

## REZERVNA SESTAVA: SAMOSTOJNA OBRAVNAVA IN PRIMERJAVA S TEŽAVAMI STALNE SESTAVE

## RESERVE FORCE: UNIQUE CONSIDERATIONS AND A COMPARISON WITH REGULAR FORCE ISSUES

**Povzetek** Rezervna sestava kanadskih oboroženih sil (CAF) je sestavljena iz več komponent. Največja komponenta je primarna rezervna sestava (P Res), katere namen je dopolnjevanje redne sestave (Reg F) pri delovanju doma in v tujini. Vloge pripadnikov stalne in primarne rezerve sestave so zato podobne, obstajajo pa tudi pomembni samostojni vidiki. Sodelovanje v primarni rezervni komponenti lahko prinese bistveno drugačne izkušnje in izzive, povezane z zadrževanjem kadra. V tem članku primerjamo podatke iz dveh nedavnih velikih raziskav: ankete kanadskih oboroženih sil o zadrževanju kadra v stalni sestavi (CAF Reg F Retention Survey) (n = 1.956) in ankete kanadskih oboroženih sil o zadrževanju kadra v rezervni sestavi (CAF Reserve Force Retention Survey) (n = 3.669). Rezultati so pokazali, da je tako pri pripadnikih stalne sestave kot pri pripadnikih rezervne sestave prisoten konflikt med njihovimi vojaškimi, civilnimi in zasebnimi vlogami, čeprav na različne načine. Iz rezultatov je prav tako mogoče sklepati, da so pogoste domneve, da naj bi pripadniki stalne sestave rezerviste dojemali kot manj predane od njih, neutemeljene. Presenetljivo je, da je bila čustvena in normativna predanost rezervistov višja od predanosti pripadnikov stalne sestave, razlog njihovega odhoda pa pogosto povezan z željo po večji in ne manjši vpetosti v vojsko. Priporočila avtorjev se osredotočajo predvsem na izboljšanje ravnovesja med poklicnim in zasebnim življenjem pripadnikov ter na enakost med komponentami.

**Ključne besede** *Kanadske oborožene sile, stalna sestava, primarna rezerva, rezervna sestava, zadrževanje kadra.*

**Abstract** The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Reserve Force comprises several subcomponents. The largest is the Primary Reserve (P Res), whose purpose is to supplement the Regular Force (Reg F) in operations at home and abroad. As such, there is similarity in the roles of Reg F and P Res members, but also important unique aspects.

Membership of a primarily part-time force may result in significantly different experiences and retention-related challenges. This article compares data from two recent large-scale surveys: the CAF Reg F Retention Survey ( $n = 1,956$ ) and the CAF Reserve Force Retention Survey ( $n = 3,669$ ). The results indicated that both the Reg F members and the reservists experience conflict between their military, civilian, and personal roles, albeit in different ways. They also suggest that Reg F members' oft-cited perceptions of reservists as being less dedicated than themselves are unfounded. Surprisingly, the reservists' affective and normative commitment was higher than the Reg F members', and their reasons for leaving often focused on a desire to be more, rather than less, involved with the military. Recommendations focus on improving work-life balance and equity between the components.

**Key words** *Canadian Armed Forces, Regular Force, Primary Reserve, Reserve Force, retention*

**Introduction** As in many other countries, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) include both regular and reserve components. Whereas the Regular Force (Reg F) comprises full-time members who participate in domestic and overseas operations, the Primary Reserve (P Res) is a primarily part-time force whose main role is to support and supplement the Reg F at home and abroad. Like the Reg F, members of the P Res serve in all three environments: air, land, and sea. Thus, most occupations exist in both components (e.g. naval communicator, pilot, cook).

Most research on military personnel is focused on the Reg F, and although conclusions from these studies are often extended to reservists, this practice may overlook the unique considerations and important distinctions between the two groups. Furthermore, one of the biggest differences between the components is the fact that, in addition to personal and family obligations, many reservists also pursue civilian employment (49.5%) or schooling (25.1%), thus engaging in dual civilian and military roles to a greater extent than Reg F members (Anderson, 2017; Anderson & Goldenberg, in preparation; Hadziomerovic & Simpson, 2013). For this reason, some previous research has fruitfully considered reserve service from a role conflict perspective (Griffith, 2009). To the extent that reservists experience role conflict, these competing demands may be associated with attrition (Van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981). In the present research, we consider the impact of competing demands on both reservists and Reg F members.

Holding multiple roles is more feasible for reservists because of the largely part-time nature of service in the P Res. Whereas members of the Reg F serve full-time, Canadian reservists transition often between three classes of service. At any given time, 70.8% of reservists are on Class A service, which is non-operational and part-time; typically, it includes training one evening per week and one weekend per month (Anderson, 2017). Another 27.3% are on Class B service, which is full-time and non-operational, encompassing periods of service of between two weeks and three

years. Finally, a small number (2.0%) are on Class C service, which is full-time and operational, and includes international and domestic deployments. In the CAF, an individual reservist could be Class A for months at a time, then take a two-week Class B assignment, return to Class A, and later deploy as Class C. The potential frequency of these transitions has even led researchers to refer to reservists as *transmigrants* (Lomsky-Feder, Gazit, & Ben-Ari, 2008). Reservists often live in a state of flux, within which they must balance competing military and civilian obligations.

Conversely, members of the Reg F are subject to significant demands and conditions of employment that reservists are not. Whereas reservists are subject to class of service instability, Reg F members are subject to geographic instability because they are posted by the CAF every few years. This can significantly affect Reg F members' well-being, as well as that of their families (Pepin, Sudom, & Dunn, 2006; Segal, 1999; Sudom, 2012). Another notable demand on Reg F members is the requirement to deploy on operations, which often entails not just lengthy separations from home and family, but also the risk of physical harm. Indeed, among the most notable differences between the Regular and Reserve Forces – although it may often be forgotten day-to-day – is the concept of *unlimited liability* as it applies to the Reg F. Members of the Reg F can be ordered to take actions that civilians and members of the Reserve Force<sup>1</sup> are not, up to and including placing themselves in harm's way. This requirement of Reg F service is one that may have profound effects on members' relationship with the organization, relative to the Reserve Force. That said, the effects of unlimited liability on work and organizational variables cannot be teased out by the present analyses, which entail broad comparison of the two populations; however, it is worth bearing in mind as a potential source of influence.

