



Ministry of Defence

# UK Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey Results 2021

● Annual

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United Kingdom

This statistical release provides results from the Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FamCAS) 2021, along with results from previous years.

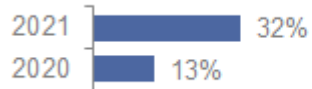
Statistics from FamCAS are used by both internal Ministry of Defence (MOD) teams and external bodies to inform the development of policy and measure the impact of decisions affecting personnel and their families.

## Impact of COVID-19 on Families' experiences

COVID-19 and the resulting lockdowns may have had some negative effects on the experiences of Service families. For example:

Of those who required dental treatment:

% families unable to access dental treatment



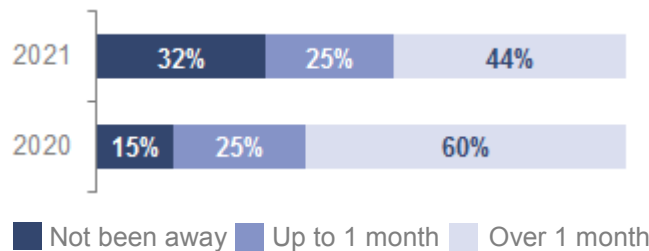
Of those with school age children:

% had difficulties with their children's schooling



## Separation has improved this year

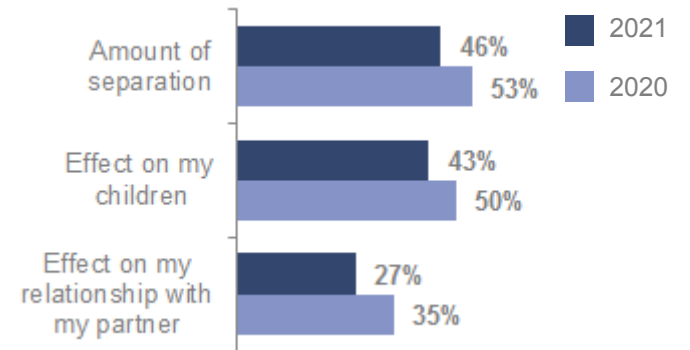
This year, Serving partners spent less time away from home.



This change may be due, in part, to the restrictions imposed and changes to working arrangements as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Families feel less negative this year

Families are feeling less negative about many aspects of Service life this year:



This year, families also feel less disadvantaged about family life and more satisfied with their quality of life married to a member of the Armed Forces.

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Background quality report: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index)

Would you like to be added to our **contact list** so that we can inform you about updates to these statistics and consult you if we are thinking of making changes? You can subscribe to updates by emailing [Analysis-Surveys-Enquiries@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Analysis-Surveys-Enquiries@mod.gov.uk)

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## About these statistics

The Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FamCAS) refers to a set of harmonised Tri-Service questions included within the annual single Service Families Attitude Surveys.



The FamCAS is one of the main ways that the department gathers information on the attitudes and experiences of Service families.

The 2021 FamCAS was distributed to a sample of 24,245 trained Regular Service personnel who were married or in a civil partnership. The Serving person was then asked to pass the survey on to their spouse. The Army and RAF survey used both online and paper questionnaires whilst the RN/RM has been online only since 2020. The survey was open from late January until early May 2021.

### Response rates:

Overall 5,987 valid responses were received, representing a response rate of 25%.



This is a three percentage point increase since 2020.

The increase in the overall response rate this year follows a decrease by a similar amount last year. Response levels are now similar to 2019. The decrease in 2020 was largely driven by a decrease in RN/RM response rates following the move to an online only survey, with no paper survey option. This year, with increased communications, RN/RM response rates are similar to those achieved in 2019 as are Army and RAF.

The FamCAS went into field late January 2021, during the third COVID-19 national lockdown in England. The survey asked about the past year and so will have also captured experiences from previous national and local COVID-19 lockdowns. To better understand the possible impact of this, some COVID-related questions were added to the online version of the survey. These questions asked whether things like access to healthcare, difficulties with children's education or employment were affected by COVID-19. Although only asked of online respondents, since 81% of responses were online, these provide helpful context to some of the reported changes.

## About this statistical release

The following terminology has been used throughout this report:

- “married” refers to those who are married or in a civil partnership.
- “spouse” refers to spouse/civil partner.
- RN/RM is used as an abbreviation of Royal Navy/Royal Marines.

### AFCAS 2021 comparisons:

These comparisons are based on a subset of [Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey](#) results (AFCAS) for Service personnel who are married/in a civil partnership. As a result they will not match published AFCAS results.

### National comparisons:

National figures are used to provide context wherever possible. However, these are rarely directly comparable due to demographic differences between the general population and the population of Service spouses.

Reference tables and an example of a FamCAS 2021 questionnaire are published as separate documents and can be found on the [FamCAS](#) webpage.

Please also see the Background Quality Report at the webpage above for full details of survey methodology, analysis and data quality considerations.

Only differences that are statistically significant are commented on within this report; statistical tests were carried out at the 99% confidence level. This is at a fairly stringent level and means that there should be a less than 1% chance that differences observed in FamCAS results are not representative of Service families as a whole. This reduces the likelihood of wrongly concluding that there has been an actual change based on survey results, which only cover a sample of Service families.

# Section 1 - About you

Section 1 provides background demographics of Service spouses and their families as well as information about how often they move and the amount of separation they experience.

## Data Quality Note

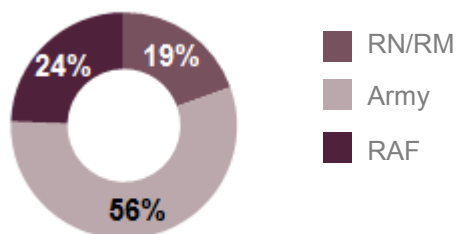
The estimates provided below are derived from the Joint Personnel Administration system (JPA)<sup>1</sup>. The estimate of married Service personnel is derived from a self-reported field so there may be some under-reporting. The 2021 Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) estimated 49% of Service personnel were married/in a civil partnership, which would equate to just over 67,000 personnel.

**Approximately 58,000 Regular trained Service personnel are married or in a civil partnership<sup>1</sup>**

**Over half of all Service spouses are married to Army personnel<sup>1</sup>**

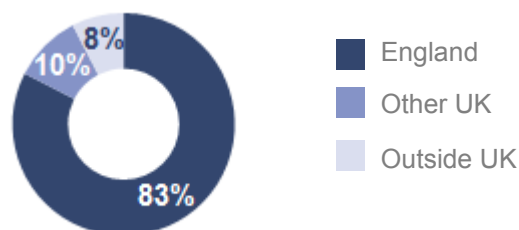
This distribution broadly reflects the relative size of the Services.

% married Service personnel by Service



**The majority of Service spouses live in England<sup>1</sup>**

% Service spouses by location



**73%** of Service spouses are married to Other Ranks<sup>1</sup>

**27%** of Service spouses are married to Officers<sup>1</sup>

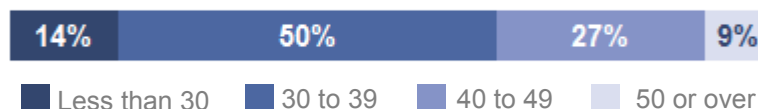
Estimates within the rest of this report are taken from the FamCAS. Comparisons to other data sources are referenced.

**Over nine in ten Service spouses are female**

This reflects the fact that the majority of Serving personnel are male.<sup>2</sup>

**Nearly two-thirds of Service spouses are aged under 40**

% Service spouses by age



## National Comparison

On average, Service spouses are younger than the married population. The [2019 national age profile](#) of married people for England estimates 68% are aged over 45 compared to just 19% of Service spouses in England. This difference reflects the younger age profile of Service personnel in comparison to the wider population.

**Spouses of Other Ranks are, on average, younger than Officer spouses**

Just over seven in ten Other Rank spouses are aged under 40 compared to around four in ten Officer spouses. This difference reflects the age difference between Officers and Other Ranks.<sup>2</sup>

The majority of Army Other Rank spouses are aged less than 40 (79%). This compares to 61% and 64% of RN/RM and RAF Other Rank spouses respectively.

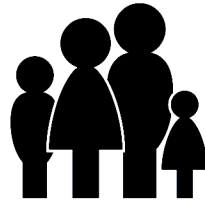
<sup>1</sup> Based on data from the Joint Personnel Administration system (JPA) as at 1 March 2021

<sup>2</sup> Please refer to the [UK Armed Forces biannual diversity statistics](#) for age and gender information

**80%** of Service families have children

**37%** of Service families have at least one child aged under 5

**55%** of Service families have at least one child of school age



**46%** of spouses are educated to Undergraduate level or above<sup>2</sup>

This differs by rank: 71% of Officer spouses compared to 36% of Other Rank spouses.

### National comparison

Although not directly comparable, the [2011 Census](#) estimated that 30% of the England population aged 16-64 were educated to Undergraduate level or above.

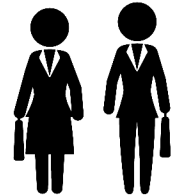
### National comparison

Although not directly comparable, the [2020 UK Labour Force Survey](#) (LFS), estimates 52% of married couple households have children, considerably lower than the 80% of Service families. This will be due, in part, to the differing age range of Service spouses compared to the general population.

The LFS also estimates 62% of UK married couple households with dependent children have two or more dependent children. This is not too dissimilar to Service Families; of those families with at least one child aged under 18<sup>1</sup>, 66% have two or more children aged under 18.

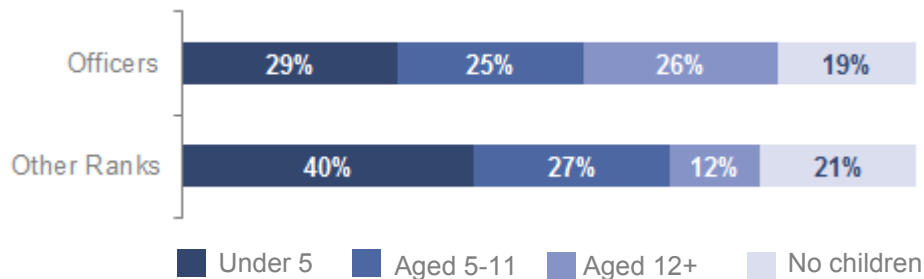
**78%** of spouses are employed<sup>3</sup>

This includes 10% of spouses who are also serving in the Regular Armed Forces. Couples where both partners are members of the Regular Armed Forces are referred to as dual-serving couples.



### Other Rank families tend to have younger children than Officer families

% families by age of youngest child



**62%** of spouses are homeowners

The proportion of homeowners is unchanged since 2018. Homeownership differs greatly by Rank and Service, ranging from 47% for Army Other Rank spouses to 88% for RN/RM Officer spouses.



### AFCAS 2021 comparison

These results are consistent with the AFCAS 2021 findings: 63% of married Service personnel are homeowners; 77% of spouses/civil partners are employed including 8% who are also serving in the Regular Armed Forces.

<sup>1</sup> SUBSET: families with at least one child aged under 18 (73%)

<sup>2</sup> Undergraduate level or above includes Undergraduate Degrees, Post-graduate Degrees and professional qualifications (e.g. teaching, nursing, accounting, civil engineering etc.).

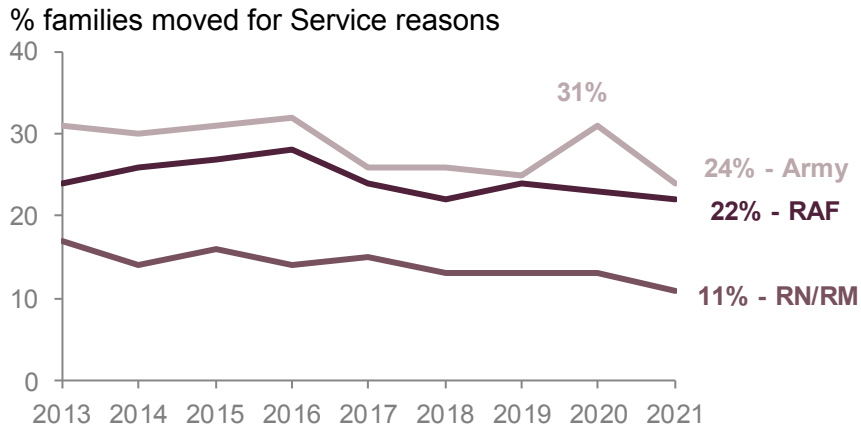
<sup>3</sup> Employed refers to those in full-time, part-time or self employment.

Service personnel are often posted to new locations and many spouses choose to accompany them rather than be separated. This means that Service spouses are also a very mobile population.

### Just over a fifth (21%) of Service families moved for Service reasons over the last year

Following an increase last year, the proportion of families moving for Service reasons decreased by four percentage points this year. Levels are now similar to those reported between 2017 & 2019.

### This decrease is largely driven by Army families, following a peak last year



The increase in Army mobility last year was largely due to the [Army Basing Programme](#) which involved the return of a large number of Service families from Germany to the UK over the summer of 2019. This year, Army family mobility has returned to similar levels reported between 2017 and 2019.

RN/RM families are less likely to move for Service reasons than RAF and Army families. Royal Navy families cannot accompany Service personnel at sea.

A higher proportion of Officer families moved for Service reasons (26%) than Other Rank families (19%).

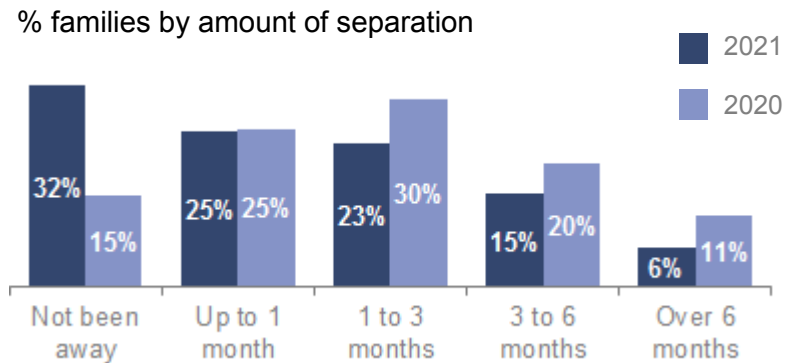
### Just over two in five families (42%) have moved at least twice for Service reasons in the past five years

Just over a third of families have not moved at all over the past five years. This differs greatly by Service ranging from 26% for Army families to 56% for RN/RM families.

### Over three-quarters (77%) of Service couples live together during the working week

This differs by both Service and Rank. Spouses of RN/RM personnel are less likely to live with their partner (66%) as are Officer spouses (75%).

### Fewer families experienced separation of one month or more this year



Correspondingly, the proportion of families who did not experience any separation more than doubled this year. This may be due, in part, to the government advice to work from home where possible.

### AFCAS 2021 comparison

AFCAS also reported a reduction in separation from families this year. The proportion of married personnel who had been away for one month or more fell by nine percentage points.

