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Defence People Group

2017 ADF Families Survey

June 2017



Findings from the 2017 ADF Families Survey:

- Partner's employment
- Childcare
- Wellbeing
- Awareness of support services
- Service intentions and influences

DIRECTORATE OF PEOPLE INTELLIGENCE & RESEARCH

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This report took 385 research hours to produce.

More information about *the ADF Families Survey* is available from the **Directorate of People Intelligence & Research** intranet site

<http://intranet.defence.gov.au/People/sites/StrategicPeopleResearch/>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) Families Survey was first conducted in late 2008, with a second administration conducted in 2012.

As of 2015, the Families Survey program was split into two separate and alternating surveys. The 2015 survey related to absences and relocations with a focus on Member with Dependants (Unaccompanied) arrangements, while the 2017 survey (the subject of this report) is focused on employment, wellbeing, childcare and awareness and use of support services.

Overall, 4649 civilian partners, members of a dual ADF couple, single parent ADF members, ADF members with dependants other than partners or children and parents of ADF members responded to the survey. The response rate was approximately 14 per cent.

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the ADF Families Survey and outline implications for policies, services and practices for ADF members and their families.

Key findings and insights from the survey are presented in the following tables.

Key findings		Key insights
Partner employment	The unemployment rate for civilian partners of ADF members is approximately 14% (compared to 17% in 2011). ⁽¹⁾	<p>ADF partners experience high levels unemployment & other career & employment sacrifices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Also, for ADF partners who are employed, overall satisfaction with their work arrangements is not very high due to the compromises they make in the amount & nature of work they perform. - One mitigation option would be the conduct of local industry, business, services & community ‘expos’ to assist partners to develop links to potential employers, while also fostering community engagement.
	This compares to a national female unemployment rate of 6%. ⁽²⁾	
	The underemployment rate for civilian partners of ADF members is approximately 12%.	
	This compares to a national female underemployment rate of almost 11%. ⁽²⁾	<p>Most partners appear to consider how to safeguard their employability against the challenges associated with ADF life, but consideration does not always lead to action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partners of ADF members are generally willing to consider alternative employment or career options that may maintain or improve their employability. However, only a minority of partners who had difficulties finding employment used an employment support service such as resume services or coaching. More active promotion of such services appears warranted.
	Only 11% of partners reported that their career had been unaffected due to ADF service demands or conditions.	
	Awareness of various employment services is not high. For those who do use them, satisfaction with them is not high.	
Childcare	Of families with dependent children, 6% could not access childcare (compared to 8% in 2012).	<p>Childcare accessibility problems are not pronounced overall, but are high in some regions & are a potential retention issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As expected, difficulties accessing childcare is linked to unemployment, & these dual problems are most pronounced in some rural & remote locations in WA & NSW, along with Sale, Albury-Wodonga, the Hunter Valley & Cairns & remote far north QLD. - For some families, childcare options mitigate the impact of being separated from their extended family & social networks. One option is for Defence to consider how families can be assisted to have extended family members or in home care providers reside with them, at least temporarily, through a form of reunion travel entitlement or more flexible housing eligibility criteria.
	The biggest barriers to accessing childcare are affordability and limited places.	
	Of ADF members who do use childcare, over one third said that their arrangements did not fully meet their needs. Affordability & centres not opening early enough are the main concerns. ⁽³⁾	

(1) Based on 2015 Defence Census data. An unemployment rate of 20% for civilian partners of ADF members was calculated from the 2017 ADF Families Survey, which over-represents unemployed partners. The unemployment rate is calculated using the Australian Bureau of Statistics definition (number of unemployed but seeking work divided by the total labour force (employed and unemployed but seeking work)).

(2) Australian Bureau of Statistics official labour force figures with effect Mar 17. Figures for females are used given that that most partners of ADF members are female.

(3) Based on 2015 Defence Census data.

Key findings		Key insights
Wellbeing & social support	ADF members who are single parents or who have dependants other than partners or children have the lowest sense of belonging to & pride in Defence, even when compared to civilian partners.	<p>Engagement with Defence & financial security are key concerns for ADF members who are single parents & those with dependants other than partners & children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Like other families, single parent members & those with dependants other than partners & children are expressing a desire for Defence to consider less rigid & exclusive ways of categorising members, their families & their needs. - A common thread through the respondents' comments is a view that pay categorisations & housing & relocations policies do not entirely reflect the modern reality of families. There is a clear desire for more flexible options around entitlements in acknowledgement of the diverse nature of family structures & circumstances.
	Around one half of families believe that the demands of ADF service have a negative impact on their families. This is particularly pronounced in geographically separated families (where the ADF member is on an unaccompanied posting).	
	Only 14% of families are dissatisfied with their links to the general community. One quarter are dissatisfied with their links to the Defence community.	
Service intentions & influences	Key factors that influence the service intentions of families are a high impact of ADF service demands on families (particularly a belief that families are not considered in postings) and an inability to access childcare.	<p>ADF families appear to be largely accepting of the impact of service life on them, but do expect mutual consideration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In particular, ADF Career Management Agencies should note that a perception that families are not considered in posting decisions did emerge as a retention factor. It was clear from the survey findings that partners expect acknowledgement that, in their families, their career is as important as that of the ADF members'. - A desire to leave is likely influenced by a critical mass of impacts: the combined effects of career or employment sacrifice, long & frequent periods of absence, lack of choice over where they can live & childcare accessibility problems.
	For around 10% of civilian-ADF couples, the civilian partner wishes to leave, whereas the ADF partner wants to stay. These couples are somewhat 'at risk' due to their comparatively higher levels of relationship strain and lower perceived social and family support.	
Awareness and use of services & communications	One third of respondents are unaware of the 1800 Defence telephone number. Of those who did use it, 82% found it useful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Levels of awareness & use of a broad range of Defence & Defence affiliated services & organisations are highly varied. For some services & organisations, this reflects the level of actual or perceived need & how specialised they are in nature. - For those respondents who had used DCO & other Defence services, for most services, perceptions are predominantly positive.
	Almost one half of respondents are unaware of the National Welfare Coordination Centre. Of those who did use it, two thirds found it useful.	

Below is a limited selection of comment themes from respondents on aspects of Defence’s support for families they would like to see improved. A summary of all comments from respondents is at the end of this report under Supplementary Results.

Feedback from respondents	
For Commanders	During deployments, ensure that families are contacted by unit representatives or well-trained family liaison officers / unit welfare officers.
	Invite partners to unit pre-deployment briefings.
	Enabling ADF members access to flexible work arrangements so that the work-family balancing act is not just the concern of the non-ADF partner.
	Remind ADF members of their responsibility to share information with their families (e.g. unit points of contact and sources of deployment support).
For DGNP DGPERS-A DGPERS-AF	More advanced notice with postings.
	Provide members with more time and opportunity to negotiate posting options.
	Increase access to financial education (e.g. provision of financial education to members throughout their career and subsidised access to financial planners who understand ADF remuneration and superannuation).
For PPEC	Wide distribution of a complete list / explanation of all allowances and benefits available to families in one document or reference guide.
	A review of Defence’s current definitions of dependants, including the definitions based on the age of children and the number of nights they need to reside with non-custodial parents.
	Housing entitlement criteria be reviewed and expanded so that the location of a partner's workplace and the family's preferred school can be reasons to reject a service residence and be eligible for rental assistance.
For DHA	Improve housing case management around relocations.
	Increase availability of service residences near ADF establishments to reduce work commute times for ADF members.
For Toll Transitions	Improve service from removal contractors (communication, reliability and quality of service).
	Improve case management by Toll (including processes for claiming losses or damage and more personalised / compassionate customer service).

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Target population

Respondents were asked to indicate their family circumstances to enable analysis of the impacts that ADF life has on different types of families. The respondents' family types were grouped as:

- **Civilian-ADF couples.** A family type comprising a Defence recognised interdependent partner or spouse of a permanent ADF member who is not an ADF member themselves. This family type may or may not also include dependent children and other dependants. The survey respondent in this family type is a civilian Defence recognised partner. In the interests of brevity, spouses and partners are referred to only as partners throughout this report.
- **Dual ADF couples.** A family type comprising a Defence recognised interdependent partnership or marriage between two permanent ADF members. This family type may or may not also include dependent children and other dependants. The survey respondent in this family type is a military Defence recognised partner or spouse.
- **ADF single parents.** A family type comprising a permanent ADF member who is a single parent and not in a Defence recognised relationship but had full or share custody of dependent children. This family type may or may not also include other dependants. The survey respondent in this family type is an ADF member.
- **ADF members with other dependants.** A family type comprising a permanent ADF member who is not in a Defence-recognised relationship but has Defence-recognised other dependants other than children. The survey respondent in this family type is an ADF member.
- **Parents or guardians of a permanent ADF member.** A family type comprising an ADF member and their parent or legal guardian. The survey respondent is the parent or guardian of the ADF member.

Further information about response rates and respondent demographics is presented at the end of this report under Supplementary Analysis Information.

Report structure

As shown below, the results of the survey are presented across six main sections, each of which is applicable to specific groups of respondents.

Section	Applicable to the following respondents:
Partner employment	Civilian partners of ADF members
Childcare	All respondents with Defence recognised dependent children (other than parents or guardians of ADF members)
Wellbeing	All respondents other than parents or guardians of ADF members
Service intentions and influences	All respondents other than parents or guardians of ADF members
Support services and communications: Awareness and use	All respondents
Overseas lateral recruits or transfers	All respondents other than parents or guardians of ADF members who indicated that they or their partner was an overseas lateral recruit or transfer

In the partner employment and childcare sections, some additional information from the 2015 Defence Census¹ is also reported.

Summaries of comments from respondents (e.g. relating to employment, childcare and internet accessibility issues) are provided in the relevant sections of this report. Summaries of all other comments from respondents are provided at the end of the report under Supplementary Results.

¹The 2015 Defence Census reports can be found at: <http://drnet.defence.gov.au/People/WP/People-Intelligence-and-Research/Research-Programs/Lists/Census%20Reports%20and%20Fact%20Sheets/AllItems.aspx>

PARTNER EMPLOYMENT

Key findings

Based on the 2015 Defence Census, the unemployment rate for ADF partners is 14 per cent (down from 17 per cent in 2011), compared to six per cent for the general population.

Based on Families Survey data, the underemployment rate is 12 per cent, compared to 11 per cent for the general population. Underemployed persons are defined as those who are working part time or casual but would like to work more hours.

For those partners who are employed, almost one quarter experienced some difficulty securing their employment.

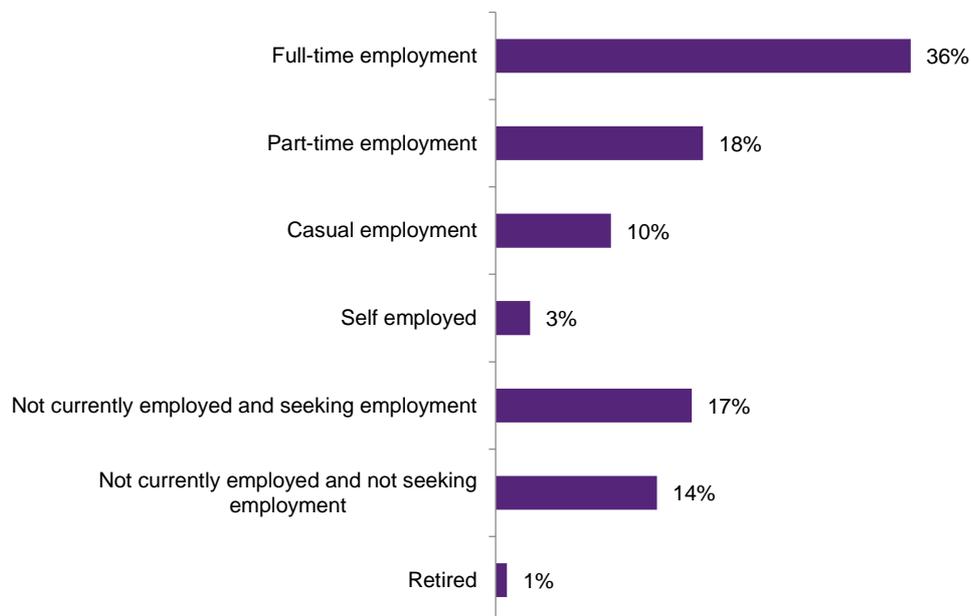
Encouragingly, most partners consider ways of accommodating their employment and careers with the demands of their partner's ADF service. However, dissatisfaction with current work arrangements and perceptions of career and employment sacrifice are common.

The findings in this section relate to civilian partners of ADF members only.

Overall employment profile

As shown in the following chart, around two thirds of partners are in some form of employment.

Overall employment profile of partners

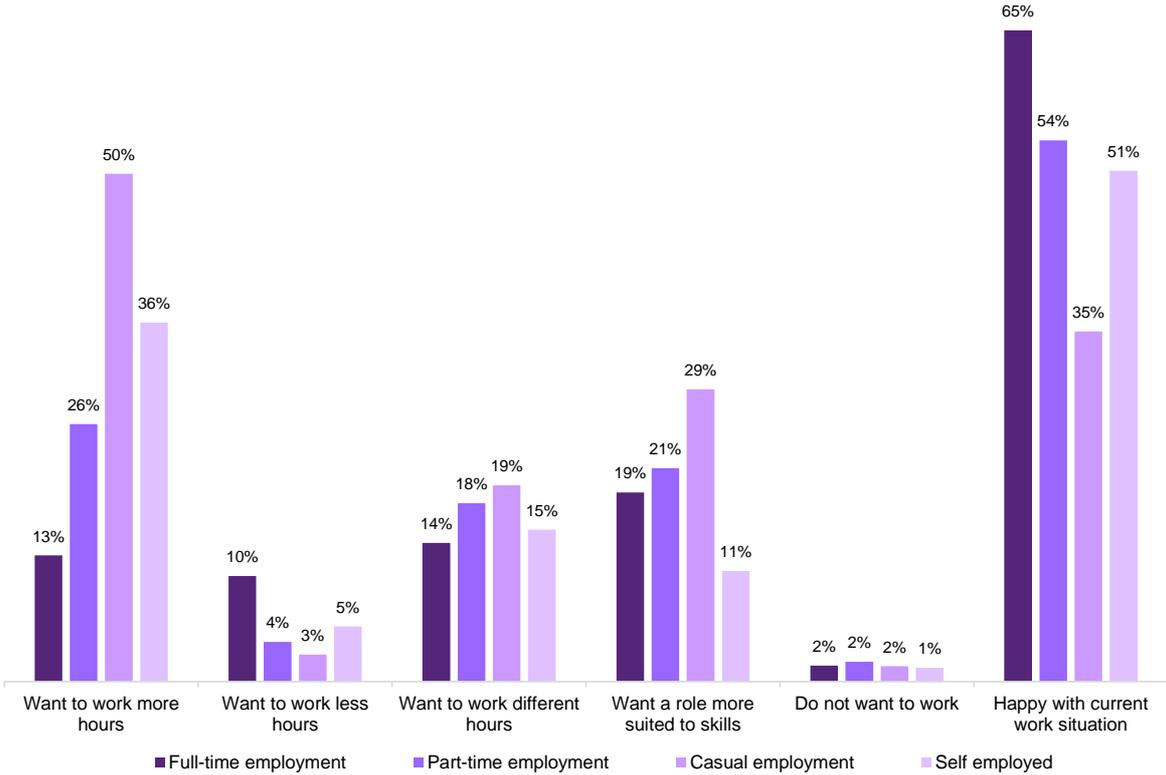


*The 17 per cent of partners not employed but seeking work does not represent the overall partner unemployment rate. Unemployment rates are discussed in a latter part of this section and is based on the total labour force, which excludes those not seeking employment or who are retired.

For those working on a part time or casual basis or who are self-employed, 44 per cent usually work between 23 and 34 hours a week, while 40 per cent work between 11 and 22 hours a week. A minority (16%) work up to 10 hours a week.

In terms of preferred work arrangements, the chart below shows that, as expected, partners who work on a casual basis are least likely to be satisfied with their current work arrangements, are most likely to want a role more suited to their skills and are most likely to want to work more hours.

Work preferences of employed partners



While around one half of self-employed partners are happy with their work situation, a third of them want to work more hours. This suggests that while self-employment is one means for ADF partners to overcome some of the employment challenges associated with ADF life, establishing and maintaining a business poses unique challenges.

Comments from self-employed partners

Comments from self-employed partners indicate that they have similar challenges as other partners in relation to employment, but with some added challenges.

Self-employed partners noted that, when they move, they lose their business connections, their clients and the good will they have developed over time when they move for their Defence partner's career. The financial outlay to re-establish the business, as well as the loss of income to the business can be considerable.

However, some self-employed partners noted that maintaining strong client, social and other professional relationships helped ease the difficulties associated with relocating their business. Others noted the importance of thinking about how easily transportable their business would be in the early planning and establishment process.

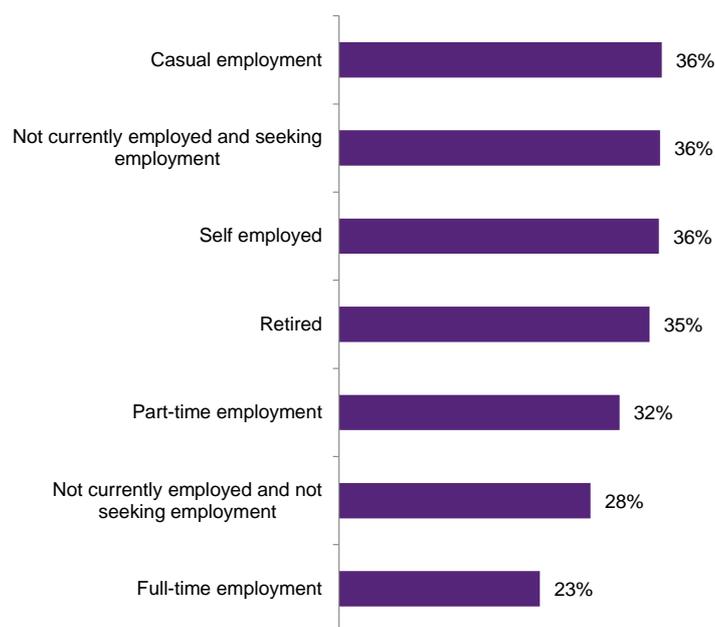
As an instrumental music teacher the challenges of re-establishing a studio and student base are significant. A three year posting cycle will allow time only to begin generating sufficient student experience to enter exam candidates and maintain professional standing.

Of all employed partners, six per cent reported that they wanted to work fewer hours or not at all but had to work for financial reasons.

This is not an indicator of the extent of financial hardship in ADF families. However, it does reflect that not all employment challenges for ADF partners relate primarily to finding and maintaining preferred work arrangements. For some (albeit a minority of) partners, being employed is a financial imperative.

Overall, 29 per cent of partners reported that they had done some voluntary work through an organisation or group. The proportions of partners who perform volunteer work, regardless of their employment status, reflects positively on partners' interests in this as a means of community engagement. As shown in the following chart, those in casual employment, self-employed, looking for work or retired are most likely to be doing volunteer work.

Per cent of partners who perform volunteer work



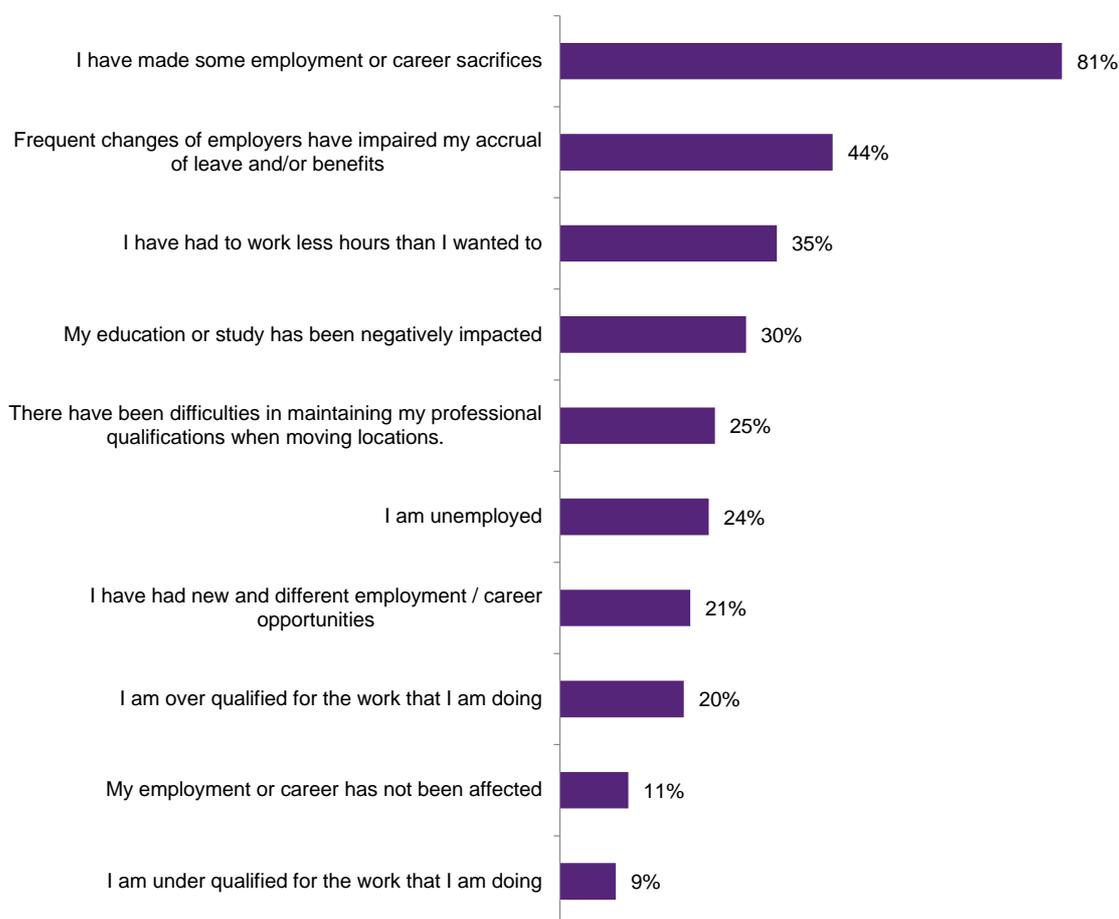
Employment sacrifices due to being in an ADF family

The following chart displays partner's responses when asked about their employment or career sacrifices due to their partner's ADF service. Overall, 81 per cent of partners indicated that they had experienced some form of career or employment sacrifice, while only 11 per cent said that their career or employment had been unaffected.

