



2016 The Future Accommodation Model

RAF FF SURVEY REPORT



Cover images: *A new-build Service family home at Lee-on-the-Solent near Portsmouth/ A bedroom at the Personnel Recovery Centre (PRC) Chavasse VC House, Colchester/ An aerial view of new Single Living Accommodation (SLA) blocks built under Project SLAM at Richmondshire Lines, Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire.* Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

Background

For years the quality of service housing, its availability and the entitlement to it (or not) has been a hot topic of debate amongst RAF personnel and their families, and it remains by some distance the number one issue reported to the RAF Families Federation. Equally, the Air Member for Personnel Briefing Team (AMPBT), Chief of the Air Staff Warrant Officer (CASWO) and others have consistently reported on the concerns and opinions expressed about Service accommodation at the grass roots by all ranks. Further, during New Employment Model forums since 2013, audiences have consistently raised matters concerning housing as their most pressing issue. The MoD has made clear that affordable, good quality accommodation remains central to the offer but acknowledges that the current model is unsustainable at an acceptable standard of provision. As part of the consultation process for the Future Accommodation Model, the MoD team asked us to survey RAF family members – spouses and partners – for their views on the provision of service accommodation.

Observations

Our results show a clear overlap within childcare, spousal employment and our personnel's family plans for now and the future and it is important that FAM is not viewed in isolation but is cognisant of these (and other) factors that influence our people's lives. However, regarding this survey specifically, it is noteworthy from reading some of the pages of qualitative comments that some spouse/partners are not aware of current entitlement, the policy or how potential future options could be delivered. Many people struggle to 'imagine' delivery against a backdrop of this lack of understanding. In addition, it is clear that SSFA management is currently poorly delivered, leading to most if not all respondents replying negatively. Again, this has led our personnel to judge future options against the current poor performance. Interestingly, despite the underwhelming performance of DIO/CarrillionAmey, there is still a positive message with respect to the future need and provision of SFA. Finally, we did not choose these questions but we recognise some of them are 'leading' and in other cases 'closed', promoting a certain response.

Summary

With the MoD pursuing a number of high profile initiatives aligned to the current 'offer' including FES, NONJ, and FAM it is obvious through our many forums, surveys and unit visits that RAF personnel and their families need to be engaged throughout. It will be interesting to see the response to the MoD survey for serving personnel and in particular the uptake, given the high interest shown by spouse/partners. What is certain is that our people will be thirsty for feedback and clarity about the detail as it becomes available.

Methodology

Normally, RAF Families Federation surveys are conducted at a single Service level in order to best reflect and capture specific evidence and enable solid, specific analysis aligned to RAF personnel and their families. However, it was requested that the survey on this occasion be of a joint nature. Analysis is delivered in two forms: Quantitative (percentage scores) and Qualitative (where the compiler can expand on the answer given).

Findings

1540 people participated in the RAF FF survey, of which circa 80% were married. Our report also summarises the **221** pages of comments provided by respondents.

Participation – Top Level Statistics

- 60% ORs and 35% Commissioned
- 77% have completed 6 - 20 years' service
- 80% are married or in a civil partnership with children. 16% without children

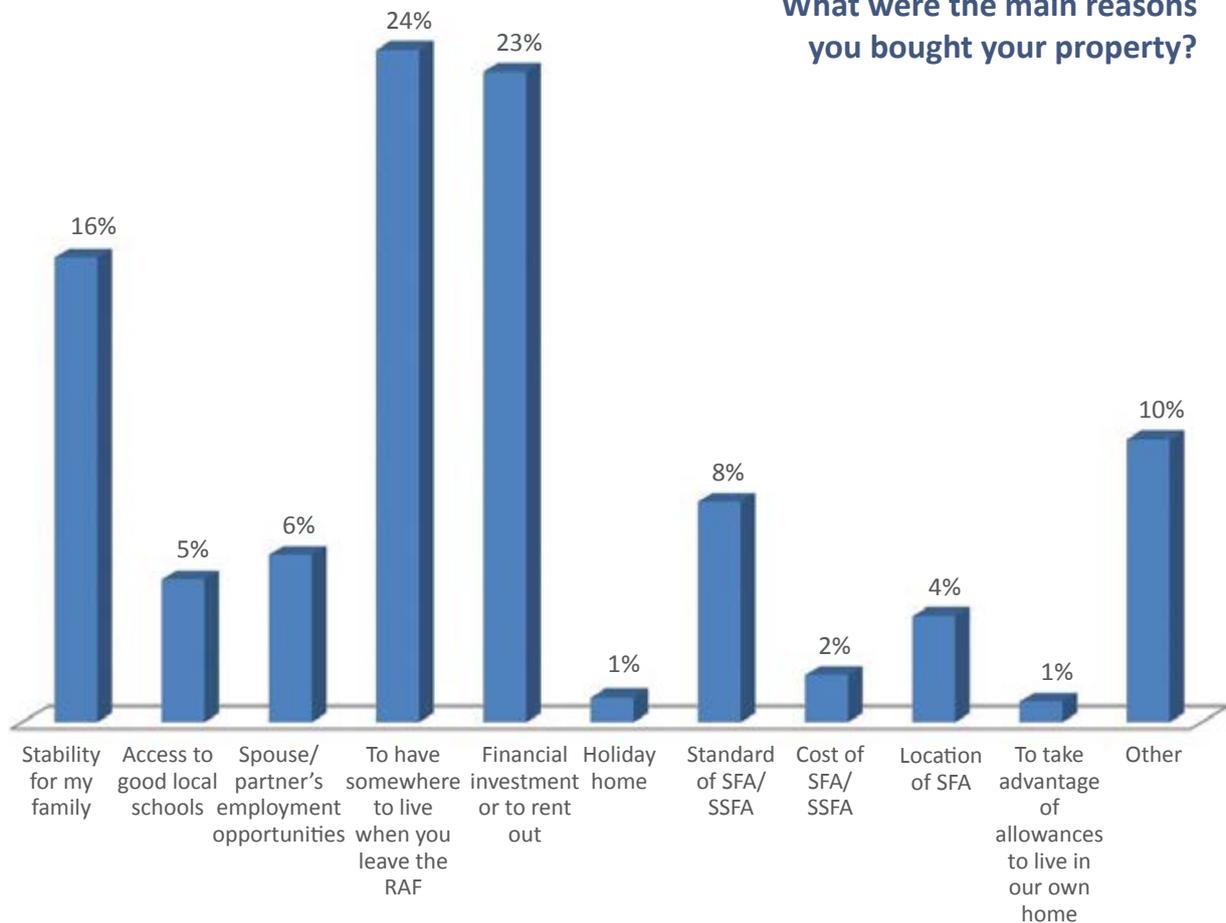
Home Ownership

- 46% owned a property but only 9% were living in their own home

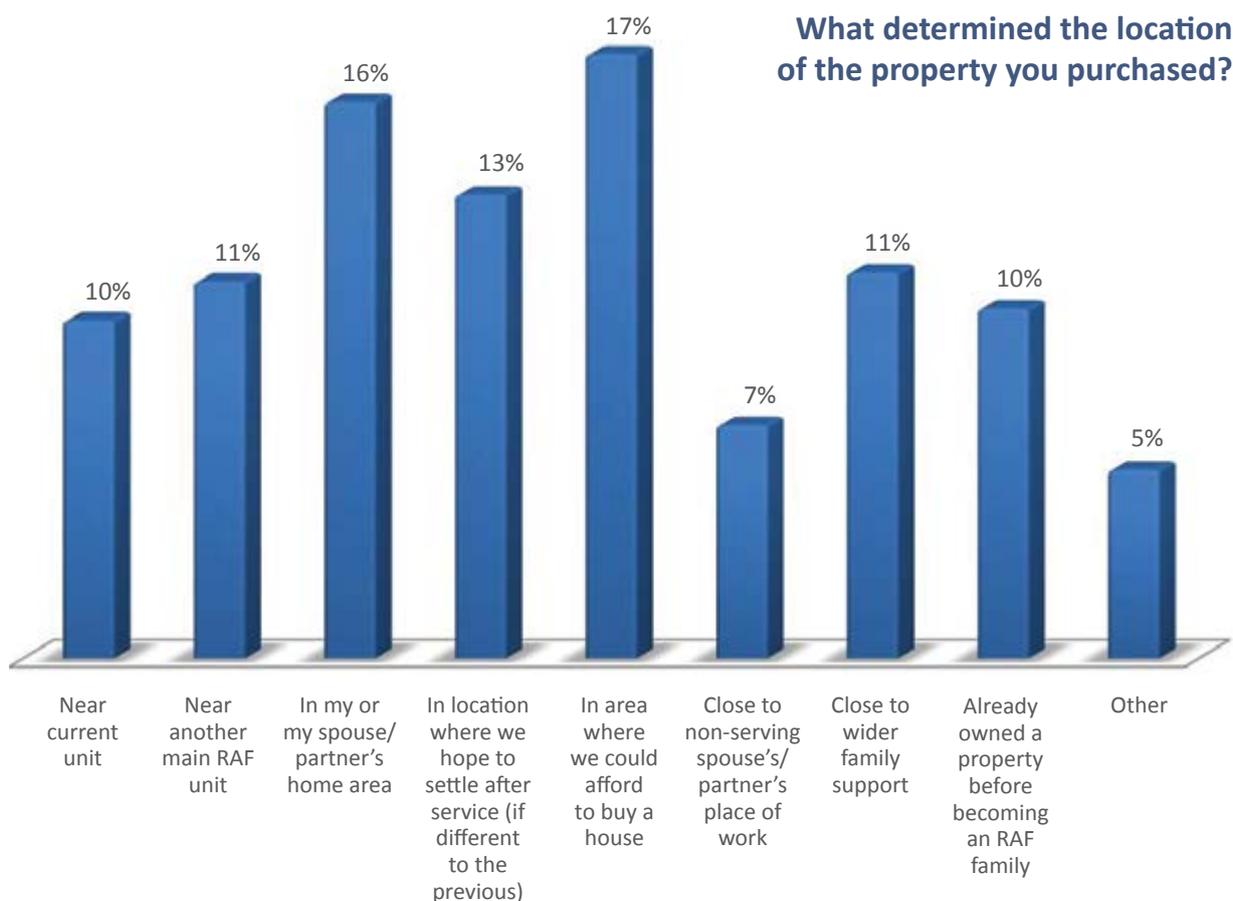
Do you own a property?