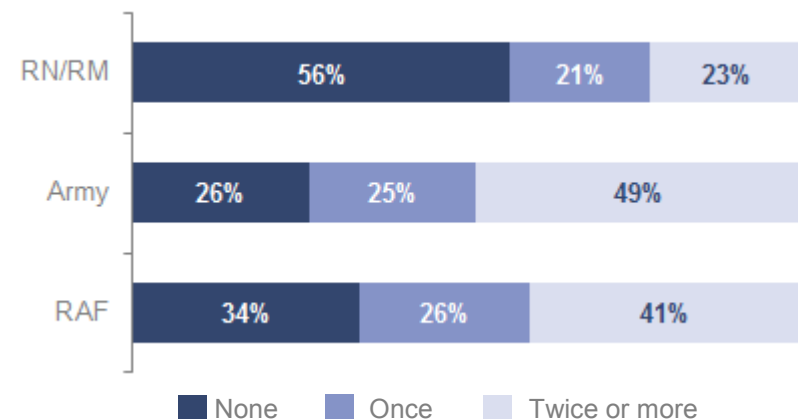
The amount of separation differs by Service with a higher proportion of RN/RM spouses reporting separation of more than three months (32%) than Army (17%) or RAF spouses (21%).

## Section 2 - Service comparisons

There are differences in the survey results for each Service which reflect the unique challenges faced by each. In particular, Army and RAF families experience higher mobility whilst RN/RM families are less likely to live together and experience more separation. This section highlights the main differences in families' experiences of, and attitudes towards Service life.

### Army and RAF families are more mobile than RN/RM families

% families by number of moves for Service reasons over the past five years



RN/RM families are the most likely to have not moved within the past five years, whilst Army families are the most likely to have moved twice or more.

### Over the past year, 24% of Army and 22% of RAF families moved home for Service reasons

These differ to the 11% reported for RN/RM families.

Army spouses feel the most negative about the number of house moves (38%) followed by RAF spouses (28%). RN/RM feel the least negative (19%).

### During the past year, 10% of both Army and RAF spouses accompanied their partner on an overseas assignment

This compares to 5% of RN/RM spouses.

Army spouses are the most positive about opportunities for travel (40%) followed by RAF spouses (33%). RN/RM are the least positive (24%).

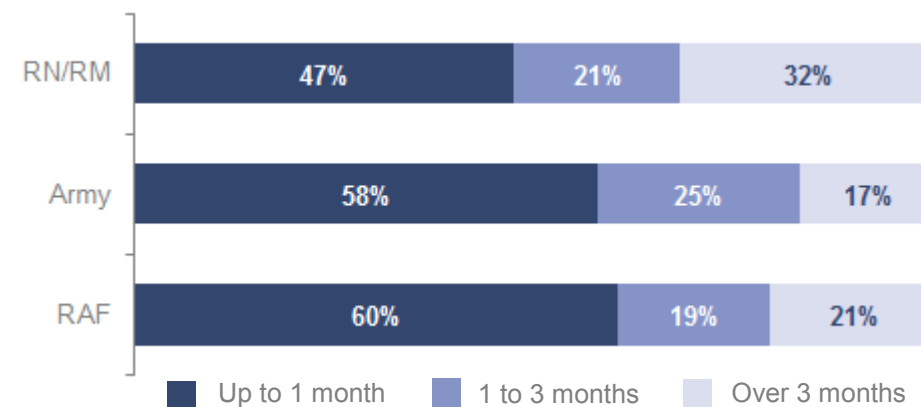
### RN/RM spouses are less likely to live with their partner during the working week

**66%** of RN/RM spouses live with their partner during the working week

This compares to 80% of Army and 81% of RAF spouses.

### Although levels of separation have reduced this year, RN/RM spouses remain more likely to have experienced separation of over three months than Army or RAF

% families by the amount of time the Serving spouse has been away for Service reasons in the past year



RN/RM spouses are more likely to feel negative about the amount of separation from their partner than Army or RAF spouses.

Royal Navy families cannot accompany Service personnel at sea. This tends to encourage home ownership, which provides stability. Despite this, Royal Navy spouses are still more likely to experience separation during the working week even if the Service person is based on shore.

## RN/RM families are the most likely to own a home whilst Army families are the least likely

% families own their own home



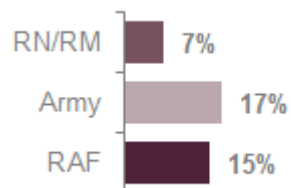
Army and RAF families feel more negative about the prospects of buying their own home than RN/RM families.

Army families are the most likely to be living in Service Family Accommodation (67%) followed by RAF (51%) and then RN/RM families (33%). RN/RM families are most likely to live in their own home, followed by RAF and then Army families. A higher proportion of RAF families are not living in their own home, but would prefer to be than the other Services.

Army spouses are the most positive about Service provided facilities whilst RAF spouses are the most negative.

## RN/RM families were less likely to have a child change school for Service reasons in the last 12 months

% families with a child who changed school for Service reasons<sup>1</sup>



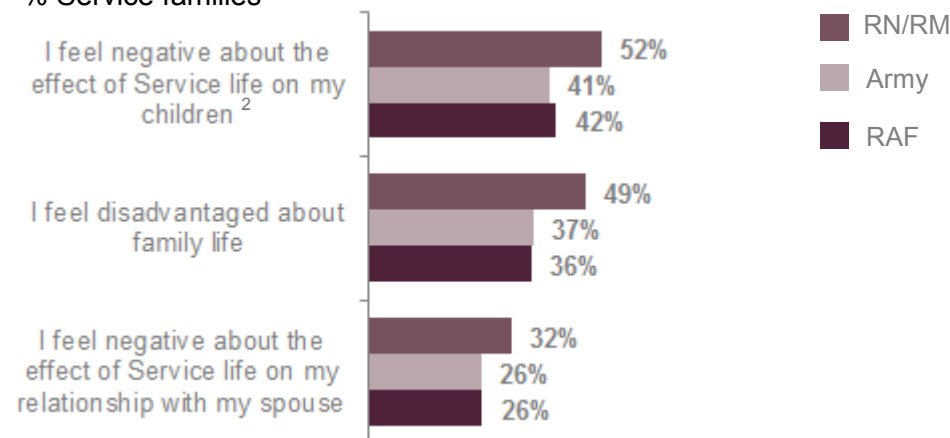
As a result, RN/RM families were less likely to experience difficulties getting a place at the school of their choice compared to Army or RAF families.

Overall, the proportion of families who experienced difficulties with their children's education increased this year. This increase is largely due to the impact of COVID-19. RN/RM families remain less likely to experience difficulties than Army families, however, there is no longer any difference when compared to RAF families.

<sup>1</sup> SUBSET: Families with school age children (55%).

## Despite some of the benefits of stability, RN/RM spouses feel more negative than Army and RAF spouses about some aspects of Service life

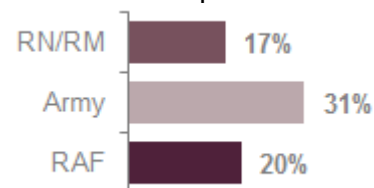
% Service families



A higher proportion of RN/RM spouses would feel happier if their partner chose to leave the Service (42%), followed by RAF spouses (32%) and then Army spouses (23%). RN/RM spouses are less positive about knowing other military families and community support for their family than the other Services.

## Army families are more likely to agree they felt part of the wider Service community than the other Services

% families feel part of the wider Service community



RN/RM spouses are more likely to disagree than the other Services.

Army spouses are also more likely to agree that they felt valued by the Service than RN/RM and RAF spouses.

RAF spouses are the most positive about job security (87%) whilst Army spouses are the least positive (65%). Army spouses are also the least positive about household income.

<sup>2</sup> SUBSET: Families with children (80%).

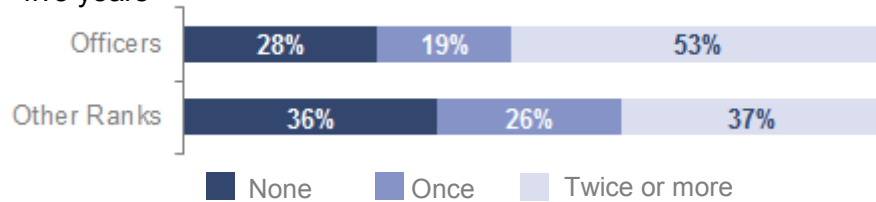


## Section 3 - Officer/Other Rank comparisons

This section compares results for Officer and Other Rank families, highlighting the main differences in their experiences of, and attitudes towards Service life. Nearly three-quarters of Service spouses are married to Other Ranks (73%).

### Officer families are more mobile than Other Rank families

% families by number of times moved home for Service reasons over past five years



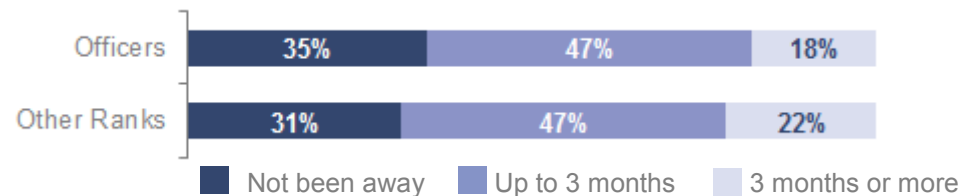
As a result, Officer spouses feel more negative about the number of house moves (42%) than Other Rank spouses (28%).

### Despite being more mobile, Officer spouses are less likely to live with their partner during the working week (75%) than Other Rank spouses (78%)

The proportion of Officer families living together during the week has increased from 71% last year. This has narrowed the gap between the proportions of Officer and Other Rank families living together.

### Over the past year, more Other Ranks spent time away from home than Officers

% families by time spent away over the past year

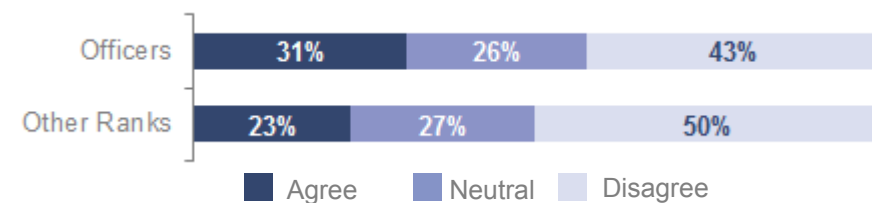


Despite being less likely to have experienced separation, Officer families remain more negative about separation than Other Ranks. Overall, the proportion of Serving partners who have not spent time away increased this year.

The changes around separation and families living together may be due, in part, to COVID-19 and the instruction to [work from home](#) where possible.

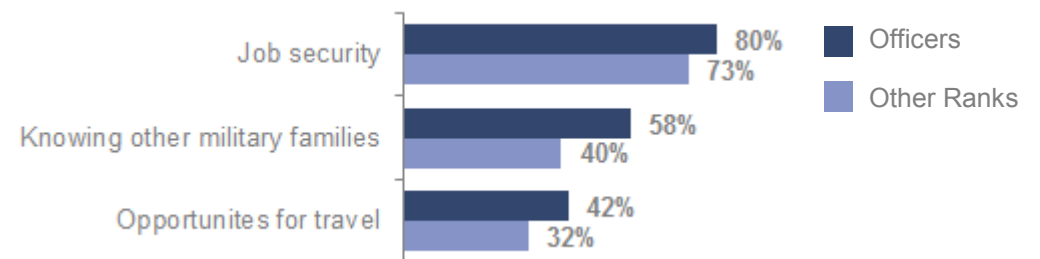
### Officer spouses are more likely to feel part of the wider Service community than Other Rank spouses

% agree/disagree they feel part of the wider Service community



### Officer families feel more positive than Other Rank families about many aspects of Service life

% families feeling positive about:



Officer spouses are also more satisfied with their quality of life, being married to a member of the Armed Forces (73%) than Other Rank spouses (68%). A higher proportion of Officer spouses feel proud that their partner is part of the Armed Forces (86%) than Other Rank spouses (81%).

Officer spouses also scored better on all four of the well-being questions (see Section 4) and are less likely to feel lonely than Other Rank spouses.

However, higher mobility coupled with being less likely to live together may have a negative impact on other views of Officer spouses

### When comparing themselves to the general public, Officer families feel more disadvantaged about family life than Other Rank families

% families feeling disadvantaged about family life



This is also witnessed for healthcare, education, housing, childcare and access to commercial products and services.

Despite feeling more disadvantaged about childcare, Officer spouses have higher levels of satisfaction for some aspects of both early years and school age childcare.

### Officer spouses also feel more negative about the effect of Service life on their career than Other Rank spouses

% spouses feel negative about effect of Service life on their career



This may be due, in part, to the higher mobility of Officer families. Of those who experienced difficulties finding employment<sup>1</sup>, Officer spouses were more likely to select their job history i.e. changing jobs frequently (39%) than Other Rank spouses (25%).

However, Officer spouses were slightly more likely to be in employment (81%) than Other Rank spouses (77%), although this was due to higher proportions working part-time or being self-employed.

<sup>1</sup> SUBSET: Those who experienced difficulties finding suitable employment (20%)

### Other Rank families feel less positive about household income than Officer families

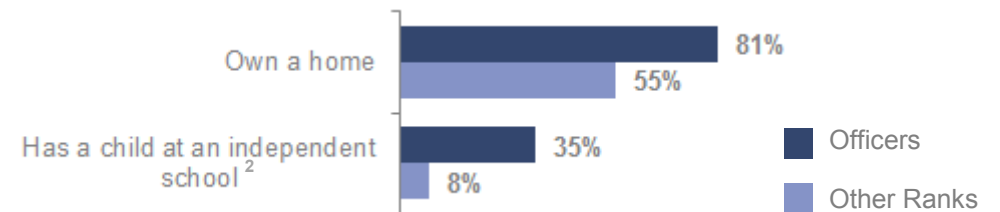
% families feel positive about effect of Service life on household income



This difference may be due to higher levels of [pay](#) for Officers than Other Ranks. Other indicators, such as home ownership and spousal employment, may also suggest higher levels of household income for Officer families.

### Other Rank families are considerably less likely to own a home or have a child at an independent school than Officer families

% families



### Affordability seems to be more of a concern amongst Other Rank families than Officer families

For example, of those who do not own a home<sup>3</sup>, Other Rank families are more likely to cite affordability (56%) or difficulties getting a mortgage (10%) as reasons than Officer families (31% and 3% respectively).

Similarly, of those who experienced difficulties finding employment<sup>1</sup>, access to affordable, quality childcare was selected by more Other Rank spouses (41%) than Officer spouses (22%). Also, satisfaction with the cost of local childcare for school age children<sup>4</sup> is lower amongst Other Rank families (44%) than Officer families (58%).