In describing the differences in Reg F members' and reservists' roles and responsibilities above, we hinted at the fact that there may also be differences in their relationships with the CAF. Previous research has demonstrated reservists' complicated relationship with their militaries. Although most nations are dedicated to maintaining and strengthening their reserve forces (e.g. Department of National Defence, 2017; National Defense Authorization Act, 2017; WFA Narrative, 2015), Canadian and international research has shown repeatedly that reservists are subject to doubt and negative stereotyping from members of the Reg F, or treatment as “second-class soldiers” (e.g. Department of National Defence, 1994; Fraser, 2013; Hadziomerovic & Simpson, 2013; Keene, 2015; Parry, Connelly, Robinson, Robinson, & Taylor, 2013; Standing Committee on Public Accounts, 2016).

This literature suggests that Reg F members' doubts focus on two key characteristics of reservists: their competence and dedication. Although competence is beyond the scope of our self-report data, we consider dedication. Doubts about reservists' dedication may be explained in part by Moskos' (1988) conceptualization of military service on the occupational-institutional continuum. Viewing military service from

<sup>1</sup> Except under extenuating circumstances.

an institutional perspective (including ascribing to its values, norms, and principles) rather than an occupational perspective (including emphasis on transactional aspects such as pay), creates a sense of loyalty and duty. To the extent that reservists are assumed to view their service as occupational because they serve part-time and often dedicate themselves to another vocation in addition to their military service, this may explain doubts about reservists' commitment to the military. The present analyses address that commitment directly. Further, it is seemingly inevitable that if reservists feel unappreciated and misperceived, such perceptions would play a role in their job satisfaction and retention, as previous research suggests. The present analyses can also address this proposition.

The general aim of this article is to provide a broad comparison of reservists and Reg F members with respect to satisfaction with aspects of their work, commitment, and retention. More specifically, we use the previous research and theory described above as a lens through which to interpret differences between these two groups. Our intention is to provide an understanding of possible component-specific issues related to retention of CAF personnel, and a better understanding of the importance of considering reservists as a unique group.

## 1 METHOD

This article includes data from the *2016 Reg F Retention Survey* and the *2015 Reserve Force Retention Survey*.<sup>2</sup> These surveys are administered regularly by the Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis (DGMPPRA) in support of the *CAF Military Personnel Retention Strategy* (Chief Military Personnel, 2009) and the *Reserve Strategy 2015* (Chief of the Defence Staff, 2015).

### 1.1 Procedure

The *2016 Reg F Retention Survey* was administered electronically between September and December 2016. In total, 1,956 Reg F<sup>3</sup> respondents completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 41.3%, and an overall margin of error of  $\pm 2.2\%$  with 95% confidence (Bremner & Budgell, 2017; Goldenberg & Ebel-Lam, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> The *CAF Regular Force Retention Survey* is designed and administered by the Recruitment and Retention Section of Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis (DGMPPRA) in the Department of National Defence. The quantitative analyses of the Regular Force data were carried out by Bremner and Budgell (2017) as specified in the Statement of Work provided by Goldenberg (2016); the qualitative analyses of the Regular Force data were carried out by Lee, Eren, and Budgell (2017) as specified by the statement of work by Goldenberg (2017); the qualitative analyses of the Reserve Force data were carried out by Yeung, Sanders, Eren, and Budgell (2017) as specified in the statement of work by Anderson (2016). Unless otherwise noted, the quantitative results described in this article for the Regular and Reserve Forces were first reported in Bremner and Budgell (2017) and Anderson (2017), respectively. Similarly, the qualitative results for the Regular and Reserve Forces were first reported in Lee, Eren, and Budgell (2017) and Yeung, Sanders, Eren, and Budgell (2017), respectively.

<sup>3</sup> The *CAF Regular Force* comprises more than 51,000 full-time officers and non-commissioned members.

The *2015 Reserve Force Retention Survey* was administered electronically from November 2015 to January 2016. In total, 3,669 P Res respondents<sup>4</sup> completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 36.9%, and an overall margin of error of  $\pm 1.5\%$  with 95% confidence (Anderson, 2017).

For the present analyses, population estimates based on weighted data are provided for each of the two components, which allows for a general assessment of the pattern of differences. However, we did not conduct tests of statistical significance because these two data sets were sampled from different populations at different time points, with different underlying weighting procedures. For the *2016 Reg F Retention Survey*, weights were based on members' rank and occupational authority (i.e. the authority to whom their trade is answerable: the Chief of the Air Force Staff, Army Staff, Naval Staff, or Military Personnel<sup>5</sup>). For the *2015 Reserve Force Retention Survey*, weights were based on members' rank, classes of service in the past 12 months,<sup>6</sup> and environment (i.e. air, land, or sea).<sup>7</sup> Thus, although the methods were quite similar – allowing for the addition of service class, an important variable that does not apply to Reg F members – they were not identical. Given these differences, as well as the different time points, formal inferential tests would be inappropriate. This puts limitations on interpretation; however, because a broad comparison of differences can be useful, in this article we use logical interpretation to discuss potentially meaningful differences between the two components. Given the nature of these data, this is the most practical and intuitively meaningful approach.

## 1.2 Participants

The *2016 Reg F Retention Survey* and the *2015 Reserve Force Retention Survey* were administered to stratified random samples of personnel from their respective populations. Table 1 presents the sample and population breakdowns by rank, years of service (YOS), age, gender, and first official language (FOL).

