



Impact of Military Life on Families and Single Canadian Forces Members

Current State of Knowledge and Research Gaps

Kerry Sudom
*Psychosocial Health Dynamics
Personnel and Family Support Research*

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Defence R&D Canada
Director General Military Personnel Research & Analysis

Chief Military Personnel



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Author

(Original signed by)

Kerry Sudom, PhD

Approved by

(Original signed by)

Sanela Dursun, PhD

Section Head – Personnel and Family Support Research

Approved for release by

(Original signed by)

Kelly Farley, PhD

Chief Scientist – Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis

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Abstract

Families of military members face many challenges as a result of the military lifestyle, including frequent relocation, spousal unemployment and underemployment, and deployment of their military family member to potentially unsafe areas. Since families are impacted by military life, and since they have a profound influence on CF members and the CF organization as a whole, the CF have considered it important to study the impacts of military life on families in support of personnel policies and programs. The purpose of the present report is to review selected research that has been conducted by DGMPPRA on the impacts of military life on families, the impacts of families on CF personnel, and the challenges faced by single members with dependent family members. The overall goal of the report is to present the current state of knowledge on military families and single military members with dependent family members, and to determine the gaps in research that need to be addressed.

Résumé

Les familles des militaires doivent affronter un grand nombre de défis en raison du mode de vie des militaires, dont des réinstallations fréquentes, une situation de chômage ou de sous-emploi pour le conjoint du militaire et le déploiement d'un membre de la famille qui est militaire dans des endroits potentiellement dangereux. Étant donné que le mode de vie des militaires a des répercussions sur les familles et que celles-ci ont une grande influence sur les militaires ainsi que sur l'ensemble de l'organisation des FC, les Forces considèrent qu'il est important de se pencher sur ce sujet dans le but de soutenir les politiques et les programmes relatifs au personnel. L'objectif du présent rapport est d'évaluer la recherche sélectionnée qui a été menée par le DGRAPM relativement aux répercussions de la vie militaire sur les familles, l'influence des familles sur le personnel des FC et les défis auxquels sont confrontés les militaires célibataires ayant des personnes à leur charge. Le but général du rapport est de faire état des connaissances actuelles relativement aux familles des militaires et aux militaires célibataires qui ont des personnes à leur charge, ainsi que de déterminer les lacunes en matière de recherche qui doivent être corrigées.

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Executive summary

Impact of Military Life on Families and Single Canadian Forces Members: Current State of Knowledge and Research Gaps

Kerry Sudom; DGMPRA TM 2012-008; Defence R&D Canada – DGMPRA; May 2012.

Background: Families of military members face many challenges as a result of the military lifestyle, including frequent relocation, spousal unemployment and underemployment, and deployment of their military family member to potentially unsafe areas. Since families are impacted by military life, and since they have a profound influence on CF members and the CF organization as a whole, the CF have considered it important to study the impacts of military life on families in support of personnel policies and programs (Dursun, 2006; Sudom & Dursun, 2007). To date, two surveys have been conducted of spouses and common-law partners of CF personnel in order to examine the impacts of military life on families (Dursun & Sudom, 2009; Sudom, 2010). However, many other studies have examined this important topic indirectly, through the inclusion of survey questions related to families. In addition to families in which one or both parents is a serving CF member, the needs of single members who may have other dependent family members (parents, siblings) may experience unique challenges, particularly at certain points in the military lifecycle such as transition to civilian life. However, this group has not been studied. Although research has traditionally focused on spouses¹ and children of military members, since they are typically the most directly affected by postings and deployments, family-related impacts of the military lifestyle can also affect single members with dependants, including those with dependants other than a spouse or children.

Aim: The purpose of the present report is to review selected research on the impacts of military life on families, the impacts of families on CF personnel, and the challenges faced by single members with dependants using existing sources of data from recent surveys conducted by DGMPRA. The goal of the report is to present the current state of knowledge on military families and single military members with dependent family members, and to determine the gaps in research that need to be addressed.

Results: Families may have unique needs throughout the military member's career, particularly when relocating due to a posting, during deployments, at the point of transition into civilian life, and when the military member dies during service. For example, during postings, many spouses of CF members report finding it difficult to re-establish medical services, employment, social support networks, and childcare when they relocate. Deployments may present challenges such as temporarily being a single parent, and behavioural issues among children whose CF parent is deployed. Furthermore, deployments may be especially challenging for single parents.

¹ Throughout this report, the term “spouse” includes both legally married and common-law partners. In addition, use of the term “married” also includes common-law relationships.

For dependants, the most challenging experience may be the potential death of the CF member. For those parents and siblings who are financially dependent upon their CF family member, his or her death will create financial hardship, in addition to the emotional suffering associated with the loss of their loved one. However, families also face non-financial issues when they transition from military to civilian life. For example, dependants living with a CF member in military housing must transition to civilian housing upon the CF member's death. There is a paucity of research on the needs of families when a CF member transitions to civilian life or when the CF member dies. Nonetheless, it is recognized that families require support during these times, and future research is planned on CF veterans' experiences with transition (as they relate to the family).

Single members with dependent parents or siblings may also have unique issues associated with the military lifestyle. The effects on dependent parents and siblings have not been studied, since it has been assumed that they are impacted less by military-related moves of residence than spouses and children (although it has been recognized that some do live and move with the military member). However, research comparing single and married members has shown some differences in their attitudes and experiences. Single members may experience issues such as difficulty establishing and maintaining relationships, and may perceive that they are more often chosen for tasks that allow married members to have time with their families. In the Reserve Force, single members had lower rates of awareness and usage of benefits related to transition to civilian life when compared with married members; although the rate at which singles with parent or sibling dependants were aware of or accessed benefits is unknown. Further research into the concerns of single CF members with dependent parents or siblings is needed in order to determine their specific concerns.