<sup>2</sup> SUBSET: Those with school age children (55%)

<sup>3</sup> SUBSET: Those who do not own a home (38%)

<sup>4</sup> SUBSET: Those who required childcare for school age children (22%)

## Section 4 - Armed Forces Covenant, well-being and Service life

Section 4 covers voting registration as well as a number of questions related to the Armed Forces Covenant. These measure whether families feel advantaged or disadvantaged compared to the general public, and how positive or negative they feel about particular aspects of Service life. This section also includes questions on well-being and satisfaction with Service life.

### Armed Forces Covenant

Announced by the government in May 2011, the [Armed Forces Covenant](#) is a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces and their families, are treated fairly.

### Just over three in ten (31%) have never heard of the Armed Forces Covenant, unchanged since 2018

Awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant



Between 2015 and 2018 the proportion of spouses reporting that they had never heard of the Armed Forces Covenant fell from 41% to 33%. Since then, levels of awareness of the Covenant have remained unchanged.

Officer spouses continue to have a greater awareness of the Covenant compared to Other Rank spouses. The majority (86%) of Officers spouses have heard of the Covenant compared to 62% of Other Rank spouses.

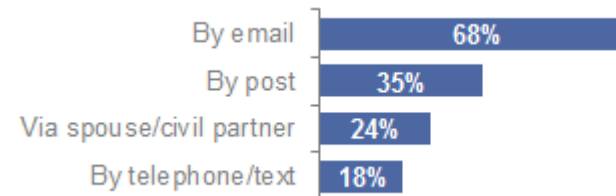
A higher proportion of Army spouses have “never heard of” the Covenant (37%) compared to RN/RM and RAF spouses (23% and 25% respectively).

### Communications

For the first time in 2021, families were asked how they would prefer the Services to communicate with them, indicating a first and second choice.

### Families have indicated that email is their preferred method of communication from the Services

% families selecting method as first or second choice



These were the top four methods selected, 8% of families said they did not wish to receive any communication.

### The majority (86%) of Service spouses are registered to vote, though this is a slight drop compared to 2020

As a result, the proportion of registered voters amongst Service spouses has returned to 2019 levels.

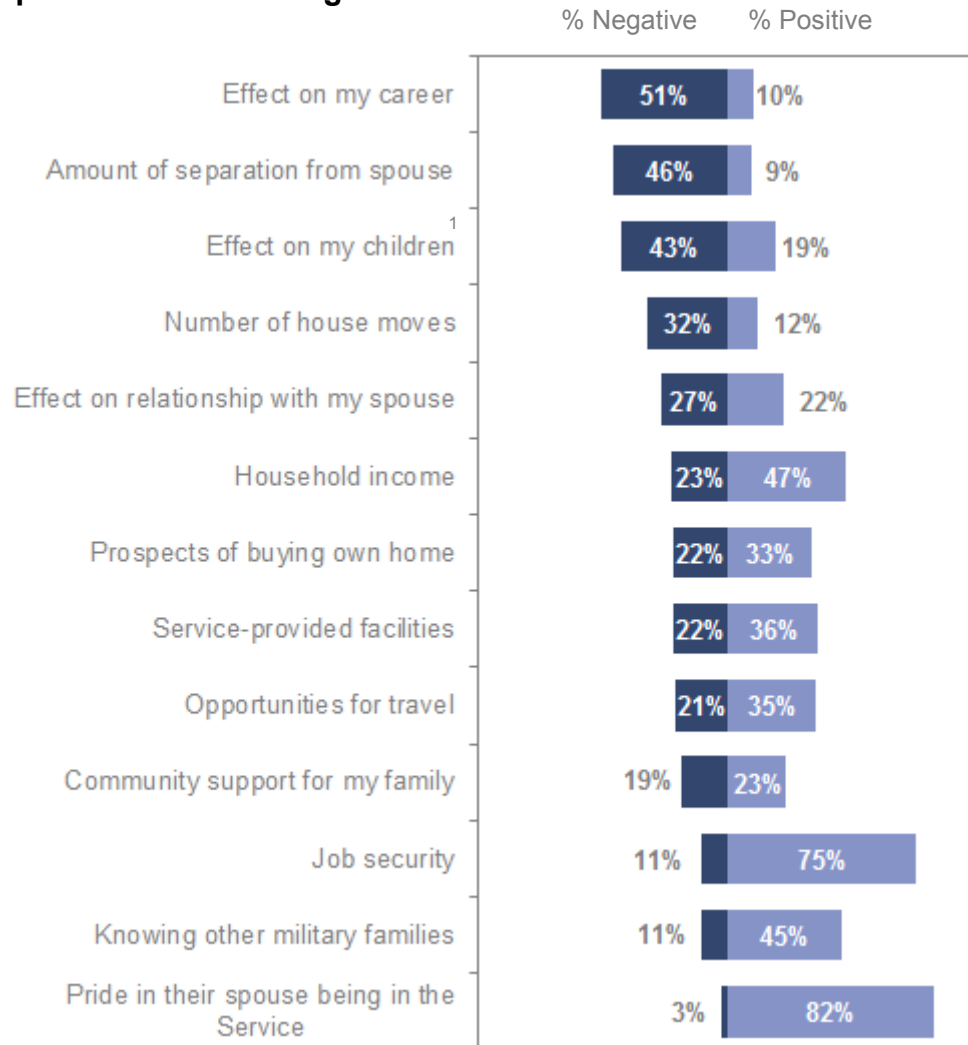
### National comparison

Nationally there was also a slight decrease in the number of [UK registered voters](#) in 2020.

### AFCAS 2021 comparison

A slightly higher proportion of married Service personnel are registered to vote (91%).

## Effect on my career continues to be the aspect of Service life spouses feel most negative about



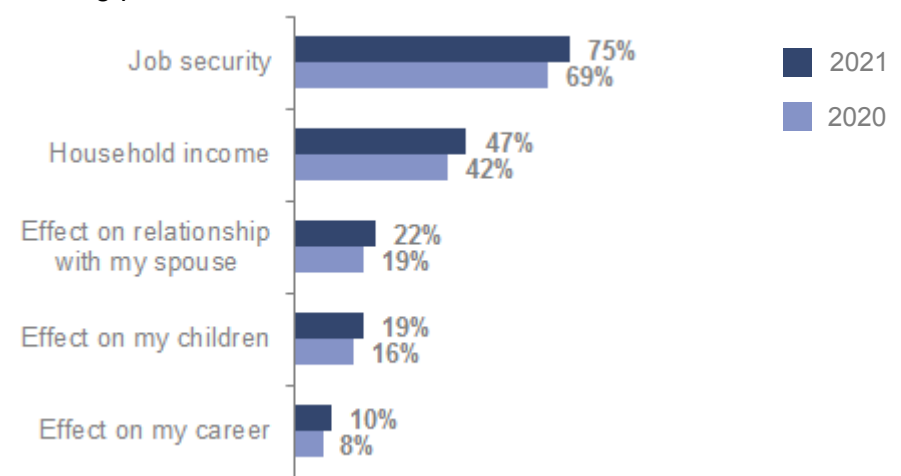
Just over half (51%) feel negative about the effect of Service life on their career in 2021. However this proportion has reduced since last year, down from 57% in 2020.

Pride in their spouse continues to be the aspect Service spouses feel most positive about (82%).

<sup>1</sup>SUBSET: Families with children (80%).

## Service spouses are feeling more positive about several aspects of Service life this year compared to 2020

% feeling positive about....



Correspondingly, families feel less negative about these aspects of Service life compared to last year.

These changes may be due, in part, to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the increases in household income and job security may suggest some families are feeling more financially stable during economic uncertainty. The proportion of families feeling positive about job security has increased 18 percentage points since 2015.

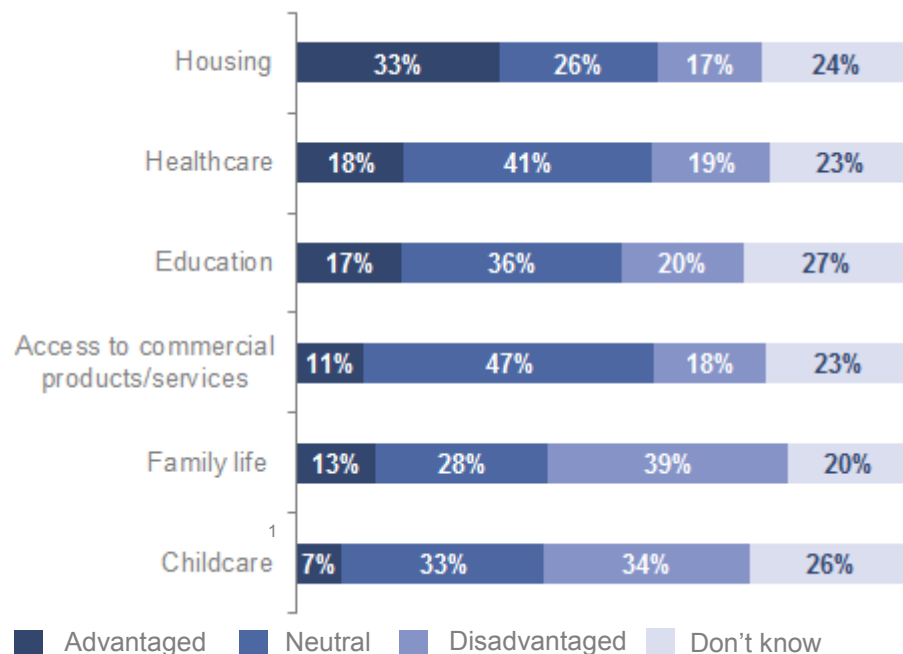
### In addition, families feel less negative about the amount of separation from their partner this year

The proportion of families feeling negative about the amount of separation has reduced for the second year in a row, down from 53% in 2020 to 46%. This is 12 percentage points lower than in 2015.

This may be due, in part, to the increase in the proportion of Serving spouses not spending time away from home, which has more than doubled over the past year (see Section 1). This may have also contributed to families feeling more positive about other aspects of Service life.

## Housing remains the aspect families feel most advantaged about in comparison to the general public

% feel advantaged/disadvantaged compared to the general public



This year has seen a drop in the proportion of families feeling disadvantaged about a number of Covenant issues including family life (down from 47% in 2020 to 39%). However, this has not resulted in a corresponding increase in feeling advantaged. Instead, more families are reporting that they “don't know” how they feel about these issues in 2021.

RN/RM families are more likely to feel disadvantaged about family life (49%) than Army and RAF families (37% and 36% respectively), though the gap has narrowed slightly this year.

### AFCAS 2021 comparison

Married Service personnel feel more disadvantaged about family life compared to Service spouses.

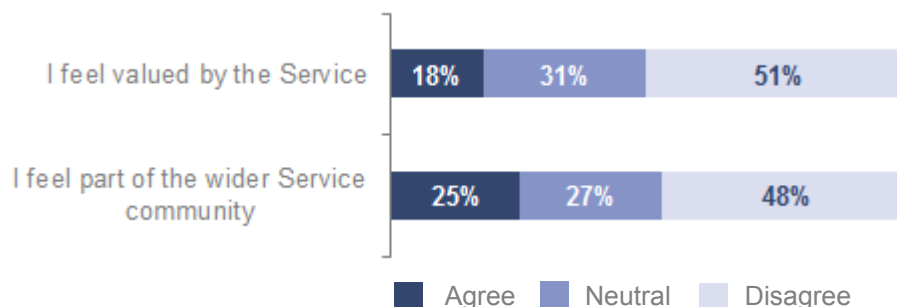
<sup>1</sup>SUBSET: Families with children (80%).

## Satisfaction with quality of life, being married to a member of the Armed Forces has increased to its highest level since this question was first asked in 2017

Almost seven in ten (69%) are satisfied with their quality of life, being married to a member of the Armed Forces compared to six in ten (61%) last year. This increase is reflected across the Services.

## Around half of families do not feel valued by the Service, or part of the wider Service community

% agree/disagree



The proportion of families who feel valued by the Service has improved since 2019, up from 15%, but remains unchanged this year.

## Just under three in ten families (29%) would feel happier if their spouse left the Service; 16% would feel less happy

This year fewer families would feel happier if their spouse left the Service compared to 2020 (down from 33%).

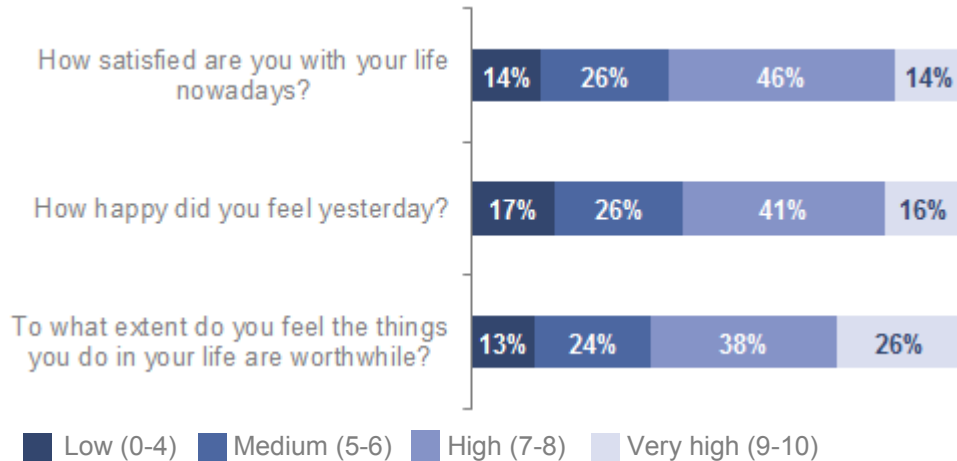
Spouses living in England are more likely to feel happier if their partner chose to leave the Service than those living overseas (29% and 22% respectively).

## Measuring well-being

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) collects [data on well-being](#) for the general population in their Annual Population Survey.

## Well-being measures for Service spouses

% Service spouses



These well-being measures remain unchanged since 2017 when they were first included in the survey.

Three in ten (30%) Service spouses rate their anxiety as 'high', unchanged since last year.

## National comparison

[National well-being scores](#) are not directly comparable to those of Service spouses due to differences in demographics. For example, national figures include a larger proportion of over 60s, who generally score their well-being higher than younger people. However, national well-being results by gender may still provide some context. The proportion of UK females scoring aspects of their well-being as 'very high' (a score of 9-10) ranges between 26-36%. These are considerably higher than corresponding results for female Service spouses.

## Well-being scores differ by attributes, such as employment status

Overall, spouses who are employed, homeowners, those who live in their own home during the working week or are married to an Officer, are more positive across the four well-being measures.