Observing Table 1, it is evident that the Reg F and the P Res have similar demographic characteristics. In terms of rank, both are primarily made up of non-commissioned members (NCMs), particularly in the junior ranks (Sergeant and below). Both forces also have large proportions of members with 5 to 14 years of service (YOS) and both show similar majorities of male members and members who speak English as their FOL. Of all the demographic factors, the only notable difference between the two

<sup>4</sup> The CAF Reserve Force comprises four sub-components. The P Res is the largest sub-component and the one that is most comparable to the Regular Force. It comprises more than 26,000 officers and non-commissioned members.

<sup>5</sup> Members falling under the authority of the (Assistant) Chief of Military Personnel are those in occupations that are needed across all elements, or the 'purple trades' (e.g. health services, logistics).

<sup>6</sup> Members were divided into three categories: part-time (Class A) only, full-time (Class B or C) only, or a mix of part- and full-time service.

<sup>7</sup> Although similar to occupational authority, environment is somewhat different in that members under the authority of the (Assistant) Chief of Military Personnel are categorized according to their assigned environment (i.e., air, land, or sea), resulting in three categories rather than four.

forces is that the P Res has a larger proportion of young, early-career members than the Reg F: that is, members under the age of 25 and with fewer than 5 YOS.

Some differences between the samples and the populations from which they were drawn were evident, which is common for CAF surveys (e.g. Eren & Budgetell, 2015; Koundakjian, 2014). For this reason the analyses were conducted using weighted data.

**Table 1:**  
Sample and  
population  
characteristics

Groups	Regular Force (%)		P Res (%)	
	Sample (%)	Population (%)	Sample (%)	Population (%)
<b>Rank</b>				
Junior NCM	28.6	54.0	38.6	62.8
Senior NCM	21.9	24.6	25.3	19.0
Junior Officer	29.3	12.1	22.0	12.3
Senior Officer	20.2	9.3	14.1	5.8
<b>YOS</b>				
0 – 4	3.8	16.5	13.8	29.9
5 – 14	33.2	49.3	35.6	46.9
15 – 24	35.1	18.1	19.3	14.5
25 +	27.9	16.1	31.3	8.7
<b>Age</b>				
16 – 24	3.2	7.0	11.7	25.8
25 – 34	30.5	38.2	28.2	33.6
35 – 44	34.8	30.8	22.2	16.5
45 +	31.4	24.0	37.9	24.1
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	85.2	85.7	77.4	83.4
Female	14.8	14.3	22.6	16.6
<b>FOL</b>				
English	87.2	73.3	75.4	75.9
French	12.8	26.7	24.6	24.1

### 1.3 Measures

The Reg F and Reserve Force Retention Surveys are omnibus surveys, including a range of measures related to aspects of members' military service. The respondents' experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and opinions with regard to work and organizational issues were assessed in both surveys, although some measures differed slightly. This article compares the results from some of the most relevant measures that were common to both surveys; these are described briefly below. Detailed descriptions of all measures, results, and the complete survey instruments can be found in Bremner and Budgetell (2017) and Anderson (2017).

### 1.3.1 Organizational commitment

Both surveys included Meyer, Allen, and Smith's (1993) measure of organizational commitment, which respondents rated on a 6-point scale ranging from 1, *strongly disagree*, to 6, *strongly agree*. Specifically, this scale measures three aspects of organizational commitment: affective (i.e. emotional attachment to the organization, e.g. "The CAF [Reserve Force] has a great deal of personal meaning for me"); normative (i.e. feelings of obligation to stay, e.g. "The CAF [Reserve Force] deserves my loyalty"); and continuance (i.e. perceived costs of leaving, e.g. "Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided to leave the CAF [Reserves] now").

### 1.3.2 Satisfaction with key aspects of work and the organization

Both surveys included a range of items assessing members' satisfaction with aspects of their work and the organization. Although many of these aspects were measured similarly on the two surveys, items making up those measures often differed, reflecting the key differences in service in the Regular and Reserve components. For example, although both surveys measured satisfaction with the CAF's support for members' families, the Reg F Retention Survey included items addressing the quality of that support under different circumstances (e.g. posting, deployment), whereas the Reserve Force Retention Survey focused on the distinction between quality and availability of support, because for reservists (who do not live on or necessarily even near a base), access to support is a key issue. For this article, we attempted to balance our desire to consider as many relevant factors as possible with the need for consistency of items. Thus, we present all reasonably comparable<sup>8</sup> items and scales that pertained to satisfaction with broad work and organizational factors.

In the present analyses, we included measures of satisfaction with the fairness of selection for career courses (a key aspect of career progression), rate of promotion, future promotion opportunities, rate of pay, medical and dental benefits, and overall work-life balance. All of these items were developed internally for use in CAF surveys. They were measured on six-point Likert-type scales anchored at 1, *completely dissatisfied*, and 6, *completely satisfied*.

In addition, we considered satisfaction with unit leadership, which was developed internally and measured using a scale of seven items (e.g. "The way your unit leaders build teamwork and cohesion"). This was measured on a 6-point scale from 1, *completely dissatisfied*, to 6, *completely satisfied*.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, we also consider overall job satisfaction, measured using the three-item Job in General Scale (Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, & Paul, 1989; e.g. "All in all,

<sup>8</sup> In some cases, the items compared had minor differences in wording between the two surveys (e.g. whereas Reg F members rated their satisfaction with "CAF medical and dental benefits," the P Res item included the words "available to you", to reflect that CAF benefits depend on the member's component and class of service).

<sup>9</sup> When we report the percentage of members who are satisfied with unit leadership, it refers to those whose score on the mean composite is above the scale midpoint of 3.5.



I am satisfied with my job [as a Reservist<sup>10</sup>]). Reg F respondents rated these items on the original 5-point scale from 1, *strongly disagree*, to 5, *strongly agree*, with a neutral midpoint (*neither agree nor disagree*). P Res respondents used a 6-point scale from 1, *strongly disagree*, to 6, *strongly agree*, with no midpoint.<sup>11</sup>

### 1.3.3 Measures specific to the P Res

For this article, we considered a few additional measures and items from the Reserve Force Retention Survey. These do not have a parallel for the Reg F, so we did not make any comparisons. However, consideration of these factors will further inform reservist-specific retention issues, and may provide additional insight into how the two forces differ.