Sommaire

Répercussion de la vie de militaire sur les familles et les militaires célibataires des FC : Connaissances actuelles et écarts en matière de recherche

Kerry Sudom ; DGMPRA TM 2012-008 ; R & D pour la défense Canada – DGRAPM; mai 2012.

Contexte : Les familles des militaires doivent affronter un grand nombre de défis en raison du mode de vie des militaires, dont des réinstallations fréquentes, une situation de chômage ou de sous-emploi pour le conjoint du militaire et le déploiement d'un membre de la famille qui est militaire dans des endroits potentiellement dangereux. Étant donné que le mode de vie des militaires a des répercussions sur les familles et que celles-ci ont une grande influence sur les membres ainsi que sur l'ensemble de l'organisation des FC, les Forces considèrent qu'il est important de se pencher sur ce sujet dans le but de soutenir les politiques et les programmes relatifs au personnel (Dursun, 2006; Sudom et Dursun, 2007). Jusqu'à ce jour, deux enquêtes ont été menées auprès des conjoints mariés et des conjoints de fait du personnel des FC dans le but d'analyser les effets de la vie des militaires sur les familles (Dursun et Sudom, 2009; Sudom, 2010). Beaucoup d'autres études ont toutefois porté de manière indirecte sur ce sujet important, au moyen de questions d'enquête portant sur les familles. En plus des besoins des familles dont un parent ou les deux sont des militaires actifs des FC, ceux des militaires célibataires qui peuvent avoir d'autres personnes à leur charge (un parent, un frère ou une sœur) peuvent constituer des défis particuliers, notamment à certains moments dans la vie d'un militaire, comme lors de la transition à la vie civile. Ce groupe n'a toutefois pas été étudié. Même si les recherches effectuées ont toujours porté principalement sur les conjoints¹ et les enfants des militaires, puisqu'ils sont habituellement les plus directement touchés par les affectations et les déploiements des militaires, les répercussions familiales du mode de vie des militaires peuvent également se faire sentir sur les militaires célibataires qui ont des personnes à leur charge autres qu'un conjoint ou un enfant.

Objectif : L'objectif du présent rapport est d'évaluer les renseignements qui ont été recueillis de recherche sélectionnée sur les répercussions de la vie de militaire sur les familles, l'influence des familles sur le personnel des FC et les défis auxquels sont confrontés les militaires célibataires ayant des personnes à leur charge, au moyen des sources de données existantes obtenues lors des récentes enquêtes menées par le DGRAPM. Le but général du rapport est de faire état des connaissances actuelles relativement aux familles des militaires et aux militaires célibataires qui ont des personnes à leur charge, ainsi que de déterminer les lacunes en matière de recherche qui doivent être corrigées.

¹ Dans ce rapport, le terme « conjoint » se rapporte à un conjoint marié et à un conjoint de fait. De plus, l'utilisation du terme « marié » inclut également l'union de fait.

Résultats : Les familles peuvent avoir des besoins particuliers tout au long de la carrière d'un militaire, notamment lors de la réinstallation à la suite d'une affectation, d'un déploiement, d'une transition à la vie civile et du décès d'un militaire dans l'exercice de ses fonctions. À titre d'exemple, au moment d'une affectation, beaucoup de conjoints des militaires des FC font état de la difficulté d'entreprendre de nouvelles démarches pour s'inscrire à des services de santé, se trouver un emploi, se construire un réseau de soutien social et trouver une garderie à la suite d'un déménagement. Les déploiements peuvent comporter des défis, comme devoir être mère ou père monoparental temporairement et les problèmes de comportement chez les enfants dont le parent militaire participe à un déploiement. De plus, un déploiement peut s'avérer particulièrement éprouvant pour les parents célibataires.

Pour les personnes à charge, l'expérience la plus éprouvante est sans doute les risques de décès d'un militaire des FC. Pour les parents, les frères et les sœurs à la charge d'un militaire des FC sur le plan financier, le décès de ce dernier créera des difficultés financières en plus de la souffrance liée à la perte de l'être cher. Toutefois, les familles doivent également composer avec des questions autres que financières en lien avec la transition de la vie de militaire à la vie civile. À titre d'exemple, pour les personnes à charge qui vivent avec un militaire des FC dans un logement militaire, le décès de ce dernier exige une éventuelle transition dans un logement civil. Les recherches servant à faire état des besoins des familles au moment de la transition d'un militaire à la vie civile ou lors du décès d'un militaire des FC sont présentement peu nombreuses. On reconnaît toutefois que les familles ont besoin de soutien durant ces moments et davantage de recherches sur les expériences des anciens militaires des FC à propos de la transition sont prévues dans l'avenir, puisque ce sujet se rapporte également à la famille.

En plus des familles avec des enfants, les militaires célibataires peuvent devoir composer avec des problèmes propres à leur situation et en lien avec le mode de vie des militaires, notamment pour ceux qui ont un parent, un frère ou une sœur à leur charge. Il se peut que les parents, les frères et les sœurs à la charge d'un militaire ne subissent pas de répercussions aussi directes que les conjoints et les enfants (même si l'on constate que certains déménagent et habitent avec le militaire) à la suite d'un déménagement dans un contexte militaire. Les recherches qui comparent les militaires célibataires et mariés ont toutefois révélé quelques différences relativement aux attitudes adoptées et aux expériences vécues. Les militaires célibataires peuvent devoir affronter des difficultés, telles que créer et entretenir des relations, et peuvent croire qu'ils sont choisis plus fréquemment pour accomplir des tâches qui permettent aux militaires mariés de passer plus de temps en famille. Au sein de la Force de réserve, les militaires célibataires présentaient un taux de sensibilisation et de perception de prestations en lien avec la transition à la vie civile qui est inférieur à celui des militaires mariés, même si la proportion de militaires célibataires ayant un parent, un frère ou une sœur à leur charge qui connaissaient l'existence de ces prestations ou qui y avaient recours est inconnue. Des recherches plus approfondies sur les problèmes vécus par les militaires célibataires des FC qui ont un parent, un frère ou une sœur à leur charge sont nécessaires afin de déterminer les problèmes précis que ces militaires doivent affronter.