The most common specific types of sacrifices reported are difficulties accruing leave and benefits and not being able to work as many hours as preferred.

Around one third of partners believe that being part of an ADF family has limited the number of hours they could work, while one quarter believe it has led to their unemployment or some other form of interruption to their employment or career.

Impact of ADF life on partner's own employment or career



Self-employed partners are just as likely as other employed partners to report that they had experienced some form of career or employment sacrifice as a result of their partner's ADF career.

Comments from partners about their employment sacrifices

In their comments about employment sacrifices, partners noted the impact of relocations is compounded by moving to locations with high unemployment rates and opportunities in only a limited range of industries and occupations.

Some partners noted a cumulative impact of frequent relocations. Some had lost confidence in their skills due to repeatedly starting again, knockbacks when looking for work, missing development and progression opportunities, losing seniority and not being able to develop a professional reputation for their work.

Some partners highlighted that there was not enough room for two careers in their families because of their ADF partner's frequent absences or their long and unpredictable work hours.

[I'm] always cancelling shifts and annoying employers because they want me to do more with my quals but I never know what I can offer them as hubby's hours change, or he's asked to go away for weeks at a time.

Hours of work, childcare hours and having ADF member away frequently and unable to help with childcare.

I actually could not gain employment in our new location...so I moved to Canberra. I am sick of putting MY life and career on hold for Defence who don't care about me or my family.

Underqualified...as a result of constant moves. Employers are unwilling to invest in an employee who is going leave before they benefit from the qualifications. The result is that now I am underqualified for someone at my level within professional services.

After five years of no work and only holding a professional qualification as a Veterinarian that has been out of practice for five years (due to husbands job combined with new family, I had to find a new career.

Finding work

A profile of employed partners who had relocated recently and had difficulty finding work was assessed, based on those who reported that they:

- Found it difficult to find work in their current location, and/or
- Found work in their current location in a field different to their own due to a shortage of jobs for which they are qualified, and/or
- Took more than four months to find a job in their current location.

Overall, 22 per cent of employed partners had difficulty securing employment in their current location based on these criteria. As shown in the following table, difficulties finding work are most common in regional and remote areas, although difficulties are also common in urban areas such as Adelaide (27%) and Melbourne (26%).

% of employed partners who experienced some form of difficulty gaining employment in their location	
Albury & Wodonga	50%
QLD - Other	44%
WA - Other	44%
Seymour and Puckapunyal	39%
Sale	36%

A table showing the proportion of employed partners who experienced difficulty finding work by all locations is presented at the end of this report under Other Supplementary Results (Table 1).

Difficulties finding work were common in all occupational and in most industry areas. Occupational groups where difficulties finding work are most common are labourer (41%), technician and trades worker (33%) and sales (32%). For industries, difficulties are most common in financial and insurance services (38%), arts and recreation (35%), accommodation and food services (33%) and transport, postal and warehousing (33%).

Those in professional, managerial and clerical occupations and those in real estate, mining and manufacturing industries have the least difficulty finding work.

A table showing the proportion of employed partners who experienced difficulties finding work by occupations and industries is presented at the end of this report under Other Supplementary Results (Table 2).

Relocating and changing jobs: Findings from the 2015 Defence Census

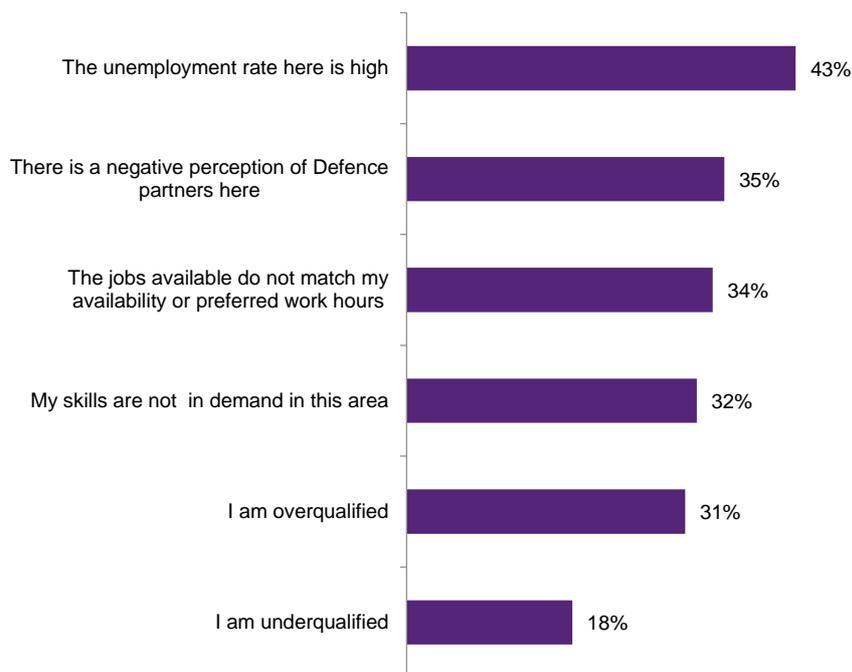
According to the 2015 Defence Census, 52 per cent of civilian partners of Permanent ADF members had changed jobs between one and five times due to service related relocations. A further 11 per cent had changed jobs six or more times.

Also, 55 per cent of civilian partners of Permanent ADF members were out of work for one to six months following their last relocation. Only nine per cent were not out of work for any time following relocation.

Of those partners who changed jobs due to service related relocations, 56 per cent earned a lower income than their previous job, while 14 per cent earned a higher income.

As shown in the following chart, difficulties finding work are mostly attributed to a high unemployment rate in that location. Negative perceptions of Defence partners and not being able to find work with suitable hours are also seen as common barriers to finding preferred employment. Almost one third of those who had difficulties finding work said they are overqualified for the work they are doing.

Reasons why employed partners had difficulty finding work



Comments from partners about barriers to finding work on relocation

In their comments, partners said that barriers to finding suitable work on relocation are:

- Inadequate childcare services
- Inability to or difficulty transferring professional registrations or credentials to another state
- Long commute times between home and places of work
- High unemployment rates and competition for advertised positions
- Lack of opportunities in preferred industries and occupations
- Negative perceptions among employers of ADF partners' ability to commit long term to a job
- Age discrimination
- Difficulties transferring their existing job to another location
- Inadequate pay for the available jobs
- Long absences from the workforce (e.g. while raising children)
- Difficulties negotiating flexible or preferred hours.

[There's] a noticeable change of attitude (negative) once a potential employer knows/works out that I am a Defence spouse.

While difficulties finding work are common, 65 per cent of employed partners did find work in a similar field or skill set to their previous employment, while around one in five (17%) said they eventually found work in a different field as there were no jobs related to their skills in that location. Five per cent of employed partners who had recently relocated said they found work in a different field as they were seeking a career change. This suggests that around one in five partners appear to find themselves in a situation of forced compromise in relation to employment.

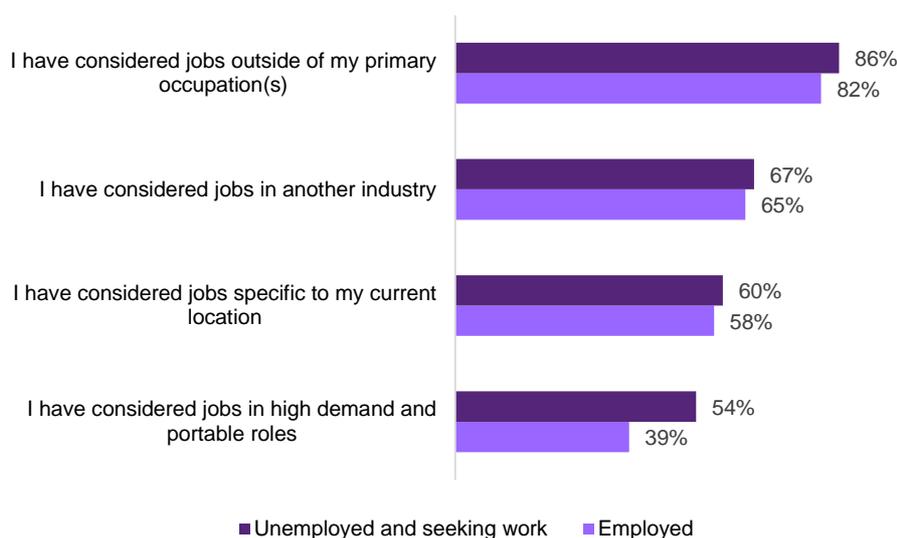
Consideration of career and employment alternatives

All civilian partners of ADF members were asked whether they had considered a range of alternatives that may improve their career or employment prospects. Overall, their responses indicate a willingness to adapt their employment or career around their partner's ADF service or in relation to life stage factors.

As shown in the following chart, employed partners are almost as likely to consider employment or career alternatives as unemployed partners. It is possible that one of the reasons why the employed partners are employed is that they have made some adjustments to improve their career or employment prospects.

Most partners who are unemployed and seeking employment have considered jobs outside of their primary occupation. It is also very common for them to consider working in other industries, in jobs specific to their location or in high demand and portable roles.

Consideration of employment and career alternatives



Taken together, all results relating to finding work indicate that while the majority of partners find work within their field on relocation, dissatisfaction with current work arrangements is relatively common.

Encouragingly, partners are usually willing to consider employment in other occupations and industries. However, around one in five partners appear to find themselves in a situation of forced compromise in relation to employment. This suggests that there is scope for partners to adopt more deliberate plans to improve their employment options.

Unemployment

Based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' definition of the labour force, 20 per cent of the civilian partner respondents to the ADF Families Survey are unemployed. However, 2015 Defence Census data indicates that of all civilian partners of Permanent ADF members, approximately 14 per cent are unemployed (down from 17 per cent in the 2011 Defence Census). This suggests that the ADF Families Survey data is over-representative of unemployed partners.

In contrast, based on Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force statistics, the national female unemployment rate as of March 2017 is 6 per cent.²

Based on ADF Families Survey data, the table below displays the locations which had the highest unemployment rates for partners. These are predominantly regional or remote locations.

ADF partner unemployment rate by location	
Sale	39%
WA - Other	38%
QLD - Other	37%
Albury & Wodonga	36%
Ipswich	26%
VIC - Other	26%
Seymour and Puckapunyal	25%
NSW - Other	24%
Hunter Valley	23%
Nowra	22%
Cairns & Remote Far North QLD	22%

A table showing partner unemployment rates by all locations (based on ADF Families Survey data) is presented at the end of this report under Other Supplementary Results (Table 3).

Partners of members who are categorised as a Member with Dependents (Unaccompanied) are less likely than other partners to be unemployed (11% compared to 22%). This is likely to reflect the benefit of unaccompanied postings to partners being able to maintain locational stability and in turn, employment stability.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics Release 6202.0: Labour Force, Australia, March key figures, March 2017. The unemployment rate is calculated based on the number of those who are unemployed but seeking work divided by the total number of people in the labour force (employed and unemployed but seeking work). Comparing the ADF Families Survey unemployment rate with the national unemployment rate for females is appropriate given that 95% of the partners who responded to the survey are female.

Barriers to employment: Findings from the 2015 Defence Census

In the 2015 Defence Census, Permanent ADF members noted the following reasons why their civilian partner was unemployed:

- Service related absences make it difficult for their partner to work (17%)
- No suitable jobs available (16%)
- No jobs available at all (13%)
- Childcare difficulties (11%).

Less than 10 per cent of members noted that a lack of qualifications, limited tenure in their current location and transport difficulties were other reasons for their partners' unemployment.

Underemployment

Underemployed persons are defined as those who are working part time or casual but would like to work more hours.

Based on this definition, 12 per cent of employed partners are underemployed. This compares to a national female underemployment rate of 11 per cent.³

The highest underemployment rates are somewhat more common in regional areas, but are also high in many urban and semi urban areas including Perth, Rockingham, Ipswich and Frankston/Mornington Peninsula.

A table showing partner underemployment rates by all locations is presented at the end of this report under Other Supplementary Results (Table 4).

In terms of occupation and industry trends, underemployment rates largely reflect those areas associated with a 'casualised' labour force. Of note, however, 17 per cent of those in professional occupations are underemployed.

Underemployment rate by occupational group		Underemployment rate by industry group	
Labourer	40%	Accommodation and Food Services	41%
Community and personal service worker	40%	Retail Trade	33%
Sales worker	40%	Health Care and Social Assistance	28%
Technician and trades worker	22%	Education and Training	28%
Professional	17%	Services	27%
Clerical and administrative worker	15%	Arts and Recreation	25%
Manager	9%	Construction	24%

* Figure for Machinery operator and driver occupation not reported due to low count

A table showing partner underemployment rates for all industry groups is presented at the end of this report under Other Supplementary Results (Table 5).

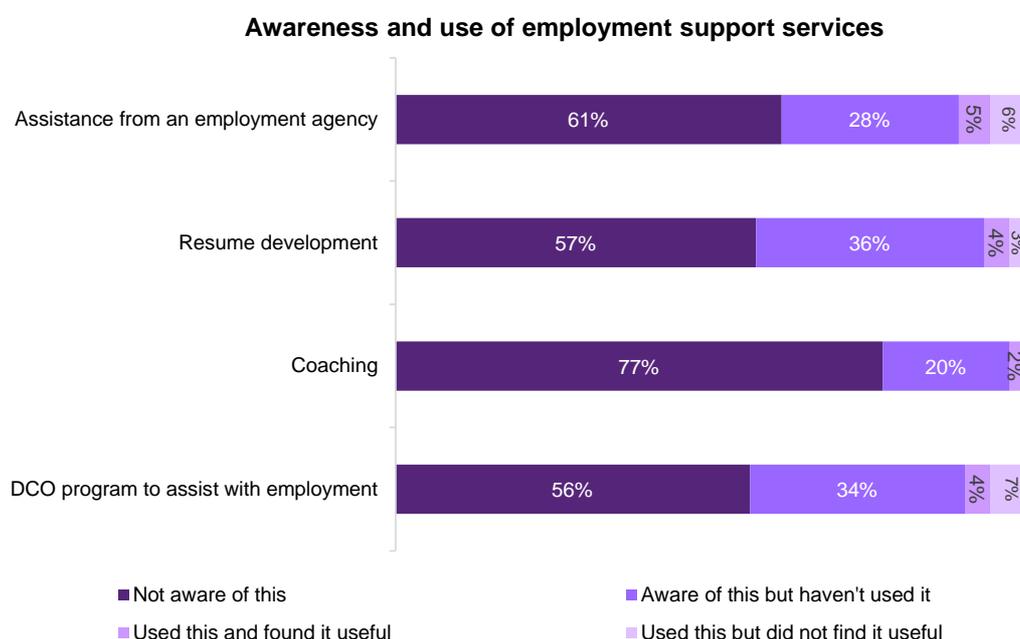
³ Australian Bureau of Statistics Release 6202.0: Labour Force, Australia, March key figures, May 2017. Comparing the ADF Families Survey underemployment rate with the national underemployment rate for females is appropriate given that 95% of the partners who responded to the survey are female.

In terms of age trends, underemployment rates are highest for those aged under 24 years (21%) and those aged over 55 years (17%). Partners of members on unaccompanied postings are as likely to be underemployed as other partners.

For those partners who are underemployed, 40 per cent expressed a preference to work full time (35 hours or more a week). A further 40 per cent would like to work between 23 and 34 hours a week.

Perceptions of employment support services

Employed partners were asked about their awareness and use of a range of employment support services. As shown below, awareness of various services, particularly coaching, is not high. A minority (five per cent or less) had used these services and found them useful. Among those partners who had experienced some form of difficulty finding employment in their location, only six per cent or less had used these services and found them useful.



Of those respondents who had used these services, the following proportions found them useful:

- Assistance from an employment agency: 44 per cent
- Resume development: 53 per cent
- Coaching: 59 per cent
- DCO program to assist with employment: 38 per cent.

Comments from partners on strategies for finding employment

In their comments, partners described a range of strategies or options for finding and maintaining employment and careers, including:

- Arranging a geographical transfer or remote work agreement with their existing employer
- Starting a business or expanding self-employment arrangements
- Commuting from the posted location to a previous work location
- Accepting underemployment and loss of income, despite the cost to their longer term career aspirations
- Seeking out employment with organisations with branches in multiple locations
- Changing careers. However, for some partners, this involved abandoning years of education, undertaking re-training and starting at the bottom of the career ladder again
- Opting for an unaccompanied posting to minimise disruption to their employment and career continuity
- Joining the ADF Reserves
- Maintaining social and professional networks in various locations
- Networking with others in the Defence community (including through Defence and Defence affiliated Facebook pages)
- Accessing the Partner Education and Employment Program
- Registering with temporary employment agencies.

Some partners said that they do not disclose that they are an ADF partner when going through selection processes for jobs.

Permanent work is difficult to find in teaching and this ... led me to looking for work outside teaching and a career change.

I love my new job and am very happy I had the opportunity to change jobs in a new city.

I've moved to Brisbane, away from my partner, in order to gain career progression in my profession. The challenge was choosing between my career and my relationship!

People in my industry work in the field for a number of years; Loyalty is rewarded. My resume shows that I have not stayed in a job for more than a year and a half... I have lied to an employer that I intend to stay around for a long time just to be considered for work.

However, many other partners said they lacked awareness of employment support services in their area. Many partners expressed a need for more tailored services to assist them in finding employment on relocation (e.g. recruitment services dedicated to ADF partners with links to local businesses).

Several other comments about the Partner Education and Employment Program reflected concern that those with tertiary educations should also be eligible. In these comments, it was pointed out that the employment market for professionals was highly competitive, particularly for recent graduates with limited work experience.

Went to DCO education/ employment night in Canberra recently. Fantastic! An array of speakers who all spoke passionately and succinctly about what was available and I was very surprised at how much help, information, services and support is available to us. Maybe this information needs to get out more and/ or people need to look into what is available.

My degree is now 20 years old and many things have changed in my industry. I need to do some short courses to update my skills in order to gain employment, but cannot apply as I have a tertiary qualification.

An expansion of the current PEEP program to include education or training for partners who may already have a qualification. I have a BA but that doesn't mean I don't need to re-train or upskill to try and gain employment in new posting localities.

CHILDCARE

Key findings

A minority (6%) of those with dependent children could not access the childcare they need. This is down from eight per cent in 2012.

Unmet demand is greatest in remote and regional WA, Cairns and remote far north QLD and Sale. Demand for childcare services to be on or near an ADF establishment is highest in Sale and Albury Wodonga.

The biggest barriers to accessing childcare are affordability and limited places. Flexible hours (such as during weekends or evenings) is more of an issue for single parents. Many ADF members also expressed a need for earlier opening hours of childcare centres.

Overall profile of childcare use

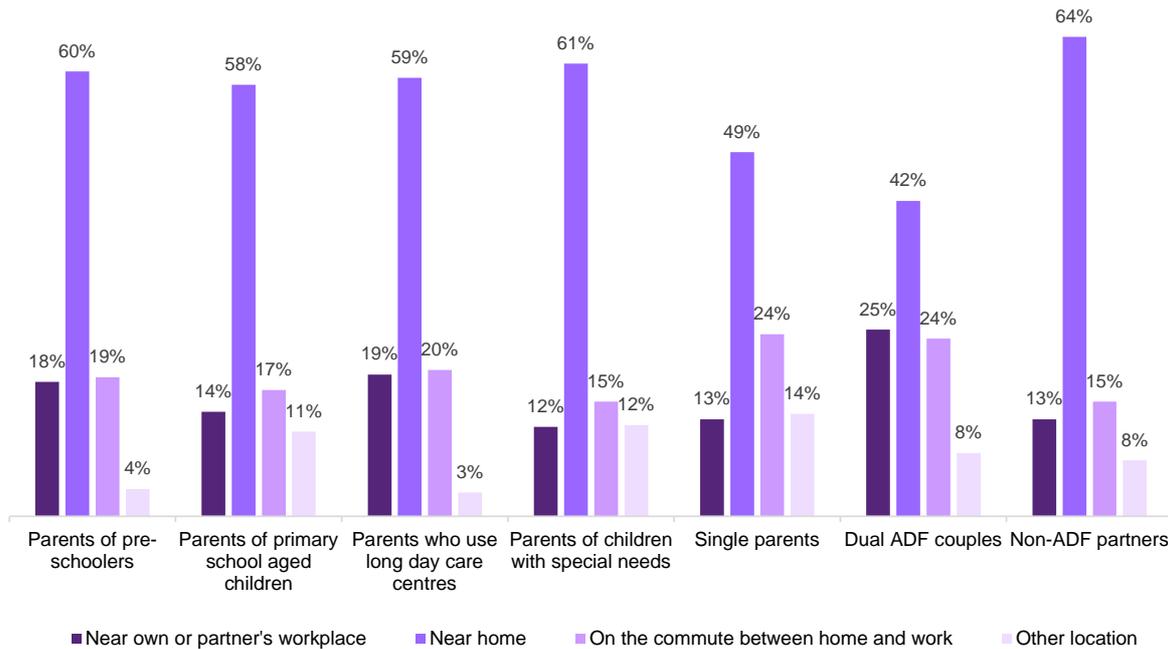
Of the respondents who have Defence recognised dependent children, 54 per cent had used some form of childcare in the past year. Of those who use childcare, 63 per cent use long day care, 36 per cent use friends or relatives, nine per cent use family day care, nine per cent use an au pair or nanny and nine per cent use a Defence sponsored long day care centre.

