Spouse Employment User Summary

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### Title

Spouse Employment User Summary

### Abstract

The Army Family Research Program (AFRP) is a 5-year integrated research program that supports the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) White Paper 1983: The Army Family and The Army Family Action Plans (1984-1990) by developing databases, models, program evaluation technologies, and policy options that assist the Army to retain quality soldiers, improve soldier and unit readiness, and increase family adaptation to Army life. This report is an easy-to-read document that illuminates the issue of spouse employment for the Army. It traces why spouses are employed or not employed, why they work, what they earn, what they do, and the barriers they find when seeking employment. It describes organizational programs and policies that assist spouses in finding employment and outlines research questions being addressed by the Army Family Research Program.

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### Subject Terms

Spouse employment, Retention, Reenlistment, Salaries, Labor, Army families

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PRELIMINARY DATA SUGGEST SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS MAY HELP THE ARMY RETAIN QUALITY SOLDIERS.

THERE ARE STILL SEVERAL IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED ABOUT SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT.
The Army has initiated an Army Family Research Program (AFRP) to investigate the importance of family factors in retention, readiness, and the Army community. Sponsored by the Community and Family Support Center (CFSC), the research activities are being conducted by the Army Research Institute for the Behavioral Sciences (ARI) with the assistance of a contract research consortium of Research Triangle Institute (RTI), Caliber Associates, and the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO). Four research areas are being investigated:

- Family adaptation
- Family factors in retention
- Family factors in readiness
- Spouse employment.

This report is a summary of the research findings to date about spouse employment. It is based on review of the literature, special analyses of the 1985 DoD Surveys of Officer and Enlisted Personnel and Military Spouses, the March 1985 Current Population Survey, the 1987 Annual Survey of Army Families, and exploratory interviews with employment program managers and family members at Army installations throughout the United States and Germany. It presents our current understanding of spouse employment issues and questions, and provides a point of departure for future research and program efforts.

"A major contribution to retention is ensuring that our soldiers and families know we will take care of them. You see, family programs are not only the right thing to do for our soldiers -- they also improve our readiness through retention."

General Carl Vuono
Chief of Staff, U.S. Army
WHY STUDY SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT?

The national trend in the United States is toward dual-income families. More than half of the wives in America are now working outside of the home. This figure is projected to rise to more than 80 percent by the year 2000. Obviously, the two-income family is now the norm, not the exception.

Findings from earlier research on military families suggest that employed Army spouses are more satisfied with Army life than their unemployed counterparts. They are also more committed to the Army as a way of life. Spouse commitment to the Army has a positive effect on the service member's decision to continue on active duty. Such career decisions mean that trained, experienced soldiers are retained, leading to the accomplishment of the Army's foremost goal — improved individual and unit READINESS.

The links between spouse employment, the strength of Army families, and commitment to the Army are all complex. Understanding more about these linkages and translating that understanding into Army policies and programs that promote successful spouse employment is the goal of this research effort.
THE MAJORITY OF SOLDIERS IN TODAY'S ARMY ARE MARRIED

53% OF ALL ENLISTED ARE MARRIED

75% OF ALL OFFICERS ARE MARRIED

OVERALL, 56% OF ARMY PERSONNEL ARE MARRIED
WHO ARE THE SPOUSES OF SOLDIERS?

THE VAST MAJORITY OF ARMY SPOUSES ARE THE CIVILIAN WIVES OF SOLDIERS.

SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT ISSUES THEREFORE FOCUS PRIMARILY ON CIVILIAN WIVES.
ARMY WIVES, ON THE WHOLE, ARE YOUNG...

- Wives of enlisted soldiers tend to be younger than officers' wives: 34% of enlisted soldiers' wives are 24 or under, compared with only 8% of officers' wives.

- Most spouses (77%) are also parents, most with young children.

- For 70% of Army wives the youngest child is 11 years old or under.

- Nearly half (46%) of junior enlisted (E1-E4) families have a youngest child under age three.

...WITH YOUNG CHILDREN
ARMY WIVES, GENERALLY, ARE A WELL-EDUCATED GROUP

- 88% of enlisted soldiers' wives have at least a high school diploma, and 35% have at least some college.

- All but 2% of officers' wives are at least high school graduates, and 45% have bachelors' degrees or more.

AND THE MAJORITY NEED OR WANT TO WORK
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION BY WOMEN IN GENERAL IS ON THE RISE

... Which means that more women are employed or want to work and are looking for employment

Since 1970, labor force participation by American wives whose youngest child is under the age of three has risen dramatically:
ARMY WIVES ARE PART OF THE TREND TOWARD INCREASED LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AMONG WOMEN


... INCLUDING MANY WHO HAVE YOUNG CHILDREN

% in Labor Force whose youngest child is ...