Specifically, we present the reservists' satisfaction with their combined military and civilian pay and their satisfaction with their pay compared to Reg F pay. Both of these items were developed internally and measured on 6-point scales ranging from 1, *completely dissatisfied*, to 6, *completely satisfied*. We also consider items assessing how reservists see themselves, and their beliefs about how they are perceived by members of the Reg F ("When you/members of the Regular Force think of Reservists, you/they see them as... intelligent/dedicated/important to the CAF"). These additional analyses, directly referring to the Reg F, are interesting because of the role of the P Res as a supplement to the Reg F. Reg F members and reservists perform very similar jobs, so any perceived disparities in treatment are likely to be very salient to them.

### 1.3.4 Intentions to leave

Both surveys included items assessing members' level of intention to leave the CAF within the next year, three years, and five years, or to stay until their compulsory retirement age (CRA).<sup>12</sup> These four items were developed internally for use on CAF surveys and were all measured using a five-point scale labelled as 1 (*definitely not*), 2 (*probably not*), 3 (*uncertain*), 4 (*probably yes*), and 5 (*definitely yes*).

### 1.3.5 Main reasons for leaving

Both Reg F and P Res respondents who indicated that they would probably or definitely leave their component within five years for reasons other than reaching CRA were asked to select their main reasons for leaving from a list (e.g. dissatisfaction with pay). These lists differed slightly between the two components, reflecting their differing circumstances.

<sup>10</sup> Added to ensure that reservists would not answer with respect to civilian employment.

<sup>11</sup> The latter scale was modified to be consistent with the other agreement scales in the survey. In this report, we compared the percentage of members satisfied with their jobs in general (i.e. with average responses above the respective scale midpoints) rather than scale means, as they are more comparable.

<sup>12</sup> CRA is 60 for members who joined the CAF July 1, 2004 or later. Some members who began their service prior to that date have a CRA of 55 if they did not opt to change it.



### 1.3.6 Recommendations from participants

Finally, both surveys included open-ended questions at the end, one of which solicited recommendations from members for improving retention. These were framed slightly differently in the two surveys. The Reg F survey asked, “If you are considering leaving the CAF within the next five years for reasons other than retirement, what changes could the CAF make to persuade you to stay?” The Reserve Force survey asked, “If you could talk directly to senior decision-makers within the Reserve Force, what one or two things would you tell them to focus on improving?” Coding schemes were developed for each open-ended question and used to code the responses into themes.

## 2 RESULTS

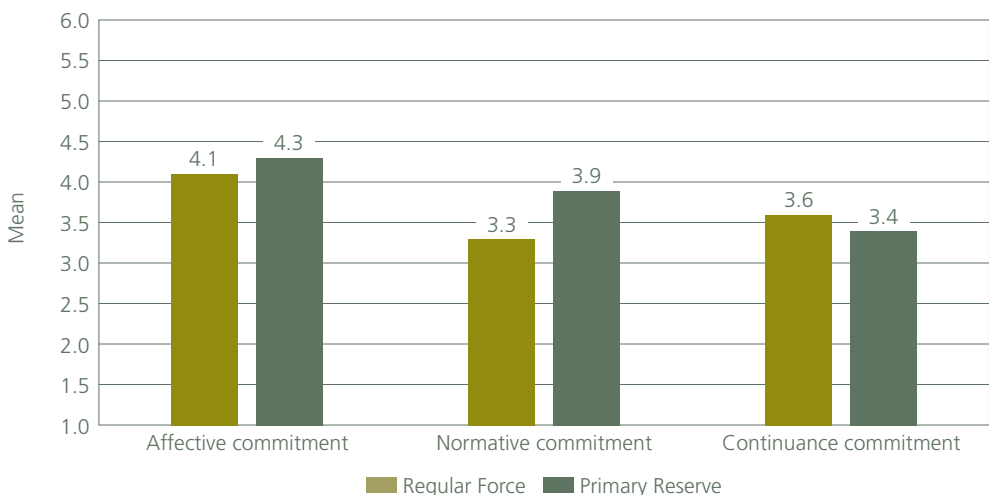
### 2.1 Organizational commitment

As illustrated in Figure 1, reservists had notably higher mean levels of normative commitment than Reg F members, indicating that they have greater feelings of obligation or duty to stay. They also had slightly higher levels of affective commitment (i.e. emotional attachment) and slightly lower levels of continuance commitment, which indicates they feel it is less of a necessity to stay.

### 2.2 Satisfaction with key aspects of work and the organization

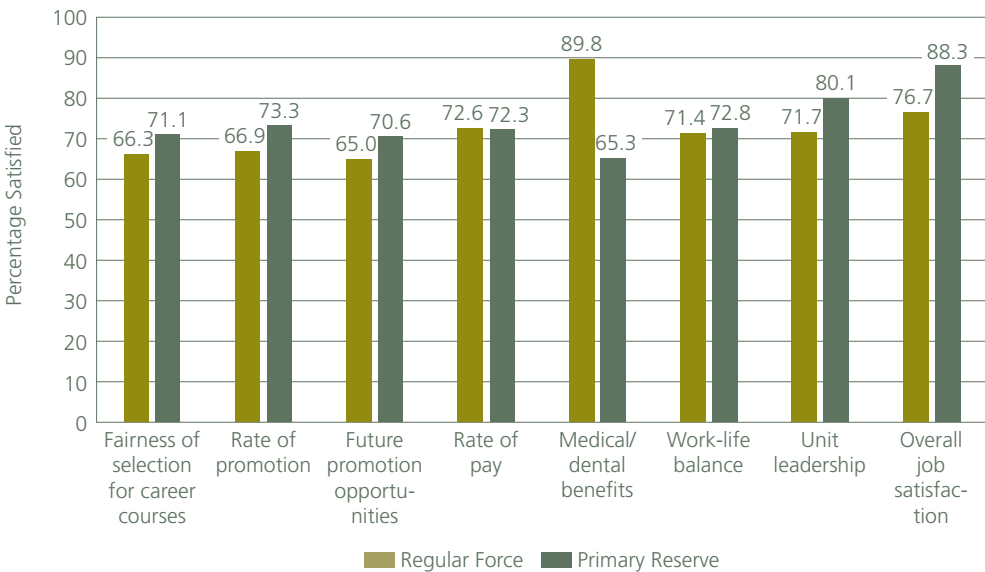
Survey respondents from the Reg F and the P Res were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with major work and organizational factors. Figure 2 depicts the percentage of members in each component who are satisfied with key aspects of

