



Family Factors Affecting Servicewomen's Wellness, Readiness and Retention

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Disclaimer

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Agenda

- Brief Summary of Literature
 - Servicewomen's retention
 - Demographic differences in women's families
 - Factors influencing retention by family type
- Recent Studies' Findings:
 - Marital Problems
 - Childcare
- Policy & Practice Implications
- Next Research Steps

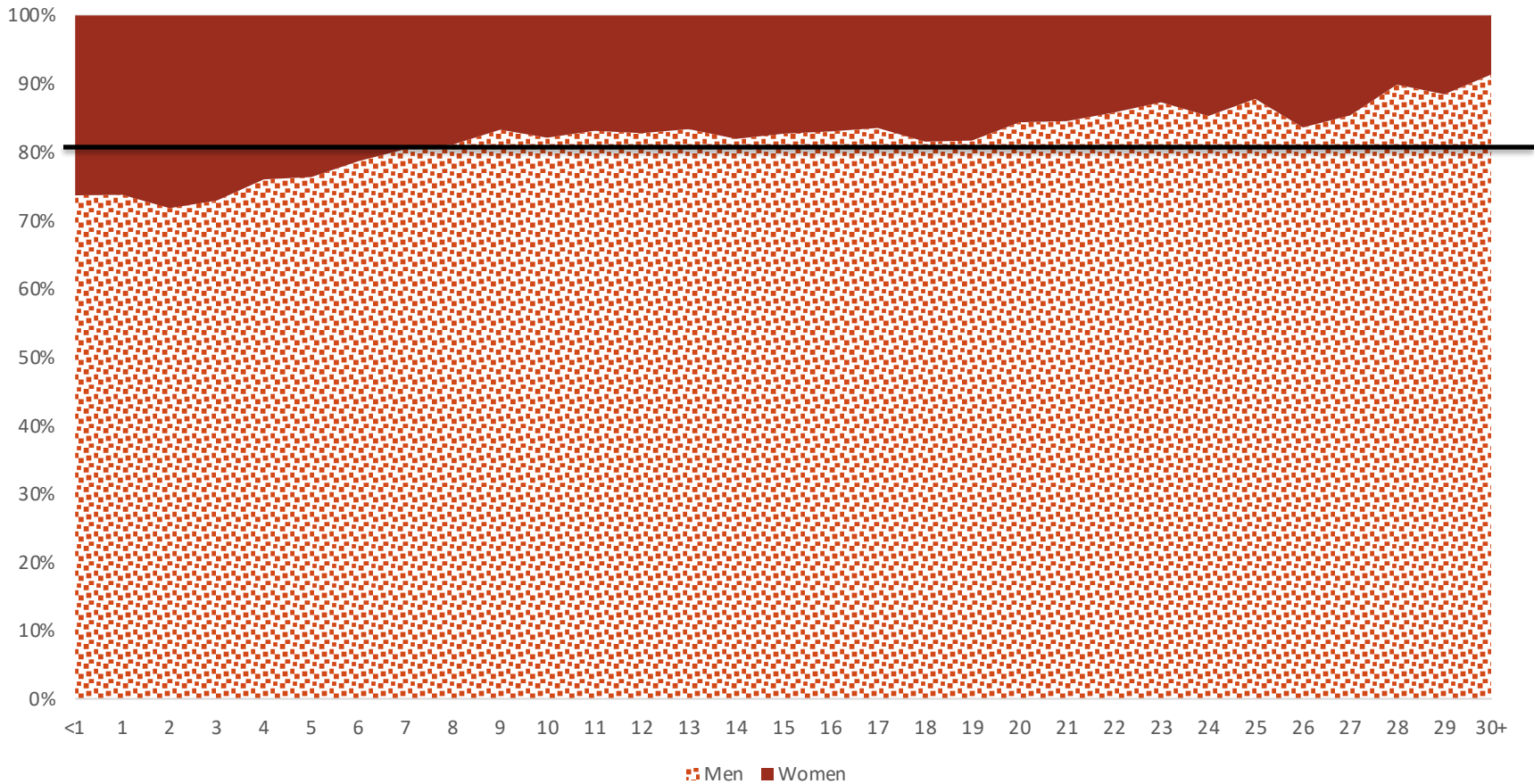


Literature Background



- The AVF is dependent on women to serve.
- Women leave the military at higher rates than men at the mid-career and 20 year points.
 - Fewer women in high ranking positions to advocate change
- Family factors, such as marriage and having a child are associated with servicewomen's turnover.
 - Women who join the military desire to have a family, but assess it as incompatible at higher rates than men
- Servicewomen's family structures differ from servicemen's.
- Policies aimed at reducing work-family conflict disproportionately affect different family structures