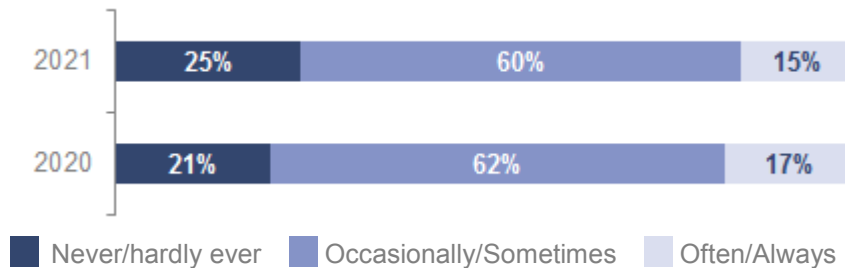
However, there are overlaps between these groups, for example Officer spouses are more likely to be homeowners and so the differences observed may be due to other reasons.

## AFCAS 2021 comparison

The proportions of married Service personnel rating aspects of well-being as 'very high' range between 12-19%, lower in comparison to Service spouses.

## The proportion of Service spouses who often or always feel lonely has decreased slightly this year

Views on how often spouses feel lonely



## National comparison

Results from the 2020 [ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey](#) provide some context to these findings. For females in Great Britain, 5% feel lonely often/always. Although not directly comparable, these figures are considerably different from female Service spouses living in Great Britain (16%).

## Section 5 - Childcare and Children's Education

Section 5 focuses on families with children, particularly their ability to access childcare and satisfaction with local childcare facilities. This section also covers the difficulties families experience in relation to their children's schooling.

### Eight in ten (80%) Service families have children

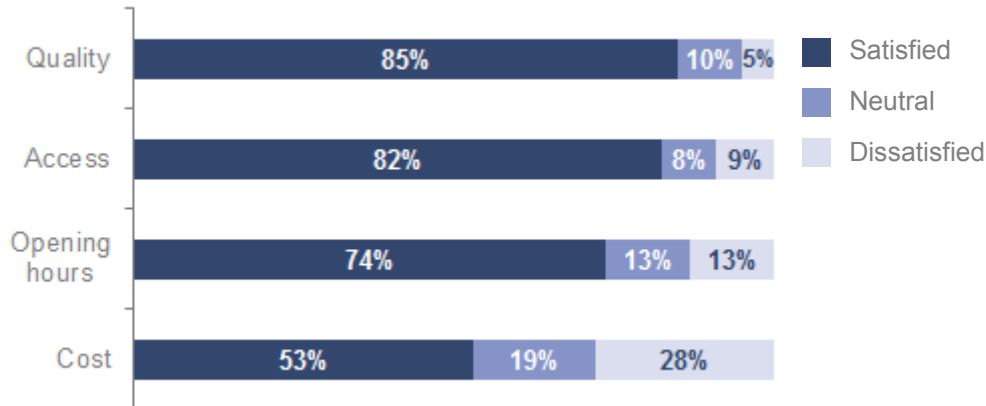


Almost seven in ten (68%) families with a child aged under five<sup>1</sup> required early years (0-4) childcare.

Of these families, nine in ten are able to access early years childcare.

The majority of families are satisfied with the quality, access and opening hours of early years childcare, but less so with cost

% satisfied/dissatisfied with aspects of early years childcare<sup>2</sup>



Satisfaction with both access and cost of early years childcare have improved this year, returning to levels reported in 2019.

### National Comparison

Although not directly comparable, the [Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents in England](#) also reports much more positive views around the quality than the cost of childcare.

<sup>1</sup>SUBSET: Families with a child aged under five (37%)

<sup>2</sup>SUBSET: Families who needed early years childcare (27%).

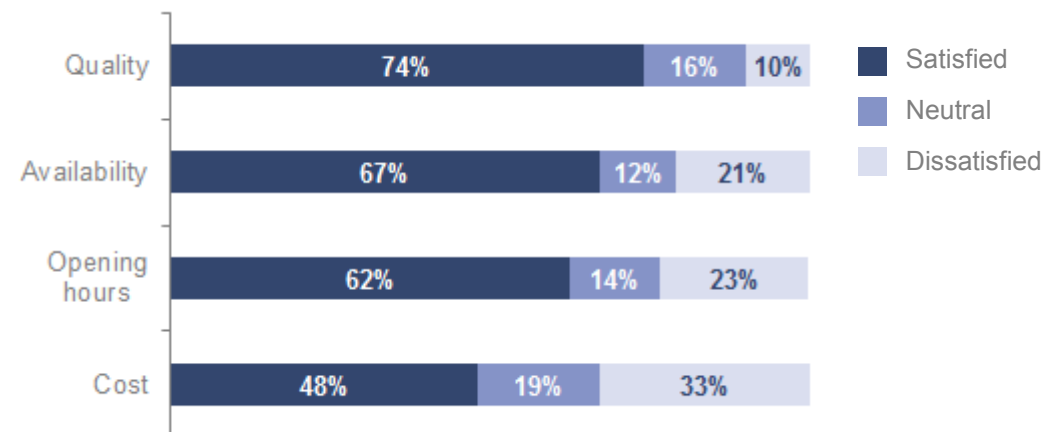
### Over half (55%) of all Service families have at least one child of school age

Of these families, four in ten required childcare such as breakfast/after school clubs in the last 12 months

However, fewer families required breakfast/after school clubs in 2021, down from 51% in 2020 to 41%. This reduction may be due, in part, to the restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A third of families who required childcare for school age children are dissatisfied with the cost of their local childcare

% satisfied/dissatisfied with aspects of local childcare for school age children<sup>3</sup>



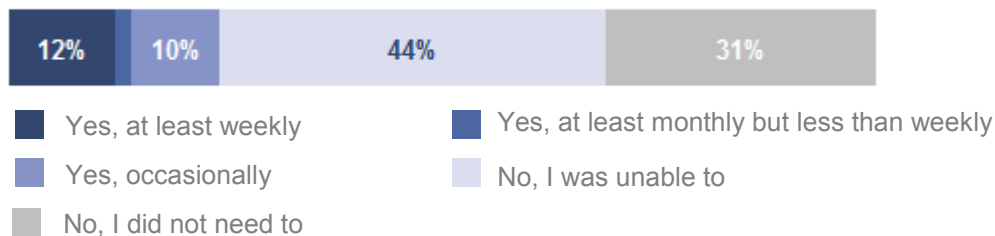
Levels of satisfaction with aspects of local childcare for school age children remain unchanged since these questions were first asked in 2017.

In general, families are more satisfied with most aspects of early years childcare than childcare for school age children.

<sup>3</sup>SUBSET: Families who needed childcare for school age children (22%).

## Around one in eight families with children use free informal childcare<sup>1</sup> at least weekly

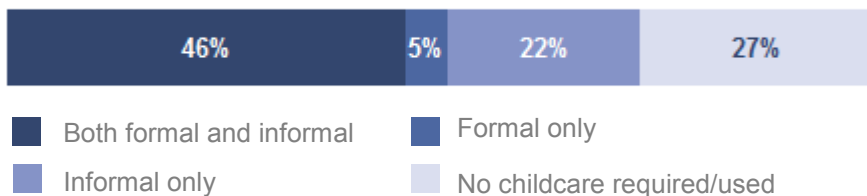
Use of free informal childcare<sup>2</sup>



A quarter of families with children make some use of free informal childcare. RN/RM families are more likely to access free informal childcare at least weekly compared to Army and RAF families.

## Half (51%) of families with children required formal childcare in the last 12 months

Requirement for formal/informal childcare<sup>2</sup>



Use of childcare is affected by the age of the children. Of those families with at least one child aged 0-11, 64% require formal childcare. This increases to 71% for families with at least one child aged under five.

### National Comparison

Although not directly comparable to Service families, the [Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents in England](#) reports around 64% of children aged 0-4 received formal childcare.

<sup>1</sup>Free informal childcare such as grandparents, extended family, friends etc.

<sup>2</sup>SUBSET: Families with children (80%).

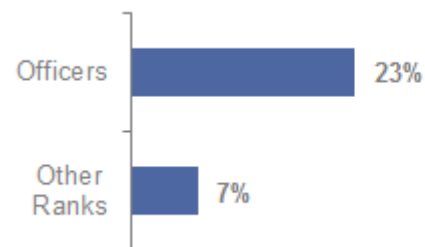
## Around six in ten (59%) families who required childcare<sup>3</sup> do not currently use any government childcare initiatives

The two top reasons for not using these initiatives are: uncertainty around eligibility and not needing the schemes. Other Rank families are more likely to not use any of these initiatives (62%) than Officer families (48%).

Tax free childcare accounts and free childcare hours are the most commonly used government childcare initiatives amongst Service families (19% and 17% respectively). A lower proportion report using the Salary Sacrifice scheme (13%), which may be due, in part, to the [closure of the childcare voucher scheme](#) in 2018.

## One in ten (11%) families with school age children<sup>4</sup> receive Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA); Officer families are much more likely to receive CEA than Other Rank families

% families with school age children who receive CEA<sup>4</sup>



This reflects the higher proportion of Officer families with a child at an independent boarding school.

**Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA)** assists Service personnel with boarding school fees to achieve the continuity of education for their children that would otherwise not be possible if their children accompanied them on frequent assignments both at home and overseas. Further details are available from the [Children's Education Advisory Service](#).

<sup>3</sup>SUBSET: Families with children who required childcare in the past 12 months (59%).

<sup>4</sup>SUBSET: Families with school age children (55%).



## The majority (82%) of families with school age children<sup>1</sup> have at least one child at a state school

Other Rank families are more likely to have a child at a state school (88%) compared to Officer families (67%).

## Fewer families with school age children changed schools for Service reasons in the last 12 months, compared to 2020

This year 15% of families with school age children changed schools for Service reasons, down from 20% in 2020. Three-quarters (74%) did not change school in the last 12 months, up from 68% last year. These changes are a return to the levels reported in 2019, following an increase in the proportion changing schools for Service reasons in 2020. This was mostly due to large numbers of families relocating back to the UK under the [Army Basing Programme](#).

## Over a quarter (28%) of families with school age children experienced difficulties with their children's schooling in the past year, an increase of five percentage points since 2020

% families with school age children experiencing schooling difficulties



This increase is due, at least in part, to COVID-19. The most common difficulty experienced by families with school age children was “difficulties related to COVID-19” (16%). This response option was added to the online survey to better understand the impact of COVID-19.

Despite the overall increase, the proportion of families selecting each type of difficulty has not increased this year. The second most common difficulty was getting a place at the school of their choice. This was selected by 7% of families, unchanged from last year.

<sup>1</sup> SUBSET: Families with school age children (55%).

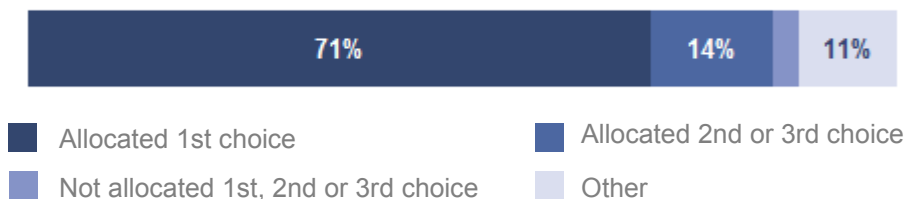
## Nearly two-thirds (64%) of families who changed schools were able to apply within the timeline for a normal point of entry<sup>2,3</sup>

However, this differs considerably between families who changed schools for Service reasons (50%) and those who changed schools for other reasons (81%).

The majority (79%) of families who changed schools in the last 12 months applied for a place at a state school.

## Seven in ten (71%) families who applied for a place at a state school were allocated their first choice of school, similar to previous years

State school allocation<sup>4</sup>



## National Comparison

Although not directly comparable to Service families, [national figures on school applications](#) offer some context: 81% of secondary school place applicants received an offer of their first choice school. For primary school applicants this was 92%.

Eight in ten families who applied for a place at a state school were happy with their allocation. Conversely, two in ten were not happy with their allocation.

<sup>2</sup> SUBSET: Families with at least one child who changed school (14%).

<sup>3</sup> The normal point of entry refers to the school's application period for the beginning of Reception, Year 7, Year 12 or equivalent.

<sup>4</sup> SUBSET: Families with a child who changed school and applied for a place at a state school (11%).

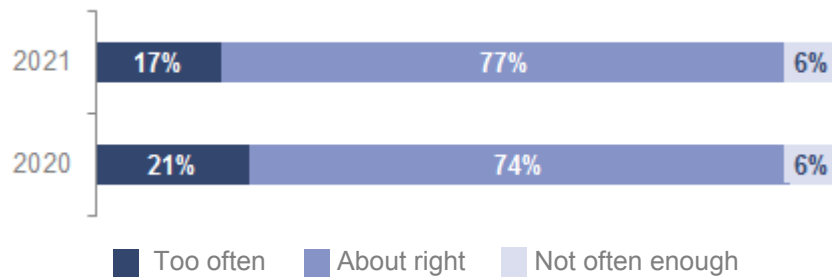
## Section 6 - Deployment

Section 6 looks at spouses' views on the length and frequency of operational tours. This section also looks at their experiences of the support and information services available to them before, during and after their spouse's deployments.

During 2014 the UK Armed Forces reduced its military presence in Afghanistan from over 5,000 personnel to less than 500. In recent years, deployments have been more dispersed over a wider range of locations. See the [MOD Annual Report and Accounts](#) for more information.

**Over three-quarters (77%) of spouses feel that the frequency of operational tours is “about right”, up three percentage points since last year**

Views on the frequency of operational tours



Correspondingly, the proportion of spouses who feel the frequency of deployments is “too often” has fallen this year.

Historically, views on operational tour length have remained fairly stable so these changes may reflect the reduction in separation families have experienced this year (see Section 1 for more information).

### AFCAS 2021 comparison

There was a similar drop in the proportion of married Service personnel who feel they deploy “too often”. However they are more likely to say that they do not deploy often enough (23%) compared to Service spouses (6%).

**More than half of spouses report that the length of operational tours is “about right”, unchanged since 2020**

Views on the length of operational tours <sup>1</sup>



### AFCAS 2021 comparison

A much higher proportion of married Service personnel felt the length of their tours was “about right” (80%) than Service spouses (53%).

**Six in ten (63%) spouses know where to go for welfare support and information whilst their spouse is on an operational tour; a third do not**

These figures are unchanged since 2015.