= Enlisted Soldiers' Wives
= Total
= Officers' Wives
= All US Wives
AMONG THOSE IN THE LABOR FORCE, UNEMPLOYMENT IS HIGHER FOR ARMY WIVES IN GENERAL, BUT ESPECIALLY FOR ENLISTED SOLDIERS' WIVES

- Wives of junior enlisted soldiers (E1-E4) experience the highest rate of unemployment at nearly 45%.

- Wives of senior officers (O4 and above) have the lowest rate of unemployment at 15%.
WIVES WHO HAVE BEEN AT THEIR CURRENT LOCATION FOR A LONGER TIME HAVE A HIGHER PROBABILITY OF:

**BEING EMPLOYED**

- *Simulation results based on regression model*

**BEING IN A JOB THAT USES THEIR SKILLS**

- *Simulation results based on regression model*
WHAT DO EMPLOYED ARMY SPOUSES DO?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Enlisted Soldiers' Wives %</th>
<th>Officers' Wives %</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clerical/Technical</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Teacher</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial/Administrative</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Development</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Others(labor, craft, etc.)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Overall, most (60%) of the employed Army wives are concentrated in three occupational categories: clerical/technical, service, and sales.

- More than a quarter (27%) of the wives with bachelor's degrees or beyond are in clerical, sales, or service positions.

- The majority (63%) of employed wives work full-time, about one-third (32%) work part-time, and the rest (5%) are self-employed (which can vary from part- to full-time).

- Most employed wives (64%) work in private sector jobs, with the other 36% working for the Federal Government (primarily Department of the Army).
HOW MUCH DO THEY EARN?

Total Gross Army Spouse Earnings for 1986

- Overall, Army spouse earnings are low, with two-thirds (68%) earning less than $10,000.

- Half of all employed senior enlisted soldiers' spouses, and 63% of spouses of E4s and below earned less than $5,000 in 1986. Only 5% of employed enlisted soldiers' spouses earned more than $20,000.

- Of employed officers' wives, more than one-third (35%) earned less than $5,000 in 1986. At the high end of the scale 16% earned $20,000 or more.

- Overall, Army spouse earnings contribute approximately 28% to family cash income (30% for enlisted spouses, and 22% for spouses of officers).
HOW SATISFIED ARE SPOUSES WITH THEIR WORK?

Percent Who Are "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" With Each Aspect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enlisted Soldiers' Wives</th>
<th>Officers' Wives</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion Opportunity</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to Progress</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Responsibility</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Skills and Abilities</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Education</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Security</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Job</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Less than half (48%) of employed Army spouses are less than satisfied with their current salaries.

- Only a minority are satisfied with their opportunities for promotion (30%) and career progression (36%).

- More spouses in professional and managerial/administrative jobs than other kinds of jobs are satisfied with level of responsibility (83% and 84% respectively), use of skills and abilities (82% and 78%), challenge of the work (79% and 75%) and use of educational background (79% and 59%).
WHY DO ARMY WIVES WORK?

Army wives, like other women, both need and want paid employment. There are a variety of often-overlapping reasons for working, but they fall into two main categories: financial need and achieving personal job or career goals.

Percentage of Wives Who Cite Each As A Major Reason For Working

- Need Money: 59%
- Want Extra Money Now: 56%
- Save Money for Future: 44%
- Planned Career: 39%
- Gain Experience for Future Career: 36%
- Independence: 34%
- Enjoy Working: 34%

Data on labor force participation, especially for enlisted soldiers' wives with young children, suggest that there is considerable financial pressure to seek employment rather than stay at home with children.
... AND WHY DO OTHERS CHOOSE NOT TO BE EMPLOYED?

Among spouses who do not hold paid jobs, a substantial number, in fact, do or may want to be employed.

- 61% of enlisted soldiers' spouses whose youngest child is age 5 or younger want to be employed.
- 32% of officers' wives whose youngest is 5 or under want to be employed.

Reasons for NOT having a paid job fell into six broad categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enlisted Soldiers' Wives</th>
<th>Officers' Wives</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Responsibilities</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not want paid job</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack child care, transportation or training</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate work unavailable</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In school or training</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (health, age, employer prejudice, etc.)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These mutually exclusive categories were created for analysis purposes from 14 more specific reasons from which respondents could select any number that applied.
BARRIERS TO SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT

Military spouses seeking employment often face more difficulties or "barriers" than do their civilian counterparts. Not all these barriers, however, are attributable to the military lifestyle. They group themselves into three general categories: individual barriers, program barriers, and institutional barriers.