Gender: ADAF Officers by Time in Service

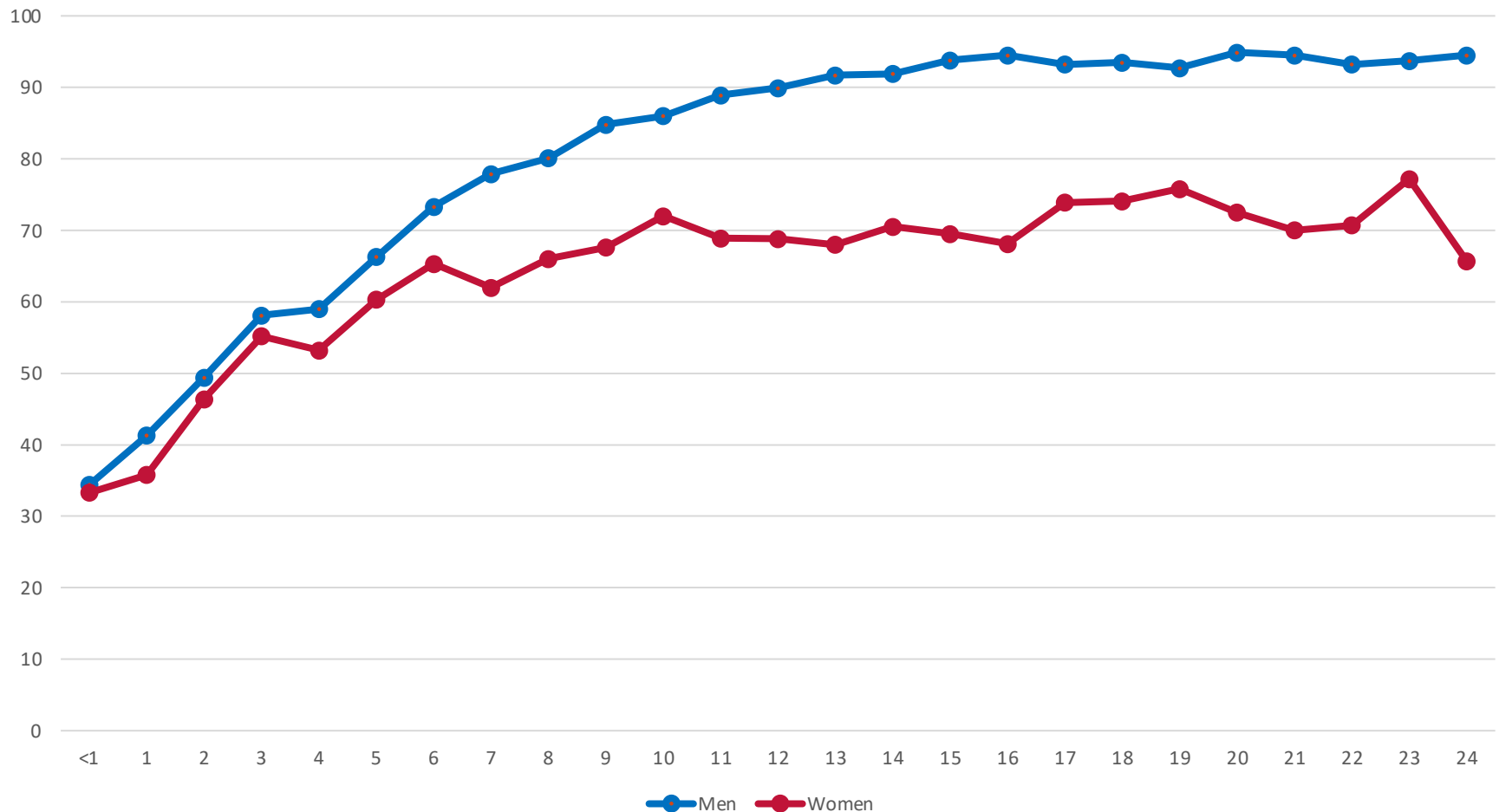


Family Demographic Differences

Military women, compared to military men, are proportionately more:

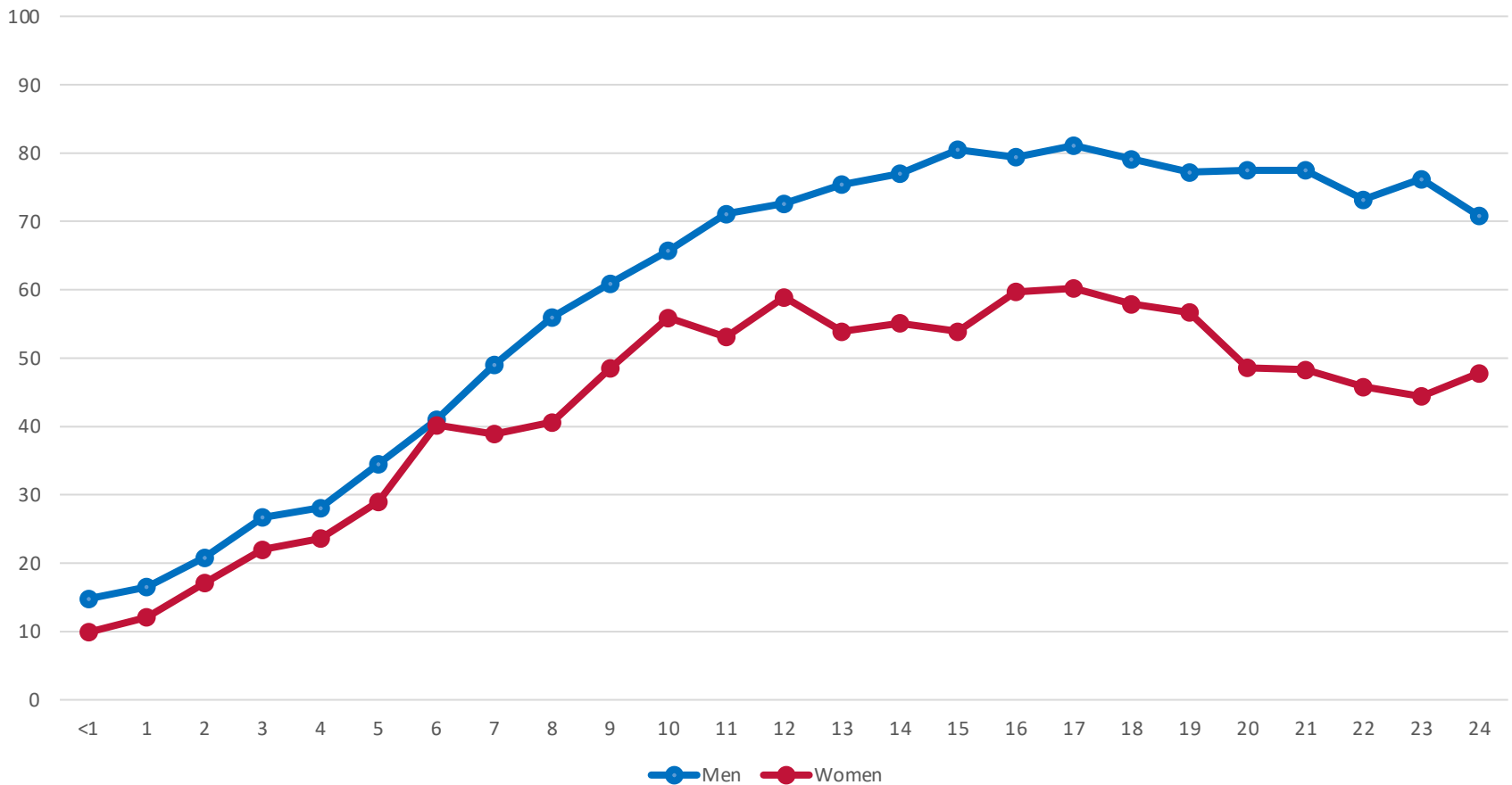
- Dual-military married
- LGB
- Divorced
- Single parents
- Unmarried (later in career)
- Without children in the home (later in career)
- Policies/Pgms designed for “traditional family”
- Lack of representation at highest ranks

