists and medical practitioners.
Education professionals include teachers, lecturers and private tutors.

A study of female civilian partners of British Armed Forces members showed that the top three self-reported job industries were administrative and support service activities, human health and social work activities, and education (Lyonette et al. 2018). Those researchers also found evidence that partners chose these industries partly because such roles are portable and suited to a lifestyle where it was necessary to change employment regularly. For female civilian partners of US military members, the top three self-reported occupations were teacher, childcare worker, and registered nurse (Tong et al. 2018). That study also noted that holding these occupations in the United States required state-issued licensing or certification, which could delay the attainment of new employment upon relocation. This may be applicable to the ADF population – given that these occupations were also common among ADF civilian partners – but Australian and US regulations around licensing and certification are different and problems with transferring accreditations were reported as a difficulty for only 6 per cent of respondents (see section ‘Difficulty finding meaningful employment’).

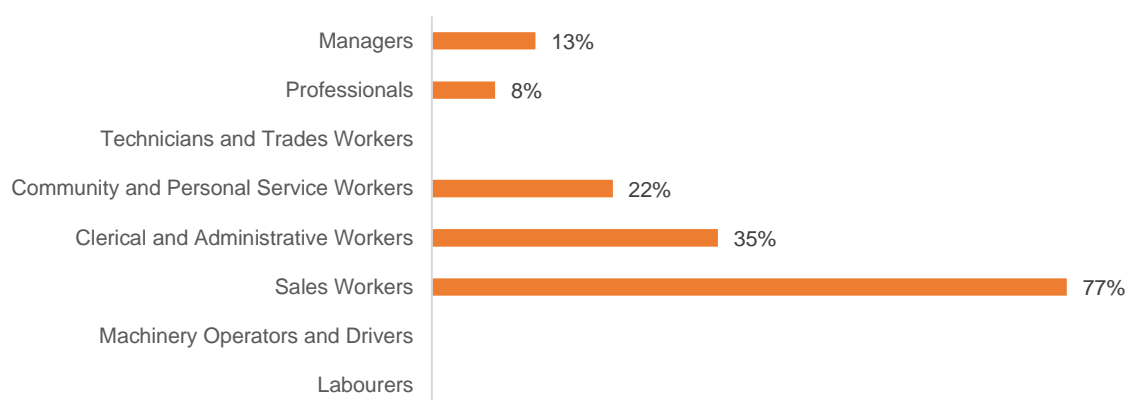
Seventy-five per cent of civilian partners were employed in their preferred field of work.

Percentage of civilian partners in their preferred field of work



For civilian partners who were not in their preferred field of work, sales workers were most likely to report that they are not in their preferred field (77 per cent), while only 8 per cent of professionals were not satisfied with their field of work.

Percentage of civilian partners in each occupational group who are not in their preferred field of work



The percentages for Technicians and Trades Workers, Machinery Operators and Drivers, and Labourers are not shown as there were fewer than 10 respondents in at least one of the two preference groups.

There are fewer than 100 respondents in each occupational group above, so caution should be exercised when interpreting these results.

The top eight sub-major groups for civilian partners who were not in their preferred occupational group are tabled below. Twelve per cent of dissatisfied respondents were working as sales assistants or salespersons.

Top 8 sub-major occupational groups for civilian partners who are not working in their preferred occupational group

	Major group	Sub-major group	Percentage (%)
1	Sales Workers	Sales Assistants and Salespersons	12
2	Community and Personal Service Workers	Carers and Aides	7
3	Clerical and Administrative Workers	General Clerical Workers	7
4	Clerical and Administrative Workers	Office Managers and Program Administrators	6
5	Clerical and Administrative Workers	Other Clerical and Administrative Workers	6
6	Professionals	Education Professionals	5
7	Professionals	Other Professionals	5
8	Clerical and Administrative Workers	Clerical and Office Support Workers	5

The ninth and tenth ranks are not shown as there were fewer than 10 respondents in these sub-major groups.

There are fewer than 50 respondents in each sub-major group above, so caution should be exercised when interpreting these results.

The results from this table are consistent with the broader literature. A study of female civilian partners of US military members found that the least preferred fields were retail and customer service, hospitality, childcare or child development, and administrative services (Maury and Stone 2014). Those researchers postulate that these are job fields where little experience or training is required and where short-term employment is normalised. This is supported by studies of the broader Australian population, where underemployed workers

(who are working fewer hours than preferred) are more likely to be community and personal service workers, sales workers, and labourers, and are less likely to work in a high-skilled occupation such as a manager or professional (Wilkins and Lass 2018). The study of US female civilian partners of military members also showed that not working in the preferred career field can affect income, as the average total gross income was statistically significantly higher for respondents in their preferred career field than those who were not (Maury and Stone 2014). This can also reflect the part-time or casual nature of some jobs in those fields, or that respondents not in their preferred fields may have less seniority in their roles.

Civilian partners who were not employed in their preferred field or who were unemployed but seeking work were asked to name their preferred major and sub-major occupational groups. The Professionals group was the most popular group.



The percentages for Machinery Operators and Drivers and Labourers are not shown as there were fewer than 10 respondents who would choose these occupational groups.

Responses were coded to 'Other (unclassifiable)' if the respondent provided a written response that did not correspond to any ANZSCO occupational group.

The top 10 preferred sub-major groups are tabled below. There is some overlap between the two tables showing the most and least preferred sub-major groups. Respondents have different work preferences to each other and some civilian partners may be satisfied with a role where others are not.