Figure 1:  
Estimated  
organizational  
commitment for  
members of  
the Reg F  
and P Res



their work and their organization.<sup>13</sup> First, an examination of the variables related to career progression suggests that the P Res respondents were slightly more satisfied than the Reg F respondents with the fairness of selection for career courses, rate of promotion, and future promotion opportunities. Similar proportions (almost three-quarters) of the Reg F and the P Res respondents were satisfied with their rates of pay; however, a substantially greater proportion of the Reg F members were satisfied with their medical and dental benefits (89.8%) than the reservists (65.3%). Similar proportions (approximately 72%) were satisfied with their work-life balance. A substantially greater proportion of the reservists were satisfied with the leadership of their units than the Reg F members. Finally, the proportion of the reservists reporting overall job satisfaction was notably higher than that of the Reg F members.

**Figure 2:** Estimated satisfaction with selected work and organizational factors for members of the Reg F and P Res



## 2.3 Measures specific to the P Res

The Reserve Force Retention Survey included many questions that did not apply to members of the Reg F. This section includes those that are most relevant to a comparison of the two components.

### 2.3.1 Combined military and civilian pay

The reservists were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with their combined military and civilian pay. Most reservists (83.8%) were satisfied with their total pay

<sup>13</sup> Specifically, the percentages include respondents who indicated somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree on average with these satisfaction items, which were measured on 6-point scales ranging from 1, strongly disagree, to 6, strongly agree.

from those combined sources; this is notably higher than the percentage of reservists who were satisfied with their rate of (military) pay (72.3%), as reported above.

### 2.3.2 Pay compared to the Reg F

The reservists were also asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with their pay compared to the Reg F. Satisfaction with pay was quite low in the context of this direct comparison; 51.1% of the reservists were at least somewhat dissatisfied with their pay compared to the Reg F.

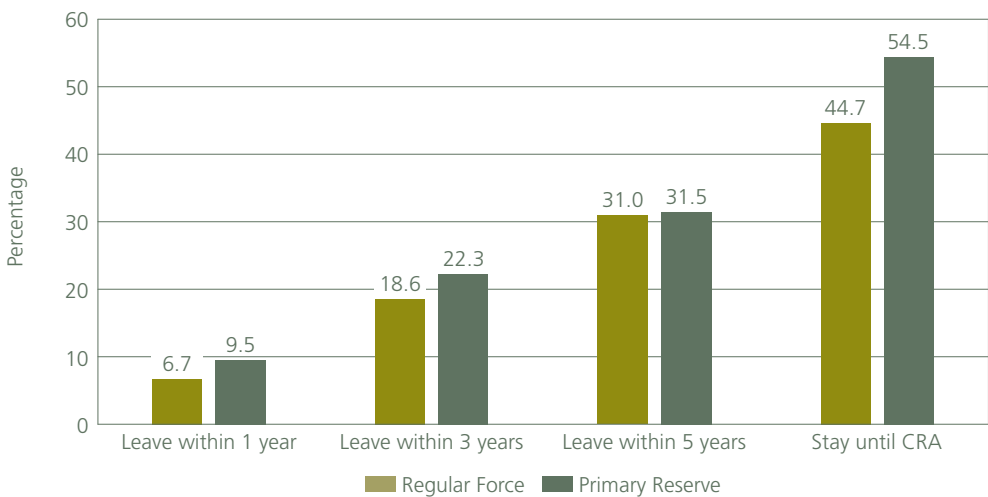
### 2.3.3 How reservists are perceived – self-perceptions and beliefs

The reservists were asked how they perceive themselves (reservists) as a group, as well as how they think members of the Reg F perceive them. Unsurprisingly, the reservists typically rated themselves positively on the three descriptors: 93.0% at least somewhat agreed that reservists are intelligent, 88.8% that they are dedicated, and 92.7% that they are important to the CAF. However, as found in previous research, the reservists' beliefs about how members of the Reg F perceive them were quite negative: Fewer than half (47.4%) agreed that Reg F members perceive them as intelligent. Even worse, only about a third of the reservists believed that Reg F members perceive them to be dedicated (37.2%) or important to the CAF (33.2%).

## 2.4 Intentions to leave

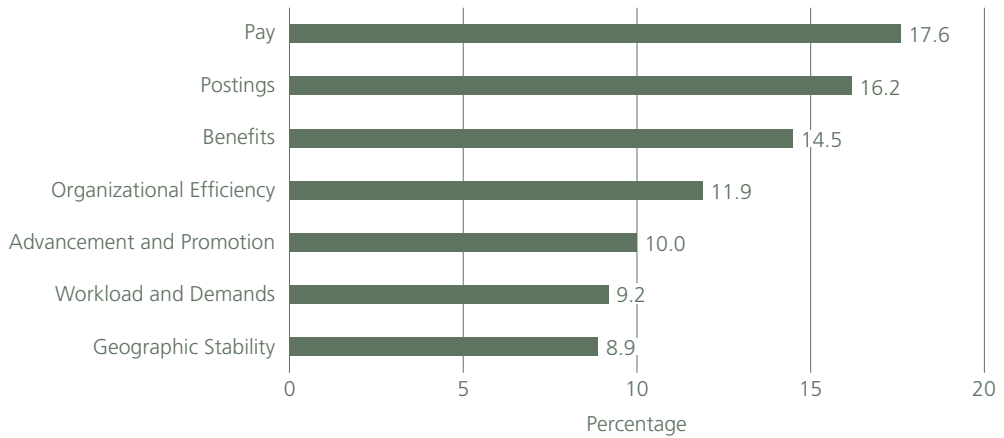
Figure 3 depicts the percentage of people in each component who indicated the intention to leave within one year, three years, five years, or the intention to stay until CRA.<sup>14</sup> It appears that reservists may be more likely than Reg F members to leave

Figure 3:  
Estimated  
organizational  
commitment  
for  
members of  
the Reg F  
and P Res



<sup>14</sup> Percentages include respondents who indicated probably yes, and definitely yes.