Proportion of AD AF Officers who are Married: Gender by Service Years





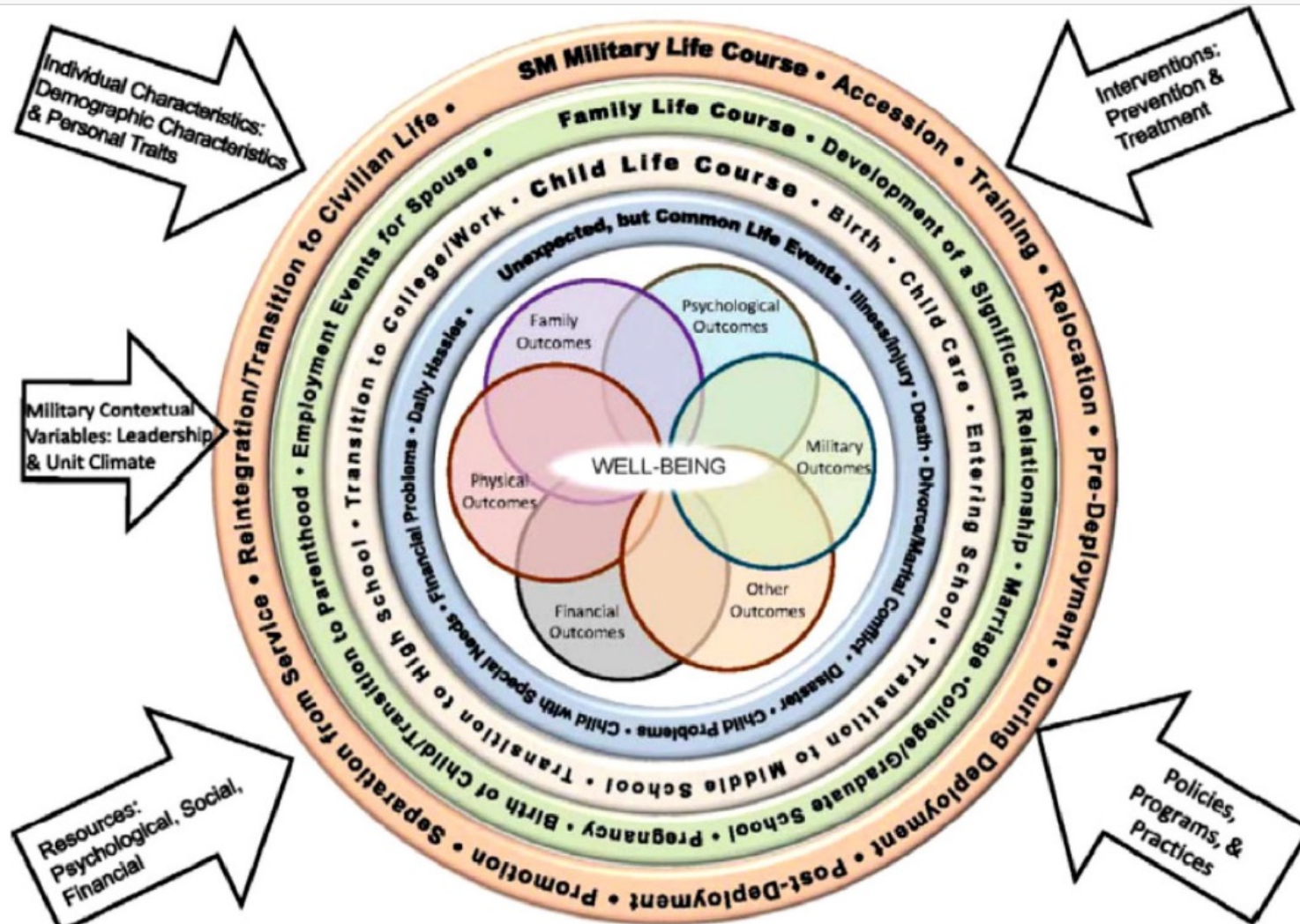
Proportion of AD AF Officers w/ Children at Home: Gender by Service Years





So What Policies Should We Focus On?