Top 10 preferred sub-major occupational groups for civilian partners

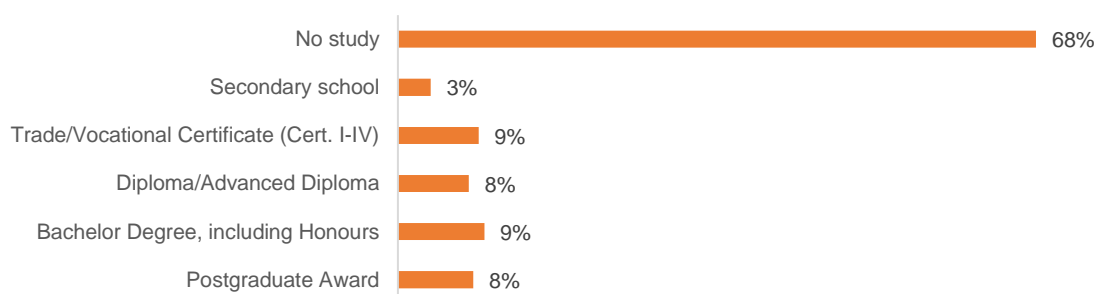
	Major group	Sub-major group	Percentage (%)
1	Professionals	Health Professionals	11
2	Professionals	Business, Human Resource and Marketing Professionals	8
3	Professionals	Education Professionals	7
4	Community and Personal Service Workers	Carers and Aides	6
5	Professionals	Other Professionals	5
6	Clerical and Administrative Workers	Clerical and Office Support Workers	5
7	Clerical and Administrative Workers	General Clerical Workers	4
8	Community and Personal Service Workers	Health and Welfare Support Workers	4
9	Professionals	Legal, Social and Welfare Professionals	4
10	Clerical and Administrative Workers	Personal Assistants and Secretaries	4

A study of female partners of US military members found similar results, where the most preferred fields were health care, education, and government (Maury and Stone 2014). Australian government roles are not captured in a single ANZSCO group as the public service comprises a multitude of occupations that span several skills and specialisations.

Civilian partner education

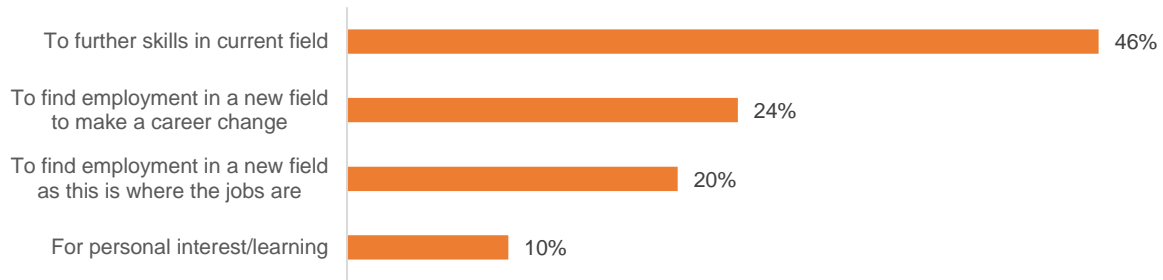
Most civilian partners were not studying for a qualification.

Percentage of civilian partners studying for a qualification



Of the civilian partners who were studying for a tertiary qualification (not secondary school), furthering their skills in their current field was the primary motivation for nearly half of these respondents. Twenty per cent of respondents reported studying to find employment in a new field only because this is where job demand was, rather than for any personal reason.

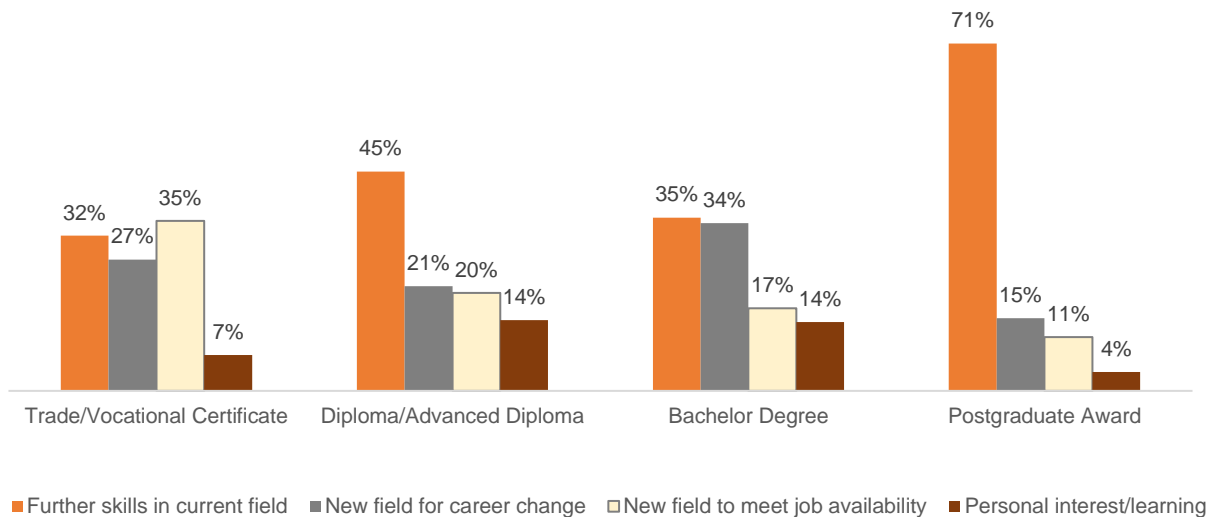
Primary motivation for studying for civilian partners



Although respondents were asked to select their primary motivation for studying, their reasons for studying are likely to be varied and may include more than one of the above options. Their motivations are unlikely to be exclusively personal or exclusively professional. The options given above are therefore not necessarily mutually exclusive.

