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# **Initial review of survey data indicates high satisfaction with Army life**

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Data from the 2010 Survey of Army Families indicates an increased satisfaction with military life, despite of the current operational tempo, according to Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation officials. The survey was based on a random selection of civilian spouses of active-duty Army Soldiers, chosen to represent the Army as a whole.

Since the last survey, completed in 2005, there has been an increase in the number of spouses who indicate their Soldier plans to stay in the Army beyond their present obligation. Additionally, there has been an increase in the number of spouses who are satisfied with the kind of life they can have in the Army and the respect the Army shows Soldiers and spouses.

"We're very happy to see, through hard data, that we're making progress in improving the quality of life for Soldiers and their Families," said Lt. Gen. Rick Lynch, commanding general of the Installation Management Command.

The data suggests that Soldiers, their spouses and Families are very resilient in the face of the demands that the Army places on their lives, especially with the increasing number of deployments and time away from Family. Sixty percent of spouses report that they are adjusting easily to the reunion with their Soldier following deployment or time away from the Family.

Additional data shows that despite ongoing conflicts, budgetary restraints and multiple deployments, 60 percent of civilian spouses of active-duty Soldiers are satisfied with the Army as a way of life and believe their Family has adjusted well to the demands of being an Army Family.

"In the past four years, we've put a lot of effort into programs and services that support Soldiers and their Families," said J.C. Abney, deputy to the commander of the Family and MWR Command. "The Army made

a promise to our entire Army Family that we'd provide them a quality of life commensurate with their service through the Army Family Covenant, and these survey results prove we're making a difference."

More than three-fifths (61.5 percent) of spouses reported that the demands the Army makes of Family members is either not a problem or only a slight problem, and less than one-fifth (13.5 percent) reported it is a serious or very serious problem. In general, spouses were able to handle tasks related to their paid job and volunteer work well or very well; three-fourths (77 percent) managed working at their paid job well or very well and about one-half (56 percent) handled doing their regular work and additional volunteer work (48 percent) well or very well.

"Through spouse employment programs, family support groups, resilience classes and dozens of other programs and services, we've put in place the right support," said Maj. Gen. Reuben D. Jones, Family and MWR commander. "Now it's a matter of refining those programs and making sure we continue to meet the needs of the Army Family.

"The survey results show we're moving in the right direction, but this is no time to rest on our laurels," he continued. "We've made a commitment, through the Army Family Covenant, and we'll continue to live up to that commitment by being responsive and supportive to the Soldiers and Families who sacrifice so much for our Nation."

A majority of officer spouses (88.4 percent) and enlisted spouses (79.8 percent) reported that they managed well or very well the taking care of their children's health while the Soldier spouse was deployed.

Though the data justifies what Army leadership suspected about the resiliency of Army Families, it also reveals that Army life is not without its challenges.

One spouse wrote, "I love the Army, but it is a hard life for both Soldier and spouse. I am an Army brat and sometimes have trouble understanding that my Family and I may not always come first... so, I do not know how [spouses] who were not brought up in the military do it."

Not all the data was positive. It also indicated that spouses are unhappy with the current deployment cycle, and want longer dwell times between their spouses' deployments.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey has already promised longer dwell times, stating in a recent Installation Management Command town hall meeting that he plans to increase dwell times to two years in the near future.

While such a move is welcome news for Soldiers and Families, it's just one step in creating a more resilient, capable total Army Family. A multi-agency workgroup is deep into the process of addressing resiliency and coping capabilities through the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness programs which identify—either through awareness campaigns or self-assessment—Soldiers and Family members who are having difficulty coping, and offering programs, support and counseling services to help improve their resiliency.

Compared to the previous survey of Army Families, spouses indicated they are currently more likely to have experienced emotional or nervous problems (15 percent in 2005; 19 percent in 2010) and marital problems (11 percent in 2005; 14 percent in 2010).

"Resiliency—for Soldiers and Family members—is high on my list of priorities," Lynch said. "The Comprehensive Fitness programs are meant to be all-inclusive, addressing the Spiritual, Emotional, Family and Physical fitness levels of our Army.

"By working closely with other agencies and commands, like the Chaplains and the Medical Command, we'll meet this challenge as well and take another leap forward in supporting our great Army." Lynch said.

Data received through the Survey of Army Families provides information to Army leadership to plan, formulate and improve policies and programs which benefit Army Families. For example, results from previous surveys have helped the Army design Family Readiness Groups and create or improve Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs such as Warrior Adventure Quest and the Exceptional Family Member Program.

"We'll be taking a hard look at this data," Jones said, "to determine where to focus our efforts in the future. We're not done; the survey results don't mean we've 'completed the mission.'

"They indicate we're moving in the right direction," he said. "There's still a lot of work to be done, and leadership is still committed to living up to the covenant."

To read more results from this year and previous versions of the Survey of Army Families, please visit <http://mwrbrandcentral.com/HOMEPAGE/research.html>.

**Link to photos on Flickr:**

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/familymwr/sets/72157626154252579/with/5532282834/>