**RN/RM spouses are less likely to know where to go for welfare support and information than other Service spouses**

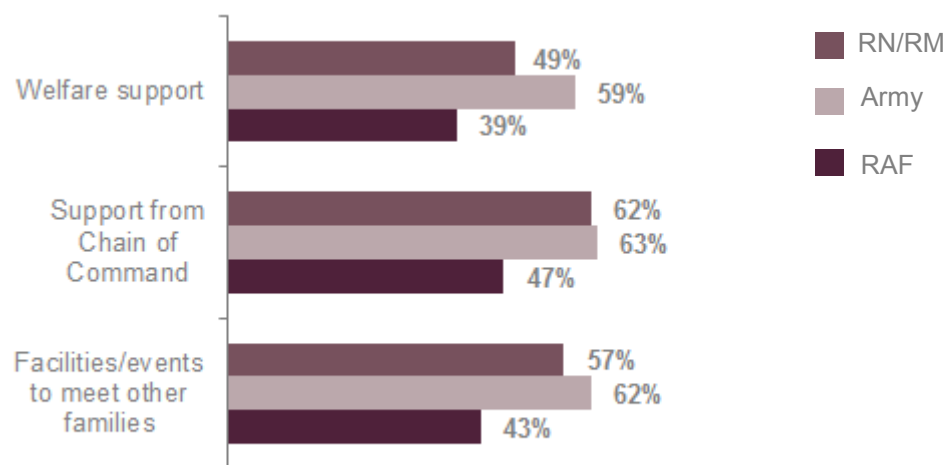
% spouses who know where to go for welfare support and information whilst their partner is on an operational tour



<sup>1</sup> SUBSET: Those whose spouse has been deployed within the past two years (38%).

## RAF spouses are less likely to make use of Service-provided support before, during and after their partner's deployment than RN/RM or Army spouses

% used support during partner's deployment<sup>1,2</sup>



Just under nine in ten (88%) spouses make use of lines of communication with their partner during deployment; this remains the most used support service.

Use of all aspects of support, except lines of communication with their partner, have fallen since 2016. This is largely due to a reduction in use amongst Army families. In the last year, use of facilities/events to meet other families before, during and after operational tours has fallen amongst RN/RM families, returning to 2018 levels.

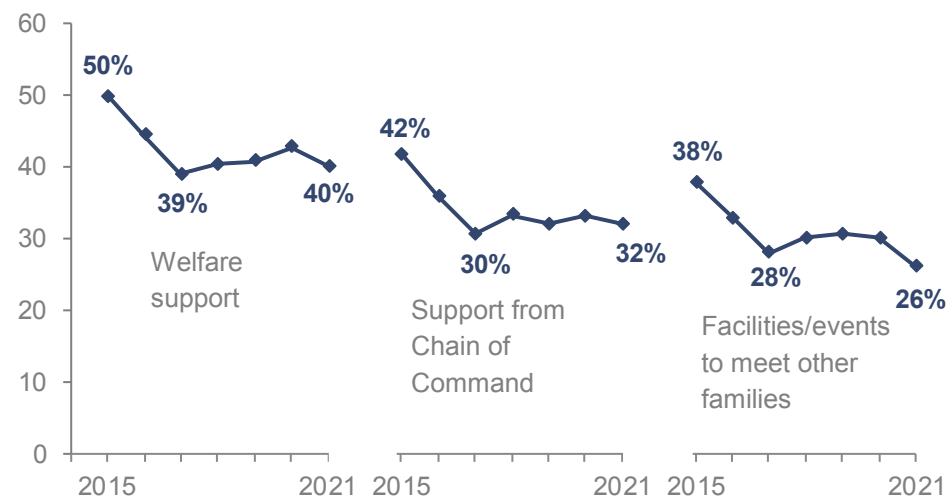
[AFCAS 2021](#) reports a much higher proportion of RAF personnel deployed individually on their last deployment (64%) than the other Services (ranging from 16% for the RN to 29% for the RM). AFCAS also shows an increase in the proportion of personnel deployed individually, rather than as a unit, for both RM and Army personnel since 2016. These differences may contribute to some of the results shown here.

<sup>1</sup> SUBSET: Those whose spouse has been deployed within the past two years (38%).

<sup>2</sup> USE is derived by summing responses with a valid satisfaction level who did NOT tick the "Did not use" response option.

## Although stable over the past few years, satisfaction with Service-provided support before deployment remains below levels reported in 2015

% satisfied with aspects of support before their spouse's deployment<sup>1</sup>

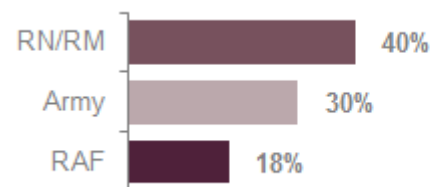


There is a similar trend for most types of support during and after deployment.

Overall there is little difference in satisfaction levels between Officer and Other Rank families, except for lines of communication during deployment where Officer families are more satisfied (70%) than Other Rank families (59%).

## RN/RM spouses report higher levels of dissatisfaction with all aspects of support before, during and after deployment

% dissatisfied with welfare support before their partner's deployment<sup>1</sup>

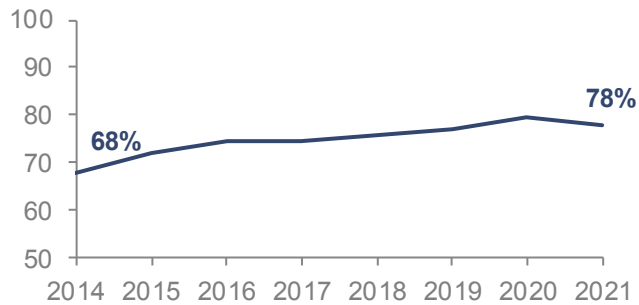


## Section 7 - Employment

Section 7 provides information on employment status, experiences of looking for a job and job satisfaction. It also covers the experiences of families who accompanied their spouse overseas.

### The employment rate for spouses is unchanged this year but has increased since 2014

% spouses employed



#### National comparison

The [UK employment rate](#) for all those aged 16-64 is 75%. This is 1.4 percentage points lower than before the pandemic.



PP = Percentage Point

### Online respondents were asked whether their employment had been affected by COVID-19

The majority (73%) reported their employment had not been affected whilst 3% said they were no longer employed and 4% were on furlough. One fifth of online respondents said their employment had been affected in another way including:

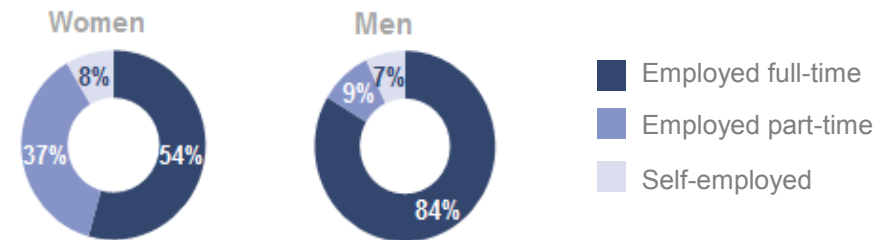
- ◆ Working from home
- ◆ Having children at home
- ◆ Working more or less hours
- ◆ Furloughed for some of the lockdown
- ◆ Changing jobs

### Employment differs by gender

The employment rate for female Service spouses (aged 16-64) is 76% compared to 93% for male spouses. This difference narrows a little when excluding dual-serving spouses to 75% for women and 86% for men.

Of those in employment, a much higher proportion of women are employed part-time than men. Gender differences are still apparent after excluding dual-serving spouses.

% by employment type (excluding dual-serving spouses)<sup>1</sup>



#### National comparison

[UK employment rates](#) (age 16-64) differ by gender as well with 72% of women being employed compared to 78% of men.

Of UK women in [employment](#), approximately 60% work full-time and about a third work part time. This compares to around 75% and 10% respectively for UK men in employment.

### Those in full-time employment are more satisfied that their qualifications match their job (77%) than those employed part-time (64%)<sup>2</sup>

There are similar differences between satisfaction levels with their job overall and that their job matches their skills and experience.

<sup>1</sup> SUBSET: Those aged 16-64 in employment but NOT dual serving (67%)

<sup>2</sup> SUBSET: Those in full-time employment (47%) and those in part-time employment (25%)

## About a third (32%) of spouses looked for a job in the past year

This has fallen from the 40% reported last year and is likely due, in part, to COVID-19.

## Of the 32% of spouses who looked for a job, 64% experienced difficulties finding suitable employment, unchanged since 2017

This equates to about 20% of all spouses. Although lower than the 25% reported last year, this change is driven by the reduction in spouses looking for a job.

### Top reasons cited by those who experienced difficulties:

**45%** Partner unable to assist with care responsibilities <sup>1</sup>

**44%** Extended family live too far away to assist with childcare <sup>1</sup>

The top reasons differ by Service and Rank. RN/RM spouses ranked “Having a spouse who is often away” in second place and Officer spouses ranked their “Employment history (moving jobs frequently)” as joint top.

“Being overseas with my spouse” was the most common difficulty (78%) for those living outside of the UK. These spouses are also less likely to be employed (48%) than those living in the UK.

## Three in five spouses would use courses to help them find or change employment if the MOD offered them

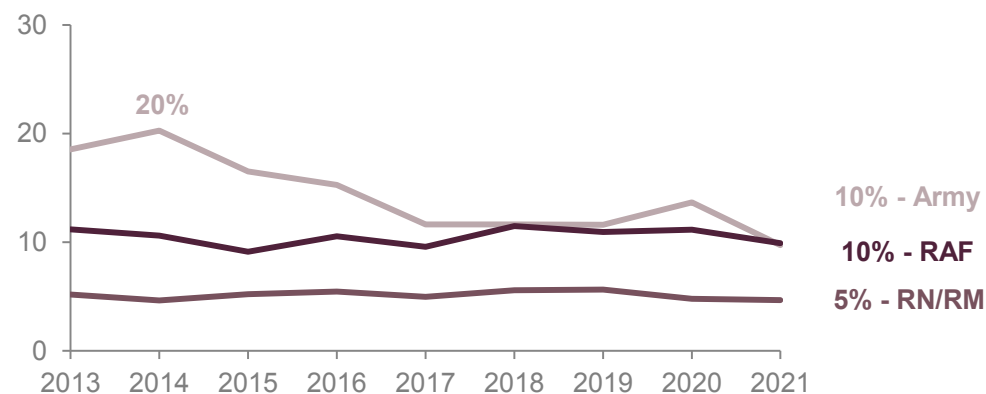
This is a decrease of four percentage points since 2020. Coupled with an increase in “not applicable” responses, this may be linked to the reduction in spouses looking for a job.

A higher proportion of Other Rank spouses said they would use the courses (63%) than Officer spouses (55%). Those living overseas are more likely to take up the courses (68%) than those living in England (60%).

<sup>1</sup> SUBSET: Those who experienced difficulties finding suitable employment (20%).

## Just under one in ten spouses accompanied their partner overseas this year

% accompanied their spouse overseas



The proportion of Army spouses accompanying their partner overseas fell from a peak of 20% in 2014 to 12% in 2017. The proportion of Army spouses accompanying has fallen a little this year following a small increase last year. Levels are similar to those recorded between 2017 and 2019.

RN/RM spouses are less likely to accompany their partner overseas than Army or RAF spouses. This reflects the lower proportion of RN/RM personnel who are posted to overseas locations where it is possible to be accompanied by their spouse.

## Of those who accompanied their partner overseas in the past year: <sup>2</sup>

**37%** Were unable to find paid employment overseas

**18%** Were unable to access Service-provided information before moving overseas

The proportion unable to find paid employment has increased from the 28% reported in 2015.

<sup>2</sup> SUBSET: Those who accompanied their partner on an overseas assignment over the past year (9%).

## Section 8 - Healthcare

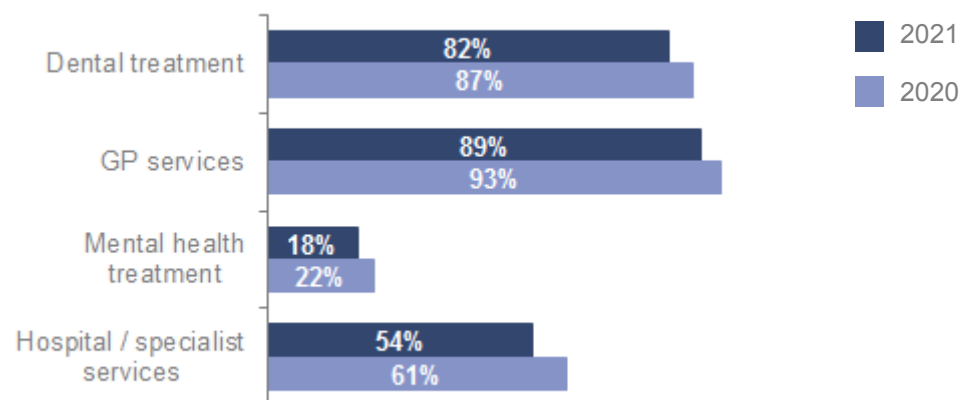
Section 8 looks at access to healthcare services for Service families.

### Data Quality Note

The survey aims to measure healthcare provisions for family members not in the Armed Forces. As such, dual-serving families without children, were not asked these questions.

### The proportion of families requiring access to all types of healthcare fell this year

% families required access



In 2021, the requirement for dental treatment, GP services and hospital/specialist services fell below levels recorded in all previous years. The decreases in requirement this year are likely to be due, in part, to the COVID-19 pandemic.

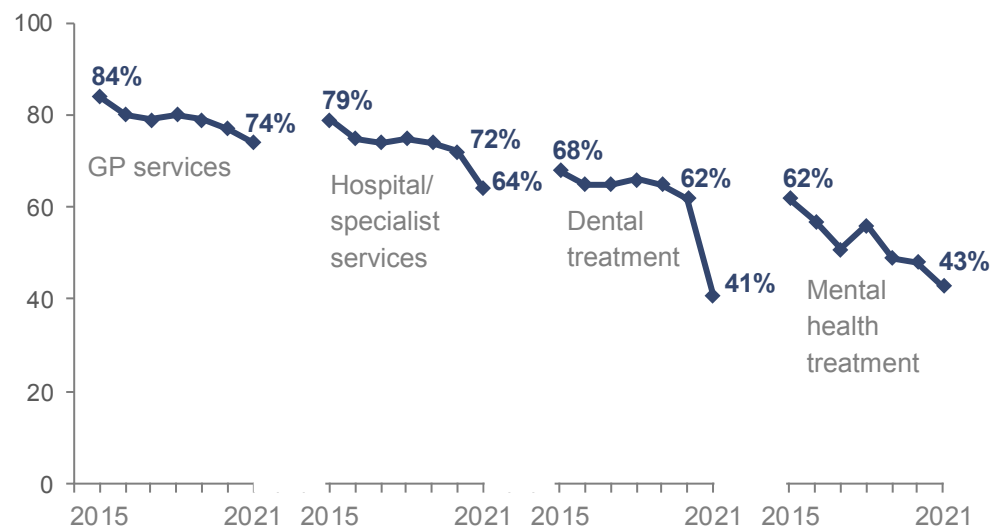
Historically, the requirement for mental health treatment had been increasing so the fall this year brings results back in line with levels reported in 2019.

Despite these decreases, the majority of Service families still required access to GP services and dental treatment over the past year.

In accordance with the [Armed Forces Covenant](#), the Armed Forces community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.

### Of those requiring access, the proportion of families able to access healthcare without difficulties has fallen since 2015

% able to access each healthcare service without difficulty<sup>1</sup>



This year there has been a steep decline in the proportions of families able to access dental treatment and hospital/specialist services without difficulties. Over the same period, the proportion of families who were unable to access dental treatment increased from 13% in 2020 to 32% in 2021. These changes are likely to be due, in part, to COVID-19.