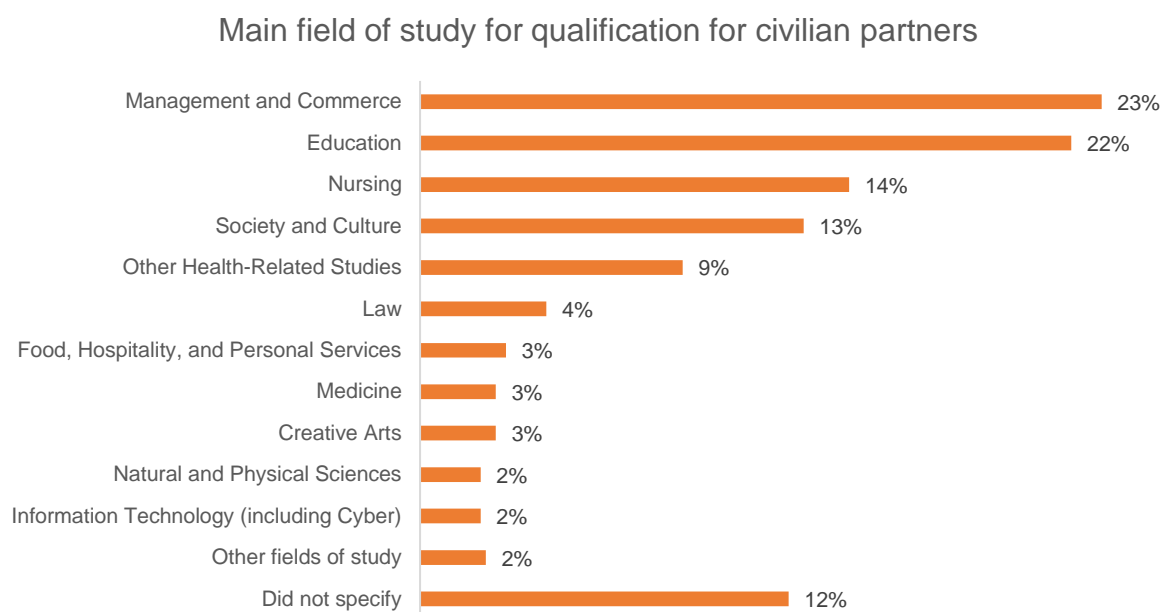
Civilian partners studying for a Diploma/Advanced Diploma or Postgraduate Award were more likely to be studying to further their skills in their current field, rather than for any other reason. Partners studying for a Bachelor Degree were more likely to be studying in a new field (51 per cent reporting a career change or to meet job availability), not their current field. Those studying a Trade/Vocational Certificate were studying for a variety of reasons, and were also more likely to be studying in a new field rather than their current field (62 per cent for a career change or to meet job availability).

Percentage of civilian partners studying each qualification by primary motivation for studying



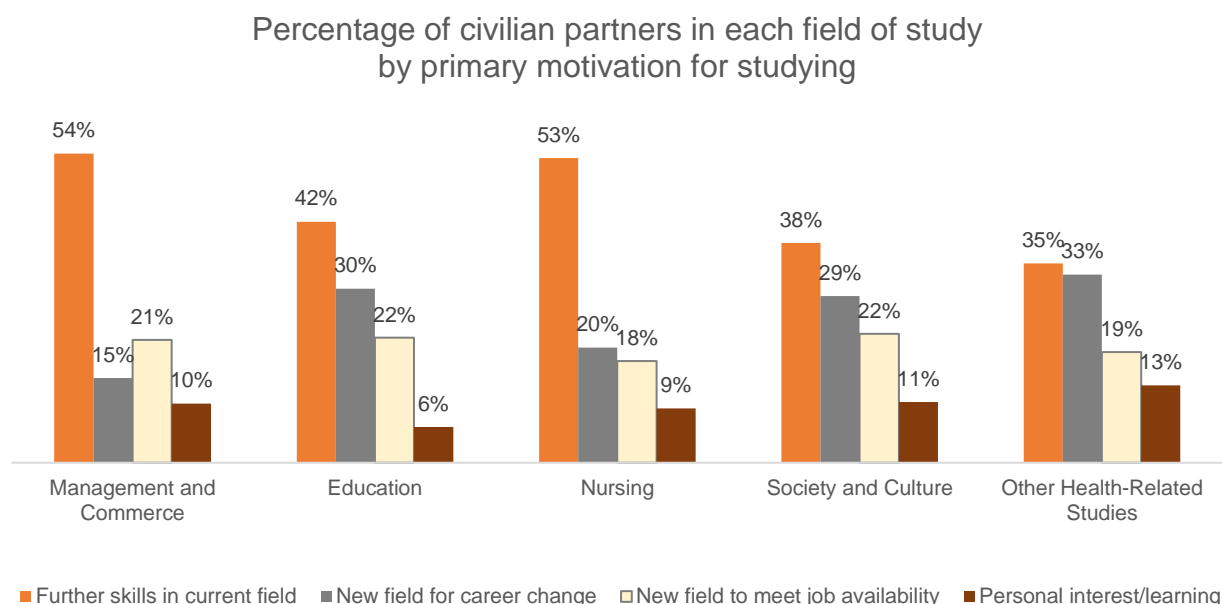
Although respondents were asked to select their primary motivation for studying, their reasons for studying are likely to be varied and may include more than one of the above options. Their motivations are unlikely to be exclusively personal or exclusively professional. The options given above are therefore not necessarily mutually exclusive.

The main field of study for civilian partners who were studying is shown below.



The fields of Engineering and Related Technologies, Architecture and Building, and Agriculture, Environment and Related Studies have been grouped into the category 'Other fields of study' as there were very few respondents who selected these options. The fields of study for respondents who selected 'Other' on the questionnaire is not known and these are categorised above as 'Did not specify'.

Eighty per cent of civilian partners currently studying were studying one of the top five fields. For those in Management and Commerce or Nursing, they were most likely to be furthering their skills in their current field, rather than studying for any other reason. Over half of the civilian partners in Education, Society and Culture, or Other Health-Related Studies were studying for a career change or to meet job availability. It is unclear whether 'furthering skills in current field' includes maintaining professional standing in an occupation through studying. Further research would be beneficial to fully understand why respondents are pursuing further study.

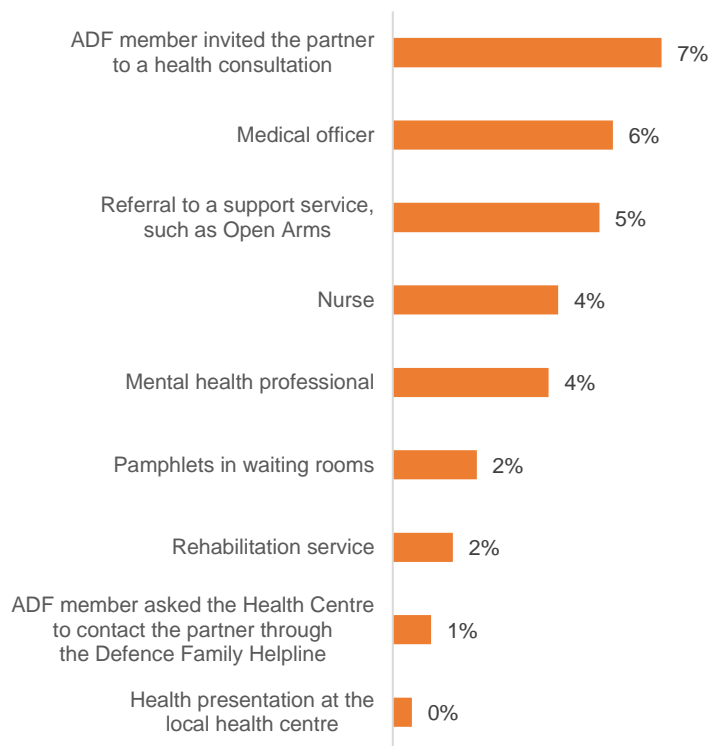


Although respondents were asked to select their primary motivation for studying, their reasons for studying are likely to be varied and may include more than one of the above options. Their motivations are unlikely to be exclusively personal or exclusively professional. The options given above are therefore not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Evaluation of Defence health services

The percentage of partners who reported receiving information or support from their local Defence Health Centre regarding the ADF member's physical and mental health and wellbeing is low. Many partners are unlikely to seek health support if the ADF member does not have a specific health need.