Table of contents

Abstract	i
Résumé	i
Executive summary	iii
Sommaire	v
Table of contents	vii
List of figures	viii
List of tables	viii
Acknowledgements	ix
1 Introduction.....	1
2 Influence of the Family on Canadian Forces Members	2
2.1 Spousal/Partner Employment and Income Project	2
2.2 Canadian Forces Exit Survey	3
2.3 Navy Recruiting Study	4
2.4 Attrition Study	5
2.5 Summary	5
3 Impacts of Military Life on Spouses.....	6
4 Impacts of Military Life on Children.....	9
5 Challenges Faced by Single Canadian Forces Members	12
6 Summary and Research Gaps	14
7 Conclusions.....	16
References	18
List of symbols/abbreviations/acronyms/initialisms	21
Distribution list.....	23

List of figures

Figure 1: Child Behaviours during Deployment – Quality of Life among Military Families: A Survey of Spouses/Partners of CF Members (n = 934) (Sudom, 2010)	11
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List of tables

Table 1: Reasons for Leaving the CF: Spousal/Partner Employment and Income Project (n = 211)	3
Table 2: Dissatisfaction with Family-Related Issues and their Influence on Leave Decisions	4
Table 3: Spousal Employment Experience Relating to CF Career – Spousal/Partner Employment and Income Project (n = 1500)	7
Table 4: Difficulties with Re-establishment of Prior Activities when Relocated – Spousal/Partner Employment and Income Project (n = 1180)	8
Table 5: Dissatisfaction and Influence of Respondents with Children as a function of Marital Status – CF Exit Survey 2008-2011 (n = 1122)	10

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1 Introduction

Families of military members face many challenges as a result of the military lifestyle, including frequent relocation, spousal unemployment and underemployment, and deployment of their military family member to potentially unsafe areas. Since families are impacted by military life, and since they have a profound influence on Canadian Forces (CF) members and the CF organization as a whole, the CF have considered it important to study the impact of military life on families in support of personnel policies and programs (Dursun, 2006; Sudom & Dursun, 2007). Two previous surveys have been conducted of spouses and common-law partners of CF personnel in order to examine the impacts of military life on families (*Perstempo Survey of CF Spouses/Partners*, Dursun & Sudom, 2009; *Quality of Life Survey of Spouses/Partners of CF Members*, Sudom, 2010). However, many other studies have examined this important topic indirectly, through the inclusion of survey questions related to families. In addition to families in which one or both parents is a serving CF member, single members with other dependent family members (e.g., parents, siblings) may experience unique challenges, particularly at certain points in the military lifecycle, such as transition to civilian life. However, this group has not been studied. Research has traditionally focused on spouses² and children of military members, since they are typically the most directly affected by postings and deployments; nonetheless, family-related impacts of the military lifestyle can also affect single members.

A data extraction from the CF Human Resources Management System (HRMS; Feb 2011) showed a total of 68,787 CF Regular Force members, of whom 35% were married, 14% were in a common-law relationship, and 33% were single. Of those who were single, the majority (89.7%) had no dependants, while the remainder declared dependants with various relationships, including children or stepchildren, parents, or siblings (Human Resources Management System, 2011). Although it is not possible to determine how many of these dependent relatives actually live (and move) with their CF family member, some may be financially dependent upon the CF member while residing elsewhere (e.g., children of a member who live with the other parent or an elderly parent of the member who resides in a nursing home).

The purpose of this report is to review the relevant research from DGMPPRA on the impacts of military life on families, the impacts of families on CF personnel, and the challenges faced by single members with dependent family members.³ The goal of the report is to present the current state of knowledge on military families and single military members with families, and to determine the gaps in research that need to be addressed.

² Throughout this report, the term “spouse” includes both legally married and common-law partners. In addition, use of the term “married” also includes common-law relationships.

³ Unless otherwise specified, the data presented in this report are not weighted.

2 Influence of the Family on Canadian Forces Members

2.1 Spousal/Partner Employment and Income Project

Families can have a considerable influence on military members, including members' decisions to stay in or leave the CF. Research conducted on CF personnel and their families has demonstrated that some of the most important factors affecting retention are family-related (Pépin, Sudom & Dunn, 2006). In particular, spousal employment has been documented as a key reason for personnel leaving the CF (Parker, 1991; Thivierge, 1998; Jenkins, 2003). Moreover, the negative impact of military life on spousal income and employment, particularly in terms of the financial impact of being posted, has been reported as a significant source of dissatisfaction for CF personnel (Dunn & Morrow, 2002). Data used for the Spousal/Partner Employment and Income Project (SPEI) extracted from the Fall 2008 *Your-Say*⁴ *Regular Forces Survey* (YSS) of CF members showed that approximately 37% of CF personnel reported that they intended to leave the CF within the next three years. As Table 1 shows, many members reported that the impact on their spouse's career influenced their intention to leave.⁵ Other family-related factors, including lack of work-family balance and spouses' preference for leaving the CF, were also influential in members' decisions. In fact, six of the top ten reasons for intending to leave the CF were family-related.

⁴ For the November-December 2008 administration, the focus section of the *Your Say Survey* (YSS) was devoted to spousal employment and income. For the purposes of the SPEI project, several exclusions were made: CF personnel who were single, widowed, divorced or did not reveal their marital status; CF personnel who had spouses in the CF (Regular Force or Reservists); CF personnel with male spouses; and CF personnel who did not indicate their L1 affiliation. The final YSS data set used for the SPEI project consisted of 572 cases. The results presented are based on weighted data.