INDIVIDUAL barriers to employment are challenges that any job-seeker, whether military or civilian, might face. They could include personal initiative, age, or the number of young children in the family. Lack of education, training or experience may also hamper a job search. Lack of job search skills and career goals/planning are also forms of individual barriers.

PROGRAM barriers to employment include the lack of employment support programs. These programs typically include child care, continuing education resources and a variety of job skills/employment assistance support programs.

INSTITUTIONAL barriers result from the requirements of military life, such as frequency of moves and location of Army posts. Civilian employers are often reluctant to hire and train Army spouses who are unable to commit to more than two or three years with a company. Remote U.S. locations have few civilian job opportunities; assignments to Army schools are generally so short that it's virtually impossible for spouses to work except in low paying clerical and sales positions. In overseas assignments, Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) often determine how many and which jobs will be available to American citizens.

The maze that results from all these barriers can prove particularly frustrating to job seekers. Still, with almost 45% of Army wives working, many have found their way through their personal maze to job satisfaction and career progression.
HOW DOES THE ARMY HELP?

Several laws, policies and programs exist to assist family members through the employment maze.

Executive Order 12362
(as amended by EO 12585)
Provides a non-competitive appointment eligibility for family members who have served in appropriated fund positions in overseas locations.

Executive Order 12568
Mandates employment preference for military spouses referred for Non-Appropriated Fund positions at UG-8 equivalents and below.

Army Family Member Priority Placement Program
Current Army employees who are family members of DA civilian or military personnel who are relocating within the 50 states to another Army activity are eligible for priority placement referral.

Military Family Act
(Spouse Preference)
Gives military spouses who are relocating to their sponsors' new permanent duty location hiring preference for DoD positions in General Schedule Grades 1-15 and equivalency if they are found best qualified.

Family Member Employment Assistance Program
Representatives of the Civilian Personnel Office (CPO) and Army Community Service (ACS) work together to provide a full range of employment information and assistance to job seekers.

Youth Summer Hire Program
Provides job eligibility for youth at any Army installation.

Leave Without Pay Policy
Provides current status Army employees who are family members a minimum of 90 calendar days LWOP to relocate without a break in service.

Merit Promotion Provisions
Allow Civilian Personnel Offices to accept applications from family members outside the CPO’s local area of consideration.

Employment Information Sheets
Separate detailed sheets for each of the DA CPO’s provide information about Army employment, other Federal agencies in the commuting area, as well as non-Federal personnel offices. These are available from any CPO/ACS office.

DoD Family Member Priority Placement Program
Family members of DoD personnel who have status and are located in AK, HI, or an overseas area may register for placement in the United States. Also, family members on family member appointments overseas or who have eligibility and E.O. 12362 as amended, may be registered for placement in the United States.

More information on the details of each can be obtained from local Civilian Personnel Offices (CPO) or Army Community Service (ACS).
TWO KEY ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

- There are approximately 155 Army Civilian Personnel offices (CPO)

- Family Member Employment Assistance Programs (FMEAP) are available through Army Community Services (ACS) at approximately 105 installations around the world

AND SO DO FRIENDS

- Informal networks of military and civilian friends and acquaintances are important sources for job seekers
PRELIMINARY DATA SUGGEST SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS MAY HELP THE ARMY RETAIN QUALITY SOLDIERS

SPOUSES WITH GOOD JOB OUTCOMES ARE MORE SATISFIED WITH THE MILITARY AS A WAY OF LIFE

ARMY POLICIES THAT LEAD TO INCREASED SPOUSE EARNINGS SHOULD INCREASE REENLISTMENT

Preliminary results suggest that a $100.00 increase in spouse earnings has the same effect as a $100.00 increase in soldier pay.
THERE ARE STILL SEVERAL IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED ABOUT SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT

- How and to what extent do employed and/or career-oriented spouses influence service members' decisions to remain in the Army?

- How do employed spouses affect soldiers' individual performance and that of the unit?

- How do Army policies and programs affect spouses who want to be employed and/or have a career?

- What policies could be modified to enhance employment opportunities for Army spouses?

- What services should an "ideal" spouse employment program provide to meet the special needs of Army spouses?

- What is the benefit of these programs to the Army compared to the cost?

The Army Family Research Program is continuing to work to answer these questions.