Conceptual Model of Military Career and Family Life Course Events, Intersections, and Effects on Well-Being (Segal, et al., 2015)



Retaining Mid-Career Female Officers: Work, Family, and Intersections



Retaining Mid-Career Female Officers at Different Family Course Intersections

- **Theory:** The Conceptual Model of Military Women's Life Events and Well-Being (Segal & Lane, 2016)
 - Work-Life Intersections
- **Methods:**
 - 2011 AF CAS, mid-career female officers (n=1,309)
 - Descriptive statistics, linear regression models
 - Satisfaction w/ AF life and career intentions as DVs
 - Analyze work factors separately, then add family factors, then add AF satisfaction
 - Models run on different family structure subgroups

Major Findings

- AF satisfaction associated w/career intentions consistently
- *Work factors* (workgroup cohesion, leadership support, ability to do job) were
 - associated with AF satisfaction
 - **not** associated w/career intentions once family factors and satisfaction are added to the model
- For married women, *family factors* (**career support from spouse, not dual married**) were associated with satisfaction and career intentions

Married Women Model

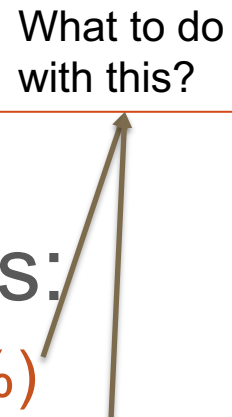


Gender Differences in Factors Associated w/ New Parents' Air Force Career Intentions

- **Theory:** Conceptual Model of Military Career & Family Life Course Events, Intersections & Well-Being (Segal et al., 2015)
- **Methods:**
 - 2011 AF CAS, parents of kids under 1 y/o (n=4,611)
 - Descriptive statistics and linear regression models
 - Work, Family and Personal Factors on Retention Intentions
 - New parents (one child under age 1) by gender

Major Findings

What to do
with this?



- Compared to new fathers, new mothers:
 - were 5 times more dual-married (11.6% vs 57.6%)
 - had 2x as many unmet childcare needs (1.11 vs 2.20)
 - reported lower retention intentions
- Years in the military, satisfaction with the AF, and spouse career support were consistently significant
- New mom's dual marriage assoc. w/**lower** retention intentions

Recent Studies to Inform Policy Advocacy

- Gender Differences in Marital Problems
- Gender Gaps in Childcare



Quick Background: Marriage, Gender and the Military

- Military women **3x** more likely to divorce than military men (Gregg & Miah, 2011)
- Military women married to civilian men face highest divorce risk (e.g., 8.4% in 2005).
- Military men with civilian wives face lowest divorce risk (e.g., 2.7% in 2005; Karney & Crown, 2007).
- Dual marriages account for 13% of DoD marriages, but
 - 44.8% of married active duty servicewomen are dual married
 - 8% of married active duty servicemen are dual (DoD, 2021)

Gender and Dual Military Differences in Marital Problems

- 2017 Air Force Community Feedback Tool data (n=28,745)
- Compared married active duty members' reported romantic relationship difficulties
 - E.g., divorce, communication problems, abuse, changing roles, living far apart.
 - Yes/No – Check all
 - Comparisons by gender and dual mil status

Hypotheses

- 1: Married active duty women will report more marital problems than married active duty men.
- 2: Dual military married members will report more and different problems than non-dual married members.
- 3: Dual married status will moderate the relationship between sex and military context-amplified marital problems



Gender Comparisons

Table 1. Married, Active Duty Air Force Members' Types of Romantic Relationship Problems Endorsed in the Past Year: Differences by Gender