⁵ Respondents must have answered "yes" to the item, "Do you intend to leave the CF within the next three years?" in order to respond to these items.

Table 1: Reasons for Leaving the CF: Spousal/Partner Employment and Income Project (n = 211)

To what extent have the following factors influenced your decision to leave the CF?	Considerable/Very Considerable Influence (%)
A desire to stay in one place	55.9
My physical/psychological well-being	54.2
Retirement	42.8
A lack of work/family balance	38.7
Lack of options for flexible work practices and career breaks	38.7
Lack of career opportunities for spouse/partner	29.0
Due to my spouse/partner's job/career	26.9
My spouse/partner would prefer that I leave the CF	26.9
Family responsibilities (e.g., caring for aging parent)	18.9
Lack of family support systems	17.1
Dissatisfaction with CF housing services	11.0
Family isolation/lack of social support	10.1
Dissatisfaction with relocation services	8.9
Lack of education opportunities for my spouse/partner	7.2%
Lack of suitable childcare services	5.7%
Complications resulting from being a dual-service couple	0.3%

2.2 Canadian Forces Exit Survey

Insight into the impact of families on members' intentions to leave the CF is also found in the *CF Exit Survey*. The *Exit Survey* is offered to all Regular Force members who are voluntarily releasing from the CF. It assesses departing members' perceptions of several organizational issues (e.g., job, working relationships in their unit, supervisor, work-life balance, postings and family) and the extent to which these variables influenced decisions to leave the CF. Table 2 shows that the 2008-2011 *Exit Survey* found that many CF members reported that family issues, including time available to spend with family, and the effects postings have had on their ability to settle down in one area, were sources of dissatisfaction and were influential in their decisions to leave the CF (Michaud, under review).

Table 2: Dissatisfaction with Family-Related Issues and their Influence on Leave Decisions

	Dissatisfied (%)	Very or Extremely Influenced (%)
Time available to spend with their family	31.7	37.2
The effects postings have had on the opportunity to settle down in a certain area	25.8	32.0
The effects postings have had on their ability to maintain family stability	27.4	33.8
The effects postings have had on their partner/spouses' employment	23.4	26.4
CF support for their family during their extended absences	20.6	19.8
The effects postings have had on their children's education	9.0	14.1

2.3 Navy Recruiting Study

A number of issues related to family were reported in the *Navy Recruiting Study*. The study, which consisted of focus group sessions and a short survey, was conducted in Halifax and Esquimalt with recruits who were on or awaiting their naval occupational training (Williams, Hachey, & St-Pierre, 2010). The study gathered information on awareness and the image of the CF/Navy, awareness and influence of attraction strategies, reasons for joining (or not joining), and perceptions of the recruiters/recruiting process. Participants discussed their unwillingness to continually uproot their families (or future families), mentioning that the Navy offers greater geographical stability and would provide a more stable home environment, as opposed to the many different and often isolated locations one could be posted to during a career in the Army or Air Force. As one respondent put it: "The biggest reason for joining the Navy? A wife and kid in Victoria. I don't have to worry about shifting family around" (Williams *et al.*, 2010; p. 20). Although travel was the most common reason that participants joined the Navy, they acknowledged that others might see it as a disadvantage. This was perceived to be especially true for those with families, since being in the Navy involves frequent trips away from home in addition to deployments. Almost all participants perceived travel to be an attractive aspect of the Navy; at the same time, they felt that it contributed to an unstable family life, suggesting that time away from home was not "marriage friendly" (Williams *et al.*, 2010; p. 23), that there was a high divorce rate in the CF, and that people miss their spouses and children. The effects of deployments on family were also mentioned in the 2008 *Primary Reserve Study*, in which over half of respondents indicated that family responsibilities influenced their decision to apply for deployments, a factor which outweighed other potential influences such as length of deployment (Fraser & Powers, 2009).

2.4 Attrition Study

The Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School (CFLRS) conducted an attrition study examining the factors contributing to recruits' and Officer Cadets' (OCdts) decisions to leave the CFLRS before completing their training (Michaud, 2010). It revealed that family-related issues were the predominant reasons for participants' decisions to voluntarily release from the CF. These included divorce, problems at home, being away from home and their children, sickness or death of a loved one, spouse being not supportive of a military career, or some kind of crisis related to a loved one. A quotation from one participant reflects the variety of issues that a recruit in training may face:

I have quit a full time job to be here. I got here and I miss my family; it is the hardest part; I have been married 14 years and we have never been apart; I realized that would happen a lot if I was in the NAVY; I did know that mentally but did not realize it would be actually so hard to be away from them; then I thought that I would have to move them all the time; it is not the kind of lifestyle I want for my kids; further I have a mortgage, a car; my wife is struggling at home and I feel guilty, useless; unhappy I missed Halloween with my kids (Michaud, 2010, p. 13.).

2.5 Summary

In sum, these surveys indicate that family has a considerable influence on the CF member. The effects of military life on the family, including the disruptive effects of postings on spouses' employment and children's education and the lack of stability associated with moving and deployments, may have an impact on CF members' decisions to stay in or leave the CF.

3 Impacts of Military Life on Spouses

Families exercise considerable influence on military members, particularly on their decisions to remain in the CF. Meanwhile, aspects of military life—such as postings, deployments and time away—can negatively influence the well-being of family members. In particular, these aspects of military life can make it difficult for spouses of CF personnel to obtain and maintain employment. Social trends in Canadian society over the past decade, such as the rising number of dual-income families,⁶ suggest that military spouses are more likely to want the option of being gainfully employed.⁷ After all, dual-income families are the norm nowadays for a variety of reasons. At the same time, the CF career management system maintains the continuous movement of its personnel through postings, which is an important aspect of a military career (Coulthard & Dunn, 2009).