**Figure 4:**  
Suggested  
areas of  
improvement  
in the Reg F



within one year and within three years; however, comparable proportions intended to leave within five years. Interestingly, the reservists were also notably more likely to indicate the intention to stay until CRA than the Reg F members.

## 2.5 Main reasons for leaving

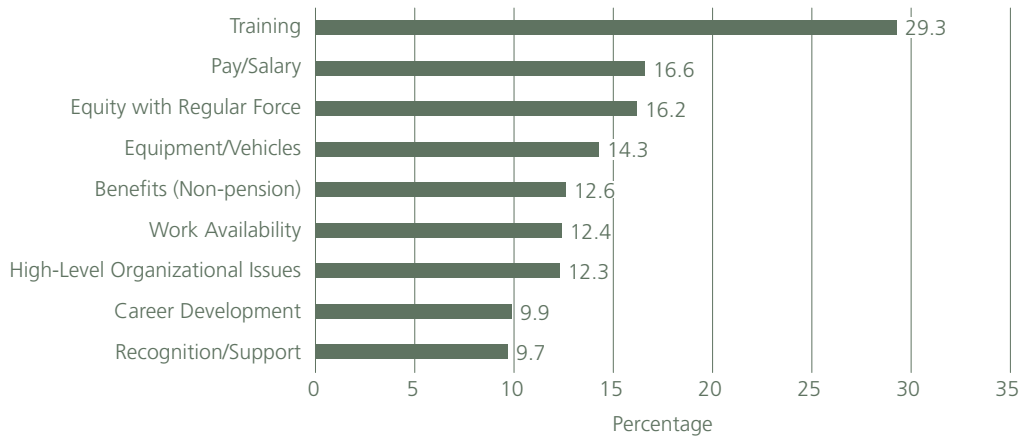
The Reg F and the P Res respondents' most common reasons for leaving are presented in Table 2. As shown, the Reg F members were more likely than the reservists to leave due to job dissatisfaction, the impact of CAF employment on their spouse/partner, dissatisfaction with their CAF occupation (6.5% of the reservists; not shown in the Table), the impact of CAF employment on their children (8.7% of the reservists), and promotion dissatisfaction (7.0% of the reservists). On the other hand, reservists appear to be more likely than Reg F members to intend to leave their component by obtaining a component transfer (CT; 3.8% of the Reg F members), or because of dissatisfaction with training (4.8% of the Reg F members). The proportions of members leaving because of pay dissatisfaction, a lack of meaningful or satisfying work, and retirement (i.e. eligibility for pension benefits/full retirement) were similar for the two components. Most of the other reasons are specific to the Reg F (i.e. lack of geographic stability, postings) or to P Res experience (i.e. civilian job, employment and deployment opportunities, Reserve-specific disorganization).

## 2.6 Participants' recommendations for improvement

The participants' recommendations for improvement, provided in the open-ended questions at the end of the two surveys, were coded to identify key themes, which are described here.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Because of differences in how the question was framed on the two surveys, the results are not directly comparable. However, both provide insights into suggested improvements that could increase retention.

**Figure 5:**  
Suggested  
areas of  
improvement  
in the P Res



For members of the Reg F, the most frequent suggestions for improvement were related to pay, which were made by 17.6% of respondents. Changes to aspects of postings accounted for the second most common theme (16.2%), followed by improving benefits (14.5%), increasing organizational efficiency (11.9%), improving advancement and promotion opportunities (10.0%), decreasing workload and demands (9.2%), and increasing geographic stability (8.9%). These most common suggestions for change are depicted in Figure 4.

For the reservists, by far the greatest number of suggestions related to training (29.3%; e.g. “More focus on training instead of admin”). Other common suggestions pertained to pay/salary (16.6%), equity with the Reg F (16.2%), equipment/vehicles (14.3%), benefits other than pension (12.6%), work availability (12.4%), high-level organizational issues (12.3%), career development (9.9%), and recognition/support (9.7%). These most common suggestions are depicted in Figure 5.

### 3 DISCUSSION

Overall, the results of our analyses demonstrate a fair degree of similarity between the members of the Reg F and the P Res members. However, several areas of divergence and uniqueness are worthy of consideration, particularly in light of the theoretical considerations outlined in the introduction.

#### 3.1 Conflicts between military, civilian, and family roles

Members of both the Regular and Reserve Forces hold multiple roles in their work and personal lives: military service, spouses, families, and other personal commitments. Both groups may therefore be susceptible to role conflict, but this study suggests differences in how that role conflict may manifest.

A defining aspect of regular service is geographic instability produced by frequent postings and deployment. The impact of this instability was visible in these analyses in a way that was not mirrored for Reserve Force respondents. First, 15.6% of Reg F members listed geographic instability as one of their top three reasons for leaving the CAF; in addition, increasing geographic stability was one of the most common suggestions for improving retention in the open-ended comments. Similarly, posting dissatisfaction was a reason for leaving for 10.7% of the Reg F members, and the highly related category of suggestions related to postings (and the associated relocation) was the second most common category of recommendations for improving retention. We posit that these specifics are likely related to a broader consideration, i.e. the impact of Reg F service on spouses and children, which is high when the family has to be relocated frequently. Indeed, the impact of service on spouses and children was listed as a reason for leaving by 23.1% and 17.3% of the Reg F members, respectively. Put another way, the impact on spouses was the second most important reason for leaving the Reg F, preceded only by job dissatisfaction.

Unlike Reg F members, reservists are not subject to geographic instability. Perhaps for this reason, the impact of service on spouses was a much less common reason for leaving among the reservists (11.3%) than among the Reg F members. Reservists, however, must often balance military and civilian employment, which presents other challenges that may affect retention. Indeed, this is reflected in one of reservists' top reasons for leaving: impact on their civilian jobs (15.9%).