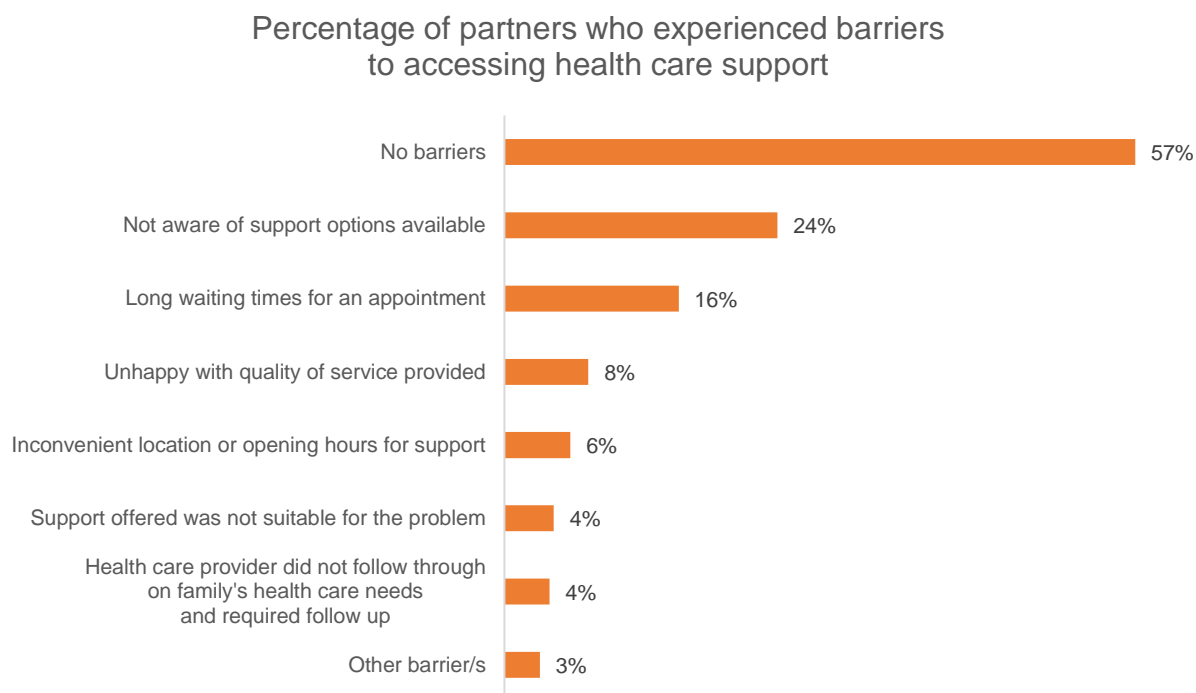
Percentage of partners who received information or support from their local Defence Health Centre



The percentage for 'Health presentation at the local health centre' is non-zero but is rounded down to 0 per cent.

Respondents also named external providers such as Open Arms and civilian medical centres as sources of information or support.

Fifty-seven per cent of partners did not experience any barriers to accessing health care support.



There is scope for improving respondents' awareness of the support options that are available to families. Respondents stated that more information about ADF health services should be available to both the member and their family across more channels, such as websites, Forcenet, and Facebook. They suggested that Defence should provide welcome packs to families upon relocation with a list of Defence health services available in that location, including basic information such as contact details and opening hours.

Respondents complained that waiting times for ADF members were too long, especially for general check-ups or other routine medical appointments. They desired more flexible opening hours or the ability to choose their own private medical provider. Respondents noted that ADF members were 'assigned' to specific ADF medical centres but this did not take into account the proportion of ADF members in each area. An example given was that the Duntroon medical centre serviced a large number of cadets as well as other ADF members working nearby, so it was too busy compared to other ADF medical centres in Canberra.

'[Members need to be able] to access same-day medical appointments – through external referral if necessary, and not having to access Medical Officers (MOs) through sick parade, which is typically up to 3-4 hours wait time and involves multiple triaging – nurses/physios, etc. – before a short time with the MO [to] access time off or pharmaceuticals – sometimes nothing more than off-the-shelf medication. It's a huge waste of the member's time and impacts the productivity of Defence when people are waiting around for hours rather than attending scheduled appointments.'

- female civilian partner of an Army member

Some respondents perceived that the medical attention they received from Defence Health Centres was inadequate. Particular issues included the perception that Defence health staff were not adequately qualified or did not understand Defence policy when providing recommendations, that they did not display professionalism or thoroughness in their care, or that they did not maintain proper record-keeping practices or follow up on test results. Continuity of care was also an issue for some respondents, where ongoing medical

treatment required 'starting over' and waiting list positions were reset upon relocation, and there appeared to be no consistency in medical advice.

'I have not had a regular GP in the last 6 years and each time I see a doctor for an ongoing issue, I have to go through all of the history. Then each doctor has their own opinion or way forward. This is very frustrating.'

- female respondent in a dual-ADF relationship with an Air Force member

'The requirement to move significant amounts of paper records manually between posting locations is absurd when all Defence health records are held electronically... the need to re-establish care programs in gaining locations often require new 'baseline' tests and scans to be performed with the new specialists. Defence should examine options for improving the portability of health care baselines.'

- male respondent in a dual-ADF relationship with an Air Force member

Respondents desired increased financial reimbursements, including travel allowances to see specialists outside of their local area, and also suggested changes to the way financial claims are made. Suggestions included using a HICAPS system rather than making claims online to reduce upfront payments.