The impact of military life on the employment and income of spouses can be found in data from the SPEI project, which was extracted from the *Quality of Life among Military Families: A Survey of Spouses/Partner of CF Members* (QOL).⁸ Table 3 shows that the majority of spouses of military members (68.1%) reported that the CF has had a negative impact on their employment. Approximately 50% of spouses reported that they have had to make employment or career sacrifices because of their military partner's CF career, while a smaller percentage reported being under-employed, overqualified, or unemployed (Table 3).

⁶ According to Statistics Canada (*The Daily*, Dec 16, 2010), 64% of families were dual-income in 2008, up from 47% in 1976.

⁷ In 2004, 73% of all women with children under 16 living at home were working compared to 39% in 1976 (*Statistics Canada: Women in Canada*, fifth edition, 2006).

⁸ In order to draw comparisons with other populations, several exclusions were made for the purposes of the SPEI project: spouses of Reservists; spouses who did not reveal their marital status; spouses who were in the CF; male spouses; and spouses who did not indicate their own gender, or their CF spouse's rank or environment. The results presented are based on weighted data.

Table 3: Spousal Employment Experience Relating to CF Career – Spousal/Partner Employment and Income Project (n = 1500)⁹

Which of the following best describes the employment experience during your relationship with your military spouse/partner?	%
My spouse/partner's career has had a positive impact on my employment or career	4.7
My employment or career has not been affected by my spouse/partner's military career	24.0
I have made some employment or career sacrifices because of my spouse/partner's military career	49.9
I am "under-employed" or overqualified for the work I am doing because of my spouse/partner's military career	9.5
I am unemployed or my career has been severely affected by the demands of my spouse/partner's military career	8.7
N/A – I have not sought employment since being with my military spouse/partner	3.3

The SPEI project also sought to examine education levels, employment status and income of CF spouses against comparable groups.¹⁰ As reported in Dunn, Urban, and Wang (2010), female spouses of CF personnel were generally found to have lower education levels when compared with other groups. In particular, fewer female spouses of CF members had university level education than female spouses of police officers and federal public service employees (FPSs). While 22.7% of CF members' spouses had a bachelor's degree or higher, spouses of police officers (29.6%) and FPSs (38.0%) were more likely to have attained this level of education.

Research has shown a consistent relationship between education and employment, such that higher education levels correlate with higher employment rates and salaries (Statistics Canada, 2010). Accordingly, female spouses of CF personnel were less likely to have a university education, in addition to being less likely to be employed. Approximately a fifth of female spouses were not in the labour force (21.5%), compared to 18.6% of spouses of other civilians, 16.1% of spouses of police officers, and 15.1% of spouses of FPSs. Furthermore, the rate of unemployment (i.e., not in the labour force but seeking employment) was highest for CF spouses at 5.1%, compared to police officers (3.5%), FPSs (3.7%), and other civilian spouses (4.3%).

⁹ Respondents could select only one of the six responses.

¹⁰ Groups were derived from data from the Statistics Canada 2006 long-form census: female (non-military) spouses of CF personnel; female spouses of male Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), or Sûreté du Québec personnel; female spouses of male federal public service employees; and female spouses of males not in the CF, police or FPS.

In line with the SPEI findings on lower educational attainment and employment levels, female spouses of CF personnel also had lower income. Female spouses of CF members represent the lowest percentage (6.7%) in the employment income category of \$60,000 or more when compared to other civilians (9.9%), police officers (16.1%), and FPSs (19.2%). In addition, females with no employment income comprised 16.4% of CF spouses, compared with between 11.5% and 15.1% among the other groups. Female spouses of CF members also had lower average employment income when compared with the other groups, regardless of geographic location (Dunn *et al.*, 2010).

The impacts of the military on spouses' education, employment, and earnings may be related to moves of residence. Not surprisingly, the SPEI study found that female spouses of CF personnel were more likely to move to a different province than the other groups (Dunn *et al.*, 2010).

CF spouses were asked how difficult it was to re-establish certain aspects of their lives after relocation. Table 4 illustrates that the four highest percentages in the "extremely difficult" response category were medical services, spousal seniority at work, spousal employment, and support networks/social contacts.

Table 4: Difficulties with Re-establishment of Prior Activities when Relocated – Spousal/Partner Employment and Income Project (n = 1180)

When you have relocated, how difficult has it been to re-establish the following?	% Responding "Extremely Difficult"¹¹
Medical services	41.9
Your seniority at work	32.2
Your employment	31.1
Your support network/social contacts	30.7
Childcare	15.7
Your professional certifications	13.2
Housing	10.4
Your family's day-to-day routines	9.4
Your educational requirements	9.1
Access to transport	8.7
Access to services to support your family's special needs	8.1
Schooling for children	3.7

¹¹ Results are based on weighted data.

4 Impacts of Military Life on Children

Several aspects of military life can affect childcare and children's education. Frequent postings, frequent or extended absences of the military member, short notice scheduling changes, and postings to smaller communities or remote locations can all affect a CF member's ability to find and maintain suitable childcare and can be disruptive to children's education. Childcare issues can include difficulties finding suitable childcare, the high cost of childcare, long waiting lists, finding care for unique needs, such as during deployments, and problems obtaining emergency childcare during deployment. Concerns around education include children's adjustment to new schools, disruptions in education, and availability of special education for learning disabilities. These issues may be particularly challenging for single parents, and for dual-career CF couples in which both individuals are serving CF members. Although no specific research has been conducted on the children of CF members, a number of surveys of members and members' spouses provide some insight into the challenges faced by members with children and those faced by children themselves.