An overall profile of childcare use for single parents, parents of children with special needs and all other parents is presented at the end of this report under Other Supplementary Results (Chart 1).

Preferred childcare location

As illustrated in the following chart, respondents had a clear preference for childcare to be located near their home; a consistent trend across different types of respondents. One notable difference is that ADF members (single parents and dual ADF couples) have more varied preferences.

Preferred childcare location



There are no pronounced differences in preference for childcare location between those who could and could not access childcare.

Based on the comments from some respondents, other preferences for the location of childcare services include at schools, in-home care and on on ADF establishments (on-base centres).

Despite a relatively strong preference that childcare be located near home, demand for childcare to be located near an ADF establishment was relatively strong in some locations. As shown below, demand for childcare to be located near ADF establishments is highest for Sale, Albury and Wodonga and Melbourne, along with other regional locations in WA, VIC, Far North QLD and the NT.

Sale	42%
Albury & Wodonga	40%
WA - Other	39%
Melbourne	36%
VIC - Other	29%
Cairns & Remote Far North QLD	28%
NT - Other & Alice Springs	27%
ACT - Other	24%
Darwin	24%
Seymour and Puckapunyal	22%
Perth	22%
NSW - Other	22%
Rockingham	22%

A table showing the proportions of ADF respondents and partners who want childcare located near an ADF establishment for all locations is presented at the end of this report under Other Supplementary Results (Table 6).

Unmet demand for childcare

Of the respondents who have Defence recognised dependent children, six per cent said they required childcare but could not access it. Also, six per cent of single parents and 10 per cent of parents of children with special needs could not access the childcare they needed. Levels of unmet demand for childcare for parents with pre-school and primary school aged children are similar.

As shown in the following table, childcare access difficulties are most common in rural and remote WA, QLD, SA and NSW, as well as Sale, Albury, Wodonga and Queanbeyan.

Required childcare but could not access it	
WA - Other	21%
Cairns & Remote Far North QLD	16%
Sale	15%
Albury & Wodonga	14%
SA - Other	12%
NSW - Other	11%
Hunter Valley	10%
Queanbeyan	10%

A table showing the proportions of respondents with dependent children who required childcare but could not access it for all locations is presented at the end of this report under Other Supplementary Results (Table 7).

Childcare access and unemployment

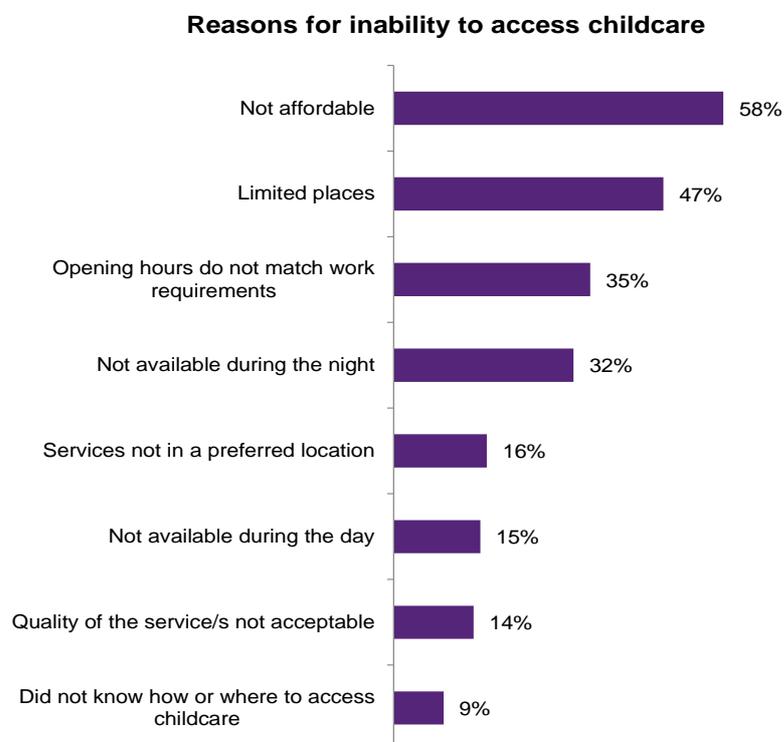
Other findings identified an association between childcare access difficulties and partner unemployment. ADF partners who are unemployed are most likely to report that they cannot access the childcare they need when compared to partners in some form of employment.

However, the overall proportion of partners affected by the dual problems of unemployment and an inability to access childcare is small (three per cent of all partners with ADF recognised dependent children).

Partners of members on unaccompanied postings are not less likely to have childcare access problems than other families with dependent children. However, childcare availability is less of an issue for partners in these geographically separated families as they are less likely than other partners to require childcare. Compared to other partners, partners of members on unaccompanied postings tend to be older and are less likely to have dependent children.

Barriers to accessing childcare

Of those who could not access the childcare they needed, affordability and limited places are the most common reasons for their access difficulties. Opening hours that do not match work requirements or night time work are also common reasons.



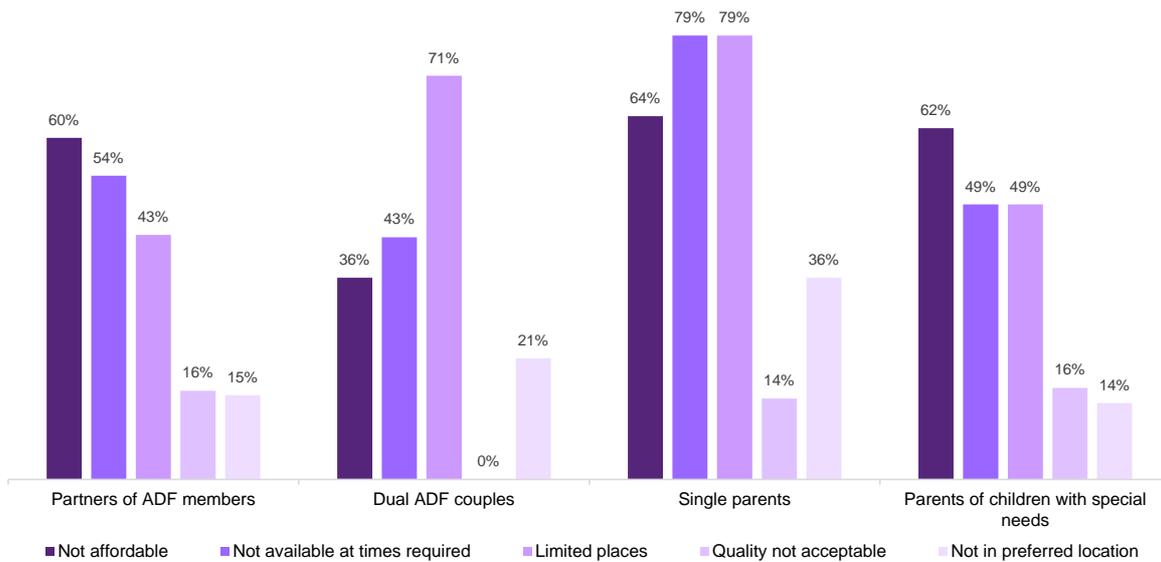
Other types of access barriers noted by respondents in their comments include lack of availability of occasional, casual, short notice, vacation and extended hours care. Some respondents noted a lack of care options for older children during school holidays and weekends.

While affordability and availability of places are the most common access barriers overall, the types of barriers do vary between different types of families, as shown in the following chart.

For partners of ADF members, affordability is a more common access issue than the availability of places. In contrast, the availability of places is a more common issue than affordability for dual ADF couples and single parent ADF members.

However, the availability of more flexible services at the times needed (day, night, weekends or around their specific work requirements) is a common access barrier, particularly for single parent ADF members.

Reasons for inability to access childcare by respondent type



For locations associated with the most pronounced childcare access issues (rural and remote WA, QLD, SA and NSW, as well as Sale, Albury, Wodonga and Queanbeyan), the most common barriers to accessing childcare are affordability (56%) followed by limited places (42%) and opening hours not matching work requirements (38%).

When families do access childcare, is it meeting their needs?

In the 2015 Defence Census, of the Permanent ADF members who used childcare, 57 per cent said that it fully met their needs, while 39 per cent said that it did not entirely meet their needs. Of those who used childcare, but found that it did not entirely meet their needs:

- 50 per cent said that affordability was an issue, while 19 per cent said that salary packaging was not available for childcare fees
- 34 per cent said that the services did not open early enough, while 24 per cent said they did not open late enough
- 14 per cent said that childcare services were not available for when they were working shifts or weekends
- 10 per cent said that childcare services were not available near their home or workplace.

Use of the Childcare Individual Case Management Service

- Of those who used or needed childcare, two per cent had accessed the Childcare Individual Case Management Service in the last 12 months, while a further 71 per cent were not aware of it. Of those who had used it, 51 per cent said that it was useful.

Comments about childcare support from Defence

In their comments about childcare support from Defence, interest in an increase in or introduction of Defence priority childcare places was common.

Other respondents want enhanced programs or strategies to improve childcare accessibility and affordability, including more childcare services located on or near bases. For example:

- Specific strategies or programs to meet childcare needs of single parent members also raised, but this was for more tailored care (e.g. outside of normal work hours, casual care, in home care)
- A fee reduction program to minimise the financial burden for childcare services (e.g. for partners who need childcare to study to improve their employability, or where childcare is particularly expensive).

Several parents I have spoken to in the last 12 months have either considered discharge or have discharged because of the removal of childcare centres from bases. In particular it doesn't encourage women to remain in the Defence Force.

I engaged with DCO about 2 years ago in order to brainstorm and see what my options were in relation to long-term care for my boy whilst achieving the work-related requirements. This exercise was very beneficial and helped me to have a realistic approach towards posting options and when to seek command selection.

WELLBEING

Key findings

ADF members who are single parents or who have dependants other than partners or children have the lowest sense of belonging to and pride in Defence, even when compared to civilian partners.

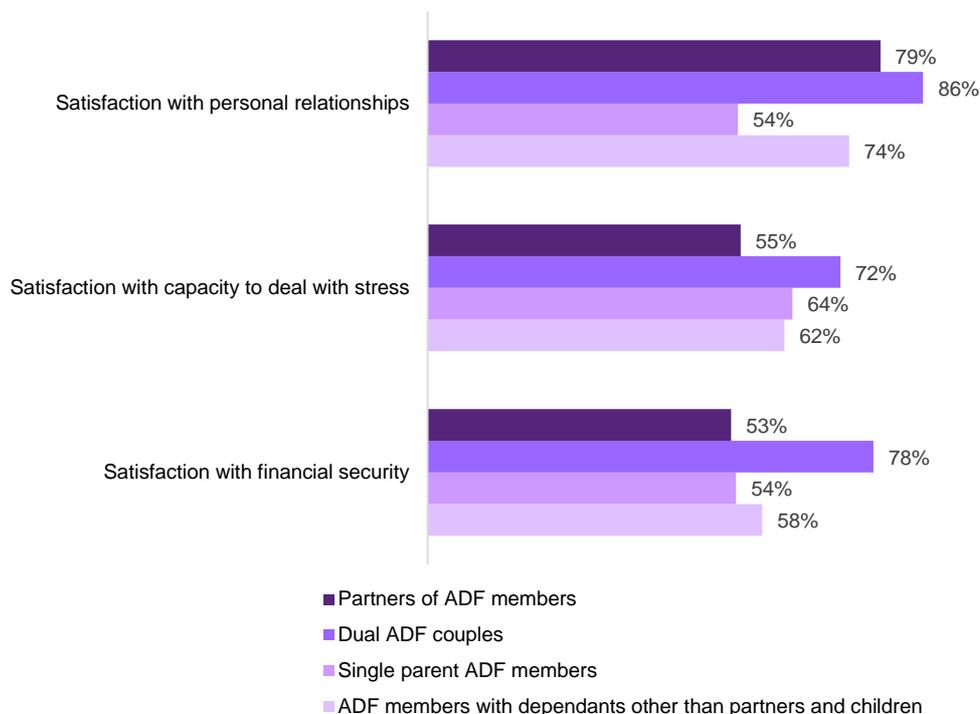
Only a minority of members and their partners are dissatisfied with their links to the general community. For many, feeling a part of the Defence community does not appear to be a strong concern.

Around one half of families believe that the demands of ADF service have a negative impact on their families. This is particularly pronounced in geographically separated families (where the ADF member is on an unaccompanied posting).

Wellbeing and social support indicators

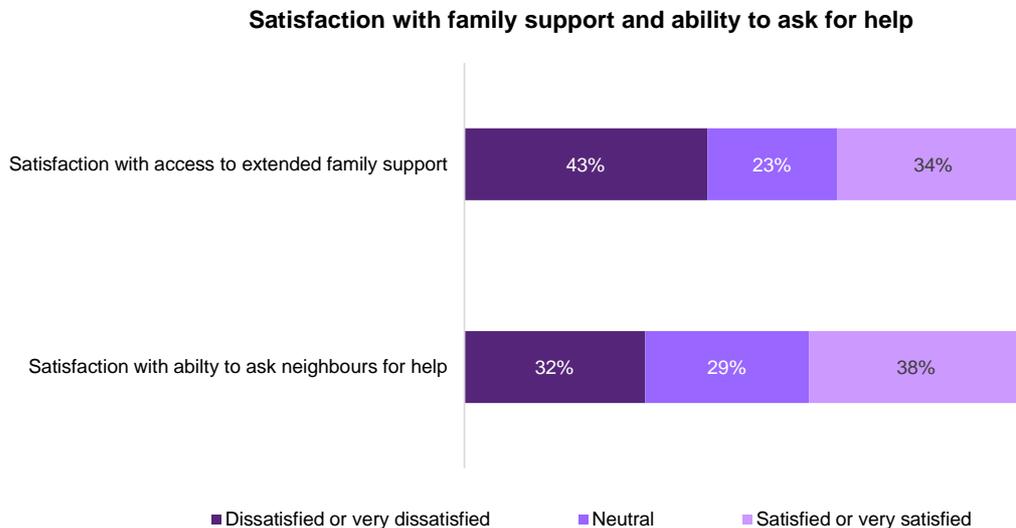
As shown in the following chart, when compared to other family types, dual ADF couples have the highest levels of satisfaction with their relationships, capacity to deal with stress and financial security. Overall, these trends suggest that most civilian partners of ADF members have good relationships but are more vulnerable to stress. Like single parent ADF members and ADF members with dependants other than partners or children, they are also more vulnerable to financial strain.

Satisfaction with relationships, coping skills and financial security



Of all respondents, 10 per cent are dissatisfied with their personal relationships, 20 per cent are dissatisfied with their capacity to deal with stress and 21 per cent are dissatisfied with their financial security.

The following chart displays other wellbeing indicators, for which there were no pronounced differences between family types. This shows that around one third of respondents are satisfied with their access to extended family support and their ability to ask neighbours for help. The proportions who are neutral in their views suggests that is somewhat common for families to be accepting of the impact of ADF life on their capacity to access social and family support.



As an overall trend observed for all respondents, the ability to ask neighbours for help and capacity to deal with stress tend increase with age and length of service. This reflects a likely adaptation to ADF life with age and experience.

There are no significant differences in these wellbeing indicators between those who live in a service residence on or near a base and other respondents, nor according to categorisation (families of ADF members on unaccompanied postings versus other families).

Community engagement

Overall, 53 per cent of respondents are satisfied with their links to the general community, while 14 per cent are dissatisfied. While differences between family types are not pronounced, satisfaction with links to the general community increased with age. Satisfaction levels with community engagement are similar for those who live in a service residence on or near a base and other respondents.

Locations with the lowest satisfaction with general links to the community are Hobart and the rest of TAS (38%), WA-Other (41%), VIC-Other (42%; excluding Sale), Ipswich (46%) and Townsville (48%).

Two thirds (66%) of respondents indicated that they or their partner are involved in at least one social or community group. As shown in the following table, sporting groups or clubs are the most common type of community or social involvement for ADF families.

Per cent of respondents who said they or their partner were involved in a community or social group	
Sporting groups or clubs	39%
Ex-service groups	16%
Schools or other education groups	16%
Hobby groups	16%
Play groups	14%
Community service groups	12%
Parent support groups	10%
Religious groups or organisations	9%

The most common ex-service organisations in which respondents are involved are the Returned Services League (RSL), Mates 4 Mates, Soldier On, Legacy and other veteran’s associations (such as the Naval Association and the 2/4 RAR Association). Other organisations listed by respondents are:

5000 Poppies	Vietnam Veterans Association
Carry On	Veteran’s Federation
Combat Support Association	Walking Wounded
Defence Force Welfare Association	Warriors
Healing Hounds	Women’s veteran networks
Invictus	Young Diggers
Poppy membership of the Australian War Memorial	Young Veterans
The Ride Home	

Use of Defence Community Centres and Neighbourhood Houses

Only eight per cent of respondents regularly use Defence Community Centres, while two per cent use Neighbourhood Houses.

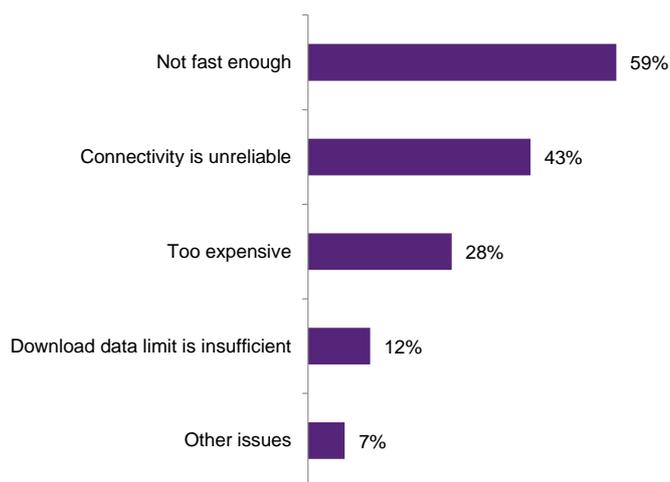
Use of Defence Community Centres is highest in Alice Springs and the NT (excluding Darwin), Sale, Seymour and Puckapunyal, Frankston and Mornington Peninsula and Albury and Wodonga. No respondents reported using Defence Community Centres in Hobart and TAS and Perth.

Use of Neighbourhood Houses is highest in Seymour and Puckapunyal and Albury and Wodonga. No respondents reported using Neighbourhood Houses in the Hunter Valley, Southern Sydney, Brisbane, Cairns and remote far north QLD, Toowoomba and Darling Downs, Adelaide, Hobart and TAS, Perth Northern Suburbs and WA-Other.

Internet connectivity

Overall, 55 per cent of respondents said that their current internet services meet their needs. For the 45 per cent of respondents who said their current service does not meet their needs, as displayed below, the most common reasons are that it’s not fast enough and the connection is unreliable.

Reasons current internet service does not meet needs



The locations in which internet needs are least likely to be met are the Perth northern suburbs, Seymour and Puckapunyal, Frankston & Mornington Peninsula, Wagga Wagga, Perth, Hunter Valley, Nowra, Sale, Hobart & rest of Tasmania and remote and regional locations in WA, SA and QLD.

The respondents who live in a service residence on or near an ADF base are less satisfied with their internet connection when compared to other respondents (48% compared to 56%).

For those respondents living in a service residence on or near an ADF base and who also said their internet is inadequate, almost one half (47%) have ADSL2+, 26 per cent have internet connection through their mobile phone and a further 22 per cent have NBN. Other types of internet connections for these respondents are shown below.

Type of internet connection for those in service residences on or near an ADF base	
ADSL2+	47%
Mobile phone	26%
NBN	22%
Wireless device from a telecommunications company	15%
Broadband OffNet/Off Net ADSL2+	7%
Other	5%
Cable	3%
None	3%
Satellite	1%

Comments on the impact of inadequate internet

Respondents with inadequate internet noted that it impacts on them three broad ways. Specifically, it reduces their ability to:

- Maintain social and family connections, particularly when their partner is absent from home.
- Access educational resources and meet school / vocational / tertiary education requirements (for themselves and their children).
- Work from home, particularly for those partners who are self-employed but also those working from home as a flexible work arrangement.

Of note, members who live in on-base service accommodation highlighted the issue of the lack internet access. Members in this situation need to have their own internet, which is expensive. This isolates a member from their families because they have limited means to keep in contact.

Feel like this survey doesn't include my category; divorced, can't afford to maintain a home, reside in LIA, my child sleeps in the bed when he visits, I sleep on the floor. But that's ok I'm a member without dependents. Oh can't get the internet in LIA so can't Skype my children.

Defence engagement

As shown in the following chart, pride and sense of belonging are lowest for single parent ADF members and those with dependants other than partners and children, even when compared to partners of ADF members. The following comments from single parent ADF members reflect this finding.

Changing a member from MWD to MWOD when a single parent goes on deployment and gives up their DHA house. This does not help the member feel like Defence is supporting them...Single parents without a home do not get Separation allowance and feel like they are left out because they are single.