Respondents also wanted Defence health support to extend to family members, where family members could access medical support on Defence bases and be entitled to the same financial allowances. In some cases, respondents noted that it was difficult to find civilian medical facilities in more remote posting locations.

Several respondents suggested improvements to mental health support. Some noted that affected members may be reluctant to seek help for mental health care, owing to broad cultural or Defence-specific stigma. Respondents suggested that the health centre could proactively reach out to the member through mandatory mental health checks, especially following a deployment or long separation from the family. This may assist members who would not have otherwise wanted to access support.

'Amongst the Defence members I know, including my partner, there is significant resistance to seeking medical care, especially regarding mental health. There seems to be a general culture and attitude of 'If I flag I need help then my career will suffer'. I think this is absolutely despicable, given [the] rates of mental illness and suicide for Defence members and their families, and in light of how loudly Defence claims they provide excellent support to us all.'

- female civilian partner of an Air Force member

Partners also expressed interest in being involved in the member's health care; this may facilitate the member's treatment and increase the member's support.

'My husband is currently experiencing mental health issues. Given he finds it hard to discuss these with me, it would be better to receive support from the health centre. This could be by inviting me to attend his appointments or discuss ways in which I can assist his treatment.'

- female civilian partner of an Air Force member

CONCLUSION

The conditions of ADF service impact not only the ADF member but also their family. Impacts can include family relationships, links to the wider community, partner employment, and children's schooling and care. In turn, the family is a consideration in an ADF member's career decisions.

Defence offers a range of family support services; some families use these and find them useful. The findings from this research can help to further improve the reach and quality of services by better understanding families' needs and where they have difficulties. Continual improvements to the way that ADF members' families are supported will maintain Defence's position as a competitive employer of choice. Family engagement in members' health care can also improve the member's health outcomes.

It may be beneficial to explore some of the survey findings further, to gain deeper insights into the nature of some of the issues facing ADF families. Some of these topics include transition to the Reserves, the relative importance of and relationship between positive and negative impacts of unaccompanied postings, the reasons why civilian partner employment is negatively affected by both relocations and unaccompanied postings, and professional and personal motivations for civilian partner education. The ways in which Defence can support the wellbeing of members and their families during unaccompanied postings should also be investigated.

ANNEX A: SUPPLEMENTARY ANALYSIS INFORMATION

Caveats

The online survey was accessed through an anonymous and open link. Anyone with this link could complete the survey and the survey did not track participants against Defence personnel information. There was a small risk that it was completed by participants who were not in scope or that it was completed more than once. The project sponsor accepts this risk.

The total number of survey responses analysed was 3,652. This represents only a very small proportion of the total number of ADF families affected by service life. Furthermore, representativeness and response rates cannot be determined for this survey, and this limits the generalisability of the results. While we can make inferences about the people who responded to the survey, we cannot generalise findings to the broader ADF population. People self-selected to participate in the ADF Families Survey and were encouraged to 'have their say' about issues they face as a Defence family. Therefore, the sample does not necessarily represent the broader population demographically and may include a disproportionately large number of respondents who have experienced difficulties. The online survey and all communication materials were in English. No provision was made for culturally or linguistically diverse participants.

Conclusions are based on self-reported data from families and the findings reflect their own perceptions of the impact of ADF conditions of service on their families. Where possible, information presented in this report is placed in the broader context of the Australian population or military families from other similar countries. The findings from this report should be considered alongside other data sources. The four-yearly Defence Census is a representative and more appropriate source of demographic information. The most recent Defence Census was conducted in April 2019 and the results, once released, can be compared to this survey sample from June 2019.

Only a small number of questions required a response before proceeding. Therefore, the number of responses varies between questions.

For confidentiality reasons, data containing fewer than 10 respondents is not output. These are noted within the relevant places in the report.

Respondent demographics

Categorisation of the ADF member

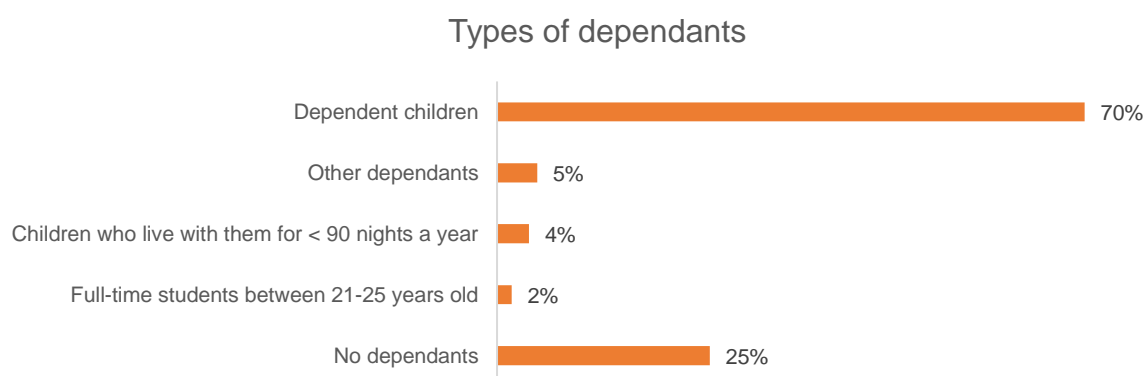
The majority of ADF members in the ADF Families Survey were categorised as Members With Dependants. Only a small proportion of members were unaccompanied. Figures for the Defence Census 2015 are shown for comparison.

Categorisation	Partner of an ADF member (%)	ADF member self (%)	Defence Census 2015 (%)
Member With Dependants (MWD)	84	85	50
Member With Dependants (Unaccompanied) (MWD(U))	13	7	6
Member Without Dependants (MWOD)	3	8	42

Noting that the Defence Census data is from 2015, families with dependants are unsurprisingly over-represented in the ADF Families Survey, compared to the overall ADF population.