The *CF Exit Survey* found that regardless of marital status, more than a quarter of respondents with children were dissatisfied with the time available to spend with their families, CF support for their families during extended absences, and the effects postings had on their ability to maintain family stability and their partner/spouses' employment (Table 5). Fifteen percent of respondents were dissatisfied with the effects their postings had on their children's education. Overall, these factors appeared to be very or extremely influential in the decision to leave the CF in about a quarter of respondents (Michaud, unpublished data).¹²

Looking at differences based on marital status, Table 5 shows that divorced/widowed respondents with children tended to be more dissatisfied with the time available to spend with their families and the effects their postings had had on their ability to maintain family stability. Married respondents with children tended to be more dissatisfied with the effects their postings had had on their children's education, and to be (comparatively) more influenced in their decision to leave the CF by the effects their postings had had on their partner/spouses' employment. Single members with children were more likely to be dissatisfied by the effects their postings had on the opportunity to settle down in a certain area, and their decision to leave was more strongly influenced by the effects their postings had on their ability to maintain family stability.

¹² Results presented here are from the surveys conducted from 2008-2011, which have not yet been published. Data were analysed for the purpose of this report.

Table 5: Dissatisfaction and Influence of Respondents with Children as a function of Marital Status – CF Exit Survey 2008-2011 (n = 1122)

	% Dissatisfied			% very or Extremely Influenced		
	Single	Married/ Common-law	Divorced/ Widowed	Single	Married/ Common-law	Divorced/ Widowed
Time available to spend with their family	25.9	25.8	34.2	26.9	35.2	34.2
CF support for their family during their extended absences	10.7	23.5	28.5	15.4	20.3	31.4
The effects postings have had on the opportunity to settle down in a certain area	32.2	25.3	25.7	36.0	34.4	34.3
The effects postings have had on their ability to maintain family stability	28.6	25.7	31.4	46.2	36.3	40.0
The effects postings have had on their partner/spouses' employment	28.6	28.8	22.8	19.2	33.1	22.9
The effects postings have had on their children's education	17.8	21.1	15.5	15.3	28.3	35.3

In addition to issues surrounding childcare and children's education, the absence of the CF parent as a result of deployment may lead to behavioural issues in children. According to QOL survey of CF spouses conducted in 2008/2009, out of those whose CF partner had deployed and who had children living at home, almost half reported that their children became more clingy; approximately a third reported that their children exhibited behavioural changes, such as young children sleeping with the parent, acting out, or suffering from anxiety (Figure 1) (Sudom, 2010).

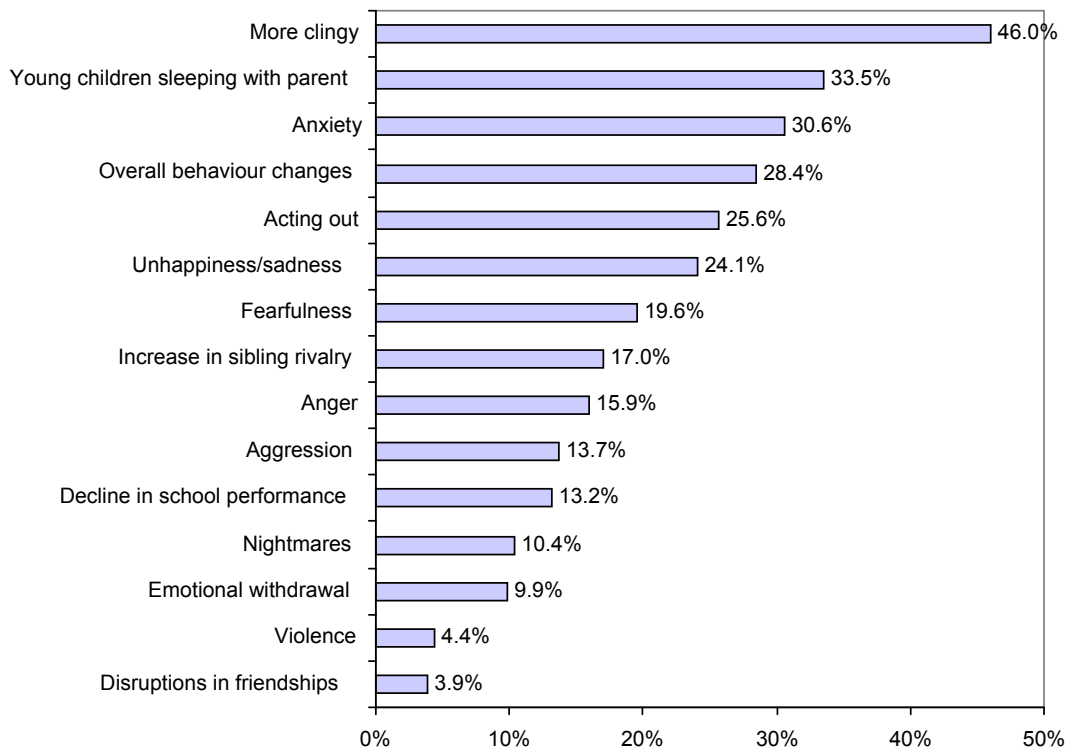


Figure 1: Child Behaviours during Deployment – Quality of Life among Military Families: A Survey of Spouses/Partners of CF Members (n = 934) (Sudom, 2010)¹³

¹³ Percentages are out of total respondents who reported that their CF partner was deployed at least once while they were together, and who had children living at home [originally reported in Sudom (2010)].

5 Challenges Faced by Single Canadian Forces Members

Research on military families has generally focused on the nuclear family where one or both parents are military members. Although little research exists on single CF members, particularly those with dependants other than a spouse or children, there is evidence to indicate that the experience of single members differs from that of married or common-law members in several respects. These differences may be particularly relevant to those with dependent parents or siblings where policies for families may not be applicable. Data from several surveys are discussed below, highlighting the differences between single and married members, and between single members with and without dependants.