Reason for Purchase:



What were the main reasons you bought your property?



The respondents who chose 'Other' did so primarily for the following reasons:

- Bought before the SP joined the RAF
- House owned pre-marriage
- Not married therefore not entitled to SFA
- To get on the property ladder

We bought our house in Lincolnshire so we could live together at weekends before getting married. Not sure it was such a good idea as after having kids I then commuted daily to London (2 hours each way) for my work and my husband was sent overseas and then posted to Bristol. Lots of new build housing around Sleaford has meant we have struggled to sell or rent it, so currently in SFA in Bristol with an empty house in Lincolnshire that is still on the market!

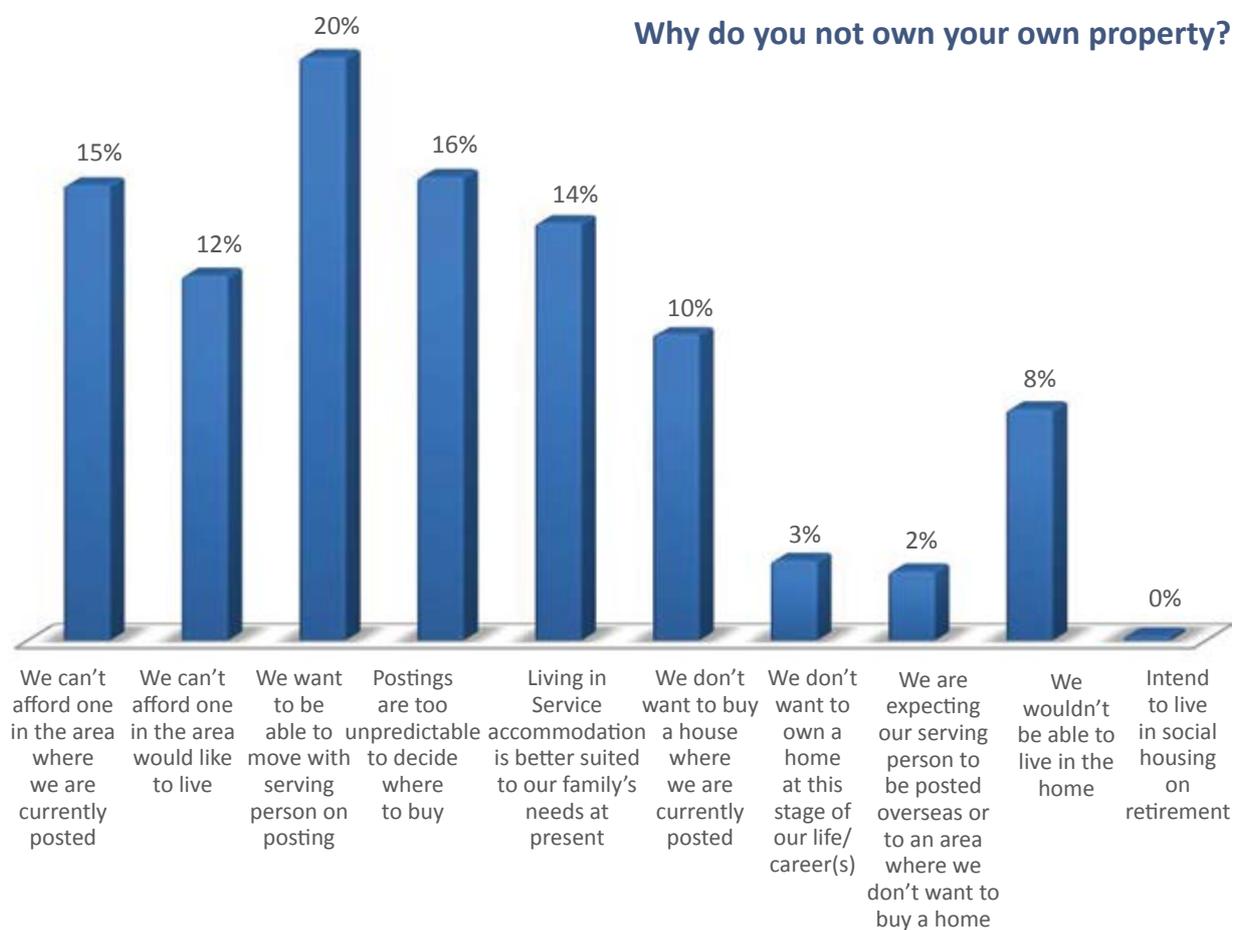
The MOD would not house my eldest child as she is over 18 but not financially viable to rent her own house. Therefore, we had no choice but to buy.

As we are not married, there is no accommodation entitlement to me or my partner and we want to live together. We do not qualify for SFA, as we are not married.

We were not married at the time and the RAF would not give us a quarter even though we had been together 10 Years so we had no option, as we could not live together in the mess.

For how long would the serving person be willing to DAILY commute from your property to their place of work? (One way)	0 - 15 minutes	16 - 30 minutes	31 - 45 minutes	46 minutes - 1 hour	1 hour - 2 hours	2 hours +
Commuting from SFA	49%	36%	11%	4%	0%	0%
Commuting from private rental (allowance from MOD)	17%	52%	21%	9%	1%	0%
Commuting from own home	8%	30%	33%	23%	5%	1%

Reasons for not purchasing a property:

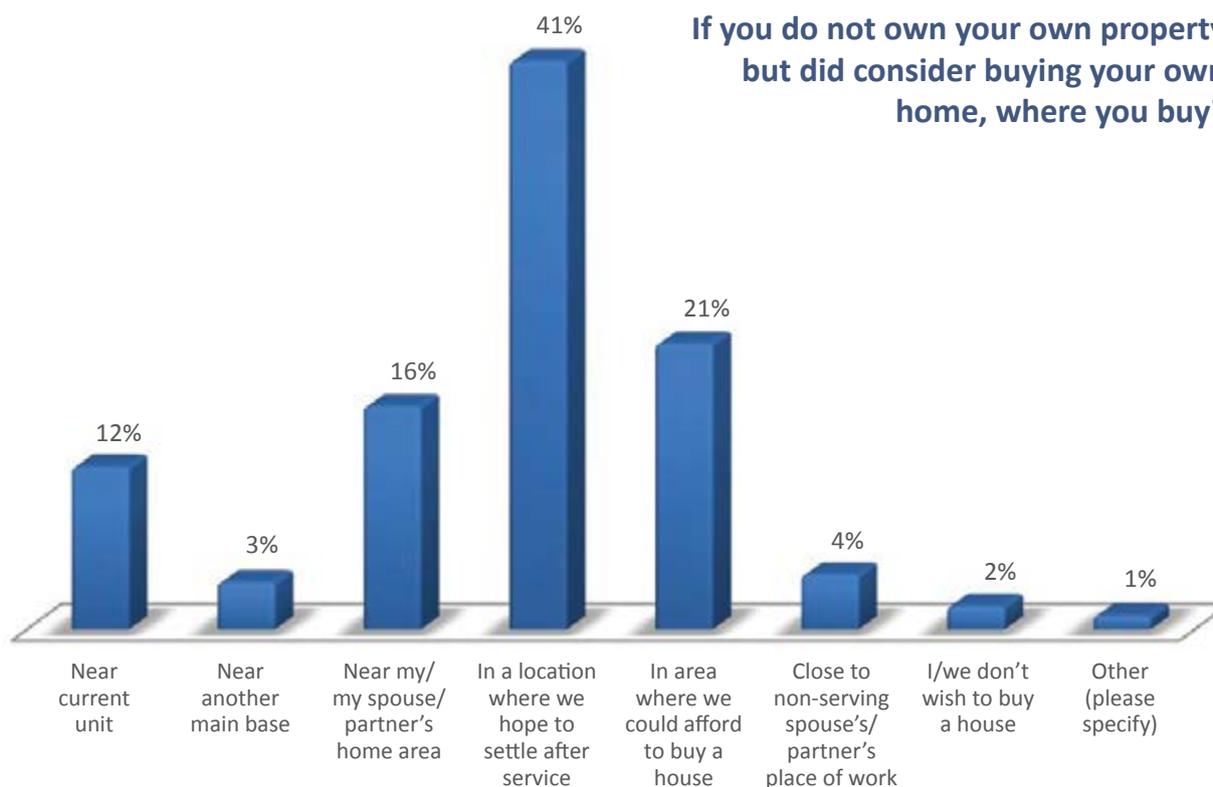


The respondents who chose 'Other' did so primarily for the following reasons:

- Cannot afford to purchase at current location
- Currently on a Overseas tour
- Don't want to buy at the moment
- Saving to buy/Intend to buy soon

I have a toddler and one on the way; I want my children to have their Father around as much as possible while they are growing up. We would like to buy our own house but can't afford one in the area we are posted in.

If you do not own your own property but did consider buying your own home, where you buy?