Types of dependants

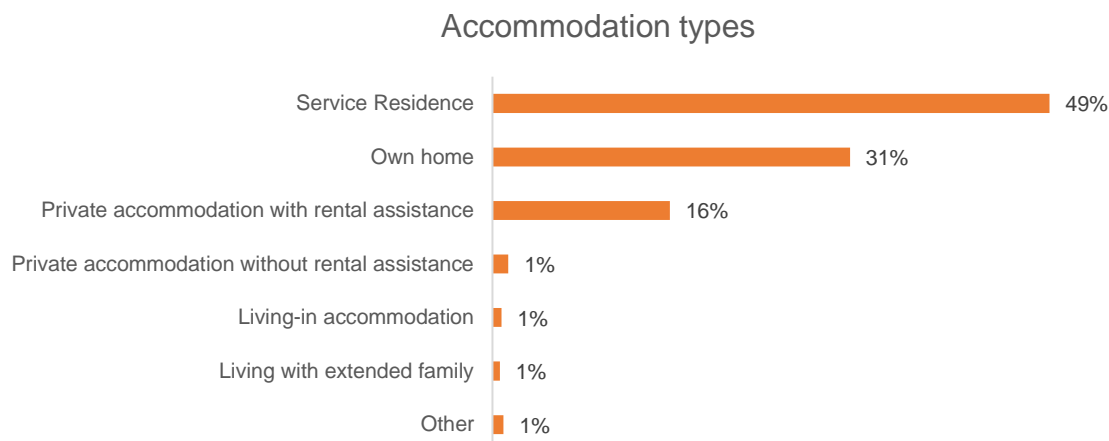
Seventy per cent of families have dependent children, with 25 per cent having no dependants.



'Other family members' were not asked about their dependants.

Accommodation types

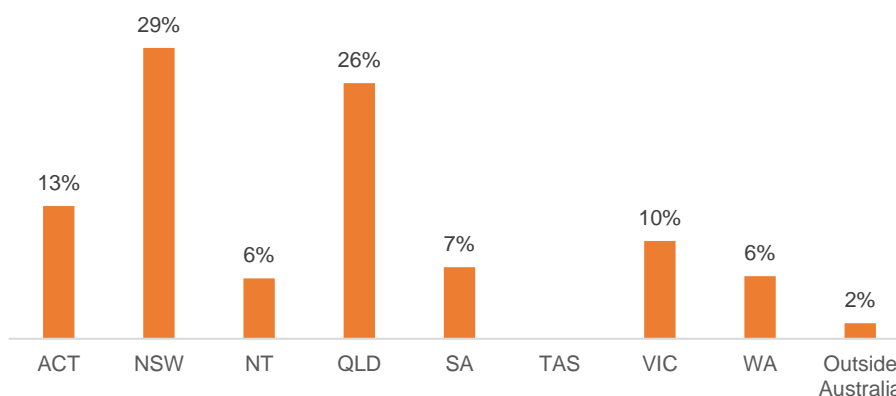
Just under half of the survey respondents live in a Service Residence. Nearly all of the other respondents lived in their own home or in private accommodation with rental assistance.



'Other family members' were not asked about their accommodation arrangements.

Location of family residence

Location of family residence (state or territory)

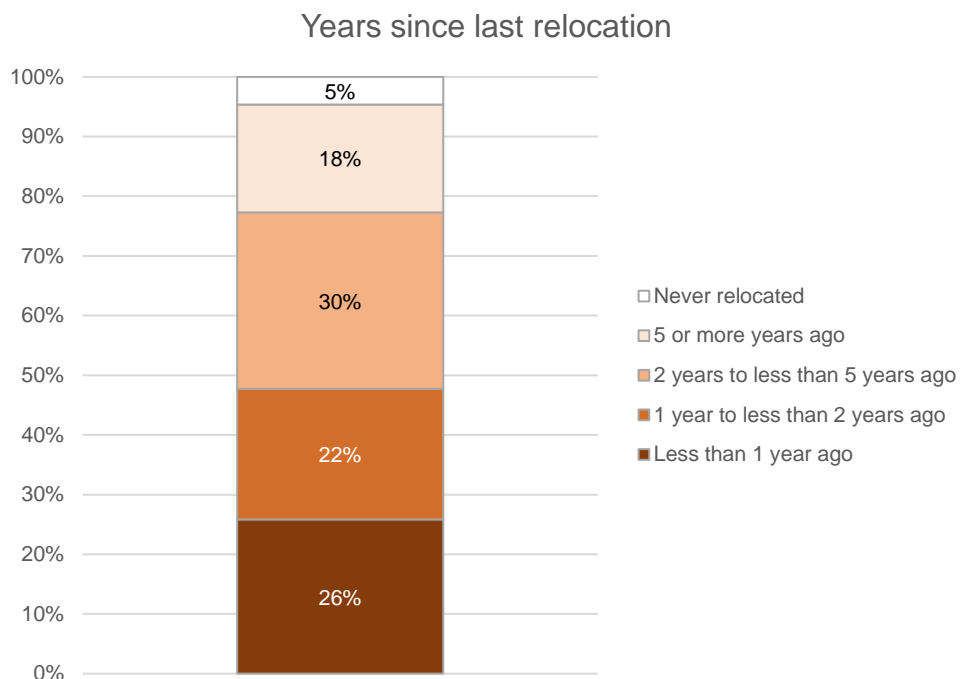


Tasmania is excluded from the graph above as there were fewer than 10 respondents who lived in Tasmania. The percentages for the other states and territories are calculated to exclude Tasmania.

'Other family members' were not asked about their location of residence.

Years since last relocation

The graph below shows the percentage of ADF members and civilian partners who relocated in each time period, as well as the cumulative percentages. Seventy-eight per cent of these families had relocated at least once between 2015 and 2019 (less than five years prior to survey administration), and were asked in the survey about their experiences of their last relocation.