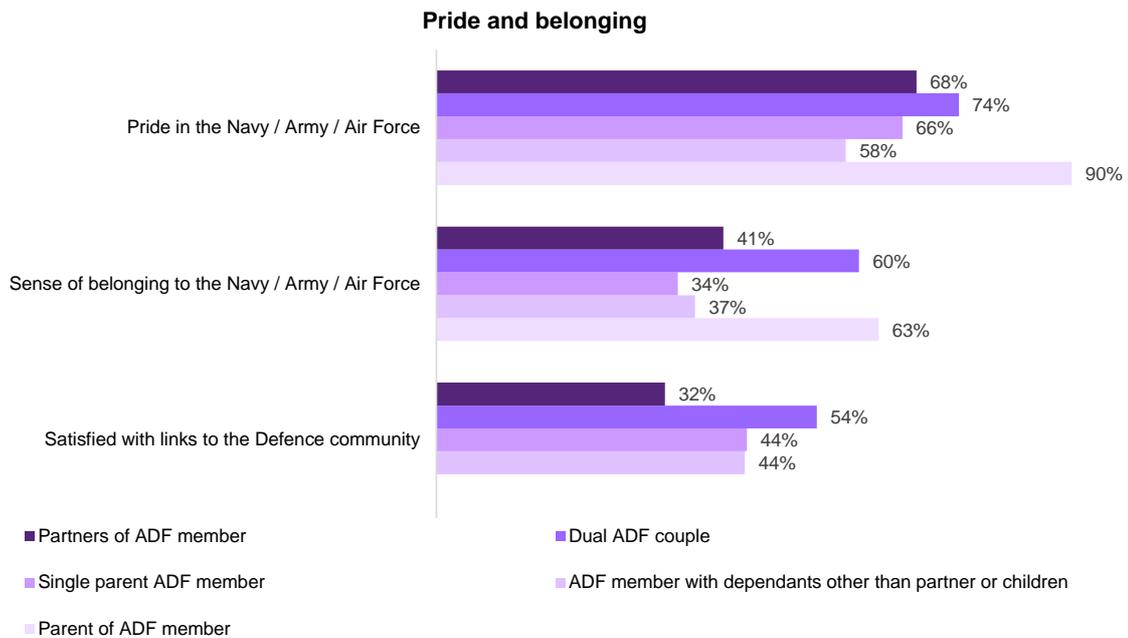
I have been told by my chain of command that I cannot apply for flexible working arrangements because I am an Officer. There is not really any acknowledgement that I am a single parent who would like to play an active part in raising his kids.

In contrast, pride and sense of belonging are strongest for parents of ADF members, even when compared to ADF respondents.

Overall, only nine per cent of respondents said that their family does not feel a sense of pride in the ADF. Almost one third (30%) of respondents overall were neutral about their family's sense of belonging to Defence.

Overall, less than one half of respondents are satisfied with their links to the Defence community. A further 23 per cent are dissatisfied, while 39 per cent expressed a neutral opinion about this.

The proportion of neutral responses in terms of sense of belonging and links to the Defence community suggests that feeling connected to Defence is not of particular concern for many ADF families.



*Parents of ADF members were not asked about their satisfaction with links to the Defence community

Overall, only nine per cent of respondents said that their family does not feel a sense of pride in the ADF. Almost one third (30%) of respondents overall were neutral about their family's sense of belonging to Defence.

Overall, less than one half of respondents are satisfied with their links to the Defence community. A further 23 per cent are dissatisfied, while 39 per cent expressed a neutral opinion about this.

The proportion of neutral responses in terms of sense of belonging and links to the Defence community suggests that feeling connected to Defence is not of particular concern for many ADF families.

There are no significant differences in pride, sense of belonging and satisfaction with links to the Defence community between those who live in service residences on or near an ADF base and other respondents.

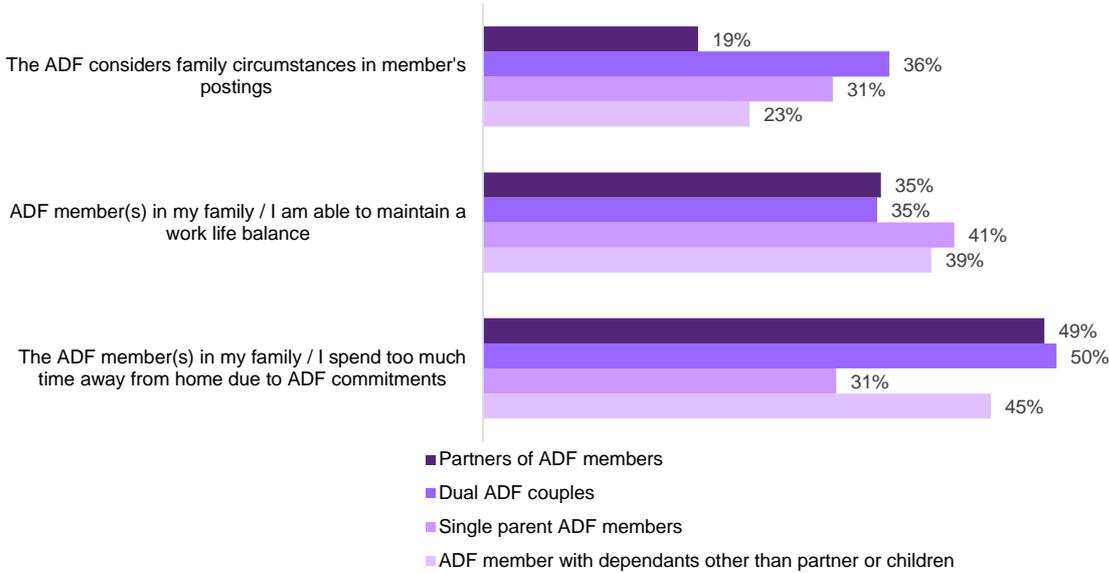
Impact of ADF service on families

As shown in the following chart, there is not a wide belief among ADF families that families are considered in postings. Respondents who are ADF members are generally least negative about this issue.

Overall, around one third of respondents believe that they or their partner have a good work life balance. In contrast, around 40 per cent do not believe they have a good work life balance.

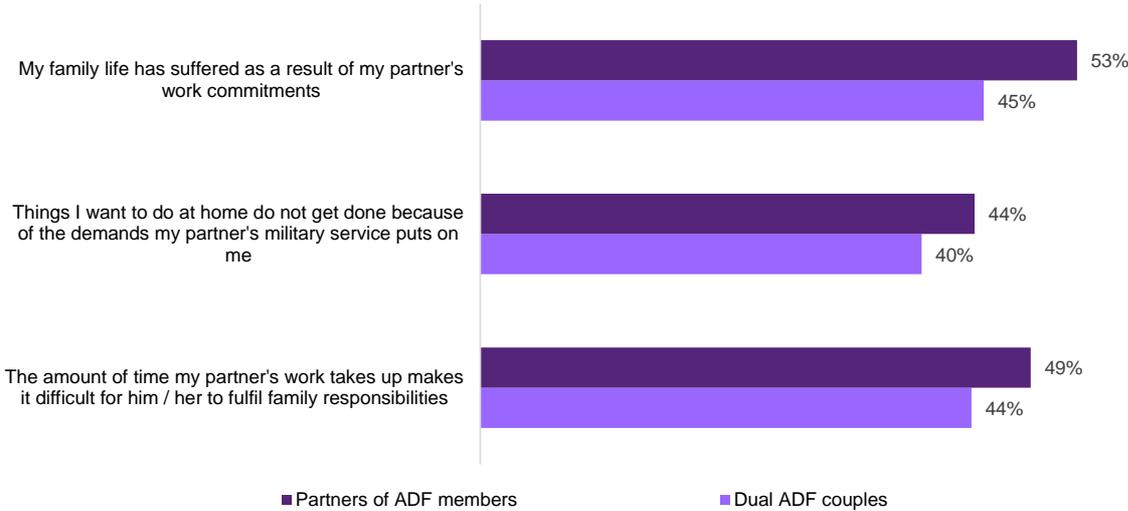
Around one third of single parents believed they spent too much time away from home, compared to around one half of all other respondents.

Attitudes towards postings, work life balance and absences



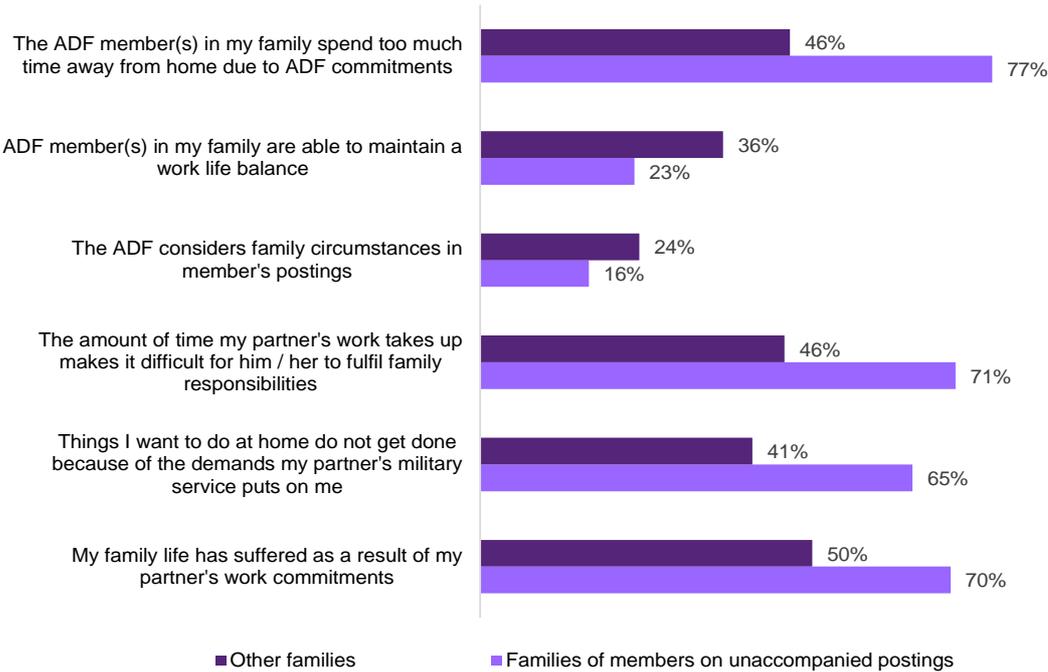
Overall, around one half of partners of ADF members and dual ADF couples believed that ADF commitments intruded into their family life. As shown in the following chart, partners of ADF members and dual ADF couples did not differ markedly in their views about this.

Perceived impact of service demands on families



Compared to other partners, partners of ADF members on an unaccompanied posting consistently expressed more negative views about work life balance, the impact of ADF commitments on family and the ADF's consideration of families in postings. These trends are displayed in the following chart.

Perceived impact of service demands on families: Families of members on unaccompanied postings



* These results include those partners who are part of a dual ADF couple.

SERVICE INTENTIONS AND INFLUENCES

Key findings

For around 10 per cent of civilian-ADF couples, there is discord between them in terms of their future service preferences. For most of these families, the partner wants to leave the ADF, but the ADF member wants to stay longer.

These appear to be somewhat 'at risk' couples, due to their comparatively higher levels of relationship strain and lower perceived social and family support.

Key factors that influence the service intentions of families are a high impact of ADF service demands on families and inability to access childcare.

Overall profile of service preferences and intentions

In this part of the survey, partners of ADF members (including those who are part of a dual ADF couple) were asked about:

- Their preference for how long their ADF partner should continue to serve
- Their belief as to how long their ADF partner wanted to serve.

Additionally, respondents who are ADF members themselves were asked about their future service intentions.

Partner's preference for future service

As displayed in the following chart, a minority of partners of ADF members would like their partner to leave the ADF immediately or in the short term. Around one half of partners either want their ADF partner to continue serving in the long term or have not considered them leaving.

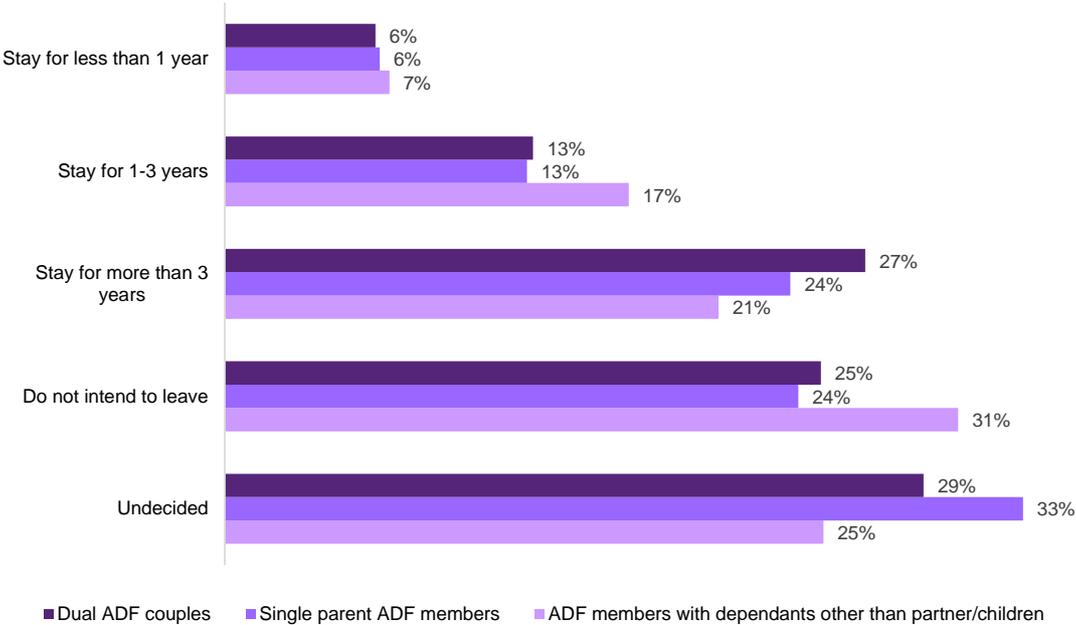
Civilian partner's preference for how long their ADF member partner serves



ADF member's service intentions

As shown in the following chart, around one half of members intend to continue serving in the medium to long term. In contrast, around one in five intend to leave the ADF in the shorter term. Almost one third of members are uncommitted to a specific future plan. This overall service intentions profile is consistent with other data on ADF service intentions.⁴

ADF members' service preferences



⁴ Based on the August 2016 and February 2017 *YourSay* Organisational Climate survey, between 15 and 20 per cent of ADF members expressed an intention to leave. Just over one quarter of ADF members were ambivalent about their future service intentions.

Overall, there are no significant differences in service intentions between dual ADF couples, single parent ADF members and ADF members with dependants other than partners or children.

There are no significant differences in future service preferences and intentions between geographically separated families (where the ADF member is on an unaccompanied posting) and other families.

Discord between couples over service preferences

This section describes the degree of alignment between partners' preferences for future ADF service and their belief as to how long their ADF member partner wishes to serve. This analysis was performed to identify the proportion of couples who may be experiencing some level of discord over how long they remain in the ADF.

A key finding of this analysis is that around 10 per cent of civilian partners have very different preferences to their ADF partners in terms of future service length. For most of these partners, they want to leave in the short term, whereas their ADF partner wants to stay longer. Specifically, among those who want their ADF partner to leave in the short term, around two thirds also said that their ADF partner wanted to stay longer.

Further examination of the 10 per cent of civilian partners who have different preferences to their ADF partners in terms of future service suggests that, for these couples, there may be a fundamental conflict between ADF service demands and civilian careers or employment.

Compared to other families, they experience greater difficulties accessing childcare and social and family support. They also report a greater degree of 'spillover' of ADF demands into their family life and their employment or education commitments or plans. Other comparisons between these and other partners suggest that they are experiencing higher levels of stress and relationship strain.

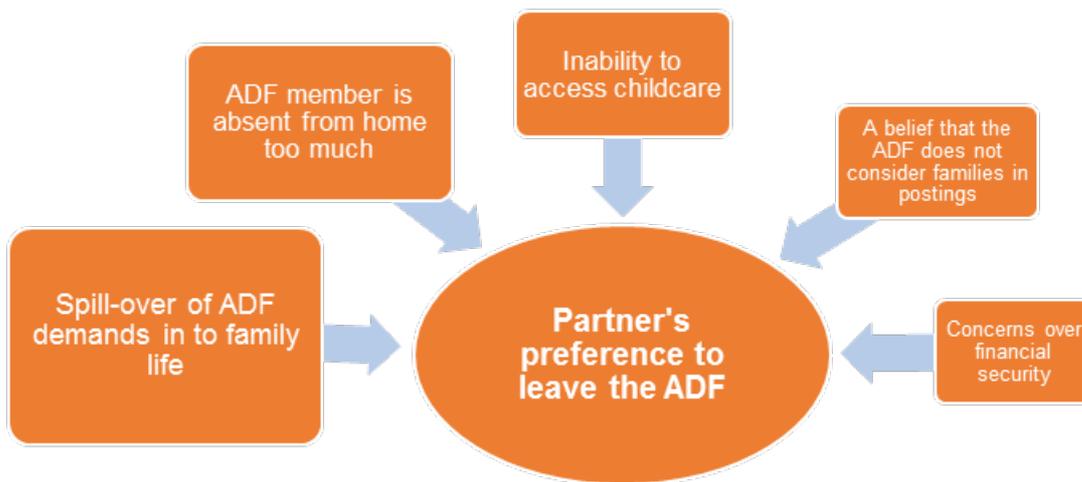
Of note, these partners are not experiencing comparatively higher levels of unemployment or underemployment. Their age and length of service profile is similar to other partners and they are not more likely to be geographically separated from their ADF member partner (due to an unaccompanied posting).

In contrast, the degree of discord between members of a dual ADF couple is lower, with only four per cent of them in disagreement over their future service intentions.

Factors that influence service preferences and intentions

For civilian partners of ADF members

Factors that influence partners' preference that their ADF partner leave the ADF were assessed and are displayed in the following chart. Factors are displayed from most influential to the left and the comparatively less influential to the right.



Of the five factors found to influence a preference to leave the ADF, three reflect perceptions of conflict between the needs of the ADF and the needs of families (a belief that their family life has suffered as a result of ADF commitments, too much absence from home and a belief that families are not considered in postings).

Of note, an inability to access childcare also appears to be a significant retention issue for families. This reflects the most profound implication of childcare accessibility problems for partners; their capacity to work. For others, the ability to access childcare can compensate significantly for living in locations where they have little to no social or family support and where their partner is often absent from home.

Concerns over financial security may reflect a view that partners' earning capacity would improve if they had the increased employment and career stability associated with more locational stability.

In contrast to these findings, partners' career and employment sacrifices, satisfaction with personal relationships, links to the Defence and general communities, ability to cope with stress and access to family support do not influence partners' preferences for future service.

For ADF members

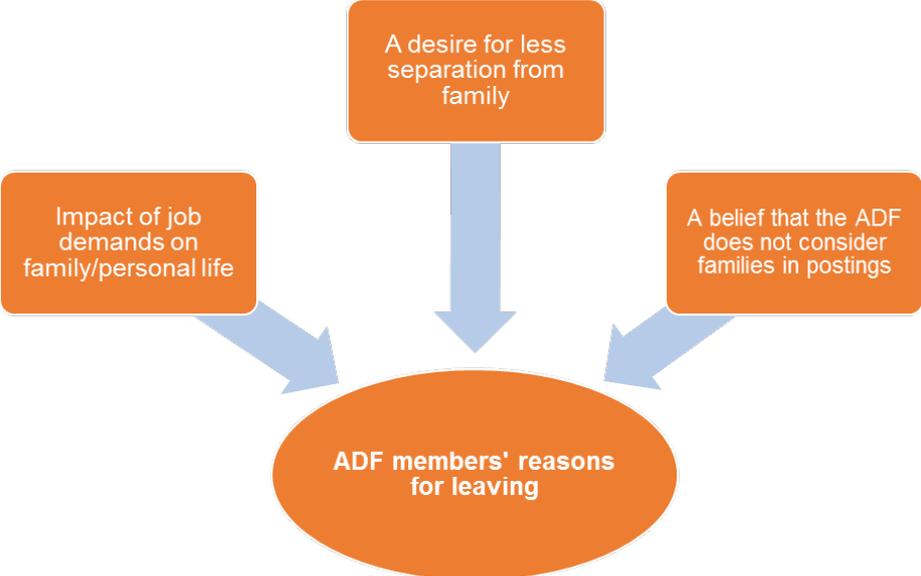
Analysis of data from the ADF Families and *YourSay Leaving Defence*⁵ surveys identified some consistencies between the factors that influence partner's and member's service preferences and intentions. Analysis of ADF Families Survey data found that, for ADF members, family relevant factors (such as childcare accessibility and work life balance) alone are not of significant influence. One factor that was found to influence their intentions is a belief that families are not considered in ADF postings.

In the *YourSay Leaving Defence* survey, the top 10 reasons for leaving among ADF respondents have remained relatively stable over time, but reflect a range of workplace, career, leadership, management and family factors. Respondents to this survey tend to select a large number of factors which, like partners of ADF members, reflects that a decision to leave is usually not based on a single issue.

In the last five years, two family related factors have featured consistently among the top 10 reasons for leaving among ADF members transitioning from permanent ADF service. These

⁵ Reports of the *YourSay Leaving Defence* (ADF) survey can be obtained from <http://drnet.defence.gov.au/People/WP/People-Intelligence-and-Research/Research-Programs/Pages/YourSay.aspx>

are shown below (along with a belief that families are not considered in postings). These are very consistent with the factors that influence partners' preferences for future service.



SUPPORT SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS: AWARENESS AND USE

Key findings

Awareness of some DCO services such as community grants, general social work services, children's resilience programs and Defence Community Centres, awareness is quite low.

For those respondents who had used DCO and other Defence services, for most services, perceptions are predominantly positive. However, one third of those who had used the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) did not find it useful.

Awareness of DCO and Defence Families of Australia (DFA) social media communications is quite low, while around one third of respondents are unaware of the 1800 Defence telephone number. In contrast, awareness of Defence, Service and DCO websites is high.