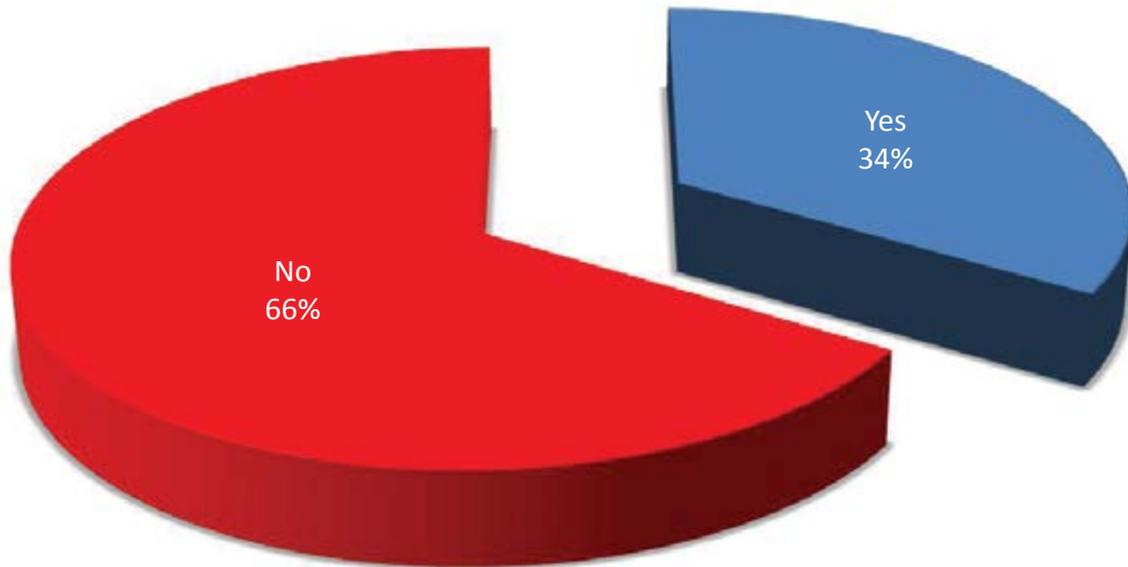
The respondents who chose 'Other' did so primarily for the following reasons:

- Near family for a support network
- Unable to afford a property
- In an area close to predicted future postings
- In an area near to where we intend to live on leaving the RAF

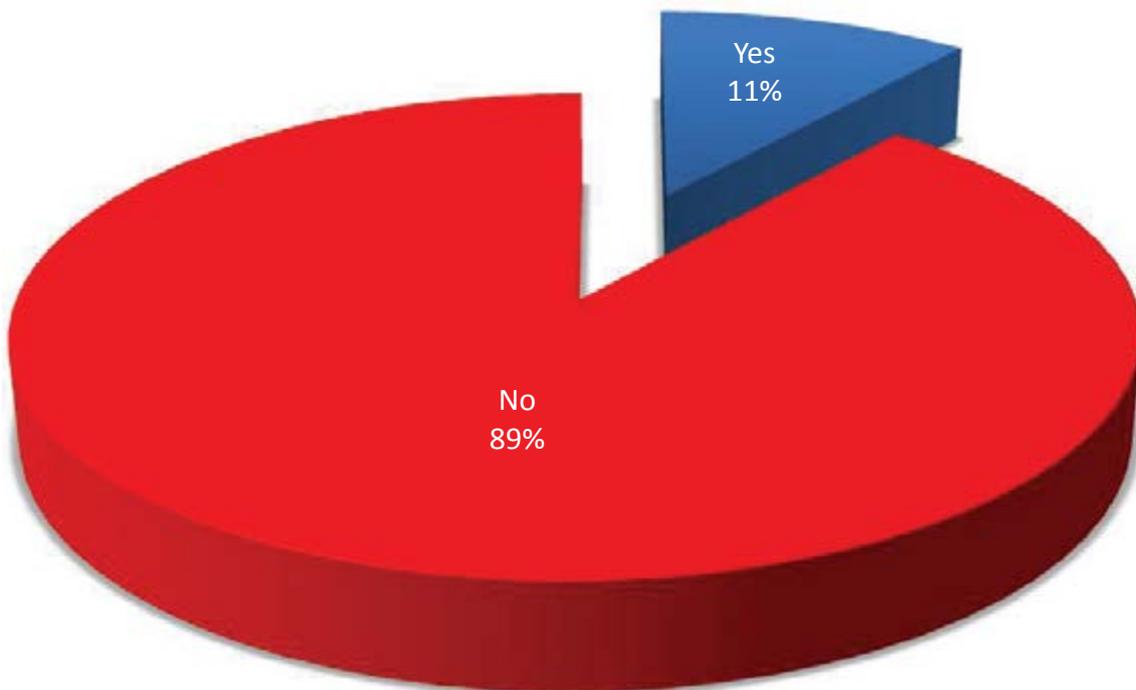
We want to get on the property ladder, but want to continue to live together as a family while partner serves (so continue to move around and live in SFA). The plan is to buy to let to get on the ladder, and then when partner leaves military, sell that house and buy own house in location where we choose to settle (which is yet unknown).

Unaccompanied Service:

Have you ever lived married unaccompanied?

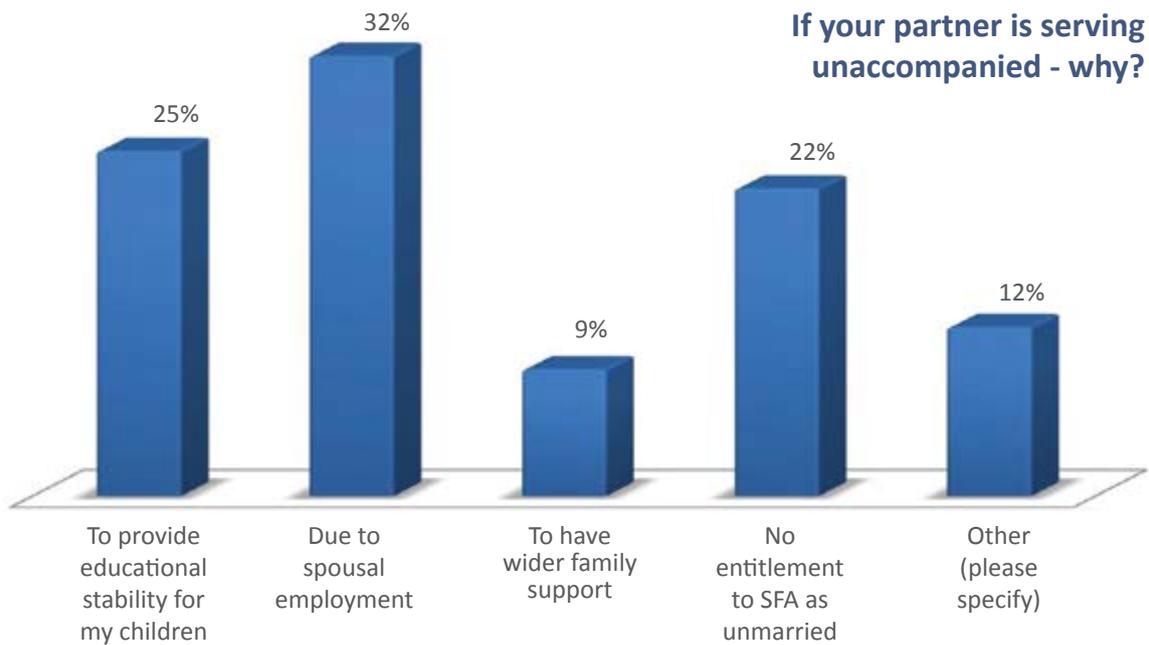


Do you live separately from your partner during the working week?



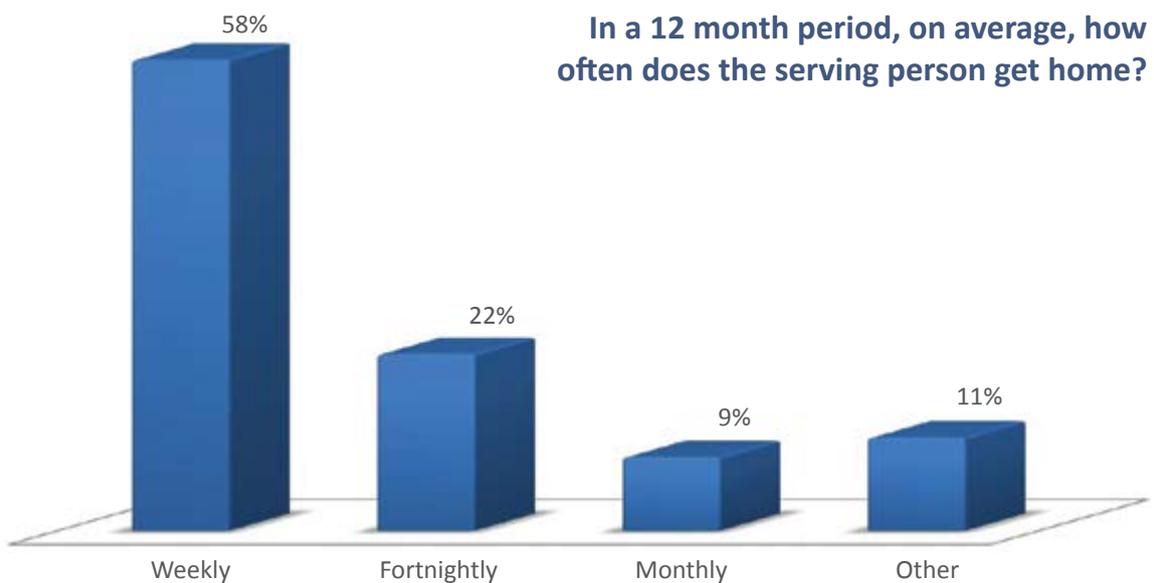
Of the 166 respondents who stated that they currently lived separately from their partners during the week. The top reasons for serving unaccompanied are:

- non entitlement
- spousal employment
- stability for children's education



CarillionAmey wouldn't house my eldest daughter due to her being over 18, but not in a financial position to own/rent her own house