Thus, the present analyses suggest that retention in both components is strongly affected by conflict between various aspects of the members' lives. For the Reg F members, the challenges appear to revolve around family and geographic instability. For the reservists, although family is also an important consideration, it may be less affected. However, impact on civilian employment emerged as a key consideration.

### 3.2 Reservists' desire to contribute

As described in the introduction, cross-national research suggests that Reg F military personnel hold significant doubts about reservists' dedication to the military. Insofar as these doubts exist, our data indicates that they are not warranted. The reservists' top reasons for intending to leave were largely work- and service-related. Key reasons included a lack of employment opportunities in the Reserve Force (16.9%), a lack of deployment opportunities (14.3%), and dissatisfaction with training and development (12.0%). These reasons suggest that, despite the many demands on reservists' time, many members want to be *more* involved with the P Res, not less – to the point that they may leave because they are dissatisfied with their level of available involvement. Further, the reservists' most common suggestions for senior leaders included improvements and additions to training, and increasing Reserve Force work availability. Finally, the single most frequently cited reason for leaving the reserves was to join the Reg F – another indication that many reservists want to be more involved with military service than they can be in the Reserve Force.

These results suggest that perceptions of reservists by Reg F members and others as less professional or committed may not be warranted. This proposition is explored further below.

### 3.3 Dedication and commitment

Further to the above, we also considered both actual commitment and perceptions of commitment and competence.

The present data show that most reservists described themselves (as a group) as dedicated to the force. Beyond that self-perception, population means suggest that reservists actually are somewhat more affectively and normatively committed than Reg F members. That is, reservists appeared to have slightly stronger emotional ties to the organization (i.e. affective commitment) and were substantially more likely to say that they felt a sense of obligation or duty to stay (i.e. normative commitment) than Reg F members.

Far from indicating that reservists take an occupational view of their military service (Moskos, 1988), these results suggest the opposite: reservists may be more likely to take an institutional view. Griffith's (2009) social identity perspective on reserve service offers one potential explanation. Drawing on Tajfel and Turner's (1979) seminal theory, Griffith proposed that reservists will identify strongly with the reserves to the extent that they have strong bonds with their unit. The present analyses indicated that reservists were substantially more satisfied with their jobs overall and were more satisfied with their unit leadership than Reg F members, which may support bonding within the unit. Although this provides only oblique evidence of Griffith's proposal, it is supported by previous research demonstrating that in the CAF P Res, unit cohesion is strong, and is also the best predictor of retention (Anderson, 2017).

This study does not and cannot speak to reservists' competence. A recent audit of the Army Reserve suggest that reservists are indeed less trained and prepared for deployment than Reg F members (Office of the Auditor General, 2016). That said, this study suggests that any differences between Reg F members and reservists in this domain do not stem from a motivational deficit, as doubts about dedication would suggest. Given the nature of the reservists' suggestions for improvement, of which improvements in training were by far the most frequent, they would strongly prefer to receive training and equipment on a par with Reg F members. Although this finding cannot speak to actual competence, it strongly suggests that reservists are motivated – they desire access to the tools necessary to maintain or improve their ability to contribute to the CAF.

### 3.4 Desire for equity and recognition

The reservists in this study were clearly aware that they are perceived by Reg F members as less dedicated and competent, whereas their self-perceptions indicate



that they do not agree with that assessment. The sense that they are not valued relative to the Reg F came through in their suggestions for improvement. Recognition, support, and explicit requests for greater equity with the Reg F featured among their most common suggestions, as it has in past reserve research. Suggestions relating to training, pay, access to better equipment and vehicles, and benefits may also speak to a desire for equity, in that Reg F members are generally more advantaged in all of these domains (Goldenberg & Anderson, in press; Yeung et al., 2017). When asked directly how satisfied they were with their pay compared to the Reg F, the reservists' feelings of inequity were clearly visible there too, with only half indicating satisfaction. In sum, this study indicates that CAF reservists feel undervalued along some key dimensions, which ultimately contributes to attrition from the P Res.

### 3.5 Implications for retention

Although they must be interpreted cautiously, these findings imply two major areas of impact on retention. For both the Reg F and the P Res, conflict between members' roles are clearly important to retention: primarily between military and family life for Reg F members, and primarily between military and civilian work life for reservists. These findings suggest that continuing emphasis on support for military families and civilian employers is important and necessary for members' well-being and retention.

For reservists in particular, the other major source of dissatisfaction and attrition stems from oft-cited negative or ambivalent perceptions of them. The present analyses indicated that such perceptions are not warranted, and in fact we find research to the contrary across several aspects, notably those related to dedication, commitment, and professionalism. These findings, in conjunction with research indicating that feeling appreciated and supported is crucial to job success (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986), strongly support whole force integration and increased messaging about the importance of reserve forces to a nation's military. Further research into the reality of reservists' dedication, commitment, and professionalism is also warranted to support these improvements.

**Conclusion** The current analyses indicate that, in a study of retention, it is crucial to consider the major ways in which the reserve service differs from the Reg F service. Notably, these included differences in the types of role conflict experienced; whereas family life tends to create the most conflict for Reg F members, balancing the demands of reserve duties and civilian work is a more typical source of conflict for reservists. The findings also indicate the importance of recognition and equity between the forces for the retention of reservists. They suggest that the oft-held perceptions of Canadian reservists as less dedicated and committed to service compared to members of the Reg F are unfounded; mean normative and affective commitment scores were actually somewhat higher for the reservists than for the members of the Reg F. Furthermore, many of the reasons reservists reported for leaving the service indicated disappointment with a lack of opportunities to serve, and a sizeable proportion even intended to transfer to the Reg F to continue and expand their

service. These findings all point to the value of reservists to the military, and the need for better communication about their contributions. Given the current emphasis on reserve forces and force integration in Canada and abroad, it is particularly important to promote respect and equity between regular and reserve forces, while simultaneously recognizing their unique strengths and needs. Future research could address specific means to achieve these goals.