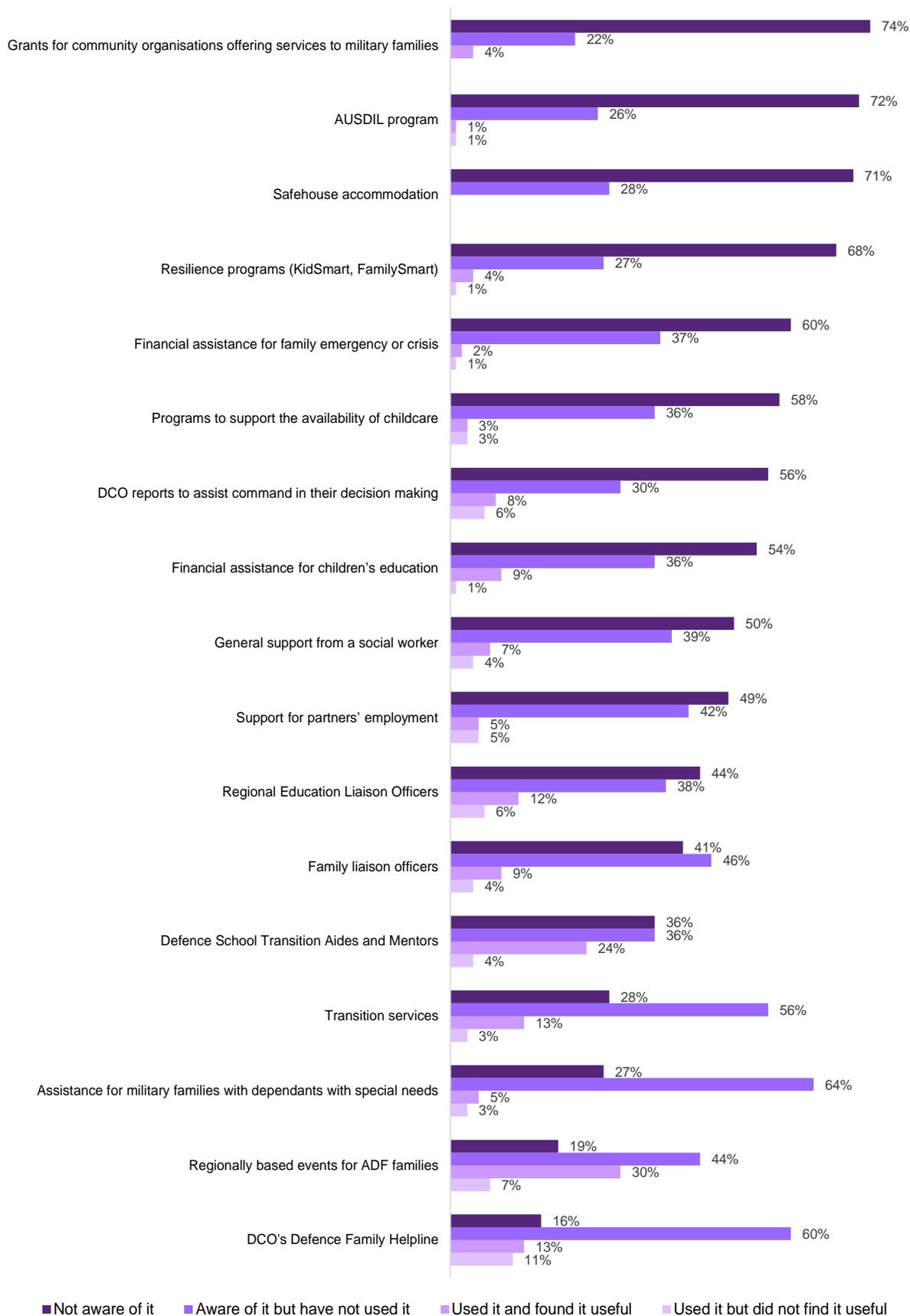
In this section, overall awareness, use and perceived usefulness of all these services are shown. Tables showing perceptions of Defence and Defence affiliated services and organisations for those who had used them are presented at the end of this report under Other Supplementary Results (Charts 2 to 5).

Overall, levels of awareness and use of a broad range of Defence and Defence affiliated services and organisations are highly varied. For some services and organisations, this reflects the level of actual or perceived need and how specialised they are in nature.

Perceptions of DCO services

The following chart shows that awareness and use of community grants, Australians Dangerously Ill Scheme (AUSDIL), safe house accommodation and resilience programs is lowest. DCO services and programs for which awareness and use are highest include the DCO Family Helpline, regional events for families, assistance to families with children with special needs and transition services.

Awareness and use of DCO services

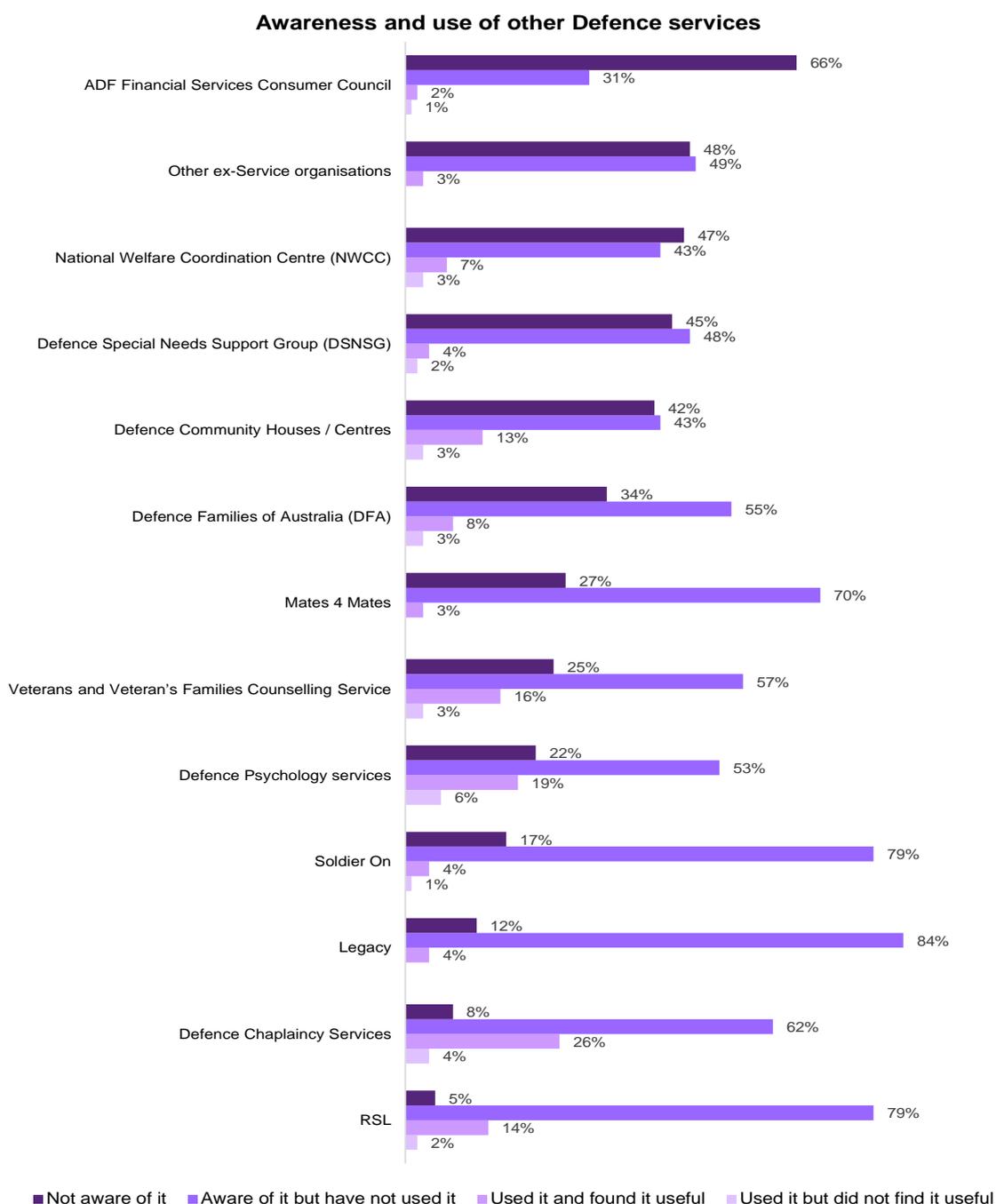


* Categories where there are less than one per cent of respondents are omitted from this chart

For those respondents who had used DCO services, for most services, perceptions were predominantly positive. However, the perceived usefulness of some services is low, notably programs to support the availability of childcare, support for partners' employment, the Defence Family Helpline, safe house accommodation and DCO reports to assist command in their decision making.

Perceptions of other services and organisations

As displayed below, awareness and use of other services and organisations is lowest for the ADF Financial Consumer Council, the National Welfare Coordination Centre and the Defence Special Needs Support Group. Awareness and use is highest for the Returned Services League (RSL), Chaplaincy services, Legacy and Solider On.



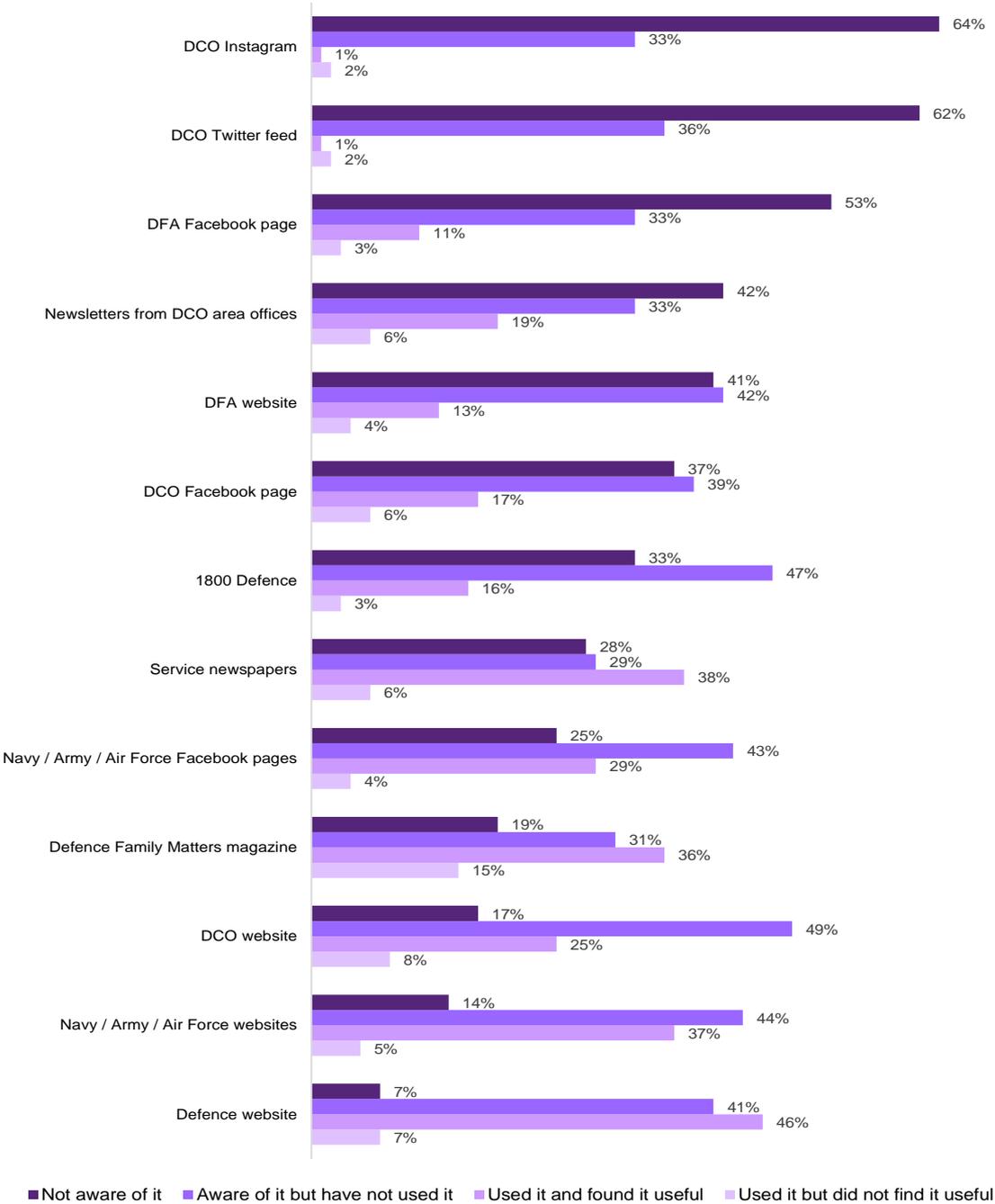
* Categories where there are less than one per cent of respondents are omitted from this chart

For those respondents who had accessed other services and organisations, the perceived usefulness of most is high. However, one third of those who used the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) and the Defence Special Needs Support Group (DSNSG) did not find them useful.

Perceptions of Defence communications

Awareness and use of various Defence communications is lowest for DCO Instagram, Twitter Feeds and Facebook. Awareness and use is highest for the Defence, Service and DCO internet sites and the Defence Family Matters Magazine.

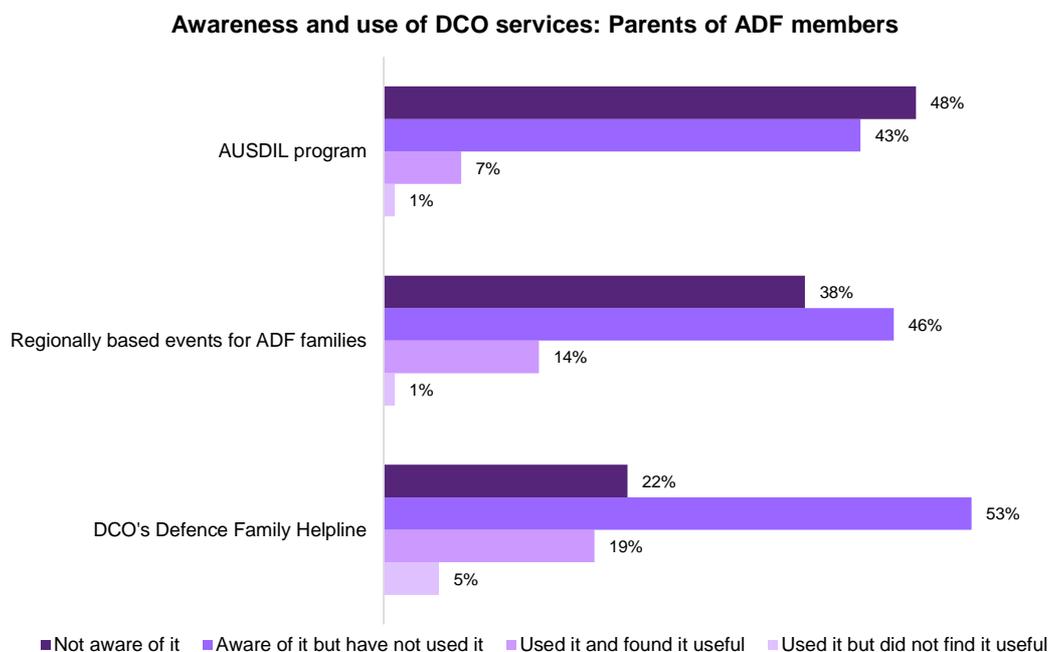
Awareness and use of Defence communications



For those who had used various Defence communications, most are viewed as more useful than not. Two exceptions are information provided by DCO Instagram and Twitter.

Support and information for parents of ADF members

As shown in the following chart, almost one half of parents of ADF members are not aware of the AUSDIL program, while a third are not aware of regional events for ADF families. Almost one quarter of parents have used the Defence Family Helpline.



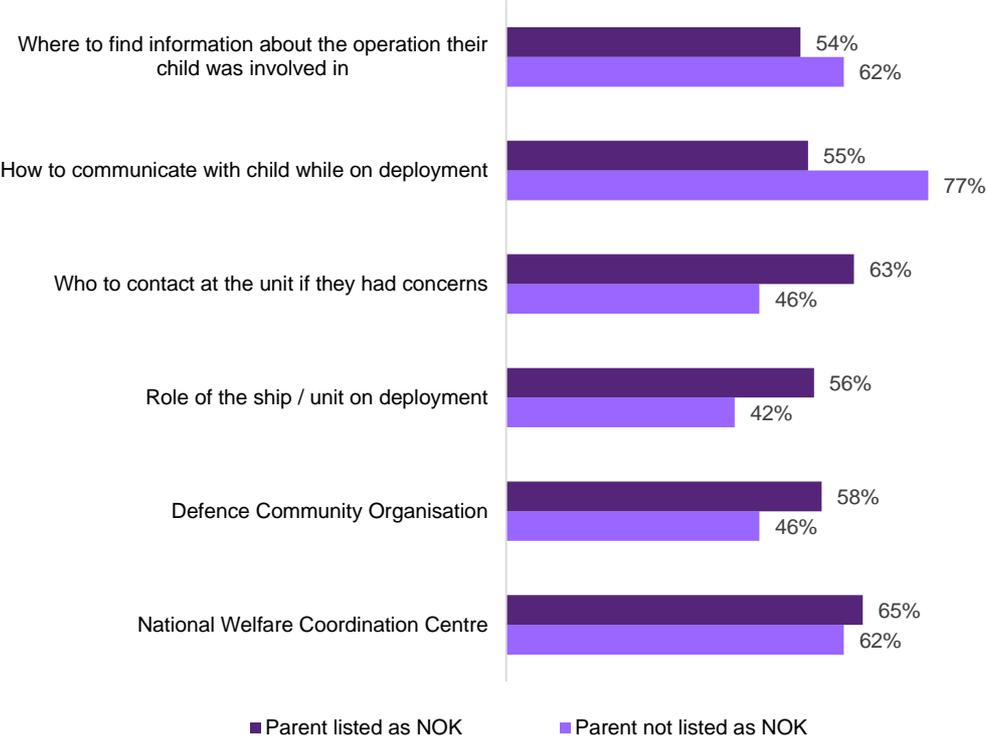
Of the parents of ADF members who had used DCO services, most found them to be useful.

In terms of how well-informed parents feel about their child's ADF service, 59 per cent agreed they had sufficient information about their child's career, while 40 per cent disagreed.

Of all parent respondents, 29 per cent said that their child had been deployed in the past year. Of these parents, their views on the adequacy of deployment related information varied somewhat between those listed as a next of kin or not.

As shown in the following chart, parents listed as a next of kin were more likely to have felt well informed about how to contact their child's unit, the role of the unit or ship on deployment and about DCO. In contrast, those not listed as their child's next of kin were more likely to have been confident about how to contact their child while deployed. This may reflect differences in the age and length of service of members who list their parents as their next of kin and those who don't. That is, older and more experienced members may prefer to maintain direct contact with their parents while deployed, as opposed to unit-mediated communication.

Parents who had enough information while their child was last deployed



OVERSEAS LATERAL RECRUIT OR TRANSFER FAMILIES

Key findings

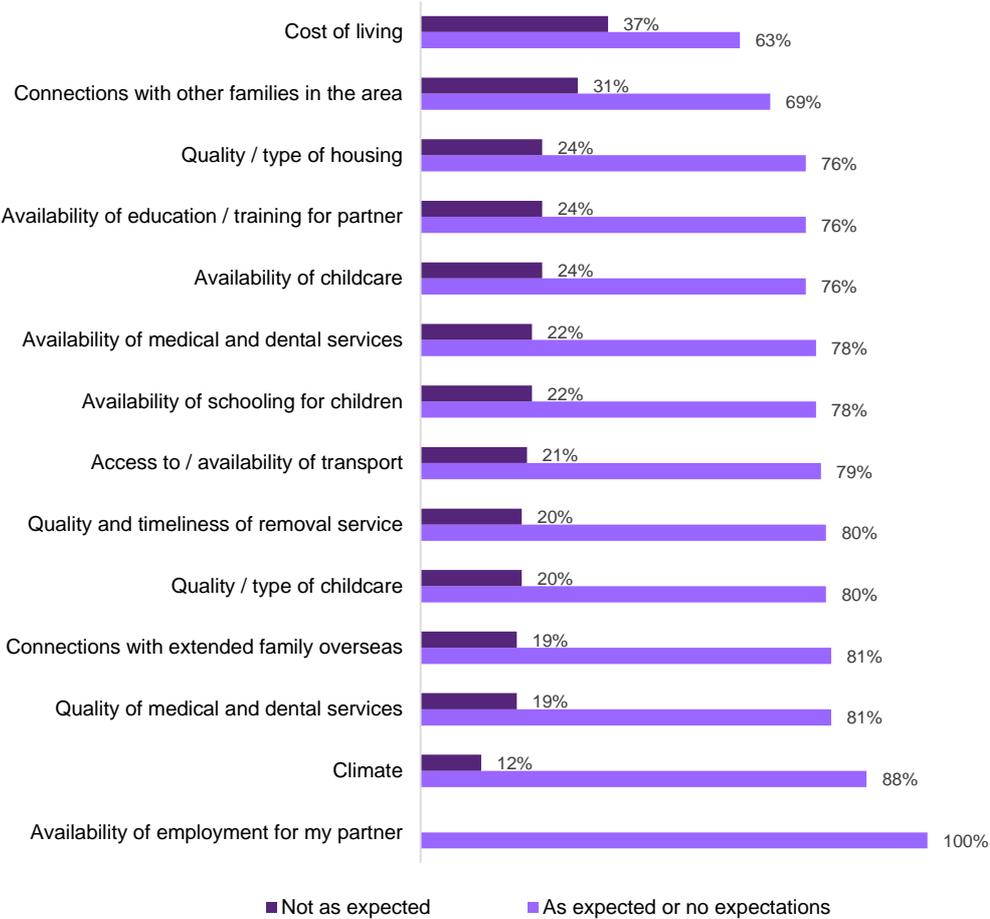
The majority of families who were overseas lateral recruits or transfers to the ADF did not feel underprepared for most aspects of life in Australia. However, over one third felt unprepared for the cost of living in Australia.

Overseas lateral families do not experience higher levels of unemployment, underemployment or childcare access issues. Their levels of engagement with Defence are also very comparable to other families.

Of the 133 respondents who identified themselves or their partners as overseas lateral recruits or transfers (overseas lateral families), 78 per cent originated from the United Kingdom, nine per cent are from New Zealand and the remainder are from Canada, the United States of America or other countries. The majority (59%) have been in Australia for more than eight years, while the remaining 41 per cent for less than eight years.

As shown in the following chart, the majority of overseas lateral families did not feel underprepared for most aspects of life in Australia. Aspects of life for which they were most unprepared are the cost of living, making social connections, housing quality and the availability of education, training and childcare.