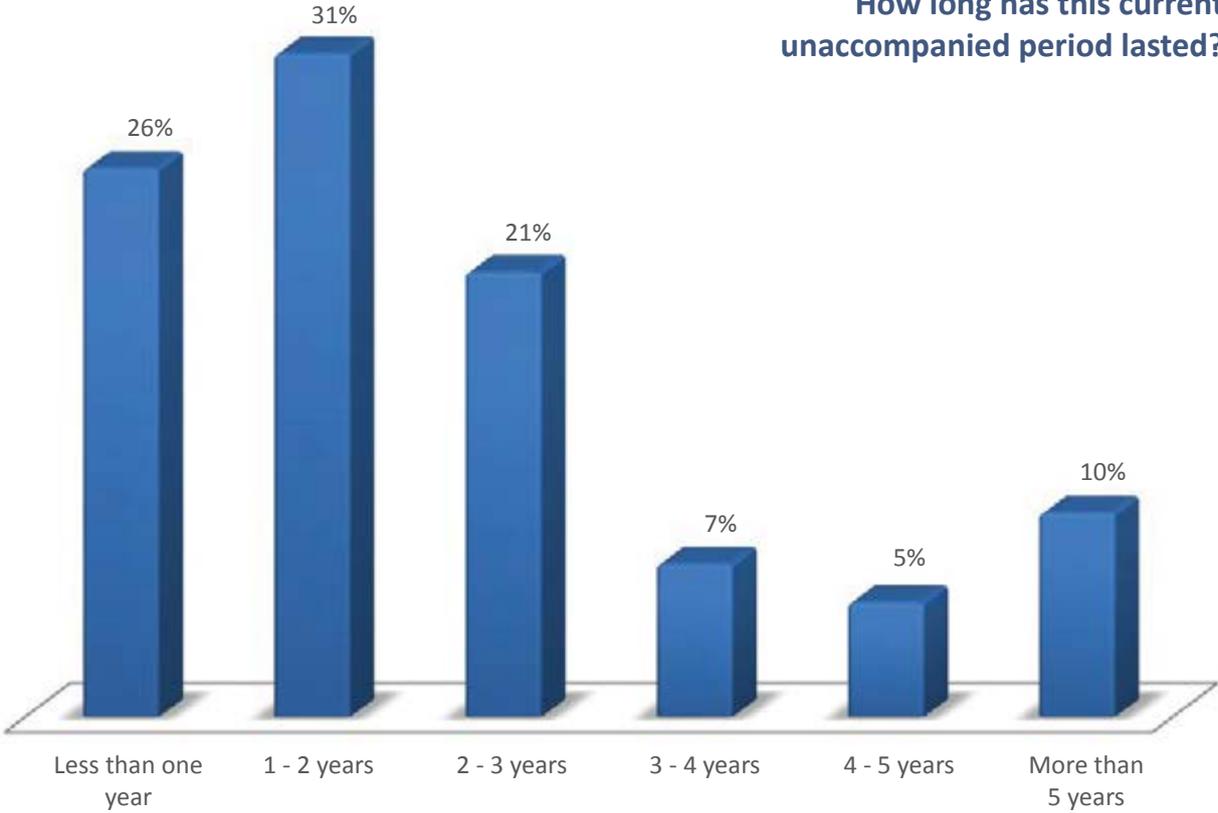
SFA is not suitable for our particular requirements as a family. We have a dependent adult daughter and two younger children and SFA tends to be too small for a family with three adults and two children.



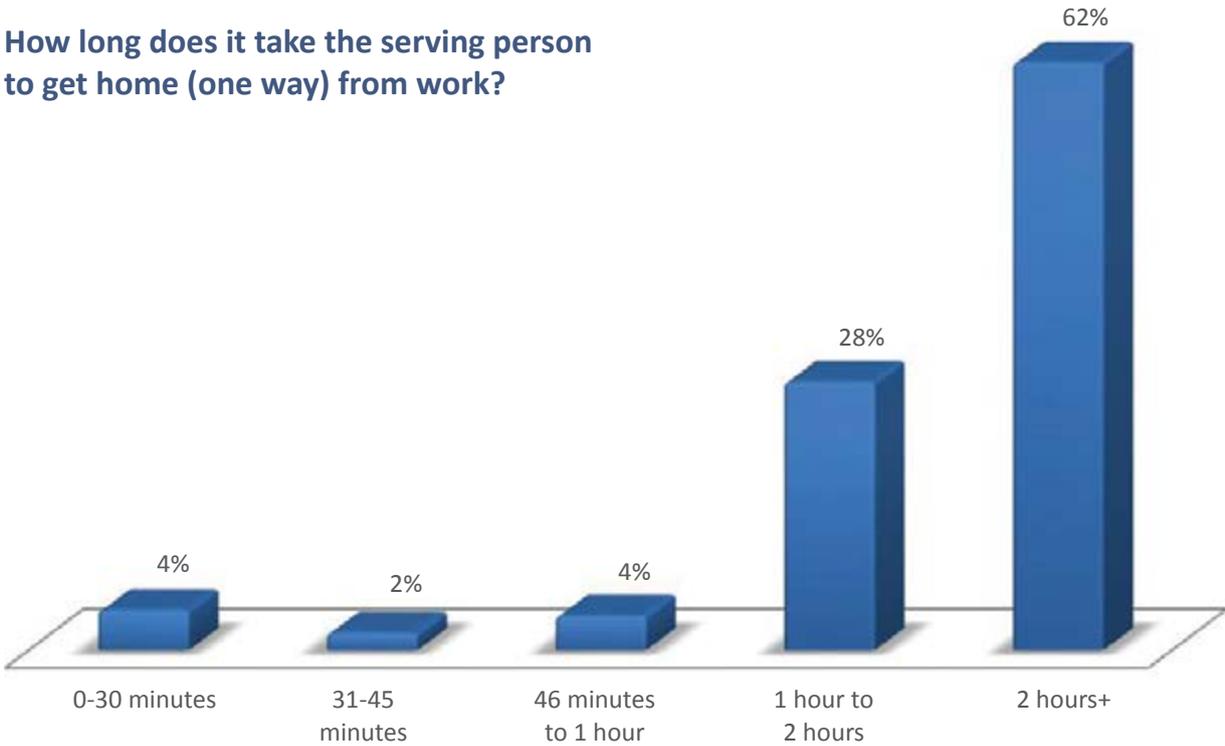
The respondents who chose 'Other' stated:

- 2 weekends out of every three
- Approximately every 2 months
- 3 monthly

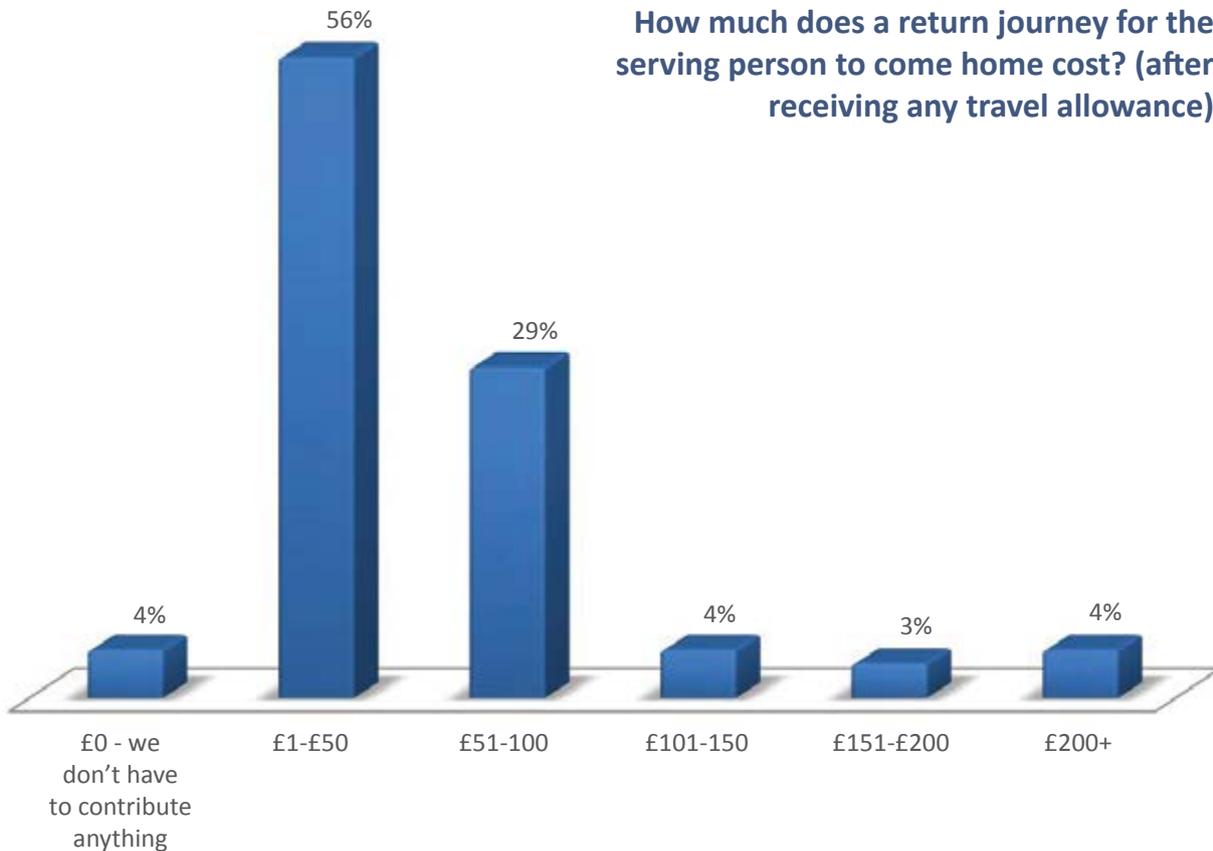
How long has this current unaccompanied period lasted?



How long does it take the serving person to get home (one way) from work?



85% of personnel travel back to home by car, and 6% use the train.