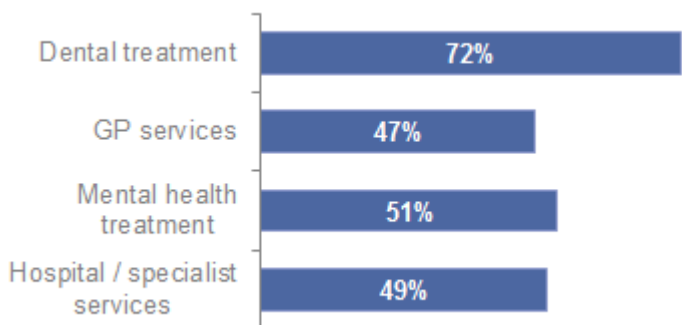
During the first COVID-19 lockdown, between late March and early June 2020, [Dental practices](#) were instructed to cease routine care and the [NHS](#) were forced to significantly reduce many areas of non-COVID care.

<sup>3</sup>SUBSET: Those who required each healthcare treatment: GP services (89%), hospital/specialist services (54%), dental treatment (82%) and mental health treatment (18%).

The 2021 FamCAS went into field at the end of January 2021. The survey asks about experiences over the past year and so will cover periods of lockdowns due to COVID-19. To better understand the impact of this, online respondents were asked about the effect on access to healthcare treatment.

**Of those who required access, over seven in ten families felt their access to dental treatment had been affected by COVID-19<sup>1</sup>**

% families who felt their access to healthcare treatments had been affected by COVID-19



**A small proportion of families moved whilst undergoing healthcare treatments**

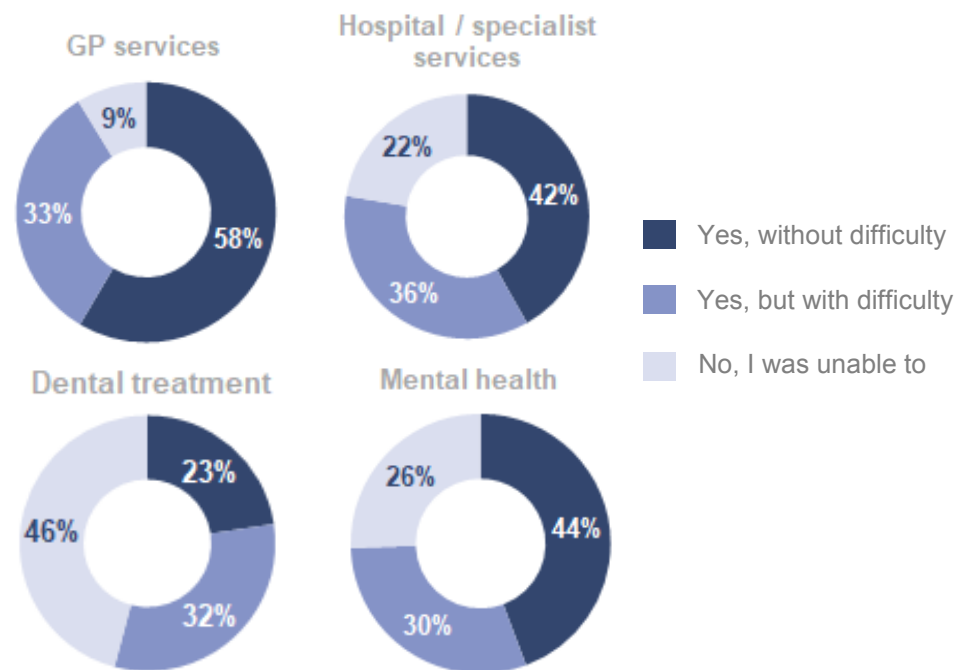
This ranges from 2% who moved whilst undergoing mental health treatment to 9% who moved whilst undergoing treatment with their GP.

Overall, fewer families moved over the past year and as a result, the proportions of families who moved whilst undergoing healthcare treatments have also fallen. For example, the proportion of families who moved whilst undergoing GP treatment fell from 13% in 2020 to 9% in 2021.

<sup>1</sup>SUBSET: Those who responded online and required healthcare treatment:: dental treatment (55%), GP services (59%), mental health treatment (12%), hospital/specialist services (36%).

**Apart from GP services, less than half of families who moved whilst undergoing treatment<sup>2</sup> were able to continue their treatment without difficulty**

% families by ability to continue healthcare treatment following a move



The proportion of families able to continue dental treatment, following a move, without difficulties fell this year from 47% in 2020 to 23% in 2021. This is likely to be due, at least in part, to the impact of COVID-19.

Since 2015, the proportions of families who moved and were able to continue GP or hospital treatment without difficulty have fallen by 13 and 18 percentage points respectively.

**A small proportion of families (6%) moved whilst on a waiting list for an operation or consultant appointment**

Of these families, 32% felt their waiting time had increased as a result of moving compared to 34% who felt it had not, similar to previous years.

<sup>2</sup>SUBSET: Those who moved whilst undergoing healthcare treatment: GP services (9%), dental treatment (6%), hospital/specialist services (8%) and mental health treatment (2%).

## Section 9 - Housing

Section 9 covers home ownership and the reasons for not owning a home. It also looks at the types of accommodation spouses live in during the working week, and how this compares to where they would prefer to live. It also reports on levels of satisfaction with Service Family Accommodation (SFA) and Substitute Service Family Accommodation (SSFA).

### Just over three-fifths (62%) of families own their own home

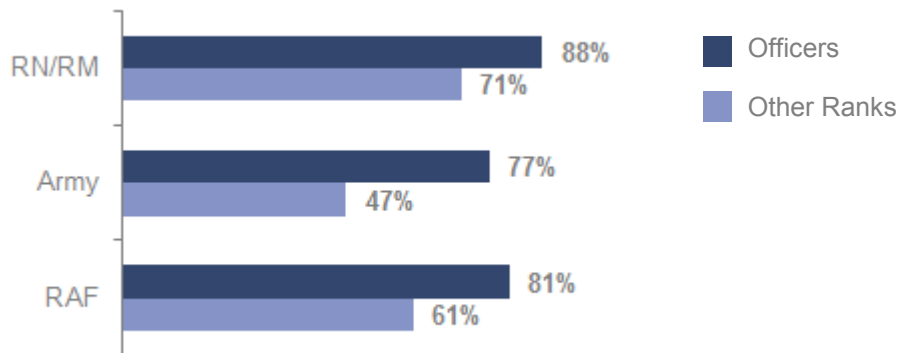
This is unchanged since 2018 but is higher than the 59% reported in 2017.

#### National Comparison

Although not directly comparable, the latest [English Housing Survey](#) reports that 65% of households in England owned their own homes in 2019-2020.

### Home ownership differs greatly by Rank and Service

% families owning their own home



### Around two in five (38%) families do not own a home at the moment

Of these families, the top reasons for not owning a home are:

- 53%** Cannot afford to buy a suitable home at the moment
- 42%** Living in Service accommodation is better suited to families' needs
- 33%** Want to be able to move with their spouse

Affordability is more of an issue for Other Rank non-homeowner families (56%) than Officer non-homeowner families (31%).

### Around two in five (38%) families live in a privately owned home during the working week, an increase of three percentage points since 2017

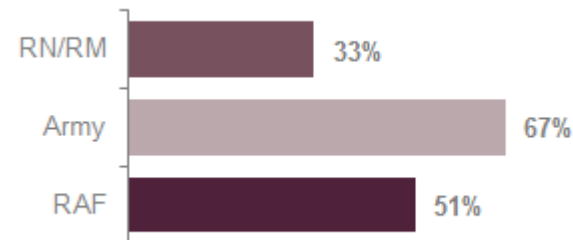


RN/RM families are more likely to live in a privately owned home (61%), followed by RAF (43%) and then Army (28%) families.

Officer families are more likely to live in their own home (45%) than Other Rank families (35%).

### Just under three-fifths (57%) of families live in Service Family Accommodation (SFA) during the working week, although this differs by Service

% families living in SFA



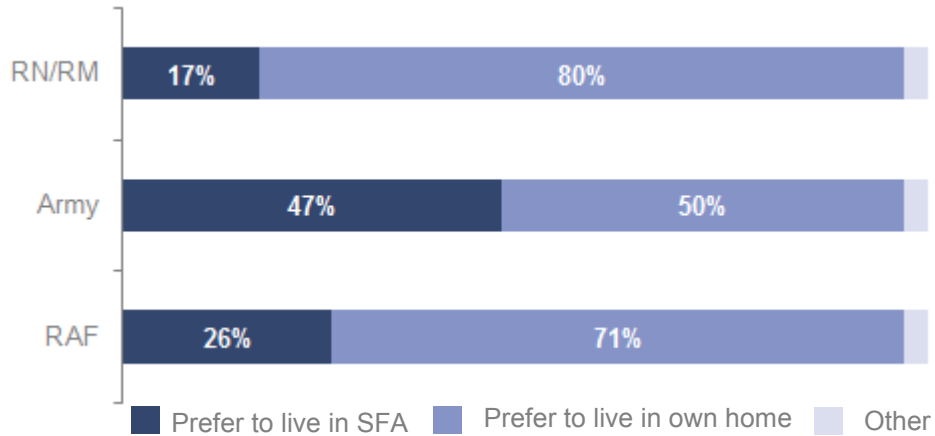
Other Rank families are more likely to live in SFA (60%) than Officer families (48%). This is largely driven by Army and RAF families as there is little difference between Officers and Other Ranks for RN/RM families.

Families living outside the UK are more likely to live in SFA (71%) than those living in England (57%) and other UK locations.



## Accommodation preferences differ by Service

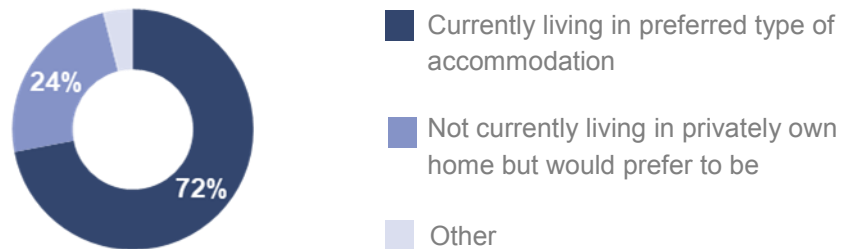
% families by accommodation preference



A higher proportion of Army families express a preference for SFA than RN/RM or RAF families.

## Over seven in ten families are living in their preferred type of accommodation

% families by current accommodation type and preference



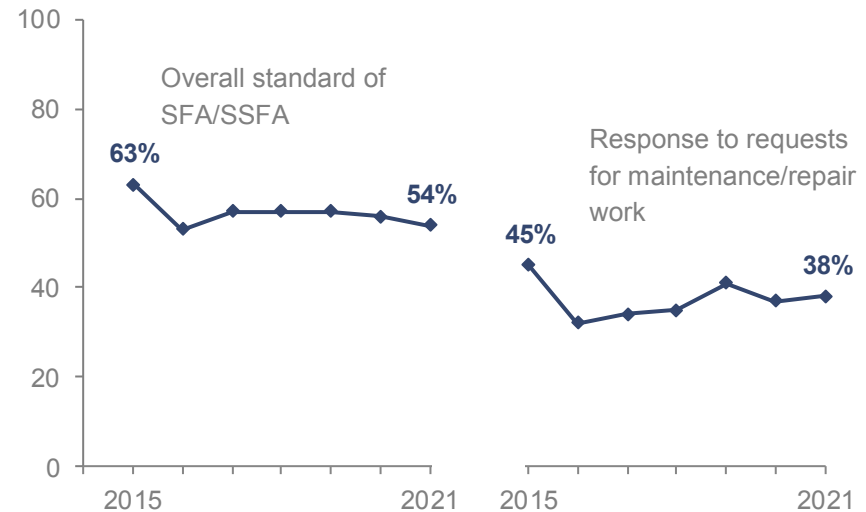
A higher proportion of families (72%) are living in their preferred type of accommodation than last year (69%). About a quarter of families (24%) are not currently living in privately owned home but would prefer to be, fewer than the 27% reported last year.

A higher proportion of RAF families are not living in a privately owned home but would prefer to be (28%) than other Service families.

Levels of satisfaction with most aspects of SFA/SSFA (Substitute SFA) fell between 2015 and 2016. Potential contributing factors to this decrease were the underperformance by the National Housing Prime contractor alongside changes to the SFA charging model over this period.

## Although stable in recent years, satisfaction with most aspects of SFA/SSFA have not returned to the levels seen in 2015

% satisfied with aspects of SFA/SSFA<sup>1</sup>



Levels of satisfaction for value for money, quality of maintenance/repair work and the cleanliness of accommodation follow a similar trend over time with levels of satisfaction remaining below those reported in 2015.

Families living outside the UK have higher levels of satisfaction with many aspects of SFA/SSFA than those living in England. For example, 73% of families living overseas are satisfied with the overall standard compared to 50% of families living in England.

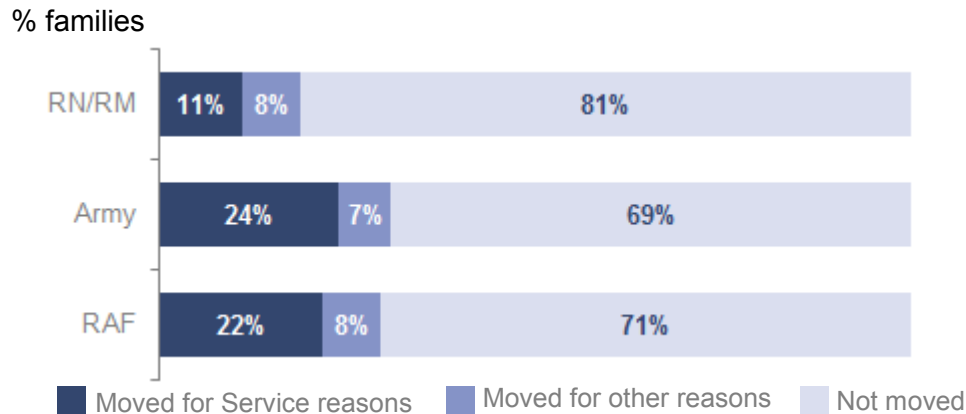
Officer families are more satisfied with some aspects of SFA/SSFA. For example Officer families are more satisfied with the fairness of allocation of SFA/SSFA (53%) than Other Rank families (45%).

<sup>1</sup> Based on the subset of families who live in SFA/SSFA (58%).