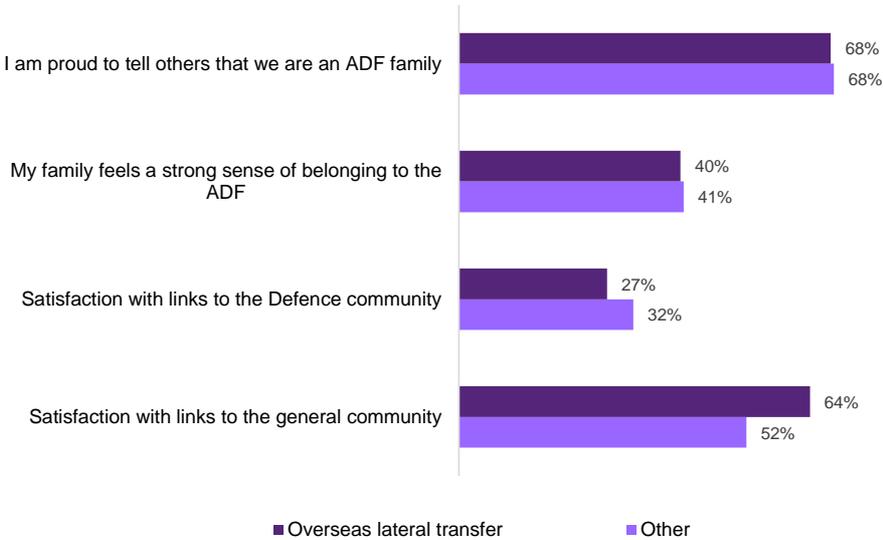
Extent to which expectations were met on migration: Overseas lateral recruit or transfer families



While these findings are not an indication of how realistic expectations were among overseas lateral families, they do highlight the additional information and guidance that they need pre and post migration.

While 31 per cent of overseas lateral families felt their expectations were not met in relation to making social connections, they do not differ significantly from other families in terms of satisfaction with their links to the Defence and general communities. Also shown in the following chart, overseas lateral families also had similar levels of pride in and sense of belonging to the ADF as other ADF families.

Pride and belonging for overseas lateral recruit or transfer families



Overseas lateral family’s satisfaction with their links to the Defence and general communities is at its highest once they have been in Australia for eight years or more. Between one and eight years, sense of community integration tends to vary, which is likely due to variations in initial expectations and experiences with postings.

Compared to other families, overseas lateral families do not have significantly different levels of partner unemployment (23% compared to 20%), partner underemployment (16% compared to 13%) or difficulties accessing childcare (6% for both groups).

CONCLUSIONS

ADF partners experience high levels unemployment and other career and employment sacrifices.

This is a common and expected consequence of ADF life, given frequent relocations and absences of ADF members due to deployments and training. However, compared to the rest of the Australian workforce, unemployment levels among ADF partners are high.

For ADF partners who are employed, overall satisfaction with their work arrangements is not very high. These partners commonly experience underemployment, lack of employment security and often need to make compromises in terms of the amount and nature of work they perform.

The impact of ADF life on partners' employment can potentially be mitigated by Defence facilitating relationships with employers in regions where there is an ADF presence. One option would be the conduct of local industry, business, services and community 'expos' to assist partners to develop links to potential employers, while also fostering community engagement.

Most partners appear to consider how to safeguard their employability against the challenges associated with ADF life, but some may not be taking enough action.

The survey findings show that partners of ADF members are generally willing to consider alternative employment or career options that may maintain or improve their employability. It is also encouraging that unemployment may not be the only incentive to do this. This suggests that partners of ADF members are motivated to balance their needs and preferences with service demands and conditions.

Despite this, it is not uncommon for partners to find themselves in situations of forced compromise. Also, only a minority of partners who had difficulties finding employment used an employment support service such as resume services or coaching. More active promotion of such services appears warranted.

Childcare accessibility problems are not pronounced overall, but are high in some regions and are a potential retention issue.

Given childcare access problems were found to be a potential retention issue, it is encouraging that, overall, a small proportion actually have access issues. However, those living in some remote and regional areas have the most difficulties accessing childcare. Affordability and lack of places are the most common barriers to access.

As expected, difficulties accessing childcare is linked to unemployment and these dual problems are most pronounced in some rural and remote locations in WA and NSW, along with Sale, Albury-Wodonga, the Hunter Valley and Cairns and remote far north QLD.

Being able to access childcare is important as an employment and service enabler, which highlights the merits of Defence considering means of supporting access to a greater range of options, including au pairs and nannies. For some families, childcare options mitigate the impact of being separated from their extended family and social networks. One option is for Defence to consider how families can be assisted to have extended family members reside with them, at least temporarily, through a form of reunion travel entitlement or more flexible housing eligibility criteria.

ADF families appear to be largely accepting of some impacts of service life on them, but do expect mutual consideration.

In particular, ADF Career Management Agencies should note that a perception that families are not considered in posting decisions did emerge as a retention factor. It was clear from the survey findings that partners expect acknowledgement that, in their families, their career is as important as that of the ADF members’.

Of the five factors found to influence a partner’s preference to leave the ADF, three reflect perceptions of conflict between the needs of the ADF and the needs of families. Taken together, these factors reflect the notion of the military as a ‘greedy institution’, which was first described in the 1980’s⁶. However, in 2017, families expect the ADF to be committed to work life balance and acknowledge that ADF service is one of a number of work and family commitments that ADF families accommodate.

A desire to leave is likely influenced by a critical mass of impacts: the combined effects of career or employment sacrifice, long and frequent periods of absence, lack of choice over where they can live and childcare accessibility problems.

Engagement with Defence and financial security are key concerns for single parent ADF members.

Many single parents face considerable challenges in meeting the criteria for their children to be recognised by Defence as dependants. Even for those with Defence recognised dependants, they may perceive inadequate policy provisions for their unique circumstances or insufficient command support or flexibility. This, understandably, would impact on their sense of pride in and sense of belonging to the ADF. Yet, financial factors may compel them to continue serving despite the conflict between service demands and their parental responsibilities.

ADF members with dependants other than partners or children are similar to single parents in these respects.

Like single parents, ADF members with other types of dependants do not feel a high sense of pride in and belonging to the ADF. They are generally committed to stay, but this may reflect a need for financial and job security.

Like other families, single parent members and those with dependants other than partners and children are expressing a desire for Defence to consider less rigid and exclusive ways of categorising members, their families and their needs. A common thread through the respondents’ comments is a view that pay categorisations and housing and relocations policies do not entirely reflect the modern reality of families. There is a clear desire for more flexible options around entitlements in acknowledgement of the diverse nature of family structures and circumstances.

Parents of ADF members are generally very engaged with Defence and interested in their child’s career.

This is reflected in their high sense of pride in and belonging to the ADF and their comparatively high awareness and use of Defence services and affiliated organisations. This is noteworthy given that only around one quarter of the parent respondents are current or ex-serving ADF members.

⁶ Segal, M. (1986). The military and the family as greedy institutions. *Armed Forces and Society*, 13, 9-38.

These are encouraging findings as they suggest that parents of ADF members can play a valuable role in fostering stronger Defence community links through their serving children.

Overseas lateral families are generally well prepared for life in Australia and appear to adjust well.

This is reflected in findings that they do not appear to be unprepared for most aspects of life in Australia, although the cost of living is a common source of surprise. Overseas lateral families do not experience higher levels of unemployment, underemployment or childcare access issues. Their levels of engagement with Defence are also very comparable to other families.

SUPPLEMENTARY ANALYSIS INFORMATION

Response rates

The target population contained an estimated 32,794 individuals based on the 2015 Defence Census. Based on this estimated population, the overall response rate is 14 per cent.

Caveats

Limited location data for respondents who live in a service residence 'off base' was captured in the survey. This was due to a flaw in the branching logic applied to the survey. This was later corrected while the survey was in the field. Overall, location data was captured for 67 per cent of respondents (other than parents of ADF members, for whom location data was deliberately not captured).

The non-response rate for the item capturing location of 'on base' residences indicates that some respondents may have been unsure as to whether to classify their residence as 'on' or 'off base'. This may have been the case for respondents who lived in an enclave of service residences adjacent to, but not on a base.

Readers should note that the ADF Families Survey data is not entirely representative of all ADF families and does over-represent unemployed ADF partners. While the ADF Families Survey is a good source of attitudinal information, the four yearly Defence Census is a more representative source of information on family demographics, particularly in relation to employment and childcare.

In the interests of brevity, spouses and partners are referred to only as partners throughout this report.

Analysis information

Some tables and charts display percentages which equal more than 100 per cent. This is where respondents were able to select more than one response in the presented list of options. Other tables and charts may have percentages slightly above or below 100 per cent due to rounding.

Differences between groups of respondents or associations between different attitudes or factors were tested for statistical significance. Such tests include the Chi-square test of independence, the Mann-Whitney U test and the Spearman rank correlation. Significant differences are reported where the likelihood that the difference occurred by chance was less than 5 per cent and where the strength of association was assessed as being at least small.

Influences of service preferences and intentions were assessed via sequential logistic regression. This is a technique in which various factors are assessed whether if (or how much) they predict service preferences (for civilian partners) and service intentions (for ADF members). The number of predictive factors assessed was restricted by sample size. As such, separate analyses for dual ADF couples, single parent ADF members and ADF members with dependants other than partners and children were not possible. The influence of age and length of service on future service intentions was controlled for in the regression models.

Respondent demographics

	Partners and spouses		Members of a dual ADF couple		Single parent ADF members		ADF members with dependants other than partners and children		Parents of ADF members		Total count
	Count	% of all respondents	Count	% of all respondents	Count	% of all respondents	Count	% of all respondents	Count	% of all respondents	
Total respondents	3034	65	824	18	348	7	196	4	247	5	4649

	Partners and spouses		Members of a dual ADF couple ⁽¹⁾		Single parent ADF members		ADF members with dependants other than partners and children ⁽²⁾		Parents of ADF members ⁽³⁾		Total	
	Count	% of this respondent group	Count	% of this respondent group	Count	% of this respondent group	Count	% of this respondent group	Count	% of this respondent group	Count	% of all respondents
Service												
- Navy	673	22	187	23	76	22	38	20	86	35	1060	23
- Army	1438	48	274	33	125	36	85	45	97	40	2019	44
- Air Force	894	30	360	44	144	42	66	35	61	25	1525	33
Service type												
- Permanent	2963	99	784	96	329	96	188	97	236	98	4500	98
- CFTS	29	1	17	2	14	4	6	3	3	1	69	2
Length of service												
- 5 years or less	424	14	101	12	37	11	32	17	121	51	715	16
- 6 to 10 years	620	21	180	22	57	17	41	21	61	26	959	21
- 11 to 20 years	1031	35	325	39	117	34	60	31	35	15	1568	34
- 21 years or more	888	30	217	26	134	39	60	31	22	9	1321	29
Rank group												
- OR & JNCO	1098	37	265	32	126	37	92	47	N/A	N/A	1581	36
- SNCO & WO	928	31	220	27	125	36	65	33	N/A	N/A	1338	31
- Junior Officer	740	25	256	31	70	20	35	18	N/A	N/A	1101	25
- Senior Officer	237	8	79	10	23	7	3	2	N/A	N/A	342	8
Categorisation⁽⁴⁾												
- MWD	2504	83	715	87	281	81	145	76	N/A	N/A	3645	85
- MWOD	96	3	28	3	51	15	23	12	N/A	N/A	198	5
- MWD(U)	340	11	72	9	13	4	22	12	N/A	N/A	447	10
Lateral / o'seas recruit	115	4	11	1	5	1	2	1	N/A	N/A	133	3
Employment status												
- Employed	2043	68	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2043	68
- Not employed	973	32	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	973	32
Employment type												
- ADF Reserve member	96	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	96	5
- Other employment type	1901	95	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1901	95
Hours of work per week (PT/Cas/Self empl)												
- 1 - 10 hours	152	16	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	152	16
- 11 - 22 hours	378	40	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	378	40
- 23 - 34 hours	410	44	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	410	44
Voluntary work	875	29	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	875	29

(1) For dual ADF couple respondents, the figures shown for Service type, Rank group and Categorisation is for their ADF partner

(2) The demographic information for these respondents indicates that many have misclassified themselves as a permanent member with recognised dependants other than children or partners/spouses. This is reflected in that some within this group indicated that they are MWOD or indicated that they have ADF recognised dependent children.

(3) Data for Service, Service type and length of service relates to that for the child of the respondent. Data for gender relates to the gender of the respondent.

(4) Some partner/spouses, dual ADF couples and ADF member with other dependants have indicated that they are MWOD, which either suggests that they have provided incorrect information about their categorisation or have incorrectly identified themselves as part of the target population for the survey.

2017 ADF Families Survey

	Partners and spouses		Members of a dual ADF couple		Single parent ADF members		ADF members with dependants other than partners and children		Parents of ADF members		Total	
	Count	% of this respondent group	Count	% of this respondent group	Count	% of this respondent group	Count	% of this respondent group	Count	% of this respondent group	Count	% of all respondents
Age group												
- 24 or younger	187	6	55	7	8	2	16	8	N/A	N/A	266	6
- 25 to 34 years	1116	37	319	39	89	26	56	29	N/A	N/A	1580	36
- 35 to 44 years	1057	35	302	37	122	35	64	33	N/A	N/A	1545	36
- 45 to 55 years	521	17	132	16	119	34	45	23	N/A	N/A	817	19
- 55 years or older	105	4	11	1	8	2	13	7	N/A	N/A	137	3
Gender												
- Male	136	5	319	39	197	58	157	84	113	47	922	20
- Female	2820	95	493	61	140	42	31	16	125	53	3609	80
Residence type												
- Service Residence (SR)	1576	53	392	48	163	47	91	47	N/A	N/A	2222	51
- Privately rented accommodation with RA	380	13	134	16	72	21	32	16	N/A	N/A	618	14
- Privately rented or own accommodation	919	31	268	33	88	25	58	30	N/A	N/A	1333	31
- Other	112	4	26	3	24	7	14	7	N/A	N/A	176	4
Have ADF recognised dependent children	2115	73	520	65	297	87	121	64	N/A	N/A	3053	66
Have ADF recognised other dependants	168	7	66	10	40	15	68	40	N/A	N/A	342	7
Have dependent children with special needs	361	12	43	5	49	14	25	13	N/A	N/A	478	10

Location of respondents	Count	%
Canberra	327	7
ACT - Other	71	2
Albury	8	<1
Hunter Valley	122	3
Nowra	82	2
Central Sydney	168	4
Richmond and Greater Western Sydney	131	3
Southern Sydney	57	1
Wagga Wagga	61	1
Queanbeyan	80	2
Orange	3	<1
NSW - Other	212	5
Alice Springs	1	<1
Darwin	90	2
NT- Other	60	1
Brisbane	247	6
Cairns and Remote Far North QLD	38	1
Ipswich	125	3
Toowoomba and Darling Downs	34	1
Townsville	160	4
Rockhampton	2	<1
QLD - Other	128	3
Adelaide	161	4
SA - Other	65	1
Hobart	9	<1
TAS - Other	7	<1
Melbourne	90	2
Seymour and Puckapunyal	41	1
Wodonga	25	1
Sale	43	1
Frankston and Mornington Peninsula	48	1
Queenscliff	2	<1
VIC - Other	54	1
Perth	40	1
Perth Northern Suburbs	13	<1
Rockingham	86	2
WA - Other	38	1
Overseas	58	1
No location data available	1415	32
Total	4402	100

Analyses of location trends in the report are based on a variable in which locations with less than 10 respondents are aggregated together (e.g. Albury respondents are grouped with Wodonga & Rockhampton respondents are grouped with QLD-other respondents). Overall, location data was obtained for 67 per cent of respondents (other than parents of ADF members, for whom location data was not captured).

SUPPLEMENTARY RESULTS

Table 1

% of employed partners who experienced some form of difficulty gaining employment in their location	
Albury & Wodonga	50%
QLD - Other	44%
WA - Other	44%
Seymour and Puckapunyal	39%
Sale	36%
VIC - Other	35%
Ipswich	29%
Hobart & rest of Tasmania	29%
Cairns & Remote Far North QLD	28%
Adelaide	27%
SA - Other	26%
Wagga Wagga	26%
Melbourne	26%
NT - Other & Alice Springs	24%
Central Sydney	24%
Southern Sydney	24%
Hunter Valley	19%
Darwin	18%
Brisbane	17%
Townsville	16%
NSW - Other	16%
Frankston & Mornington Peninsula	16%
Richmond & Greater Western Sydney	16%
Perth	13%
Nowra	13%
Rockingham	11%
Canberra	11%
Perth Northern Suburbs	10%
ACT - Other	9%
Toowoomba & Darling Downs	6%
Queanbeyan	4%

Table 2

% of employed partners who experienced some form of difficulty gaining employment in their location	
Occupational group	
Labourer	41%
Technician and trades worker	33%
Sales worker	32%
Community and personal service worker	26%
Professional	25%
Clerical and administrative worker	25%
Manager	25%
Industry	
Financial and Insurance Services	38%
Arts and Recreation	35%
Accommodation and Food Services	33%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	33%
Retail Trade	32%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	31%
Administrative and Support Services	29%
Health Care and Social Assistance	28%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	25%
Public Administration and Safety (including Department of Defence)	23%
Services	23%
Information, Media and Telecommunications	22%
Education and Training	21%
Wholesale Trade	20%
Construction	19%
Mining	18%
Manufacturing	18%
Rental, Hiring, and Real Estate Services	18%
Other Services	24%

* Figures for the Machinery operator and driver occupation and Electricity, Gas, Water, Waste Services industry are not reported due to low counts

Table 3

ADF partner unemployment rate by location	
Sale	39%
WA - Other	38%
QLD - Other	37%
Albury & Wodonga	36%
Ipswich	26%
VIC - Other	26%
Seymour and Puckapunyal	25%
NSW - Other	24%
Hunter Valley	23%
Nowra	22%
Cairns & Remote Far North QLD	22%
SA - Other	21%
Toowoomba & Darling Downs	18%
Brisbane	17%
Townsville	17%
ACT - Other	13%
Darwin	13%
Hobart & rest of Tasmania	13%
Adelaide	12%
Melbourne	12%
Perth	12%
Wagga Wagga	11%
Frankston & Mornington Peninsula	11%
Canberra	10%
Richmond & Greater Western Sydney	10%
Queanbeyan	10%
Central Sydney	9%
Southern Sydney	8%
Rockingham	8%
NT - Other & Alice Springs	3%
Perth Northern Suburbs	0%

Table 4

ADF partner underemployment rate by location	
Wagga Wagga	28%
Seymour and Puckapunyal	25%
Perth	24%
Albury & Wodonga	24%
Ipswich	22%
Rockingham	22%
Frankston & Mornington Peninsula	21%
NSW - Other	20%
Cairns & Remote Far North QLD	19%
Toowoomba & Darling Downs	19%
NT - Other & Alice Springs	18%
Adelaide	16%
SA - Other	16%
Richmond & Greater Western Sydney	15%
Townsville	14%
Darwin	12%
QLD - Other	12%
Central Sydney	12%
Hunter Valley	11%
Queanbeyan	11%
Sale	11%
Hobart & rest of Tasmania	10%
Brisbane	10%
Melbourne	9%
Canberra	8%
VIC - Other	8%
Southern Sydney	8%
Nowra	5%
WA - Other	5%
ACT - Other	4%

* Figure for Perth northern suburbs is not reported due to low count

Table 5

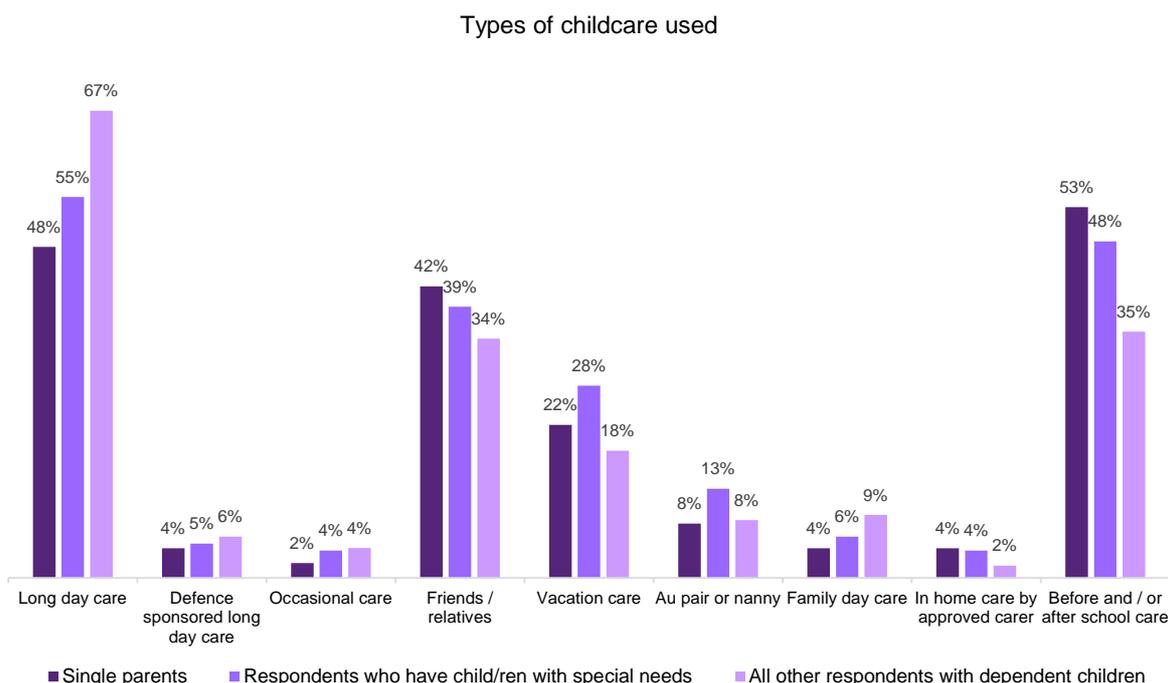
ADF partner underemployment rate by industry group	
Accommodation and Food Services	41%
Retail Trade	33%
Health Care and Social Assistance	28%
Education and Training	28%
Services	27%
Arts and Recreation	25%
Construction	24%
Financial and Insurance Services	17%
Other Services	17%
Administrative and Support Services	16%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	14%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	6%
Public Administration and Safety (including Department of Defence)	6%
Information, Media and Telecommunications	5%
Rental, Hiring, and Real Estate Services	0%

* Figures for agriculture, forestry, fishing, electricity, gas, water and waste services, wholesale trade, mining and manufacturing are not reported due to low counts

Chart 1 – Types of childcare used

As shown below, trends in childcare use vary slightly between different types of parents. Differences in childcare use between single parents and other parents reflects other Families Survey data which shows that single parents are somewhat more likely to have school aged children. Single parents and parents who have children with special needs are also more likely to rely on friends and family for child care. This could reflect that they are more likely to be posted to preferred locations in recognition of their greater need for social and family support.