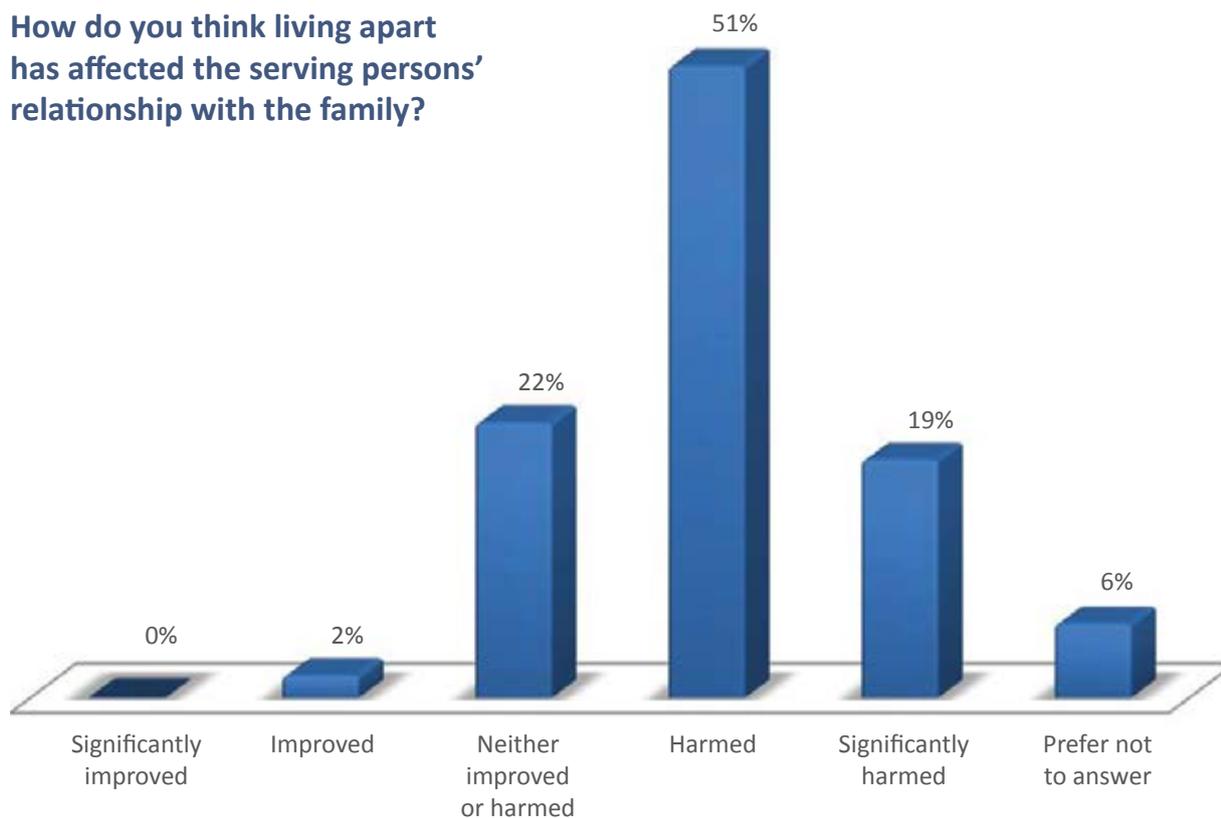


GYH(T) does not cover the full cost of fuel, or contribute towards depreciation of my vehicle in the same way that MMA would for business use, and yet I am travelling for business purposes.

It's not just money, it's time as well. He's tired when he gets back and tired when he drives to base as he leaves as late as possible to spend more time with me.

Partner does not receive home to duty travel support as we are not married & he has accommodation. This affects us negatively.

How do you think living apart has affected the serving persons' relationship with the family?



I have become the head of the household

My husband is depressed at being apart from the family and it's very hard on him and us

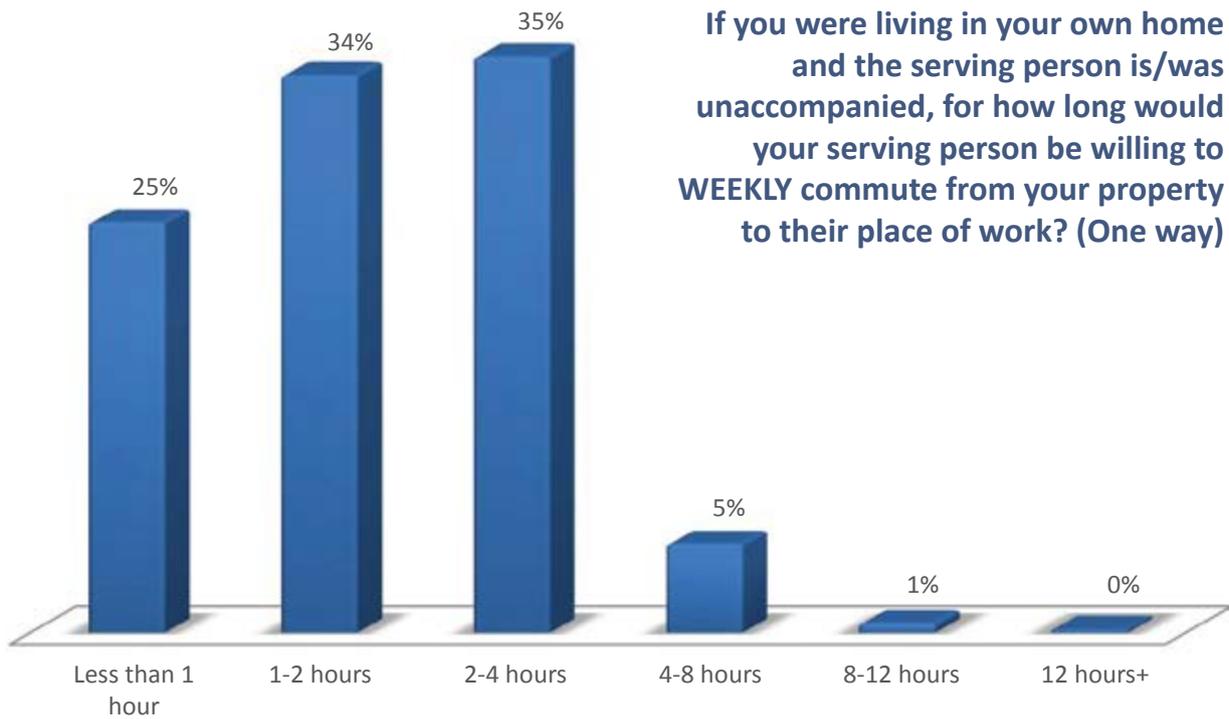
It came pretty close to ending the relationship.

Very difficult for everyone but we have chosen to prioritise stability for our children

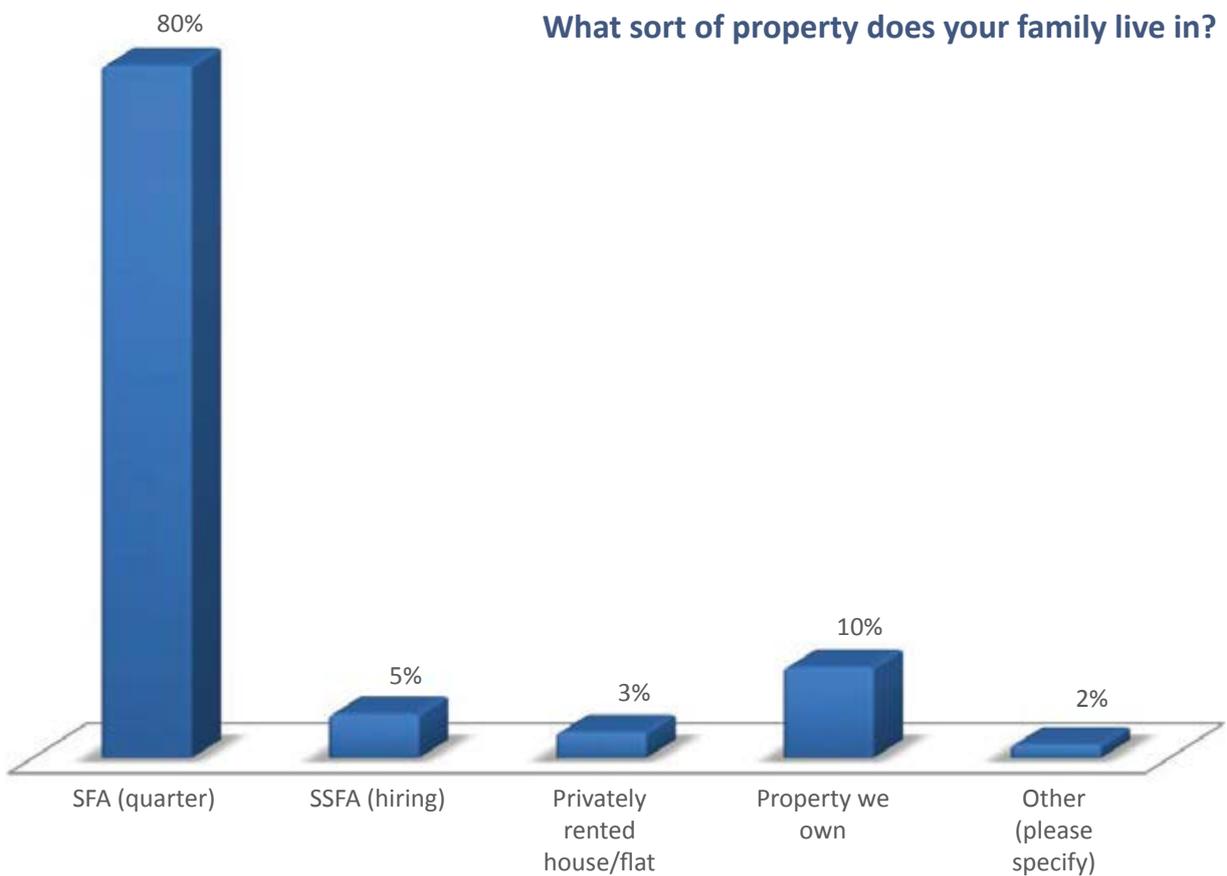
He misses school events such as parents evening, sports day etc... He's often tired from traveling and doesn't want to do much with the children. By the time he starts to recover from his working week, it's time to travel 180 miles back again.

It takes time for him to settle back into home life when he gets back. We have to do so much apart -which creates resentment and tension. He wants to help with home decisions, but they can rarely wait until he gets back and if they do, he's not there to manage or implement them. And it means we spend the short time together doing chores, which makes the trip down a drag, as he knows we don't have much time to actually enjoy ourselves

We've been doing it for years. You get used to it.



Living in SFA:



What do you like/dislike about living in SFA/SSFA?