## Section 10 - Impact of Mobility

Section 10 looks at the impact of moving location on the families of Service personnel. It looks again at some of the questions from the previous sections and compares the responses of those who moved for Service reasons with those who have not moved over the last 12 months. In this section, “moved” refers to those who have moved for Service reasons. **This section compares the 21% of families who moved for Service reasons with the 72% of families who did not move.**

### One in five Service families moved for Service reasons over the past year, although this differs by Service



RN/RM families were less likely to move for Service reasons than RAF and Army families.

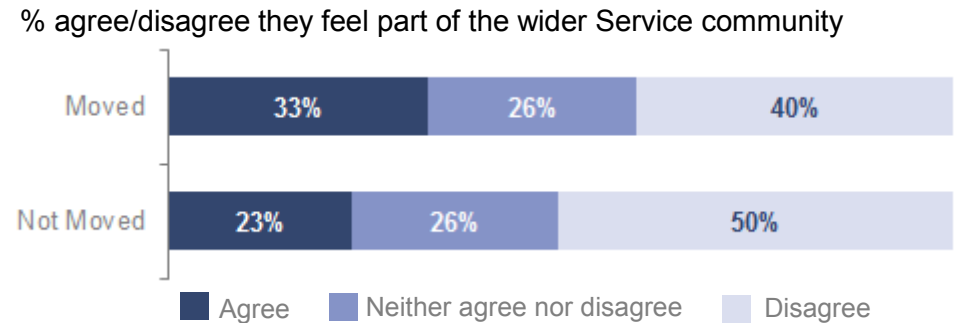
This year, mobility has returned to levels reported in 2019 following an increase in 2020. These changes are driven by Army families. The increase in mobility last year was due to large numbers of families moving from Germany to the UK as part of the [Army Basing Programme](#).

### Families who moved were more likely to live with their Serving spouse (90%) than families who did not move (75%)

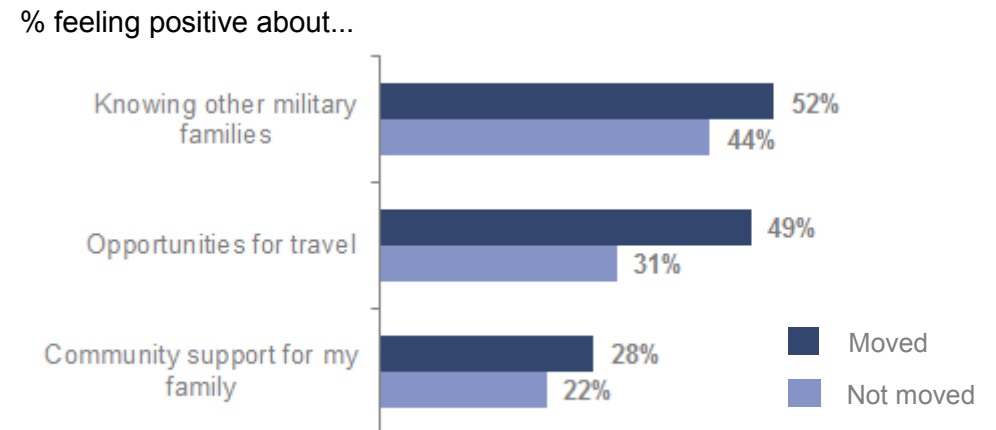
This is to be expected as those who move for Service reasons are likely to be accompanying their Serving partner.

This may contribute to those who moved feeling less negative about separation (40%) and more positive about their relationship with their spouse (27%) than those who did not move (47% and 21% respectively).

### Those who moved were more likely to feel part of the wider Service community than those who did not move



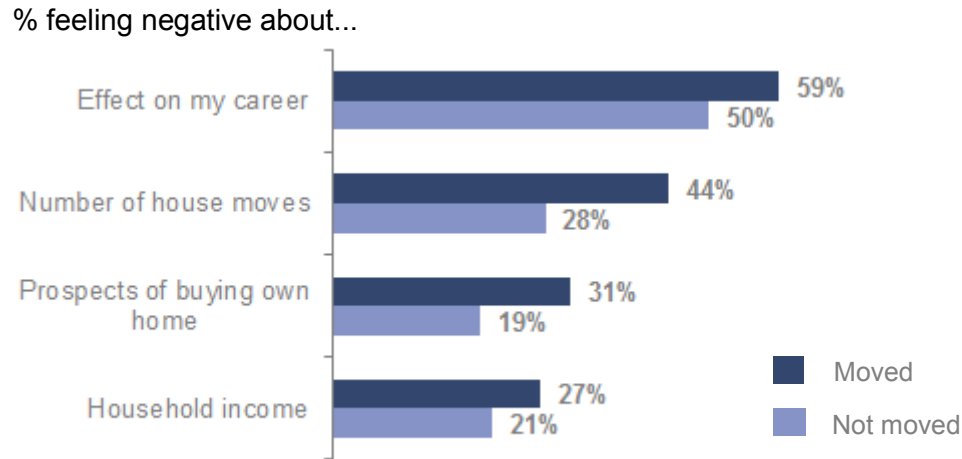
### Families who moved also felt more positive about social aspects of Service life, compared to those who did not move



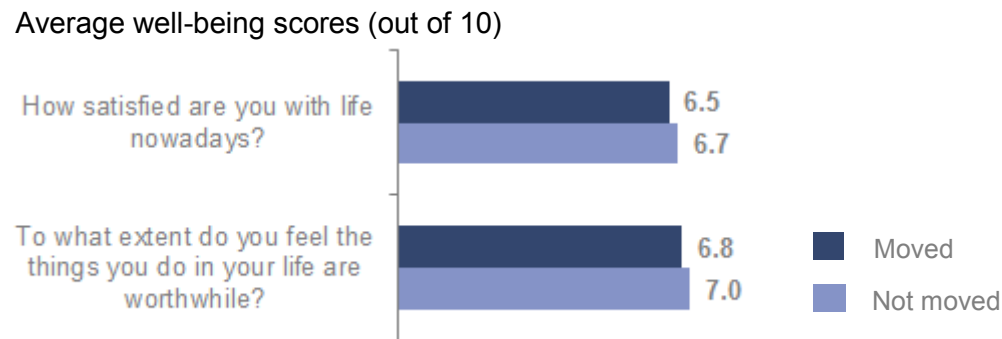
Those who moved also felt more advantaged about family life (16%) than those who did not move (12%), although there was no difference in feeling disadvantaged about family life (both 39%). Movers were more likely to feel less happy if their partner chose to leave the Service (20%) than those who did not move (16%).

However, moving home can cause a certain degree of upheaval for Service families, such as finding employment or changing their child's school.

### Spouses who moved felt more negative about some aspects of Service life....



### Those who moved had slightly lower average scores for two of the four well-being measures than those who did not move

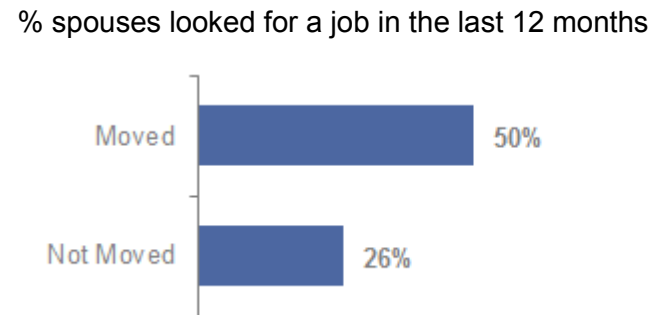


Last year, the measure “Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday” also differed. However the gap has narrowed this year and the difference is no longer significant.

### Those who moved were less likely to be employed<sup>2</sup> than those who did not move



### Spouses who have moved were much more likely to have looked for a job in the last 12 months, compared to those who did not move



Spouses who moved were less likely to be employed and more likely to have looked for a job. Therefore, mobility may be a contributing factor to them feeling more negative about the effect Service life has on their career.

### Of those who moved, around seven in ten spouses (68%) said they would use courses to help them find or change employment if the MOD offered them

This compares to 59% for those who did not move.

<sup>2</sup> Employed refers to those in full-time, part-time or self employment

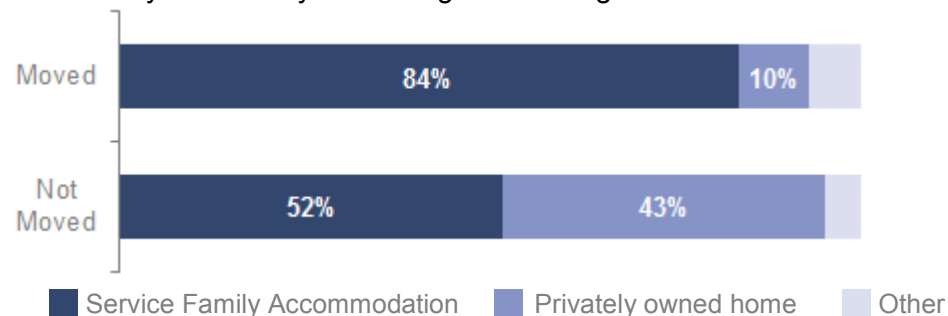
### Spouses who moved were less likely to own a home than those who did not move

% families own a home



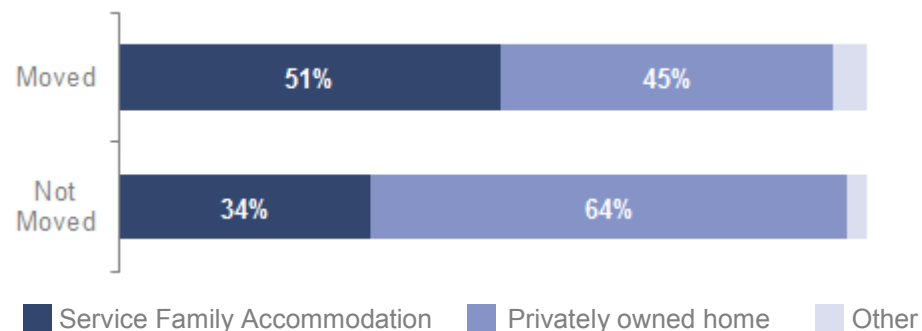
### The majority of spouses who moved live in Service Family Accommodation (SFA) during the working week

% families by where they live during the working week



### Half of spouses who moved would prefer to live in SFA whilst a slightly lower proportion would choose to live in their own home

% families by accommodation preference



### Spouses who moved were less likely to be living in their preferred type of accommodation

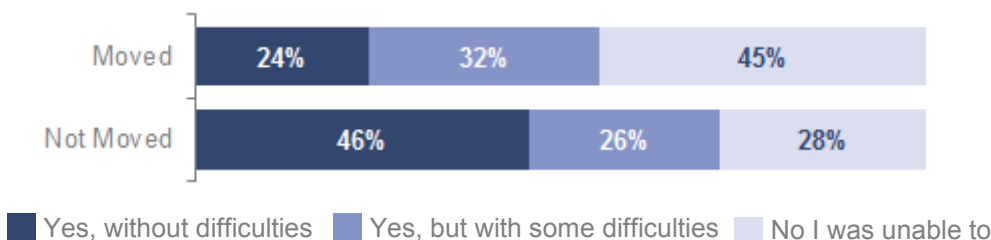
% families living in preferred type of accommodation



Just over a third of families who moved (35%) were not living in their own home but would prefer to be, this compares to 22% for families who did not move.

### Families who moved were more likely to experience difficulties accessing dental treatment than those who did not move

% families by ability to access dental treatment if required<sup>1</sup>



Ability to access dental treatment without difficulty fell for all families this year due, in part, to the closure of dental practices during the first COVID-19 lockdown.

There is no longer any difference in ability to access hospital or specialist services between those who moved and those who did not. However, this is due to a reduction in access for those who did not move rather than an improvement for those who did move. Once again this is likely to be due, in part, to COVID-19.

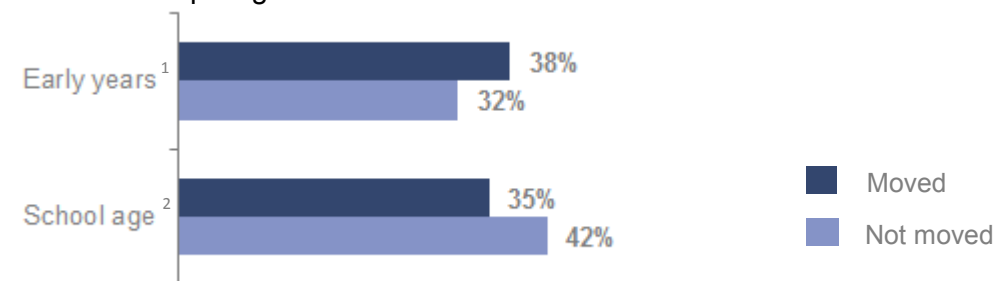
<sup>1</sup> SUBSET: Those who required dental treatment (Moved:16% Not moved:58%),

## Families who moved were less likely to have children (77%) than families who did not move (81%)

Families who moved were also less likely to have school age children (49%) than families who did not move (58%).

## Those who moved with children were more likely to require early years (0-4) childcare

% families requiring childcare



Conversely, those who moved with school age children, were less likely to require childcare for them.

Those who moved and required early years childcare, were less satisfied with the quality of the childcare (77%) than those who did not move (87%). There were no other differences in levels of satisfaction with childcare.

## Over half (56%) of families who moved with children, were unable to access any free, informal childcare<sup>3</sup>

This differs to the 41% reported for families with children who did not move.

## Families with school age children who moved, were less likely to have a child at a state school (71%) than those who did not move (84%)

Families with school age children who moved, were more likely to have a child at an independent boarding school (18%) than those who did not move (8%). As a result, they were also more likely to be in receipt of [Continuity of Education Allowance](#) (CEA) (20% compared to 9%).

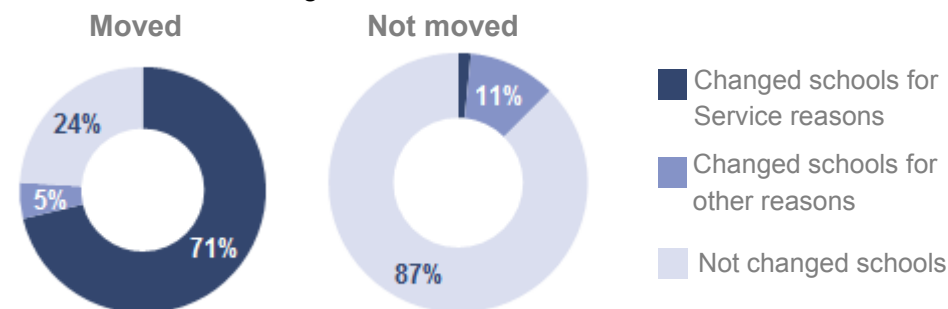
<sup>1</sup> SUBSET: Those with children (Moved:16% Not moved:59%)

<sup>2</sup> SUBSET: Those with school age children (Moved:10% Not moved:42%)

<sup>3</sup> Free informal childcare such as grandparents, extended family, friends etc.