Childcare use trends for parents of children with special needs may reflect a greater need for respite and tailored care among this group. This is reflected in their comparatively high use of vacation care, before and after school care and au pairs or nannies.



Other types of childcare used by parents include babysitting (including babysitting cooperatives), crèches (such as those in leisure centres or workplaces), after school sport or other extra-curricular programs and kindergartens and pre-schools.

Table 6

Per cent of ADF respondents and partners with Defence recognised dependent children who want childcare located near an ADF establishment	
Sale	42%
Albury & Wodonga	40%
WA - Other	39%
Melbourne	36%
VIC - Other	29%
Cairns & Remote Far North QLD	28%
NT - Other & Alice Springs	27%
ACT - Other	24%
Darwin	24%
Seymour and Puckapunyal	22%
Perth	22%
NSW - Other	22%
Rockingham	22%
Brisbane	20%
Canberra	20%
Hunter Valley	19%
SA - Other	18%
Wagga Wagga	18%
Ipswich	17%
Nowra	17%
QLD - Other	17%
Hobart & rest of Tasmania	17%
Townsville	15%
Adelaide	15%
Central Sydney	14%
Toowoomba & Darling Downs	13%
Queanbeyan	13%
Richmond & Greater Western Sydney	12%
Frankston & Mornington Peninsula	12%
Southern Sydney	11%
Perth Northern Suburbs	0%

Table 7

Per cent of respondents with dependent children who required childcare but could not access it	
WA - Other	21%
Cairns & Remote Far North QLD	16%
Sale	15%
Albury & Wodonga	14%
SA - Other	12%
NSW - Other	11%
Hunter Valley	10%
Queanbeyan	10%
Central Sydney	9%
Melbourne	8%
Richmond & Greater Western Sydney	7%
Darwin	7%
NT - Other & Alice Springs	7%
Canberra	5%
QLD - Other	5%
Adelaide	5%
ACT - Other	4%
Brisbane	4%
Toowoomba & Darling Downs	4%
Townsville	4%
Perth	4%
Seymour & Puckapunyal	3%
Frankston & Mornington Peninsula	3%
Rockingham	3%
Nowra	2%
Wagga Wagga	2%
Ipswich	2%
VIC - Other	2%
Southern Sydney	0%
Hobart & rest of Tasmania	0%
Perth Northern Suburbs	0%

Chart 2 – Perceived usefulness of DCO services

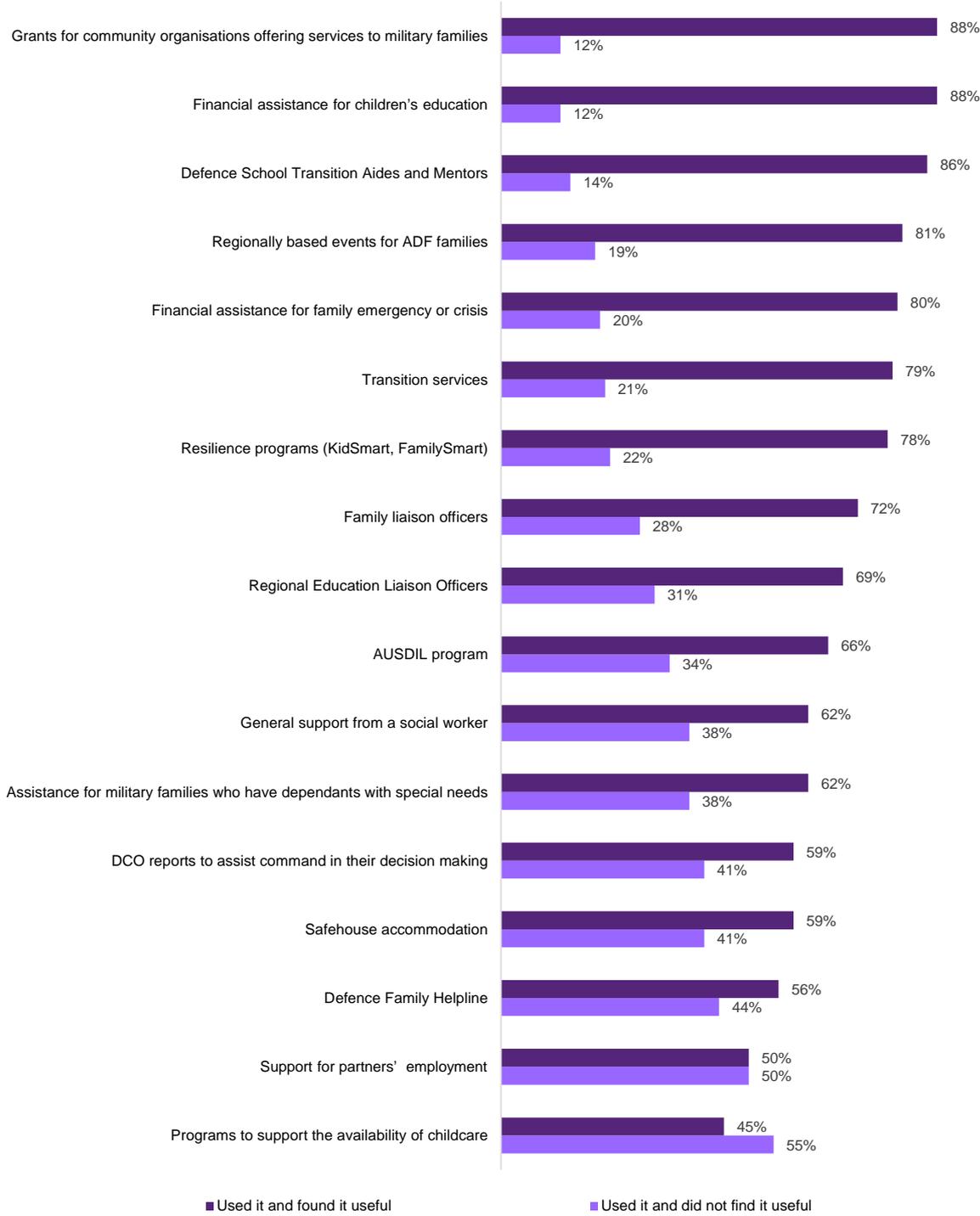


Chart 3 – Perceived usefulness of other services and organisations

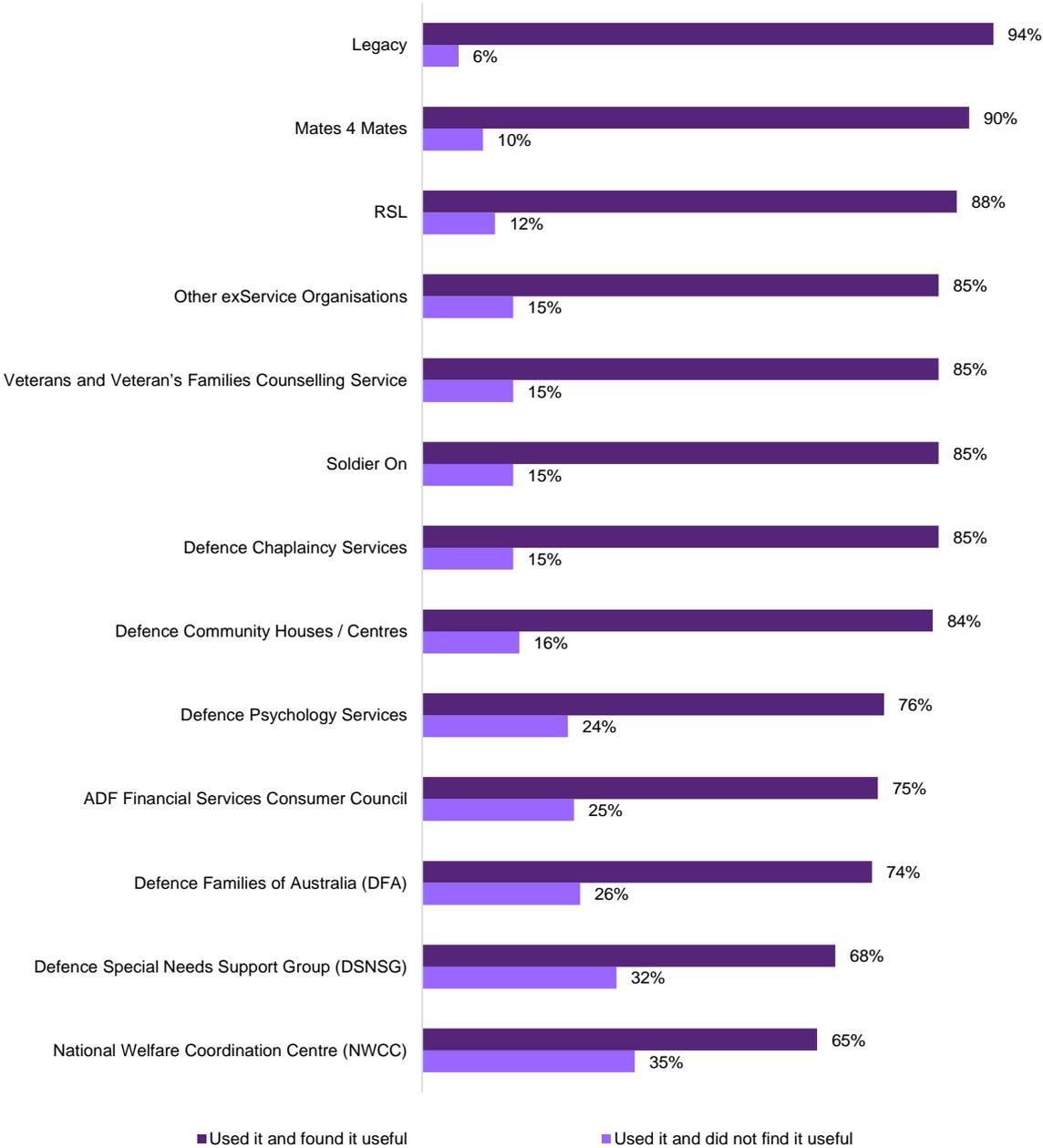


Chart 4 – Perceived usefulness of Defence communications

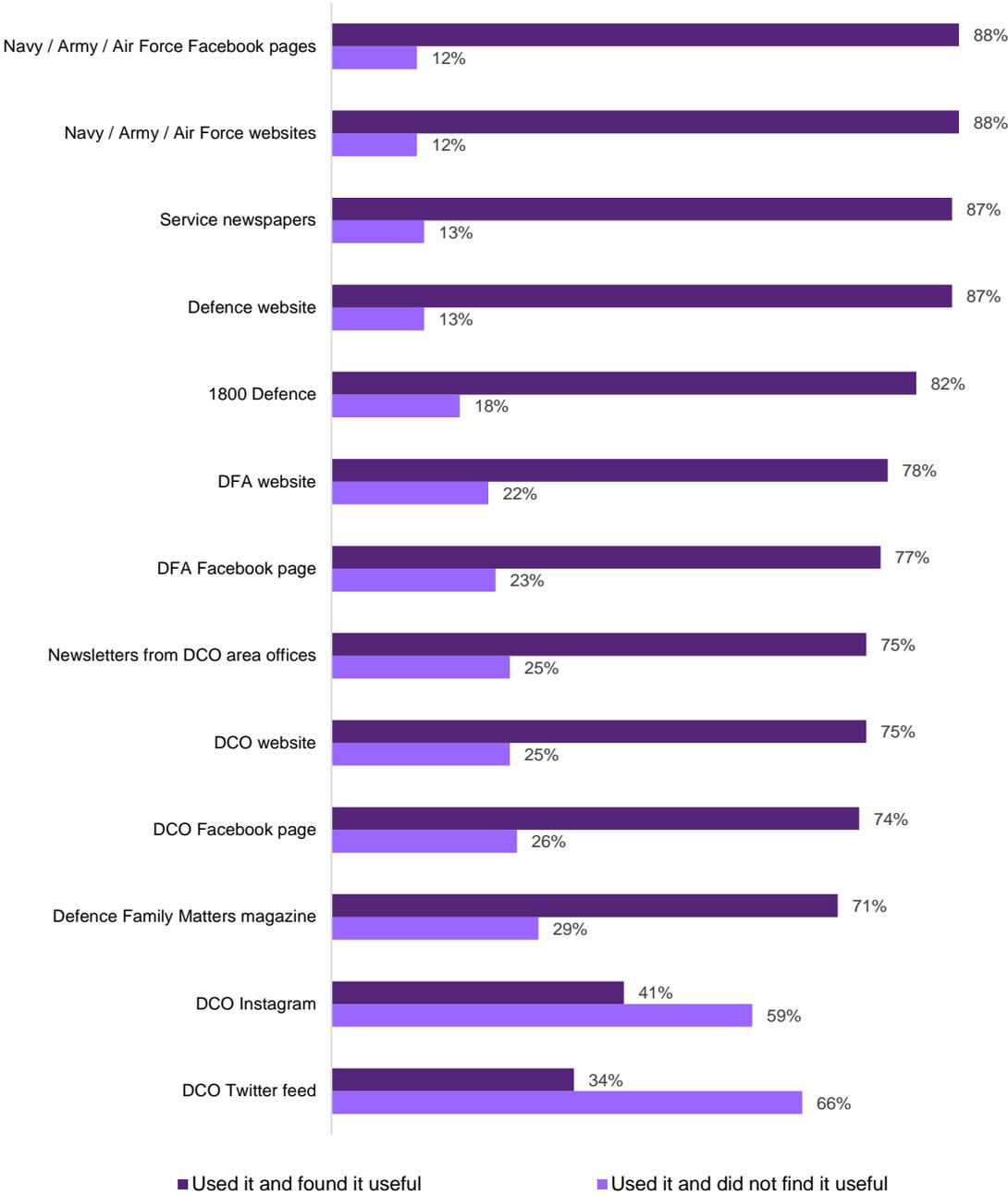
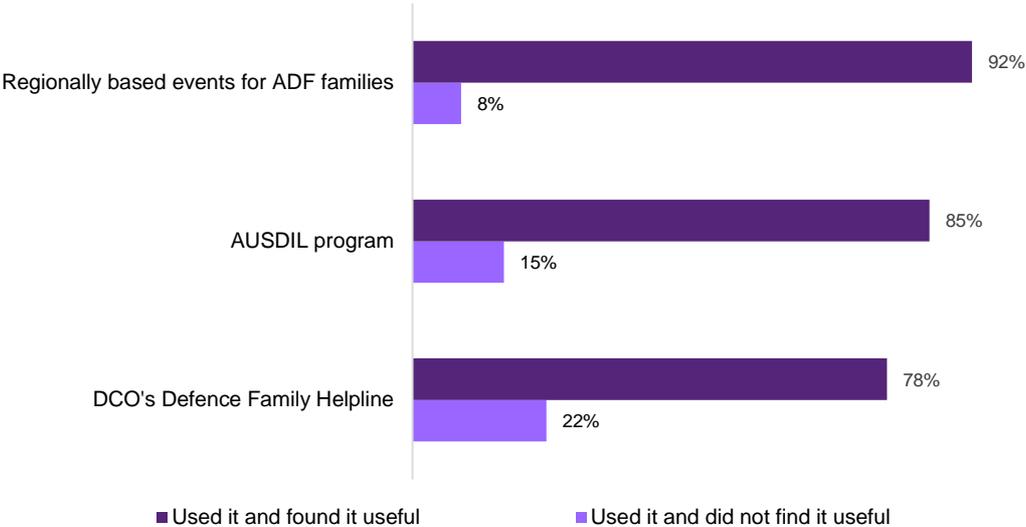


Chart 5 – Perceived usefulness of DCO services – Parents of ADF members



The following charts display ADF Families Survey trends from 2009 to 2017, for items that are common to all three iterations of the survey. Differences between years are not large enough to be statistically significant.

Chart 6 – ADF Families Survey time series trends: Work life balance and wellbeing

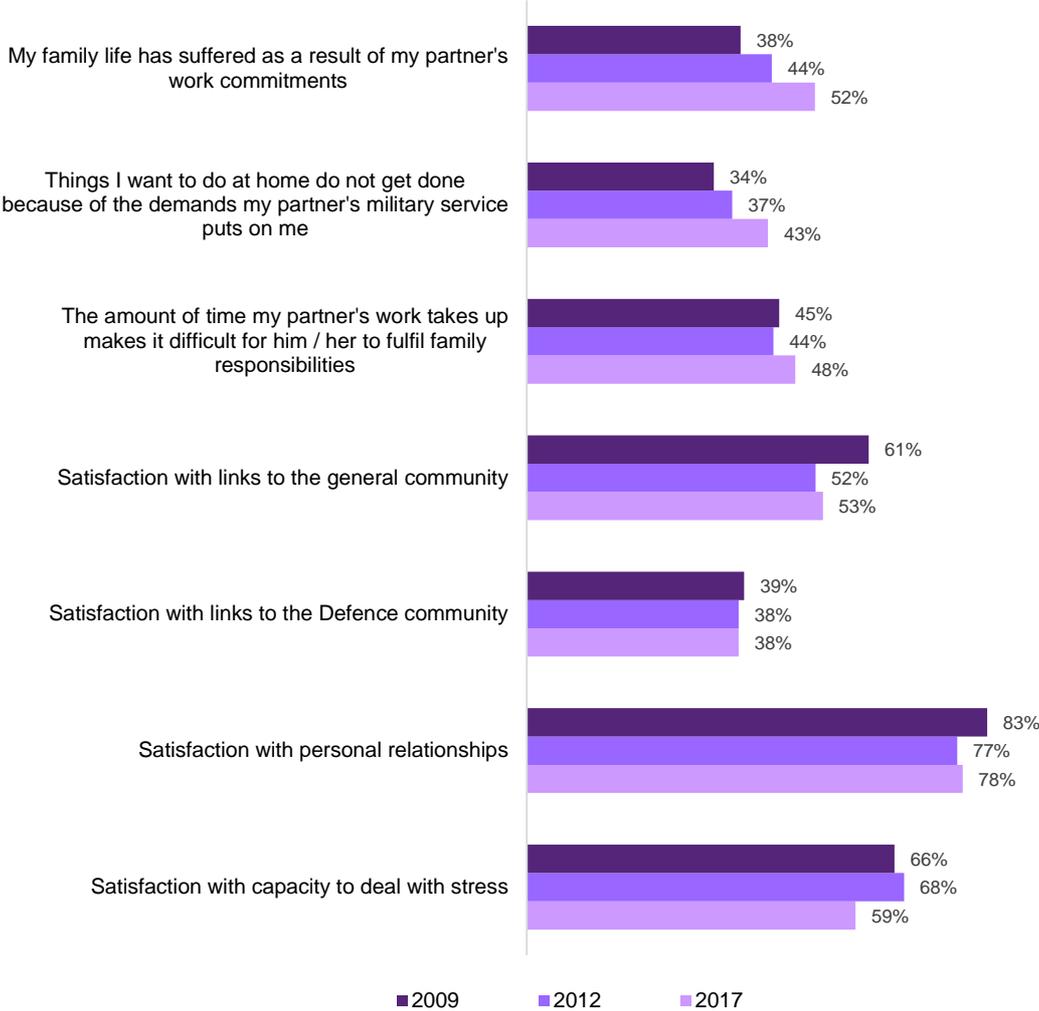
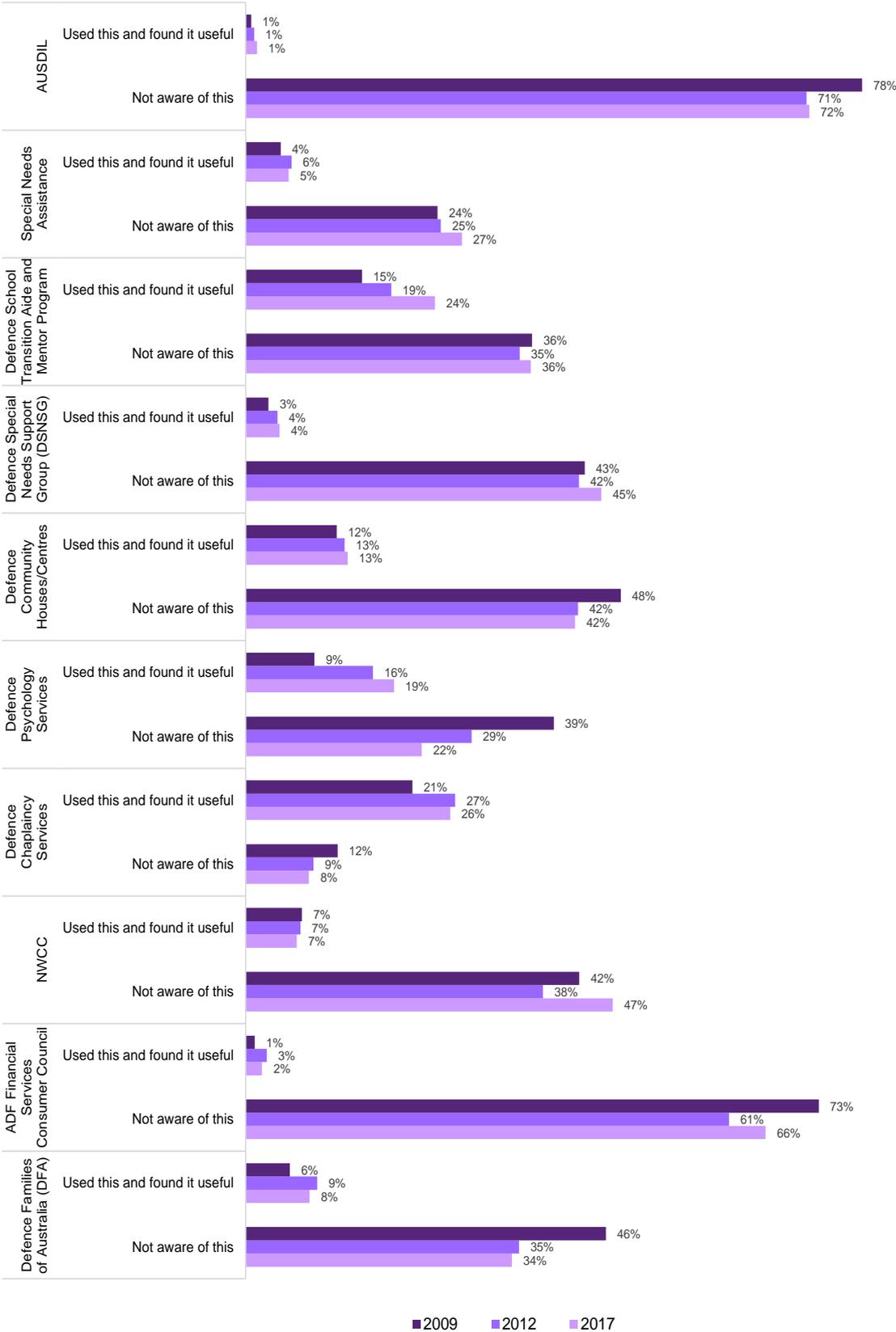


Chart 7 – ADF Families Survey time series trends: Awareness and perceived usefulness of DCO, Defence and other services



Summary of respondent's comments on support for families

For DCO

Easing the challenges of deployments

- Fulfilling promises of welfare checks / visits / calls from DCO.
- Access / referrals to reliable domestic help or financial assistance to pay for services (e.g. lawn mowing, home maintenance).
- A service (or information about non-Defence services) that provides emergency help to families (e.g. for emergency childcare if a parent is hospitalised).
- More communication to families about the deployment support available to them, including clear information about the appropriate agency to contact.
- Better access to or financial support for casual childcare / temporary nannies / au pairs or babysitting services.
- More access to psychological support / counselling services for families of deployed members.