What do you like/dislike about living in SFA/SSFA?	Like	%	Dislike	%	Not sure	%
Rental charges	948	72%	233	18%	128	10%
Rent being subsidised	1174	90%	30	2%	105	8%
Closeness of house to serving persons place of work	1170	89%	79	6%	60	5%
Current entitlement policy	699	53%	381	29%	229	18%
Being able to move with the serving person on posting & living together as a family	1247	95%	29	2%	33	3%
Maintenance available on request	921	70%	260	20%	128	10%
Condition of the property	363	28%	800	61%	146	11%
Suitability & size of rooms/properties for a modern family	695	53%	509	39%	105	8%
Living close to other Service families & being part of a community	996	76%	120	9%	193	15%
Storage space	493	38%	689	52%	127	10%
Access to Service community support facilities & unit welfare staff	930	71%	153	12%	226	17%
Ability to decorate & personalise your home	336	26%	704	54%	269	20%
Accommodation is sourced & provided for you	822	63%	325	25%	162	12%
Choice of which house you are given	529	40%	574	44%	206	16%
Spouse being able to pursue their own career	690	53%	390	30%	229	17%
Being able to live close to my wider family	278	21%	613	47%	418	32%
Being able to choose where I live	377	29%	591	45%	341	26%
Being able to choose who I can live with	590	45%	350	27%	369	28%
Being able to save, due to subsidised rental prices	905	69%	175	13%	229	18%

Summary:

The main 'likes' people stated about living in SFA:

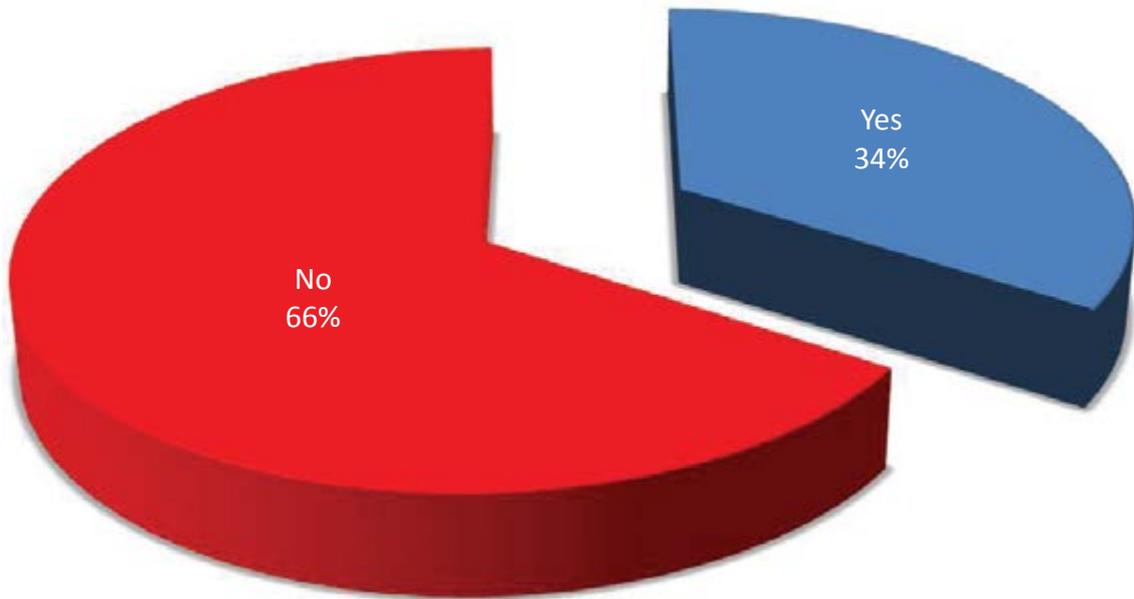
- Rent being subsidised
- Being able to move with the serving person on posting & living together as a family
- Closeness of house to serving persons place of work
- Living close to other Service families & being part of a community

The main 'dislikes' people stated about living in SFA:

- Condition of properties
- Ability to decorate & personalise your home
- Storage space
- Not being near wider family
- Having a choice of property

Living in SSFA/Hiring:

Have you lived in SSFA/hiring in the last 5 years



Have you lived in SSFA/hiring in the last 5 years? If yes, what have been the positives and negatives of your experiences?

79 people reported that they had lived in SSFA in the last 5 years.

Not many positives! Negative - price is similar to our mortgage, the housing team never fix or repair jobs properly. It is stressful trying to get things repaired. Energy bills are excessive due to poor insulation. Not getting to choose locations, so sometimes being housed a considerable commute away from the station, excluding you from the facilities provided on station for families.

Positive - we were able to take a short notice posting and move within 3 weeks. Negative - house was unsuitable, too small, insufficient parking, in a noisy area.

In Belgium. Very good quality. Excellent repairs experience.

Positive: Nice area, good maintenance contractors. Negative: distance from spouse work, inconsistent standards of care compared to SFA housing

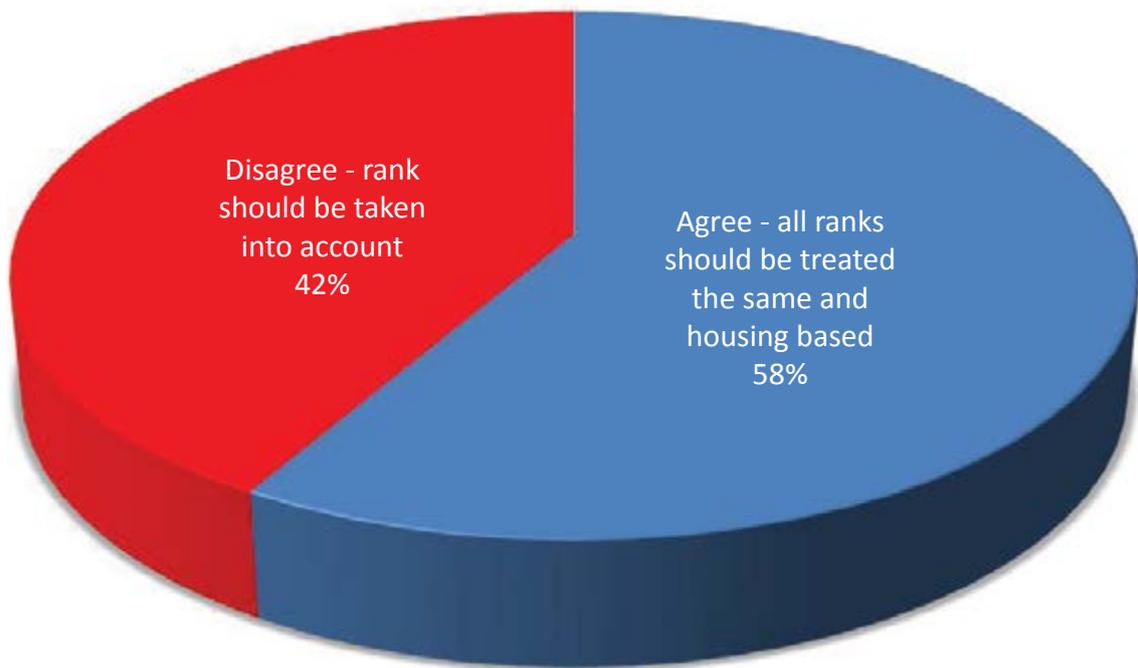
How positive or negative do you consider the following in relation to renting privately?	Very positive	Positive	Neither	Negative	Very negative
Ability to secure your rental property a maximum of up to 1-2 months in advance of posting	29%	28%	20%	14%	9%
Ability to apply for school places if address potentially not confirmed until near the moving date	28%	16%	22%	15%	19%
Ability to have time to help look for a new rental property	30%	27%	17%	16%	10%
Ability to contribute more of your own money to have the house of your choice	20%	29%	23%	17%	11%
Landlord may refuse to allow you to have pets	4%	5%	22%	26%	43%
Loss of immediate military community	4%	7%	31%	28%	30%
Need for a second car depending on location of rental	5%	5%	28%	31%	31%
Not being guaranteed to remain in the same house during the posting (eg possibly of landlord deciding to sell or no longer rent the property)	2%	4%	12%	29%	53%
Ability to get adaptations undertaken on your property, as required by your family's needs	11%	18%	33%	18%	20%
Security concerns	8%	9%	33%	26%	24%
Quality of accommodation	20%	29%	26%	14%	11%
Choice of location	24%	37%	18%	11%	10%
Choice of who you can live with	26%	32%	26%	8%	8%
Choice of type of property	28%	36%	19%	9%	8%

If you were given an allowance towards your private rental property, what would you expect the MOD to provide?	Must be provided	Nice to Have	Does not need to be provided
Assistance finding the property	53%	38%	9%
Legal assistance - dealing with contracts & tenancy agreements	78%	20%	2%
Removals	88%	11%	1%
Financial assistance - deposits	75%	22%	3%
Furniture package	31%	36%	33%

Entitlement:

At present, the entitlement to SFA for Other Ranks (OR's) is based on the number of children and for Officers, is based on their rank. People reported the following with respect to entitlement.

**To what extent do you agree that housing should be based on the number of entitled family members, rather than rank?
(Please take into account that once children have left school, the entitlement would reduce as the number of entitled family members would have gone down)**



People reported the following with respect to entitlement

- 58% entitlement based on family size
- 42% entitlement based on Rank
- Only 9% believe current entitlement is correct

Going by rank is dated and no longer works. Colleagues of a similar rank with no children are living in a 4 bed SFA as they are entitled when other ranks are squeezing 3 children and themselves in to a 3 bed house, there is no equality in this current policy of allocating SFA

Only because officers are required to entertain and often need more space to do so. Otherwise, the number of children should be taken into account.

I think the entitlement needs amended to include 18-24 yr olds who are not in full time education, as they cannot afford to live independently on current minimum wage.

It would still be important to separate officers from other ranks so that people don't have to worry about living next door to their boss.

We are a junior ranks family but I still think rank should be considered when allocating housing, especially as the cost for some bigger/posh houses may be beyond the salary of junior ranks.