## Of families who moved and had school age children, just over seven in ten had a child change schools for Service reasons

% families with school age children<sup>2</sup>

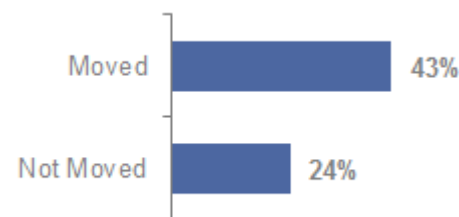


Of those families who moved and had a child who changed school<sup>4</sup>, just over half (53%) were able to apply within the timeframe for the normal point of entry (such as Reception or Year 7). This compares to 81% for families who did not move and had a child change school.

Of those families who moved and applied for a place at a state school<sup>5</sup>, two in three were allocated their first choice; three-quarters were happy with their child's allocation. Similar proportions were reported for those who did not move.

## Families with school age children who moved, were more likely to experience difficulties with their children's schooling than those who did not move

% experienced difficulties with their children's schooling<sup>2</sup>



This difference is partly due to the larger proportion of children changing school for Service reasons amongst families who have moved.

<sup>4</sup> SUBSET: Those with a child who changed schools (Moved:8% Not moved: 5%)

<sup>5</sup> SUBSET: Those who applied for a place at a State school (Moved:6% Not moved: 4%)

# Methodology

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## 1. Target Population

The target population for FamCAS 2021 was the spouses/civil partners of all trained UK Regular Armed Forces personnel including Gurkhas but excluding Special Forces and those deployed or attending training courses at the time the survey sample was drawn from the Joint Personnel Administration system.

## 2. The survey

FamCAS is distributed in electronic format for all three Services and a paper version is available for the Army and RAF. The RN/RM has run an online survey for several years and the Army and RAF introduced an online survey in 2016. In 2020 RN/RM decided to remove the paper option, running an online only Families survey.

This change impacted on RN/RM response rates in 2020. However, responses increased this year, back to levels similar to those in 2019. For a small number of questions this change in methodology may have impacted on results. Where this is the case, footnotes or discontinuities are included in the reference tables. For more detail please refer to the accompanying [Background Quality Report](#).

E-mail invites to the online questionnaire are sent to Service personnel who are asked to forward the invite onto their spouse/civil partner. Army and RAF also distribute paper questionnaires to the Serving person to pass on. Data collection ran from late January 2021 to early May 2021, a relatively long period which allows time for Service personnel to pass on the survey to their spouse/civil partner as some may be living separately due to postings/assignments.

The FamCAS went into field during the third COVID-19 lockdown in England. The survey asks questions about the past year and so will also capture experiences during previous national and local COVID-19 lockdowns. To better understand the possible impact of this, some COVID related questions were added to the online version of the survey. These questions asked whether things like access to healthcare, difficulties with children's education or employment were affected by COVID-19. Although only asked of online respondents, since 81% of responses were online, these provide helpful context to some of the reported changes.

The survey is anonymous. Individual level data are only available to a small group of civilian researchers working on the analysis and report production and the data does not contain any identifier which can be linked back to the Service person or their spouse/civil partner.

## 3. The sample and respondents

The total FamCAS 2021 sample consisted of 24,245 personnel. FamCAS questionnaires were issued to Service personnel selected under a (disproportionate) stratified simple random sampling process. Samples were designed to provide sufficient responses to yield estimates with a reasonable margin of error under cost constraints. Due to low expected response rates most strata are a complete census. Table A1, below, shows the strata we are able to select a sample from and the corresponding level of precision<sup>1</sup> we aim for.

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<sup>1</sup> Precision is based on half of a 95% confidence interval width, often referred to as the margin of error.

**Table A1: Precision aimed for by strata**

Strata	Precision
RN Officer England	5%
RN OR6-9 England	5%
Army Officer England	5%
Army OR6-9 England	5%
Army OR1-4 England	5%
RAF Officer England	5%
RAF OR6-9 England	5%
RAF OR1-4 England	5%

Based on 2019 and 2020 response rates this sample design was expected to yield precisions of around 2.5% for each Service and 4% to 5% for each Rank group by Service. Despite conducting a census for Royal Navy - OR1-4 and for all Royal Marines the margin of error for these groups are expected to be between 6% and 15%. Margins of error for each question can be found in reference tables published alongside this report on the [FamCAS](#) website.

5,987 responses were used in the FamCAS 2021 analysis, giving an overall response rate of 25%. The table below contains detailed information on the number of questionnaires issued and received along with corresponding response rates.

**Table A2: Response rates by Service and rank group**

		Sample size	Surveys returned	2021 response rate	2020 response rate	2019 response rate	2018 response rate
<b>Royal Navy</b>	Officers	2 806	832	30%	23%	33%	27%
	Ratings	5 149	908	18%	12%	19%	14%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7 955</b>	<b>1 740</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>23%</b>	18%
<b>Royal Marines</b>	Officers	339	83	24%	18%	25%	19%
	Marines	1 166	141	12%	8%	14%	12%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1 505</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>16%</b>	13%
<b>Army</b>	Officers	1 727	797	46%	47%	49%	39%
	Soldiers	7 143	1 730	24%	23%	22%	17%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>8 870</b>	<b>2 527</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>27%</b>	21%
<b>Royal Air Force</b>	Officers	1 496	500	33%	34%	37%	33%
	Airmen	4 419	996	23%	22%	24%	22%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5 915</b>	<b>1 496</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>27%</b>	25%
<b>All Services</b>	Officers	6 368	2 212	35%	32%	38%	32%
	Ranks	17 877	3 775	21%	19%	21%	17%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>24 245</b>	<b>5 987</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>25%</b>	20%

Note that percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole % for ease of interpretation.

#### 4. Weighting methodology and non-response

Due to the sample design and the differences in prevalence of non-response between the Service, rank and location strata, the distribution of characteristics amongst the FamCAS respondents did not reflect the distribution in the whole Armed Forces spouse/civil partner population. Response rates tend to vary by strata, therefore responses are weighted by rank and broad location in order to correct for the bias caused by over or under-representation.

The weights were calculated simply by:

$$\frac{\text{Population size within weighting class (p)}}{\text{Number of responses within weighting class (r)}}$$

Number of responses within weighting class (r)

Weighting in this way assumes missing data are missing at random (MAR) only within weighting classes. This means we assume that within a single weighting class the views of non-respondents do not differ (on average) to the views of respondents.

The results for each respondent within each weighting class are multiplied by the weight for that class. This effectively scales up response to the population size. Classes with larger weights are less represented in the data and so need to be scaled up more.

**Table A3: Weightings used for FamCAS 2021 analysis**

Weighting Class	Weighting Applied	Weighting Class	Weighting Applied	Weighting Class	Weighting Applied
RN_OF1+_NI_Wales	3.21	Army_OF1+_Ger	4.54	RAF_OF1+_Cyp	2.89
RN_OF1+_NonUK	7.06	Army_OF1+_NI	3.53	RAF_OF1+_NI_Scot_Wales	5.20
RN_OF1+_Scot	3.87	Army_OF1+_Scot	2.77	RAF_OF1+_NonUK	6.14
RN_OF1-4_Eng	3.78	Army_OF1+_Wales	3.55	RAF_OF1-4_Eng	10.98
RN_OF5+_Eng	3.40	Army_OF1-4_Cyp	3.41	RAF_OF5+_Eng	6.63
RN_OR1-2_Eng	10.65	Army_OF1-4_Eng	14.57	RAF_OR1-2_Eng	16.14
RN_OR1-4_Scot_NonUK	10.92	Army_OF1-4_NonUK	3.49	RAF_OR1-4_NI_Scot_Wales	9.20
RN_OR3-4_Eng	9.36	Army_OF5+_Eng	15.17	RAF_OR1-4_NI_Scot_Wales	7.81
RN_OR6-9_Eng	5.46	Army_OF5+_NonUK	3.90	RAF_OR3-4_Eng	9.37
RN_OR6-9_NI_Wales	5.71	Army_OR1-2_Eng	29.24	RAF_OR6-9_Cyp	3.81
RN_OR6-9_NonUK	5.27	Army_OR1-4_Cyp_Ger	8.87	RAF_OR6-9_Eng	11.53
RN_OR6-9_Scot	7.48	Army_OR1-4_NonUK	17.48	RAF_OR6-9_NI_Wales	4.97
RM_OF1+_Eng	5.65	Army_OR1-4_Scot	9.73	RAF_OR6-9_NonUK	8.50
RM_OF1+_Scot_Wales_NonUK	6.45	Army_OR1-4_Wales	8.97	RAF_OR6-9_Scot	5.18
RM_OR1-4_Eng	16.54	Army_OR3-4_Eng	18.43		
RM_OR1-9_NI_Scot_Wales	9.88	Army_OR3-4_NI	9.76		
RM_OR6-9_Eng	9.62	Army_OR6-9_Cyp	4.11		
		Army_OR6-9_Eng	21.10		
		Army_OR6-9_Ger	3.88		
		Army_OR6-9_NI	4.89		
		Army_OR6-9_NonUK	3.52		
		Army_OR6-9_Scot	3.61		
		Army_OR6-9_Wales	4.38		

## 5. Analysis and statistical tests

Attitudinal questions in the questionnaires have generally been regrouped to assist in analysing results and to aid interpretation. For example, questions asked at a 5-point level (e.g. Very satisfied – Satisfied – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied – Dissatisfied – Very dissatisfied) have been regrouped to a 3-point level (e.g. (Satisfied – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied – Dissatisfied)).

Missing values, where respondents have not provided a response/valid response, or 'don't know' or 'not applicable' responses have not always been included in the analysis. If they have been excluded then this will be detailed in table footnotes.



Some questions are filtered to exclude invalid responses. For example, questions about children's schooling will be subset to those respondents with school age children. These "subsets" are detailed in table footnotes. As a result of these exclusions the unweighted counts (or 'n') will vary from question to question and these are shown within the reference tables published alongside this report on the [FamCAS](#) webpage.

Where applicable, Z tests at a 1% alpha level were used to test whether observed estimates were significantly different to estimates from previous surveys. A statistically significant difference means that there is enough evidence that the change observed is unlikely to be due to chance variation (less than a 1% probability that the difference is the result of chance alone).

## **6. Format of the reference tables (published separately to the report on the [FamCAS](#) webpage)**

Each reference table refers to a question asked in the survey and includes estimates of the proportion of the population by category. Each table is broken down by Service and also by Officer/Other Rank with the total column referring to the Officers and Other Ranks results combined.

Excel tables are also available with additional breakdown of the spouse/civil partners broad location (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales & Non UK), which are provided at Annex C.

Section 9 of Annex B provides a subset of tables that compare results of those who moved for Service reasons over the past year against those who did not move. These tables are broken down by Service.

## Glossary

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Term	Description
AFCAS	The Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey.
Armed Forces Covenant	The Armed Forces Covenant defines the principles for ensuring that Armed Forces personnel are not disadvantaged in their access to public and commercial services as a result of their service. It also sets out that in some cases special treatment may be appropriate, for example for those that have given the most, such as the injured and the bereaved.
CEA	Continuity of education allowance. This is offered by the MOD to provide children with the continuity in their education.
Defence Board	The highest committee in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and is responsible for the full range of Defence business, other than the conduct of operations.
HIVE	Service information hub which assists personnel in a wide variety of topics affecting their everyday Service and personal life
JPA	Joint Personnel Administration - JPA is the system used by the Armed Forces to deal with matters of pay, leave and other personal administrative tasks
Married	Refers to those married or in a civil partnership
Marines	RM personnel of NATO ranks OR1 to OR9
Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee (MODREC)	Ensures that all research involving human participants undertaken, funded or sponsored by the MOD meets nationally and internationally accepted ethical standards
Missing at Random (MAR)	Statistical theory that states that those who did not respond to a question do not differ from those who did respond
Missing value(s)	Refers to the situation where a respondent has not submitted an answer or a valid answer to a question
MOD	Ministry of Defence
N/A	Not applicable
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
Non-response	Refers either to a person who although sampled and sent a questionnaire did not reply or to a respondent who did not reply to a question
OF	Officer of NATO rank designation ranking from '1' lowest to '10' highest
Officer(s)	All regular trained officers of NATO ranks OF1 to OF10
Operational/Deployment Welfare Package	Measures taken to support the morale of Service personnel by making the fullest possible provision for their emotional and physical wellbeing whilst on operational deployment
OR	Other Ranks of NATO rank designation ranking from 'OR1' lowest to 'OR9' highest
Other Rank(s)	Other Ranks are members of the Royal Marines, Army and Royal Air Force who are not Officers. The equivalent group in the Royal Navy is known as "Ratings".
RAF	Royal Air Force
RM	Royal Marines
RN	Royal Navy
Service Accommodation	Any type of accommodation that includes 'SFA', 'SSFA', 'SLA', 'SSSA' and 'Onboard a ship or submarine'

Service(s)	Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army and RAF
Service spouse	Within this report this term refers to the spouse or civil partner of a Regular trained member of the Armed Forces.
SFA	Service Family Accommodation
SLA	Single Living Accommodation
SNCO	Senior Non-Commissioned Officer (NATO ranks OR6 to OR9)
Soldiers	Army personnel of NATO ranks OR1 to OR9
Spouse	Within this report this refers to both spouses and civil partners
SSFA	Substitute Service Family Accommodation
SSSA	Substitute single Service Accommodation. Formerly Substitute Single Living Accommodation (SSLA)
Standard Error	A measure derived using weighting factors from the sample proportion and unweighted count in a sampling distribution and used as a benchmark in order to ascertain a range of values within which the true population proportion could lie
Statistically significant	Refers to the result of a statistical test in which there is evidence of a difference between estimates
Statistical tests	Refers to those tests which are carried out to see if any evidence exists for a change in response proportions from one year to another
Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR)	In the context of the Services, refers to a Review of what needed to be done to restructure and rescale the size of the Armed Forces to meet future Defence requirements of the UK's national security.
Trained strength	Trained Strength comprises military personnel who have completed Phase 1 and 2 training. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1 Training includes all new entry training to provide basic military skills.</li> <li>• Phase 2 Training includes initial individual specialisation, sub-specialisation and technical training following Phase 1 training prior to joining the trained strength.</li> </ul>
Unit	A sub-organisation of the Service in which personnel are employed
Unweighted count	Refers to the actual number who provided a valid response to a question in the survey
Weighting (factors)	Refers to factors that are applied to the respondent data set by Service and rank group in order to make respondent Service rank groups representative of their population equivalents
Weighting class	Refers to those members of a specific rank group to whom a weighting factor is applied
X-Factor	Additional payment to Armed Forces personnel to compensate for differences in lifestyle, working conditions and expectations compared to civilian equivalents
z test	Statistical test based on a standardised distribution which allows comparison between years for populations of different sizes

## Further Information

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### Contact Us

Defence Statistics welcomes feedback on our statistical products. If you have any comments or questions about this publication or about our statistics in general, you can contact us as follows:

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