Several studies have not found differences between married and single members. The *Unit Morale Profile*, for example, administered from 2006-2010, found that single members did not differ from married members on a number of variables, including work-family conflict and turnover intentions. The *CF Retention Survey*, developed to explore specific work and non-work related factors and their impact on intentions to stay or leave the CF, found no significant differences in perceptions of work-life balance between married and single respondents. However, differences in the *Retention Survey* responses were noted between single members with and without dependants. Compared to those without dependants, single respondents with dependants were generally more satisfied with their work-life balance. Although it may be expected that single members without dependants would have greater control over their work-life balance, and thus be more satisfied, the findings may be explained by other, unique challenges faced by single members without dependants. For example, it has previously been reported that single CF members without dependants may experience issues associated with establishing and/or maintaining romantic relationships (Dunn, Ford, & Flemming 2005). Focus groups have revealed that single members frequently report difficulty establishing relationships since they are often selected to perform tasks—particularly during holidays—to allow married members to spend time with their families. In addition, single members reported that it was difficult to maintain relationships when they were frequently required to be away, especially in the initial stages of a relationship (Dunn *et al.*, 2005). Such challenges may contribute to the lower work-life balance reported by single members without dependants in the retention research.

Other studies have found differences between married and single members in their attitudes toward the CF, which may relate to different expectations on the part of these groups. Several administrations of the *YSS*¹⁴ were analysed to compare differences between married and single members to determine how they felt the CF affected their family lives. Compared to married members, singles indicated greater agreement with the statement “*The CF looks after the families of its service members.*” Moreover, single members agreed that posting decisions take into account what is best for their families, to a greater extent than married members. Compared with singles, married members showed greater agreement with the item “*Making arrangements for family (e.g., children, elderly relatives) while I work involves a lot of effort.*” Further, married

¹⁴ The data reported here are derived from five previous versions of the survey administered between 2005 and 2009. Data provided were analysed for the purpose of this report and have not been published as reported here.

members reported that they or their family members had made more sacrifices as a result of being in the CF. Single and married members agreed equally that their career managers do their best to balance family needs with the needs of the CF. In addition, the groups did not differ in terms of the reported impact that posting frequency had on their family's quality of life, or in terms of the level of impact they felt their CF careers had on family responsibilities (e.g., caring for an aging parent).

Single members may also differ in their experiences of reintegration following deployment. The *Human Dimensions of Operations* (HDO) survey (Task Force [TF] 3-08), conducted following deployment in 2008, found that compared to single members without dependants, married members reported good reintegration with respect to positive aspects of their family lives (e.g., responsiveness to family needs). No differences were found between married members, singles with dependants, and singles without dependants, on other reintegration areas such as work, personal, and negative aspects of family life (e.g., strain and tension on relationships). In addition, the TF 1-09 HDO survey, administered after deployment in early 2010, found that married members reported more positive and negative family reintegration experiences when compared with singles with dependants, although they had fewer positive experiences with work and personal reintegration issues. In addition, singles with dependants had fewer negative experiences with reintegration when compared with singles without dependants.¹⁵

¹⁵ Data reported from the HDO survey were analysed for the purpose of this report and have not been published.

6 Summary and Research Gaps

Families have a considerable influence on CF members, and, as a result, on the CF organization as a whole. In particular, it has been shown that families have an impact on the decisions of CF members to stay in or leave the military. Issues reported include the negative impacts of military life on spousal employment and income, lack of work-family balance, lack of ability to settle down in one area, time away from home, and the impact of postings on children's education. In addition to the influence that families have on the CF member's career, families face a number of challenges as a result of the military lifestyle. Compared to other groups in the Canadian population, spouses of CF members have lower education levels, higher rates of unemployment, and lower income. Moreover, many spouses of CF members report difficulties re-establishing prior activities and services following a move of residence, including medical services and seniority at work. In addition to the impacts on spouses, children are also affected by military life, including disruptions in childcare and children's education, as well as behavioural changes that may result from changes in family routines, such as the deployment of a military parent. However, these are inferences from past research, since the children of CF members have not been directly studied.

There has also been a lack of research on single CF members, who sometimes have family members other than children under their care. The paucity of research on parents and siblings of single members may reflect the fact that, beyond a small minority who may actually live and move with the CF member, parents and siblings may not be as directly impacted by the military lifestyle as members' spouses and children. Although they have been less studied, single CF members may face unique challenges with regard to their families, particularly those with dependants other than a child because regulations regarding next of kin are less clear. When compared to members with families, single members were found to have more positive attitudes toward the impact of military life on families and the treatment of families by the CF. It may be that some married members have had negative experiences in the CF, which in turn influenced their attitudes toward the CF.

From the perspective of the single CF member, on the other hand, attitudes toward the impact of military life on families may come from their knowledge and awareness of the programs, policies and services that are available to families, even though they may not have had direct experience with them. Singles with and without family may experience unique challenges associated with family life. In particular, singles may experience difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships and may feel that they are unfairly selected for tasks to allow those with spouses and/or children to spend more time with their families. In one study, moreover, singles without dependants had more negative reintegration experiences following deployment than those with dependants. Although the reasons for this are unknown, it is possible that single members lack the social support that married members or singles with dependants have when returning to their families after a deployment. It may be expected that single members without dependants would have less difficulty adjusting to the demands of military life since their decisions are less likely to depend on the needs of others; nonetheless, it is apparent that this group does in fact experience challenges, and future research should further examine the needs of single members as they progress through their careers.