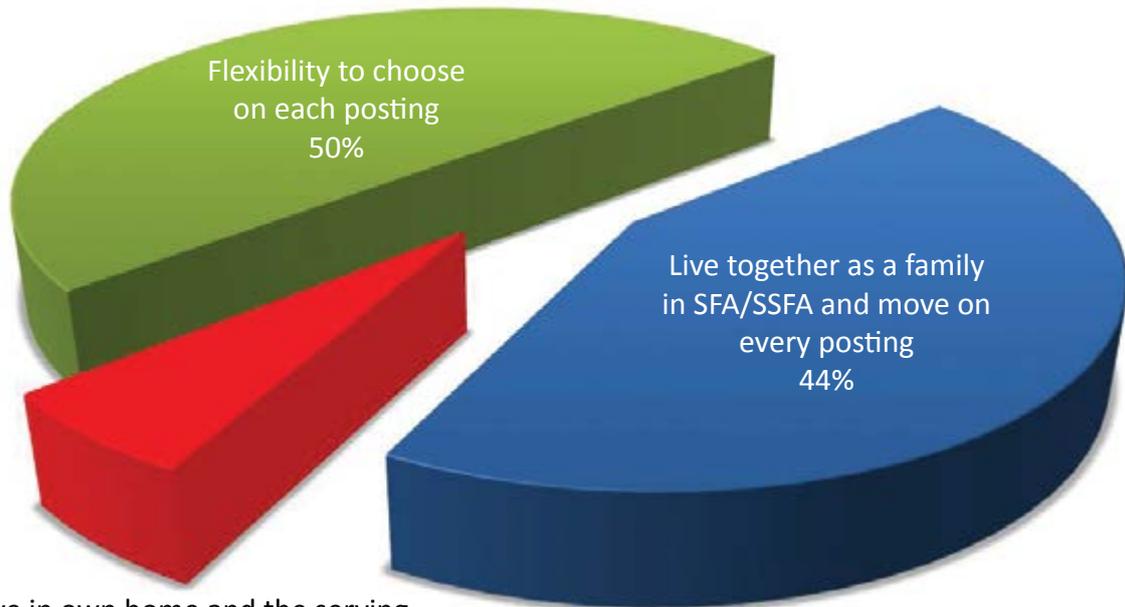
I agree with both of the statements above. I think rank is important to an extent - if you've worked hard then you should be rewarded for it. That said, an ounce of common sense has to be used when allocating properties. I'm sure that a Sqn Ldr without children wouldn't mind having two spare rooms instead of three when there are Flt Lts with 3+ kids in 3 bedroom houses.

Current and future entitlement should now recognise:

- *Older children staying at home longer*
- *Elderly parents*
- *Partners children*
- *Biological parenting responsibilities*

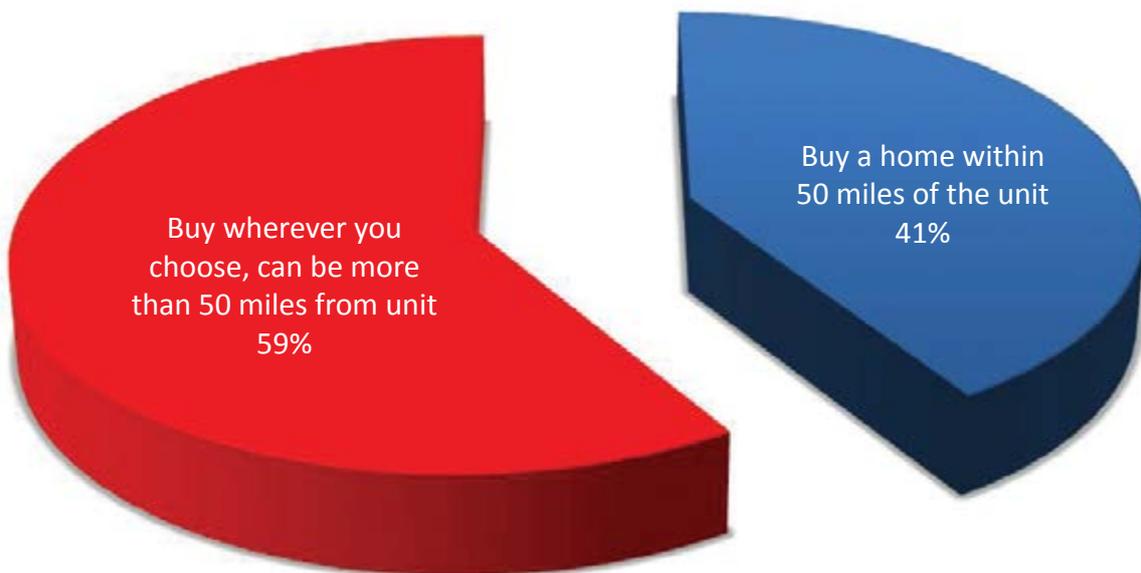
Future Accommodation Model Concepts:

Given the choice, would you prefer to:



Live in own home and the serving person weekly commute
6%

If the MOD was to reduce the availability of SFA, which of these options would you prefer if you wanted to buy a home?



At present, the entitlement to SFA for Other Ranks (OR's) is based on the number of children and for Officers, is based on their rank. People reported the following with respect to entitlement.

I would never choose to live more than 50 miles from base as I wouldn't want to live away from my spouse. Commuting more than 50 miles a day is too much

As my husband is nearing the end of his 22 years, we would rather buy a home closer to where we are originally from so we can be closer to family & friends & get our children settled in school.

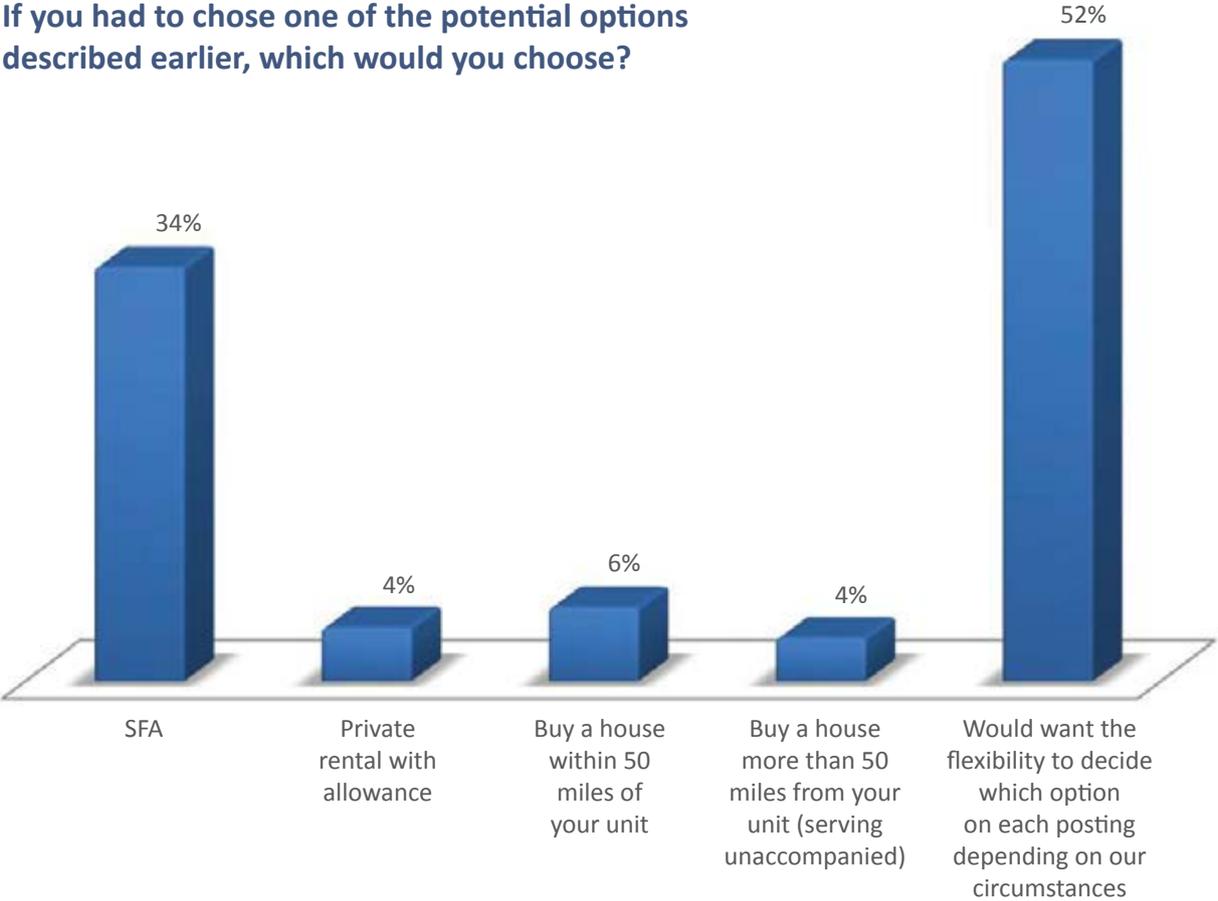
If the option to buy was given and finding a SFA house was proving difficult, we would purchase close to family.

It depends on the unit. We move so often that we can't make a decision on where to move to based on where the unit is.

If I was to buy, I would like to buy where I eventually want to settle

If we were FORCED to live apart, we would need the support of extended family

If you had to chose one of the potential options described earlier, which would you choose?



My husband is a puma pilot and so, will always be based within Oxfordshire. We have three children and, even with the help to buy scheme, could not afford to buy a family home large enough for us in this area. If we were to buy closer to family (Scotland) then the commute would be next to impossible for my husband. Our priority is to remain together as a family, even if that means putting up with SFA.

I know that we would stay together as a family and we would have military neighbours. We would have the support of the station and we enjoy the community spirit. If we wanted to buy a house and settle down we wouldn't have chosen the military as a career.