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

| | All N=28745 n (%) <i>mean (SD)</i> | Men n=23094 n (%) <i>Mean (SD)</i> | Women n=5651 n (%) <i>Mean (SD)</i> | Chi Square <i>t-test</i> |
|---|---|---|--|-----------------------------|
| → Divorce/marital separation | 911 (3.2) | 652 (2.8) | 256 (4.5) | 43.24*** |
| → Communicating or expressing feelings to one another | 6470 (22.5) | 5007 (21.7) | 1444 (25.6) | 39.11*** |
| → Growing apart, in different directions | 3489 (12.1) | 2739 (11.9) | 737 (13) | 5.96* |
| → Arguments | 6045 (21) | 4831 (20.9) | 1200 (21.2) | .27 |
| → Verbal, physical and/or sexual abuse | 429 (1.5) | 296 (1.3) | 131 (2.3) | 33.33*** |
| → Infidelity (cheating) | 701 (2.4) | 485 (2.1) | 214 (3.8) | 54.45*** |
| → Little or no physical affection | 4748 (16.5) | 3775 (16.3) | 962 (17) | 1.51 |
| → Changing roles or responsibilities in the family/marriage | 3596 (12.5) | 2422 (10.5) | 1166 (20.6) | 427.82*** |
| → Problems due to having to live far away from spouse | 2423 (8.4) | 1729 (7.5) | 690 (12.2) | 131.43*** |
| → Sum of marital problem types endorsed (Range 0-9) | 1.00 (1.53) | .95 (1.49) | 1.20 (1.67) | 11.17*** |
| → I did not experience any listed relationship problems | 15962 (55.4) | 13170 (57.0) | 2759 (48.8) | 124.44*** |

Dual vs Non-Dual Gender Comparisons

Table 3. Married Active Duty Members' Marital Problems Endorsed in Past Year: Differences in Non Dual and Dual Married Men and Women

| | Comparing by Marriage Type | | | | | | Comparing by Gender | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|--|
| | Non-Dual Married | | | Dual Married | | | Men | Women |
| | Men n=22836 n (%) mean (SD) | Women n=5135 n (%) mean (SD) | Chi Square t-test | Men n=258 n (%) mean (SD) | Women n=516 n (%) mean (SD) | Chi Square t-test | Non-Dual vs. Dual-Mil Chi Square t-test | Non-Dual vs. Dual-Mil Chi Square t-test |
| Divorce/marital separation | 647 (2.8) | 239 (4.7) | 45.33*** | 5 (1.9) | 17 (3.3) | 1.15 | .75 | 2.01 |
| Communicating or expressing feelings to one another | 4940 (21.6) | 1287 (25.1) | 28.51*** | 67 (26) | 157 (30.4) | 1.66 | 2.83 | 7.09** |
| Growing apart, in different directions | 2709 (11.9) | 675 (13.1) | 6.48* | 30 (11.6) | 62 (12) | .03 | .01 | .53 |
| Arguments | 4773 (20.9) | 1098 (21.4) | .586 | 58 (22.5) | 102 (19.8) | .77 | .39 | .73 |
| Verbal, physical and/or sexual abuse | 293 (1.3) | 122 (2.4) | 34.25*** | 3 (1.2) | 9 (1.7) | .38 | .03 | .83 |
| Infidelity (cheating) | 479 (2.1) | 194 (3.8) | 50.42*** | 6 (2.3) | 20 (3.9) | 1.27 | .07 | .01 |
| Little or no physical affection | 3727 (16.3) | 888 (17.3) | 2.88 | 48 (18.6) | 74 (14.3) | 2.36 | .97 | 2.89 |
| Changing roles or responsibilities in the family/marriage | 2375 (10.4) | 1052 (20.5) | 396.73*** | 47 (18.2) | 114 (22.1) | 1.57 | 16.61*** | .74 |
| Problems due to having to live far away from spouse | 1682 (7.4) | 598 (11.6) | 102.58*** | 47 (18.2) | 92 (17.8) | .02 | 43.37*** | 16.73*** |
| Sum of marital problem types endorsed (Range 0-9) | .95 (1.49) | 1.20 (1.67) | 10.66*** | 1.21 ^a (1.64) | 1.25 ^b (1.62) | .39 | 2.76** | .72 |
| I did not experience any listed relationship problems | 13053 (57.2) | 2527(49.2) | 108.32*** | 117 (45.3) | 232 (45) | .00 | 14.86*** | 3.23 |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