Some debriefs after your partner returns from deployment would be helpful. Again, could be over the phone or a DCO social worker making a home visit. The hardest part is when the partner returns home from deployment. There's a shift in roles and responsibilities.

- Regional / unit support groups/social events for families of deployed members (including not timing them all during work hours).
- Assisting single parent members to find alternative care arrangements for their children so that they can deploy (e.g. temporary foster care or boarding schools).

As a fulltime single dad, the opportunity to be deployed is very much restricted. I recommend Defence looks at ways to improve deployment opportunities or postings at sea for single parents, especially if no family is readily available to support the needs of the parent's absence.

- More information about how to pre-plan administratively and financially for deployments that may be unavoidably at short notice (e.g. for units on short notice to move).

Before the deployment occurs, the family being informed of what is happening and what to expect. Instead of the member packing their bags and 'disappearing' suddenly and the family standing there without any information, debriefing or anything.

- More information to families on operational mental health issues and how to recognise when a member needs intervention.

Some debriefs after your partner returns from deployment would be helpful. Again, could be over the phone or a DCO social worker making a home visit. The hardest part is when the partner returns home from deployment. There's a shift in roles and responsibilities.

Information to spouses/partners/family members of what to expect when a spouse returns e.g. mental wellness, transitioning, ways to make this easier for children, defence member and spouse. People know who they can contact but no information was ever given about what to expect in the return of a spouse.

- Continuing Kidsmart or other children's resilience programs.

Easing the challenges of relocation

- Lobbying the Government to standardise education curriculums and age / year standards across states and territories.
- Financial assistance for dependants' education expenses associated with relocation (e.g. that could be used for uniforms or private school fees to give families a greater choice of schools).
- Local 'welcome' functions following posting cycles (providing information about local services, Defence points of contact and also a local employers' 'expo').

Other types of DCO support

- More information about education systems / curriculum in each state.
- Provision of more Defence School Transition Aides in more schools / locations.
- Not having to pay up front for education tutoring services for children under the Defence Education Assistance Scheme.

When applying for the Defence Education Assistance Scheme, the serving member may not be in a position to pay the costs for tuition up front and then wait for reimbursement. An option for payment to be made directly to the tutoring company or to the ADF member directly, with receipt as proof payment to follow, would be helpful in many cases, especially those on a lower pay scale.

- Provision of local welcome / information packs in all locations.
- DCO and other Defence community activities aimed at increasing family engagement should not always be held during work hours, which makes it difficult for working partners to attend them.
- More advice and information about the implications for relocating for families accessing the NDIS to limit being disadvantaged in terms of access to services.
- More friendly and personalised responses from DCO staff when approached for help.

Having just done my first NDIS plan - I think the Government needs to recognise a special clause that if partner is deployed, the plan can be reviewed within a short period of time to get the family the extra support. We are discharging because our son has autism and sea time, sudden changes to routines are difficult.

For ADF commanders

Easing the challenges of deployment

- Welfare checks / visits / calls from unit representatives (including more / better trained family liaison officers / unit welfare officers).

Before your ADF member is deployed, we are asked if we would like to be contacted by a support team/squadron - paperwork is filled for your consent...7 months of the deployment has gone and not once was the family contacted.

Ensure Unit Welfare Officers are properly skilled to address enquiries from spouses/families, particularly in emergency situations.

- More / improved means of communicating with deployed members (including better internet services on ships, more awareness of the (free) means of sending care packages to members).

I was the XO of an ACPB which consistently suffers from the worst bandwidth in the fleet. Communications between loved ones is often marred by lack of terminal access, slow speed and outdated software and hardware, in addition to the consistent requirements placed on personnel when operational security requires the removal of outside access.

- Ability to attend pre-deployment briefings with members (not just be provided with an information booklet).
- A reliable means of contacting deployed ships / units in case of emergencies.
- More information about what members are doing / achieving on deployment.

I know the members have been given information on security and what they can do and say, and how they will be able to contact their family back home, but that doesn't always get through to the families. Is it possible to have a 'hotline' that families can call to ask all of the 'deployment questions'?

- More communication and certainty about deployment, Relief Out of Country Leave and Return to Australia dates.
- Ensuring that families of deployed members who are not deployed as part of a unit are still contacted by their parent unit.

Some form of contact other than a letter at the beginning of a deployment and some time during deployment would be appreciated, my hubby does not normally deploy with a group from his home unit so I am not involved with deployment activities in the local area.

- Ensuring that ADF partners of deployed members have access to flexible work arrangements.
- Reminding ADF members of their responsibility to share important information with their partners (e.g. sources of deployment support and points of contact at their unit).

I have heard many Defence partners say how they didn't know 'XYZ' was available to them during times of deployment. I think it is the Defence member who is not passing on the information in the first place. Often the Defence member opts out of any/all communication from DCO and units without first speaking to the partner. And some other units don't try to contact partners anyway.

- Not deploying dual ADF couples at the same time (or requiring one member to be away on exercise / course while their partner is deployed).

Other types of command support

- Commanders need to remind members of their responsibility to help their families with information and access to services.
- ADF chains of command be more willing to enable members access to formal and informal flexible work arrangements. Examples include:
 - Flexible start and finish times or time off in lieu to attend family commitments.
 - Enabling greater access to informal flexible work arrangements to compensate for long periods away at sea / on exercises / on deployments.
 - Enabling more access to leave or informal flexible work arrangements around relocations in acknowledgement that partners have work commitments too.
- Defence and chains of command also need to be more aware of the unique needs of members dealing with separation, divorce or family court proceedings. Greater access to family law advice from Defence was noted as a specific idea.

How many Defence members have been involved in marriages that have broken down? Is there an ability for Defence to play a greater role in providing legal support/advice around financial orders, parenting plans, rights and responsibilities of each party?

Because I am an Officer I feel there are more expectations placed on me and I am not able to access available services. I have been told by my chain of command that I cannot apply for flexible working arrangements because I am an Officer. There is not really any acknowledgement that I am a single parent who would like to play an active part in raising his kids.

For Director General Navy Personnel, Director General Personnel-Army and Director General Personnel-Air Force

Easing the challenges of deployments

- More pre and post deployment leave.
- Shorter deployments or more access to Relief Out of Country Leave (ROCL).
- Increased length of time between deployments.

Easing the challenges of relocations

- More advanced notice with postings (to make it easier to arrange employment, childcare and/or schooling).

Early notification of posting to allow time to visit schools (while they are open, not during the typical RTP period). Engagement with school for Defence positions – access to private schooling is problematic due to waiting lists. Our ability to plan 3-5 years is non-existent. Potentially an arrangement with State Education for out of zone placement for education would be beneficial.

- Reduce frequency of relocations/increase posting tenures, particularly for members with high school aged children.
 - Further to this theme, some respondents expressed confusion as to why some members are posted frequently and seem to have little influence, while others are posted infrequently and seem to have more influence over where they go.
- Provide members with more time and opportunity to negotiate posting options (e.g. to try and achieve a balance between Service and family needs).

A two stage interview with SCMA would in my opinion work best, after all we live in the age of technology and Skype! Host a preliminary face to face meeting with the member to discuss options, ideas, what SCMA may have in mind etc. Allow the member to relay that back to the family for discussion...Follow up with a second Skype interview to finalise choices and clarify any questions the member may have. Ideally the interviews should allow partners to be involved as it is also our careers that are impacted on these decisions.

Try to keep families in location for longer periods. My wife has served for 16.5 years and the longest stay in one location was Canberra. She is a hard worker but does not put her career aspirations ahead of her families needs. She and I am sure many serving members would appreciate a more stable home life.

- Not requiring members to relocate within three months of a deployment.
- Consider creating a 'temporary' Member with Dependants (Unaccompanied) category, where a partner of an ADF member can elect to remain in location until he/she finds alternative work in the new location (and have some entitlement to accommodation support).

Financial education

- Financial guidance for buying a home (e.g. to clarify differences between states relating to stamp duty and clarification of the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme).
- Greater awareness of and accessibility to the ADF Financial Services Consumer Council.
- Access / subsidised access to financial planners / advisers who understand ADF remuneration / tax / super system well.
- Expanded eligibility to use (and more promotion of) ADF Relief Trust Fund Loans

- Regional 'expos' or workshops on ADF financial services / schemes (e.g. Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme, salary sacrificing, ADF Family Health Program, super, plus representation from Centrelink on family benefits).
- Provision of financial education (e.g. budgeting) to ADF members at regular intervals throughout their career, but particularly around deployments.

Financial education should be mandatory for especially younger enlisted and appointed members and basic refresher every 5-10 years. Earning a stable income does not equate to financial good sense.

- Greater promotion of family/personal budgeting tools.
- More accessible guidance in relation to preparing claims for military compensation and veterans' benefits.

Mental health support

- Improving the quality of Defence mental health services for ADF members.

The ADF's current mental health attitudes / policy for service members and families is antiquated at best. Given the stress that having a service member deployed can cause, I would have thought that mental health and wellness would be a priority for the ADF and that they would have some of the most forward thinking, innovative and proactive services in place. How wrong can you be?! In my experience, the attitudes to mental health from professionals within the ADF are shockingly bad (bordering on illegal). It is no wonder that there is a very high rate of suicide within the ADF and within family members of service personnel.

For People Policy and Employment Conditions Branch

Clearer and more accessible information on pay and conditions

- Wide distribution of a complete list / explanation of all allowances and benefits available to families in one document or reference guide.
- Clearer and more accessible information on PACMAN and Defence websites about pay and conditions, particularly in relation to leave entitlements and remote locality leave travel.
 - Some comments on this issue indicate that families need greater awareness that such information is readily available from the Defence website and 1800 DEFENCE. While it also suggests that improvements to the utility of PACMAN could be made, ADF members also have a responsibility to assist their families in terms of accessing and interpreting information.

Recognition of dependants

- A review of Defence's current definitions of dependants, including the definitions based on the age of children and the number of nights they need to reside with non-custodial parents. The definition of what a dependent child is needs to reflect the modern reality and diversity of families.
 - One suggestion is that a particular category be identified for non-custodial parents who cannot meet the minimum criteria for their child/ren to be classified as their dependants because of their ADF service commitments (with specific entitlements).

I'd like to see Defence officially recognise Single Non-Custodial parents (SNCP) as a new category status....Some of the entitlements I would propose are:

- 1. Six annual re-uniting visits funded by Defence*
- 2. Posting options that geographically aid physical contact with the member's child.*
- 3. Increase in annual leave specifically for re-uniting visits.*
- 4. A child be recognised as a dependant despite not making the 90 night minimum due to posting locality.*
- 5. Married Quarter housing entitlement/off base entitlement for members posted to a different location to house their child during visits.*

Deployments

- Retaining single parents' categorisation as Member With Dependants when they go on deployment (i.e. not changing it to Member Without Dependants, thereby removing their access to Separation Allowance).

Changing a member from MWD to MWOD when a single parent goes on deployment and gives up their DHA house. This does not help the member feel like defence is supporting them while deployed. Although this category is a house requirement entitlement for most single parents they do not see this. Single parents without a home do not get Separation allowance and feel like they are left out because they are single.

- Review the policies when members are deployed while accompanying an ADF member on an overseas posting.

My husband was deployed while we were on MY posting in the USA. During this time, I had no support provided to me and my overseas living allowance was reduced to MWOD - even though my two dependent children (then aged 3 and 5) remained with me in the US. Apparently, there are no allowances for a member on overseas postings to be categorised MWD if their serving spouse is

deployed outside of my posted locality. This is an outdated policy as it assumes that if the spouse leaves the overseas posted locality, 'she' returns to Australia with the children.

- Provide families of members on long deployments with reunion travel entitlements.

Leave policies

- One to two days a year of 'family leave' or similar type of short leave that members can take to attend family commitments (and can take on an hourly basis).

Home ownership assistance

- Expansion of the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme to include a larger variety of lenders. Also, clearer and more accessible information about new and old schemes and where to provide feedback or make complaints about loan providers.

Housing policy

- Increased eligibility for living in accommodation for members during the initial period of separating from a partner (before a formal separation is arranged and categorisation / eligibility for a service residence is altered).
- Review of service residence rent contributions so that if the residence is empty because a dual ADF couple are both deployed, they should not have to pay the contribution.

I found it interesting that single people that live on base have their rent payments given back to them after a certain amount of time at sea, however despite our DHA house sitting empty whilst both at sea there is nil reimbursement. I tried to find out more information regarding this, but no one had any information.

- Increasing the availability and entitlements to Defence houses with more bedrooms so that families can accommodate family members or paid carers. Being able to do this reduces some of the impact on families when ADF members are absent from home frequently or for long periods.

Additional options to access RA rather than MQ/SR. Due to deployments and extended work hours we normally seek to access an Au Pair. There is no additional bedroom entitlement with DHA, which means I have 2 x teenage daughters sharing a 3 x 4 m bedroom. I would pay more for a RA property that can house my children with a separate room for an au pair however this was not approved.

- Housing entitlement criteria be reviewed and expanded so that housing options are not just based on the rank of member, proximity to the ADF member's workplace and number of children and pets (which can mean that partner preferences and needs are not met).
- Some respondents expressed concern about having to accept poor quality housing or housing in an undesirable suburb/town (e.g. more flexible rules around eligibility to access rental assistance or not being forced to live in an area that is known to be unsafe with high crime rates).
- Many partners want housing eligibility rules to take into account the location of the partner's workplace and preferred schools, not just the ADF member's workplace. Some partners noted that the location of the service residence they were in was a factor in their difficulties with gaining or maintaining employment (e.g. in locations involving long commute times to regional economic and retail centres or a CBD).

Being more compassionate in regards to the houses available on Home Find. Sometimes a house might be (usually is!) in a terrible suburb surrounded by housing commission/council housing sometimes an hour from a partners workplace. They don't seem to understand the incredible stress

this places on people, and the cost of commuting for 2 hours a day! Especially when there are kids involved. I don't want my children attending school with all the neighbourhood thugs and kids with parents in prison. Would you?

In the past DHA has said that placing us in a house that would have taken me 2 hours to get to work on public transport is NOT a valid reason for us to turn down a property so we can receive rent assistance. However the property having a pool or is suitable for our dog is acceptable.

Greater housing flexibility from DHA. We are currently paying rent without any assistance because we do not want to live in Sydney's Western Suburbs. It is not safe for me to be catching public transport home at night from the city after work and uni back to Sydney's Western Suburbs. It is ridiculous that Rental Assistance, as per PACMAN, is granted based on the needs of pets but not on the needs of spouses.

Having a single point of contact (case manager) possibly at DHA might help ADF members and families make sense of some of the disparate information coming from various sources during the process, and alleviate some of the anxiety that naturally occurs during a difficult time.

Relocation policy

- More choice of temporary accommodation or increase the length of time it can be used pre-move.
- Travel entitlement for a family member to travel to new location to help with settling in if the ADF member is absent on duty at new location.
- Extend removal leave entitlement for ADF members.

Allow more time for serving member to actually unpack and be ready for work, it fell to me in the 12 years I was partnered/married to another full time ADF serving member, as the female, to do all the unpacking and the assumption that the wife will stay at home to deal with it all...Calculate from the women who do the actual moving and unpacking how many days it takes them and give that number of days to the member. Double for single members if they have young dependents.

- Introducing separate removal entitlements for dual ADF couples.

As a dual serving couple the removal is based on my entitlement. As we both need a vehicle for Defence work, we reach the 2 vehicle threshold, which means we are required to pay for any recreational vehicles (trailers or motorbike or our child's car to be relocated).

- Review rental assistance entitlements to address the financial disadvantage experienced compared to paying service residence contributions.
- Option to have pre-relocation visits to the new location (based on eligibility criteria).
- Simpler and more accessible information about the relocations process and associated entitlements (particularly disturbance allowance).

A simple one stop shop for relocations. A simple step by step handout for soldiers on exactly what the process is, who is responsible for what and what the member has to do. A simpler fact sheet with your entitlements outlined.

- Access to casual childcare during pre-pack / uplift / delivery days.
- Review the way that relocation entitlements (e.g. temporary accommodation, disturbance allowance) are determined to account for the fact that most relocations occur over Christmas / New Year period and families are travelling for leisure as well as for relocation purposes.

I recommend a Remote Locality Leave Travel style arrangement where Defence is willing to pay up to the cost of the move to our posting location and we are able to fund the difference if we chose to modify this plan...If we fail to arrive in location at the designated time there is no scope to modify the

hotel bookings or larder allowances, instead defence either pays for the whole cost or none at all. The inflexible approach...is one of the greatest causes for stress when we have to relocate.

- Allow members / families to determine their removal dates so that they are suitable for them (rather than just be told by Toll).

Allow the members to select when they wish to move, rather than having Toll decide the cheapest day or time of year.

- Simplifying and reducing the amount of paperwork required.
- Consider creating a 'temporary' Member With Dependents (Unaccompanied) category, where a partner of an ADF member can elect to remain in location until he/she finds alternative work in the new location (and have some entitlement to accommodation support).
- Being able to confirm/secure a service residence earlier than the current six weeks prior to the posting date (to make it much easier to secure preferred schooling / childcare / employment arrangements).
- Expedited vehicle transport, or a vehicle hire allowance.

For Defence Housing Australia

- Improved case management from DHA (including more personalised and compassionate customer service).

Having a single point of contact (case manager) possibly at DHA might help ADF members and families make sense of some of the disparate information coming from various sources during the process, and alleviate some of the anxiety that naturally occurs during a difficult time.

DHA should have a specific person for each family to contact (case manager). Instead of having to retell your story to a new person every time you spin the lottery of the DHA switchboard. No accountability as no one seems to follow one set of rules.

- DHA not accepting new properties until all building defects have been addressed (i.e. not leaving this to members residing in the property to resolve).

We moved into a brand new SR...During our two and a half Welcome inspection with DHA we identified a number of issues with the house that are yet to be rectified despite numerous phone calls, a visit from the company that built the house and an email to DHA....Being at home for defect rectification should not be my responsibility. DHA has an acceptance team who accepted the property from the builder. I'm not convinced they ever set foot on the property, the defects we have identified would be obvious to anyone. DHA has effectively outsourced their responsibility to us! This is unacceptable. Who has agreed for me to use my time to get their property up to an acceptable standard? Defence need to be engaging with DHA and reminding them of their responsibilities to hand over properties that do not require defect remediation.

- Increased availability of service residences near ADF establishments to reduce work commute times and make it easier for members to spend more time with their families.
- Ensuring that service homes are adequately secure (for families to feel safe when ADF members are absent for extended periods).

For Toll Transitions

- Improved service from removal contractors (communication, reliability and quality of service).
- Improved case management from Toll (including processes for claiming losses or damage and more personalised / compassionate customer service). A common thread in these comments was a lack of trust in Toll.
- Improved logistics management from Toll (e.g. correctly estimating shipping containers required / providing more boxes for families to pre-pack).

Monitor the breakages of Toll and hold them accountable. Also we had just one weeks' notice of removal when moving over 3000km. Toll stuffed us around and we ended up out of pocket for the Jetpet reimbursement and we were not provided accommodation on the other end, we slept in the house with no furniture or electricity in 45° heat for 3 days.

Partner posted to barracks and 11 months later his family followed when he returned from a deployment. He originally took his pushbike and a small bar fridge through Toll as suggested. When he returned from deployment he was advised that he had already used his uplift and we had to pay almost \$6000 to move our furniture to Sydney.