## Bibliography

1. Anderson, J., 2017. *The 2015 Reserve Force Retention Survey: Descriptive Results for the P Res (Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis Scientific Report DRDC-RDDC-2017-R162)*. Ottawa, ON: Defence Research and Development Canada.
2. Anderson, J. E., & Goldenberg, I., in preparation. *Doing it all: The unique challenges of serving in the Canadian Armed Forces Reserve Force*. In R. Moelker & M. Andres (Eds.), *The Politics of Military Families*. Routledge.
3. Bremner, N., & Budgell, G., 2017. *The 2016 CAF Retention Survey: Descriptive Analysis (Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis Contract Report, DRDC-RDDC-2017-C224)*. Ottawa, ON: Defence Research and Development Canada.
4. Connelly, V. 2013. *Cultural differences between the Regular Army and the TA as barriers to integration*. Paper prepared for Director Personnel Capability. United Kingdom.
5. Department of National Defence. 1994. *A qualitative assessment of Reserve Force attraction, motivation, and retention*. Contract Report prepared by Generations Research, Inc. Toronto, Ontario.
6. Department of National Defence. 2017. *Strong secure engaged: Canada's defence policy*. Catalogue Number D2-386/2017E. Department of National Defence, Canada.
7. Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. 1986. Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71, 500-507.
8. Fraser, K. 2013. *Preliminary results of the 2013 Your-Say Survey: Reserve Force Edition (Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis Scientific Letter)*. Ottawa, ON: Defence Research and Development Canada.
9. Goldenberg, I., & Anderson, J. In press. *Pay and benefits: Attitudinal findings from the 2016 CAF Regular Force Retention Survey and the 2015 CAF P Res Retention Survey (Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis Scientific Letter)*. Ottawa, ON: Defence Research and Development Canada.
10. Goldenberg, I., & Ebel-Lam, A. 2017. *2016 CAF Retention Survey: Descriptive results (Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis Scientific Brief DRDC-RDDC-2017-B007)*. Ottawa, ON: Defence Research and Development Canada.
11. Griffith, J. 2005. Will citizens be soldiers? Examining retention of reserve component soldiers. *Armed Forces & Society*, 31, 353-383.
12. Griffith, J. 2009. Being a reserve soldier: A matter of social identity. *Armed Forces & Society*, 36, 38-64. doi: 10.1177/0095327X08327819
13. Hadziomerovic, A., & Simpson, S. 2013. *Attrition and retention among military reservist groups: A literature review (Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis Contract Report 2013-015)*. Ottawa, ON: Defence Research and Development Canada.
14. Keene, S. D. 2015. *The effective use of reserve personnel in the U.S. military: Lessons from the United Kingdom reserve model*. United States Army War College Strategic Studies Institute.
15. Lee, R., Eren, E., & Budgell, G., 2017. *2016 CAF Retention Survey: Qualitative Analysis (Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis Contract Report DRDC-RDDC-2017-C178)*. Ottawa, ON: Defence Research and Development Canada.
16. Lomsky-Feder, E., Gazit, N., & Ben-Ari, E. 2008. Reserve soldiers as transmigrants: moving between the civilian and military worlds. *Armed Forces & Society*, 34, 593-614.

17. Meyer, J. P., Allen, N. J., & Smith, C. A. 1993. *Commitment to organizations and occupations: Extension and test of a three-component conceptualization*. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78, 538-551. DOI: 10.1037/0021-9010.78.4.538
18. Moskos, C. C. 1988. *Institutional and occupational trends in armed forces*. In Charles C. Moskos & Frank Rl. Wood (Eds.), *The military: More than just a job?* (pp. 15-26). Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey.
19. *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018*, Pub. L. No. 115-91. USA.
20. *Office of the Auditor General*. 2016. *Report 5—Canadian Army Reserve—National Defence*. [http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl\\_oag\\_201602\\_05\\_e\\_41249.html](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201602_05_e_41249.html)
21. Parry, E., Connelly, V., Robinson, D., Robinson, Z., & Taylor, C. 2016. *Integration of the Whole Force: Understanding Barriers and Enablers to Task and Team Performance. Defence Human Capability Science and Technology Centre O-DHCSTC\_I2\_P\_T2\_083/005*. United Kingdom.
22. Pepin, K, Sudom, K., & Dunn, J. 2006. *Your-Say: Quality of life*. *Defence Research and Development Canada – Centre for Operational Research and Analysis Technical Memorandum 2006-41* (Ottawa: Defence Research and Development Canada).
23. Shields, P.M. 1993. *A new paradigm for military policy: Socioeconomics*. *Armed Forces and Society*, 19, 511-532.
24. *Standing Committee on Public Accounts*. 2016. *The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces need to better organize, train, and equip Army Reserve soldiers and units*. News Release. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/PACP/news-release/8450895>
25. Segal, M. W. 1999. *Military culture and military families*. In Mary F. Katzenstein & Judith Reppy, (Eds.), *Beyond zero tolerance: Discrimination in military culture* (251-261). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
26. Sudom, K. 2012. *Impact of military life on families and single Canadian Forces members: Current state of knowledge and research gaps*. *Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis Technical Memorandum 2012-008* (Ottawa: Defence Research and Development Canada).
27. Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. 1979. *An integrative theory of intergroup conflict*. *The social psychology of intergroup relations*, 33, 47.
28. Van Sell, M., Brief, A. P., & Schuler, R. S. 1981. *Role conflict and role ambiguity: Integration of the literature and directions for future research*. *Human Relations*, 34, 43-71.
29. *WFA Narrative*. 2015. *Whole Force Approach: A narrative (A joint paper by DCDS (MilCap) and CDP)*. Ministry of Defence, London.
30. Yeung, E., Sanders, J., Eren, E., & Budgell, G. 2017. *Human Resources Systems Group, Qualitative analysis of 2015 P Res Retention Survey data (Task 212, Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis DRDC-RDDC-2017-C205)*. Ottawa, ON: Defence Research and Development Canada.