^a Range 0-7 in dual-married men

^b Range 0-8 in dual-married women

Greedy Institutions' Differential Impacts

- Dual status appears to tighten, but not close the gender gap in marital problems experienced.
 - Mostly because dual men face more problems.
- Dual men and women reported greater rates of problems that appear contextual (military amplified) than non-dual:
 - changing roles or responsibilities
 - living apart from spouse
- Dual married members' unique challenges may be mitigated through targeted policy/program changes.
 - (we'll come back to this)

Gender Gaps in Childcare

- Examined gender gaps in ADAF parents'
 - Childcare access by Rank/Time on Station
 - Childcare costs and resource utilization
 - Childcare impacts on career progression
 - Childcare impacts on retention intentions
- Two Datasets
 - 2017 AF Community Feedback Tool (n=13,073)
 - 2020 AF Childcare Survey (n=26,024)

Access to Quality Childcare

Table 1. Active Duty Air Force Parents' Problem in the Past Year Accessing Quality Childcare for Children 13 Years and Younger: Differences by Gender,^a Pay Grade and Time on Station From the 2017 AF Community Feedback Tool.

| | Total sample N = 19,908 | Men n = 16,080 | Women n = 3,828 | % with problem | % with problem | % with problem | % Difference | Gap % | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------|----|
| Endorsed access problem | 19.3 | 16.7 | 30.3 | 13.6 | 81 | | | | | | |
| Pay grade groups | New on station—Less than 6 months | | | | | Established on station—More than 2 years | | | | | |
| | Subgroup n % with problem | Men n % with problem | Women n % with problem | % Diff | Gap % | Subgroup n % with problem | Men n % with problem | Women n % with problem | % Diff | Gap % | |
| All grades | n = 3,416 21.1 | n = 2,794 17.5 | n = 622 37.3 | 19.8 | 113 | All grades | n = 9,657 17.9 | n = 7,821 15.9 | n = 1,836 26.4 | 10.5 | 66 |
| Pay grade | | | | | | Pay grade | | | | | |
| E1 to E4 | n = 185 24.9 | n = 128 15.6 | n = 57 45.6 | 30.0 | 192 | E1 to E4 | n = 660 24.4 | n = 468 19.2 | n = 192 37.0 | 17.8 | 93 |
| E5 to E6 | n = 1,054 22.8 | n = 836 17.9 | n = 218 41.3 | 23.4 | 131 | E5 to E6 | n = 4,778 19.1 | n = 3,833 16.7 | n = 945 28.6 | 11.9 | 71 |
| E7 to E-9 | n = 758 17.7 | n = 627 15.9 | n = 131 26.0 | 10.1 | 64 | E7 to E-9 | n = 2,473 13.0 | n = 2,047 12.4 | n = 426 16.0 | 3.6 | 29 |
| O1 to O3 | n = 367 30.0 | n = 292 24.7 | n = 75 50.7 | 26.0 | 105 | O1 to O3 | n = 606 24.9 | n = 500 23.0 | n = 106 34.0 | 11.0 | 48 |
| O4+ | n = 1,052 18.3 | n = 911 16.2 | n = 141 31.2 | 15.0 | 93 | O4+ | n = 1,140 16.1 | n = 973 14.8 | n = 167 23.4 | 8.6 | 58 |

^aGender gaps in childcare access were determined by calculating each subgroups' percentage of men and women reporting difficulties accessing childcare in the past year, then computing the differences in the percentages between men's and women's childcare access problems, and then dividing the difference by the lower gender group's (always men's) percentage.