Past research with spouses of CF members has focused on the impacts of military life on families in terms of factors such as employment and earnings. What have not been examined, however, are the needs of family members throughout the military career cycle, particularly at critical points such as transition to civilian life and death of the CF member. Particularly for those living in CF housing, which comprises approximately 13% of families (Sudom, 2010), there may be difficulties faced at transition points. Members may choose to live in military housing for a number of reasons, including the support provided for the families whose CF family member is away, and the sense of community among neighbours sharing similar life situations (Dekker, 2009). However, families living in Permanent Married Quarters (PMQs), particularly those who are there for the majority of the military member's career, may find it especially difficult to adapt when their partner leaves the military or dies, since they can no longer rely on the military for housing. Recognizing the fact that families living in PMQs may have difficulties transitioning to civilian housing when the CF member dies, the DND policy on living accommodation for deceased military members' families who are living in base housing permits dependants of a deceased CF member to occupy DND housing for up to three years beyond the date of the member's death, after which time they must transition into civilian housing (DND Living Accommodation Instructions [DAOD 5024-1]). Although no research has been directly carried out on this topic, the 2008/9 QOL survey of spouses found that the level of comfort with their financial situation was reported to be lowest for those living in PMQs when compared with those in rented or owned civilian property. This indicates that families living in PMQs may be particularly likely to experience difficulties at points of transition.

The majority of the research contained in this report pertains to families of Regular Force members. Families of Reservists, however, as well as single Reservists, may face unique challenges. Like Regular Force members, Reservists' families have a considerable influence on their career decisions, as indicated in the *Primary Reserve Study*, which found that family factors had a strong influence on decisions to apply for a deployment (Fraser & Powers, 2009). It remains to be seen whether family issues have a similar impact on Reservists' retention decisions, as well as other challenges that families of Reservists may face.

Finally, the needs of families of ill and injured members need to be further examined. The recent conflict in Afghanistan has resulted in many members being physically wounded or suffering mental health problems, which can create increased stress for the families of those affected. Injuries that result in long-term changes in behaviour or physical abilities can place a burden on families as they may need to take on a caregiving role, and their own risk of depression or other psychological health problems may be increased as a result. Further research on casualty and family support needs is needed in order to identify areas where support for ill and injured members and their families may not be sufficient.

7 Conclusions

This report summarized relevant research related to the impacts of military life on families, the needs of family members throughout the military career, at transition to civilian life and upon the death of the CF member, and the issues associated with singles with family, including dependent parents and/or siblings. The military lifestyle poses unique challenges for families of military members, including frequent relocation, spousal unemployment and underemployment, and deployment of their military family member. The research reported here has shown that spouses' income, education and employment may be affected by military-related moves of residence. Families with children may also face issues such as behavioural problems in children when the military member is away, and concerns regarding childcare and children's education. In addition to the impact of military life on families, families also have a considerable influence on the well-being of military members and on the military organization as a whole. For example, the research reported here has shown that family considerations, such as spousal employment, are important in the career decisions that CF personnel make, such that members are more likely to report that they intend to leave the CF if their career is disruptive to their family life. Focus groups with CF members have found that "today's military family is much less portable, that is, that families were no longer traditional (e.g., male breadwinner) and that family considerations...often outweighed career considerations" (Dunn *et al.*, 2005; p. 40).

Families may have unique needs throughout the military member's career, particularly when relocating due to a posting, during deployments, at the point of transition into civilian life, and in cases where the military member dies during service. During postings, for example, many spouses of CF members report finding it difficult to re-establish medical services, employment, social support networks, and childcare when they relocate. Deployments may present challenges such as temporarily being a single parent, and behavioural issues among children whose CF parent is deployed.

For those parents and siblings who are financially dependent upon their CF family member, his or her death will create financial hardship, in addition to the emotional suffering associated with the loss of their loved one. Families also face non-financial issues associated with transition to civilian life. For dependants living with the CF member in military housing, for example, death of the CF member will require that they transition into civilian housing. There is a paucity of research documenting the needs of families at the point of transition of the CF member to civilian life or when the CF member dies. However, it is recognized that families require support during these times, and future research has been planned into CF veterans' experiences with transition, as they relate to the family.

In addition to families consisting of parents with children, single members may have unique issues associated with the military lifestyle, especially those with dependent parents or siblings. The effects of moves on dependent parents and siblings have not been studied, since it has been assumed that they were not as directly impacted by military-related moves of residence as spouses and children (although it is recognized that some do live and move with the military member). However, research comparing single and married members has shown some differences in their attitudes and experiences. Single members may experience issues, such as difficulty establishing and maintaining relationships, and may perceive that they are more often chosen for tasks that allow married members to have time with their families. In the Reserve

Force, single members had lower rates of awareness and usage of benefits related to transition to civilian life when compared with married members, although the rate at which singles with dependent parents or siblings were aware of or accessed benefits is unknown. Further research into the concerns of single CF members with dependent parents or siblings is needed in order to determine the specific problems they face.

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List of symbols/abbreviations/acronyms/initialisms

DND	Department of National Defence
DRDC	Defence Research & Development Canada
DRDKIM	Director Research and Development Knowledge and Information Management
R&D	Research & Development

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Families of military members face many challenges as a result of the military lifestyle, including frequent relocation, spousal unemployment and underemployment, and deployment of their military family member to potentially unsafe areas. Since families are impacted by military life, and since they have a profound influence on CF members and the CF organization as a whole, the CF have considered it important to study the impacts of military life on families in support of personnel policies and programs. The purpose of the present report is to review selected research that has been conducted by DGMPRA on the impacts of military life on families, the impacts of families on CF personnel, and the challenges faced by single members with dependent family members. The overall goal of the report is to present the current state of knowledge on military families and single military members with dependent family members, and to determine the gaps in research that need to be addressed.

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