ANNEX B: SUPPLEMENTARY RESULTS

Support during deployments and absences from home

Pre-deployment information sessions

Percentage of respondents who were aware of pre-deployment operational briefings by family type, comparison between 2019 and 2015

Family type	Change from 2015 to 2019 (percentage points)	Awareness in 2019 (%)	Awareness in 2015 (%)
Civilian partners	-28	14	42
ADF partners	-24	21	45
Single parents and members with 'other' dependants	-	-	-

The table above only shows differences that were statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2015 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Percentage of respondents who used pre-deployment operational briefings by family type, comparison between 2019 and 2015

Family type	Change from 2015 to 2019 (percentage points)	Use in 2019 (%)	Use in 2015 (%)
Civilian partners	-	-	-
ADF partners	+26	61	36
Single parents and members with 'other' dependants	-	-	-

The table above only shows differences that were statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2015 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Percentage of respondents who found pre-deployment operational briefings useful by family type, comparison between 2019 and 2015

Family type	Change from 2015 to 2019 (percentage points)	Perceived usefulness in 2019 (%)	Perceived usefulness in 2015 (%)
Civilian partners	-	-	-
ADF partners	-	-	-
Single parents and members with 'other' dependants	-15	60	75

The table above only shows differences that were statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2015 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Percentage of respondents who were aware of DCO education sessions by family type, comparison between 2019 and 2015

Family type	Change from 2015 to 2019 (percentage points)	Awareness in 2019 (%)	Awareness in 2015 (%)
Civilian partners	-4	13	17
ADF partners	-	-	-
Single parents and members with 'other' dependants	+12	42	30

The table above only shows differences that were statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2015 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Evaluation of family support services

Awareness, use, and opinion of Defence support services

Percentage of ADF members and civilian partners who were aware of Defence services, comparison between 2019 and 2017

Service	Change from 2017 to 2019 (percentage points)	Awareness in 2019 (%)	Awareness in 2017 (%)
Support for partners' employment (PEAP)	+18	70	51
Resilience programs (KidSMART and FamilySMART)	+11	43	32
Programs to support childcare availability	+10	52	42
Support when ADF members are injured or ill through AUSDIL program	+4	32	28
Financial assistance for children's education	+4	50	46
Grants for community organisations offering services to military families	+3	29	26
Safe-house accommodation for families experiencing severe domestic crisis	+3	32	29
Family Liaison Officers	-3	56	59
Regionally-based events for ADF families	-3	78	81
Defence Family Helpline	-15	69	84

Comparisons were only able to be made between those services asked about in both years. The table above only shows services where the difference between the two years was statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2017 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Percentage of ADF members and civilian partners who used Defence services, comparison between 2019 and 2017

Service	Change from 2017 to 2019 (percentage points)	Use in 2019 (%)	Use in 2017 (%)
Programs to support childcare availability	+3	17	13
Safe-house accommodation for families experiencing severe domestic crisis	-1	1	3
Support for partners' employment (PEAP)	-3	15	18
Regionally-based events for ADF families	-4	41	45
DCO reports to assist Command in decision making	-5	26	31
Support when ADF members are injured or ill through AUSDIL program	-5	3	8
Defence Family Helpline	-13	15	28

Comparisons were only able to be made between those services asked about in both years. The table above only shows services where the difference between the two years was statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2017 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Percentage of ADF members and civilian partners who found Defence services useful, comparison between 2019 and 2017

Service	Change from 2017 to 2019 (percentage points)	Perceived usefulness in 2019 (%)	Perceived usefulness in 2017 (%)
Support for partners' employment (PEAP)	+9	59	50
Assistance for military families with dependants with special needs	-8	54	62
Regionally-based events for ADF families	-8	73	81

Comparisons were only able to be made between those services asked about in both years. The table above only shows services where the difference between the two years was statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2017 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Percentage of 'other family members' who were aware of DCO services, comparison between 2019 and 2017

Service	Change from 2017 to 2019 (percentage points)	Awareness in 2019 (%)	Awareness in 2017 (%)
Support when ADF members are injured or ill through AUSDIL program	-11	41	52
Defence Family Helpline	-12	65	78
Regionally-based events for ADF families	-13	49	62

In 2019, all 'other family members' were invited to answer this set of questions. In 2015, only parents of ADF members were invited to answer.

Comparisons were only able to be made between those services asked about in both years. The table above only shows services where the difference between the two years was statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2017 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Percentage of 'other family members' who used DCO services, comparison between 2019 and 2017

Service	Change from 2017 to 2019 (percentage points)	Use in 2019 (%)	Use in 2017 (%)
Support when ADF members are injured or ill through AUSDIL program	-9	6	16
Defence Family Helpline	-25	6	32

Comparisons were only able to be made between those services asked about in both years. The table above only shows services where the difference between the two years was statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2017 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Percentage of respondents who were aware of services and groups, comparison between 2019 and 2017

Service	Change from 2017 to 2019 (percentage points)	Awareness in 2019 (%)	Awareness in 2017 (%)
Defence Families of Australia	+7	73	66
National Welfare Coordination Centre	+4	58	53
Defence Chaplaincy Services	-6	86	92

Comparisons were only able to be made between those services and groups asked about in both years. The table above only shows services and groups where the difference between the two years was statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2017 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Percentage of respondents who used services and groups, comparison between 2019 and 2017

Service	Change from 2017 to 2019 (percentage points)	Use in 2019 (%)	Use in 2017 (%)
Defence Community Houses/Centres	+4	31	27
National Welfare Coordination Centre	-2	16	19
Defence Chaplaincy Services	-5	28	33

Comparisons were only able to be made between those services and groups asked about in both years. The table above only shows services and groups where the difference between the two years was statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2017 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Percentage of respondents who found services and groups useful, comparison between 2019 and 2017

Service	Change from 2017 to 2019 (percentage points)	Perceived usefulness in 2019 (%)	Perceived usefulness in 2017 (%)
Defence Chaplaincy Services	-4	82	85
Defence Community Houses/Centres	-5	78	84

Comparisons were only able to be made between those services and groups asked about in both years. The table above only shows services and groups where the difference between the two years was statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2017 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Communication methods

Percentage of respondents who were aware of communication methods, comparison between 2019 and 2017

Service	Change from 2017 to 2019 (percentage points)	Awareness in 2019 (%)	Awareness in 2017 (%)
DCO Facebook page	+7	70	63
DFA Facebook page	+7	55	48
DFA website	+5	65	60
DCO website	+3	87	84
Defence website	+2	96	93
Navy/Army/Air Force websites	+2	88	86
Newsletters from DCO area offices	-3	57	59
1800 DEFENCE	-6	62	68
Defence Family Matters magazine	-6	78	84
Service newspapers	-7	66	73
Defence Family Helpline	-8	64	72

Comparisons were only able to be made between those communication methods asked about in both years. The table above only shows communication methods where the difference between the two years was statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2017 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Percentage of respondents who used communication methods, comparison between 2019 and 2017