Childcare Resources Utilized

Table 3. Gender Differences in Types of Childcare Used Immediately Prior to the Pandemic: All Applicable Items Checked in the 2020 Air Force Childcare Survey.

| Type of Childcare Used | Total N = 26,024 (%) | Men n = 17,274 (%) | Women n = 8,750 (%) | Chi square |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| DoD child development center | 5,230 (20.1) | 2,483 (14.4) | 2,747 (31.4) | 1,047.7522*** |
| DoD school age program | 2,326 (8.9) | 1,117 (6.5) | 1,209 (13.8) | 385.585*** |
| Family child care (FCC) | 671 (2.6) | 446 (2.6) | 225 (2.6) | 0.0025 |
| Off base daycare center | 4,342 (16.7) | 2,909 (16.8) | 1,433 (16.4) | 0.8964 |
| Off base in-home care | 1,002 (3.9) | 712 (4.1) | 290 (3.3) | 10.2303** |
| Off base school age program | 4,508 (17.3) | 3,053 (17.7) | 1,455 (16.6) | 4.4319* |
| Spouse/partner | 7,247 (27.8) | 6,277 (36.3) | 970 (11.1) | 1,843.2606*** |
| Parents/relatives | 2,236 (8.6) | 1,495 (8.7) | 741 (8.5) | 0.256 |
| Nanny or Au Pair | 809 (3.1) | 475 (2.7) | 334 (3.8) | 21.9673*** |
| Other | 1,387 (5.3) | 890 (5.2) | 497 (5.7) | 3.206 |
| N/A—I did not need childcare | 2,178 (8.4) | 1,889 (10.9) | 289 (3.3) | 21.9673*** |

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Childcare Costs and Waitlists

- 32.8% of men vs 16.3% of women reported incurring no childcare costs
- 14.2% of all reported they were on a DoD waitlist immediately prior to the pandemic.
 - 17.7% of mothers vs 12.4% of fathers
 - The most frequently reported amount of time waited **>1 year** (22.8% men vs 18.7% women).
 - **80%** exceeded the MCRMC's (2015) 90-day target

Childcare Impacts Women's Careers More

- Mothers reported childcare affected their **career progression** more.
 - **27.4%** said *negatively* affected career progression vs **20.0%** of fathers
 - **11.5%** said *positively* affected career progression vs **6.7%** of fathers
 - **49.9%** said *did not impact* career progression vs **60.0%** of fathers
- Mothers reported childcare affected their **retention intentions** more.
 - **33.2%** indicated childcare influenced them to *leave* vs **19.8%** of fathers.
 - **20.5%** indicated childcare influences them to *stay* vs **13.6%** of fathers.
- **Spouses are picking up the slack** for lacking DoD care availability.
 - Spouse career support is strongest factor associated w/ retention intentions
 - Military husbands face un/underemployment earnings losses comparable to military wives but are more dissatisfied with their employment situations (Cooney et al., 2011; Little & Hisnanick, 2007).

Limitations

- Cross-sectional
- Pre-pandemic data
- Race/ethnicity intersections missing
- Same-sex families not identifiable
- Policy focus limits theory expansion

Combined Implications for Policy

- Supporting families is retention/readiness imperative
- Time is ripe for ongoing major policy change
 - **Childcare Improvements:**
 - Target new mothers, lower enlisted, newly PCS'd, CGOs
 - Expand on-base care, particularly for newborns
 - Enable reimbursement for au pair, non-traditional childcare resources
 - **Dual-Military Supports:**
 - Fix childcare deficits
 - Joined assignment policy execution
 - **Policy Solutions Addressing Both Issues:**
 - Homesteading
 - Parental Leave
 - Easing transitions between Reserve/Active Duty



Micro-Practice Implications

- Identifying/Therapeutically addressing military women's different family structures and related strains/strengths
- Becoming aware of avenues/policies to promote clients' self-advocacy
 - New parents
 - Dual military
 - Single parents
- Acknowledging lack of senior role models for military women w/families in advocacy and therapy
 - Seek and amplify voices
- Empowering/Encouraging clients w/stats (e.g., normalizing)

Directions for future research

- Gender differences in factors influencing family deployment readiness
 - EFMP, spouse vet status, childcare, marital satisfaction
- Factors affecting military spouses' military career support
 - Male, same-sex spouse differences
- Replicate Navy cadet study at the AF Academy
 - Better understand and leverage role modeling effects
- Factors associated w/AF satisfaction/retention in retirement-eligible (18-21 year TIS) officers
- Social determinates of health in servicewomen
 - Ex: Childcare access problems associated w/ PPD

Feedback/Questions?





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