Service	Change from 2017 to 2019 (percentage points)	Use in 2019 (%)	Use in 2017 (%)
DFA Facebook page	+14	44	30
DCO Facebook page	+13	50	37
DCO website	+10	51	41
Defence website	+6	62	56
Newsletters from DCO area offices	+6	50	44
DCO Instagram feed	+5	13	8
Navy/Army/Air Force websites	+5	54	49
DFA website	+4	32	29

Comparisons were only able to be made between those communication methods asked about in both years. The table above only shows communication methods where the difference between the two years was statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2017 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Percentage of respondents who found communication methods useful, comparison between 2019 and 2017

Service	Change from 2017 to 2019 (percentage points)	Perceived usefulness in 2019 (%)	Perceived usefulness in 2017 (%)
DCO Instagram feed	+16	56	40
DCO website	-6	69	75
Newsletters from DCO area offices	-7	67	75
Service newspapers	-7	80	87
Defence website	-10	77	87
Navy/Army/Air Force websites	-12	75	87
Defence Family Matters magazine	-13	57	70

Comparisons were only able to be made between those communication methods asked about in both years. The table above only shows communication methods where the difference between the two years was statistically significant (using a two-proportion z-test). Any small discrepancies between the differences in the two percentages and the figure listed as the 'change from 2017 to 2019' are due to rounding.

Families' experiences with relocations and housing

Re-establishing lifestyle after relocations

Ease or difficulty re-establishing lifestyle following relocation

Aspect of lifestyle	Very difficult (%)	Difficult (%)	Neither easy nor difficult (%)	Easy (%)	Very easy (%)
Access to transport	11	16	32	31	9
Medical and dental services	9	17	35	29	10
Friends and activities for primary school aged children	14	24	30	24	6
Schooling for children	14	28	26	23	9
Connection to other Defence families in the area	17	23	34	19	7
Own educational requirements	19	27	30	16	8
Social/friendship networks in the area	25	30	20	18	7
Friends and activities for high school aged children	22	30	27	16	5
Before school/after school/vacation care for school aged children	29	26	22	17	6
Childcare for children not yet at school	24	31	22	17	6
Friends and activities for older than high school aged children	26	24	35	10	5
Own employment	28	30	19	13	10
Access to services to support family's recognised special needs	32	26	29	10	3

Families' experiences of Member With Dependants (Unaccompanied) arrangements

Impacts of MWD(U) arrangements on families' lifestyle

Impacts of MWD(U) arrangements on families' lifestyle

Aspect of lifestyle	Large negative impact (%)	Moderate negative impact (%)	No impact (%)	Moderate positive impact (%)	Large positive impact (%)
Child(ren)'s ability to attend the same school	9	5	32	16	38
Child(ren)'s ability to retain friends and activities	10	7	30	19	33
ADF member's employment opportunities	7	11	34	26	23
Continuity of childcare	10	5	50	15	19
Maintaining ownership of house	9	11	43	17	20
Ability to retain support networks	14	15	26	27	19
Ability to be closer to other relatives	19	12	30	21	19
Continuity of family health care	9	14	48	18	11
Maintaining a sense of independence	9	19	44	21	7
Ability to provide care or support to other relatives	23	17	31	15	13
Own education opportunities	16	17	55	6	7
Family's overall financial circumstance	16	31	27	17	9
Ability to manage household responsibilities, including finances	19	29	29	16	8
Ability to provide care to child(ren)	26	29	17	14	15
Managing own employment and employment opportunities	21	29	29	11	10
Ability to adjust to living together after the MWD(U) period	20	45	27	6	3
Child(ren)'s behaviour in the ADF member's absence	29	38	24	6	3
Relationship with the ADF member partner	24	56	15	4	1

Impact of the Defence lifestyle on civilian partner employment

Difficulty finding meaningful employment

States where civilian partners reported having difficulty finding employment

State	Percentage of respondents who reported having at least one difficulty (%)
ACT	51
NSW	54
NT	55
QLD	56
SA	58
TAS	N/A
VIC	57
WA	58
Outside Australia	N/A

Data for respondents living in Tasmania or outside Australia are not shown as there were fewer than 10 respondents in at least one of the two difficulty groups.

Impacts of relocations on civilian partner employment

Impacts of relocations on civilian partner employment

Aspect of employment	Large negative impact (%)	Moderate negative impact (%)	No impact (%)	Moderate positive impact (%)	Large positive impact (%)
Match between employment and skills/experience/qualifications	23	31	38	6	3
Number of hours worked	26	28	40	4	1
Availability of jobs of the type the respondent is seeking	35	30	26	6	3
Responsibility levels	30	34	29	5	2
Pay and earnings	38	36	18	6	2

Consideration of civilian partner employment in families' decision to use MWD(U) arrangements

Posting states where civilian partner employment was a factor in MWD(U) decision

Posting state	Percentage of civilian partners for whom employment was a consideration (%)
ACT	66
NSW	50
NT	59
QLD	55
SA	38
TAS	N/A
VIC	43
WA	53
Outside Australia	N/A

The states tabled above are those that respondents reported as being the state that their ADF member partner was posted to when classified as MWD(U).

The percentages in this table relate to the number of civilian partners citing their own employment as a factor in their family's decision to use MWD(U) arrangements, compared to the number of civilian partners who did not cite their own employment as a factor in this decision. It therefore excludes civilian partners who had not used MWD(U) arrangements in the past four years.

The ADF member's categorisation is self-reported by the civilian partner in this survey. It is possible that respondents indicating that the ADF member was MWD(U) may be referring to any period of separation for service reasons, rather than a long-term posting with the choice of using MWD(U) arrangements.

Employment status of civilian partners by categorisation of the ADF member

Employment status	Member With Dependants (%)	Member With Dependants (Unaccompanied) (%)	Member Without Dependants (%)
Employed by an organisation	65	70	81
Self-employed	5	9	8
Not employed and <u>seeking</u> work	13	8	5
Not employed and <u>not seeking</u> work	15	12	3
Retired	1	1	3

The ADF member's categorisation is self-reported by the civilian partner in this survey. Respondents indicating a categorisation of 'Member Without Dependants' are likely referring to 'dependants' in the general sense, as ADF members with civilian partners are not classified as a Member Without Dependants (the civilian partner is known as a 'dependant' in the context of categorisation).

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