Important factors would be availability of housing in rental / purchase markets near base, and childcare and schooling for our child

The area, how long posting is for, affordability of housing in particular area, schools, distance from work and amenities

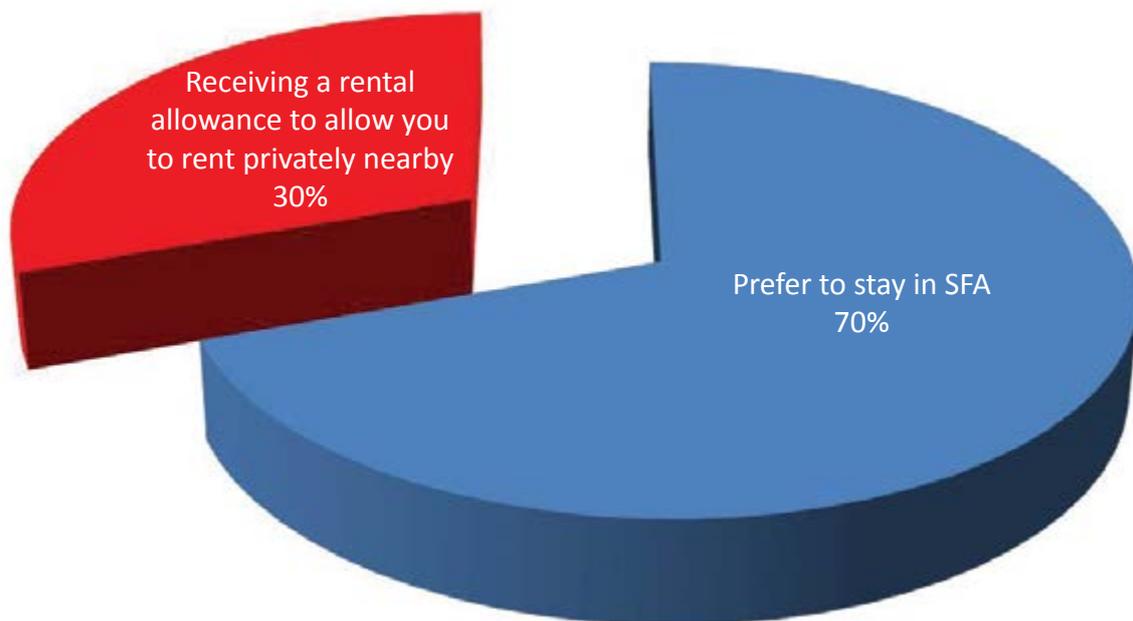
Children's education is top priority and I just don't know if I can send them away to boarding school. We are currently looking at boarding schools. Will need to be near family, schools and cheaper housing.

We cannot afford to buy anytime soon, I wouldn't want to be forced into something that could cause a lot of money issues and debt. Yes we would love to own our own home but that is not possible right now, we as a family are happy with SFA even if sometimes the houses aren't up to scratch. We make it our home before we move to somewhere else.

SFA Patch Life:

If you no longer lived on an SFA patch, how important would it be to be part of the Service and civilian communities?	Very important	Important	Neutral	Not important
Military community	48%	23%	20%	9%
Civilian community	34%	38%	23%	5%

Which of these options would you prefer if you wanted your family to be mobile and move on posting?



Prefer being close to work. However, this depends on location and some cases I would prefer an allowance.

Our SFA is £113 a month. The local area is around £1,200 a month for a 1 bed flat. This would force us to live apart.

We have dogs; a high deposit is required in private rentals

I don't believe local housing markets would be able to cope with the demand causing further stress when posted.

Allows spouses more flexibility and allows family to pick housing they feel is suitable without CA dictating what you are ENTITLED to

If limited SFA was available and therefore the opportunity to live on a military patch was reduced, how would you describe the impact on RAF life?	Significant positive impact	Some positive impact	No impact	Some negative impact	Significant negative impact
Dealing with frequent moves/postings	8%	4%	14%	29%	45%
Coping when the serving person deploys on operations/exercises	7%	2%	12%	28%	51%
Dealing with when serving person works long hours	6%	2%	19%	36%	37%
Team and unit cohesion	5%	3%	25%	35%	32%
Operational effectiveness	4%	4%	31%	33%	28%
Feeling part of a community	5%	6%	18%	32%	39%
Family finances (eg having to purchase a second car)	5%	3%	16%	31%	45%
Family time	7%	5%	16%	28%	44%
Security (no longer living on an military camp)	5%	4%	27%	30%	34%
Ability of your unit to provide welfare support	5%	3%	22%	34%	36%

If it amounted to me spending more, I would have to reconsider my options, as at the moment one of the reasons for me staying is the access to cheap housing.

It would negatively impact on quality family time, we would feel isolated and children would suffer not having others in the same boat so to speak. It would also negatively impact me financially as my own civilian job is also on station.

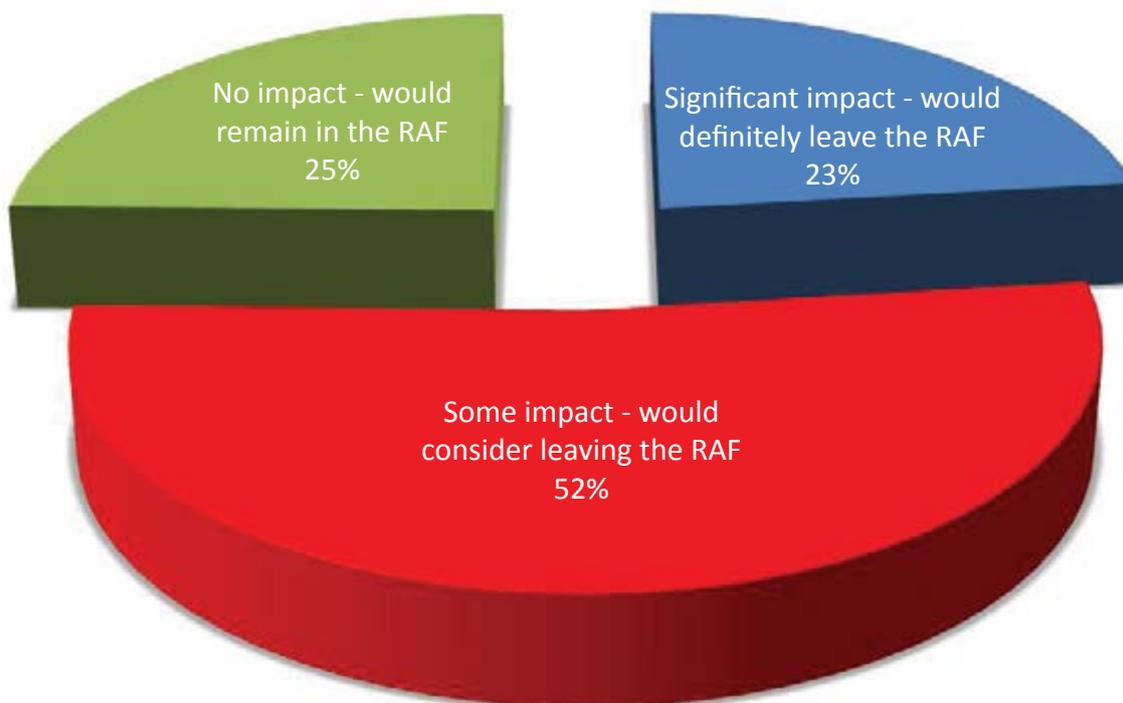
It would have a significant financial impact on us and we enjoy the service community

It would make a difference of course but not enough to leave the RAF

Whilst I have not said that my spouse would definitely leave the RAF I do feel that it would be something that we would seriously consider. SFA, whilst not being particularly updated, still enables us to live and work in a similar location. We have chosen to live our RAF life like this; people have the option to remain in their own home, we should not be forced to live apart, or live in private rented accommodation with little security and no support. Service life is demanding enough without being forced into a situation that is not one we would choose. Living with a deployed spouse is hard and disruptive enough. Trying to sort out a move into new SFA whilst they are deployed is also stressful. The thoughts for trying to negotiate a move into private rental accommodation, and the time it takes to view houses, or find one that will accommodate pets etc would be horrendous and a level of stress that is, in my opinion a step too far and asking far too much of us.

We would rather not live on "the patch" as we prefer to keep ourselves to ourselves.

If the availability of SFA was reduced (only offered to families in limited circumstances, e.g. at remote locations with little private rental available) and a rental allowance offered instead, what would the impact on your family be?



Life in your own home:

If you live in or have lived in your own home, what do you like/dislike about it (whether owned or rented)?	Like	Dislike	Not sure
Ability to afford cost of mortgage/rent	39%	30%	31%
Closeness of house to the serving persons work place	32%	35%	33%
Ability to move with the serving person on posting & live together as a family	25%	41%	34%
Educational stability for children	55%	8%	37%
Arranging your own maintenance and repairs	41%	29%	30%
Feeling part of a military community	18%	38%	44%
Access to Service community support facilities & unit welfare staff	19%	37%	44%
Feeling part of a local civilian community	56%	13%	31%
Ability to decorate & personalise your home	70%	5%	25%
Spouse being able to pursue their own career	61%	8%	31%
Being able to live close to my wider family	51%	10%	39%
Being able to choose where I live	68%	5%	27%
Being able to choose who I can live with	64%	5%	31%
Ability to make a financial investment for the future	64%	8%	28%

People reported the benefits of owning their own home as

- being able to choose who they live with
- Educational stability
- Maintenance and ability to decorate
- Being near wider family
- Being part of a civilian community

People reported the disadvantages as

- Away from serving person
- Away from military community
- Access to Community Support

To have my adult children live with me.

Like the fact that you have the freedom to come and go without others constantly watching where you have been and what you have bought

Live near amenities which we like/find useful. Enjoy a social and community circle, which isn't just tied to the military. Live away from work - can be claustrophobic

General stability, not being left alone with no support for long periods of time (deployment/exercises), being able to pursue my own career and cheaper living costs.

Living in your own property can make separation and moving on posting extremely stressful and difficult and on some cases impossible to continue.



**ROYAL
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The RAF Families Federation
13-15 St Georges Road
Wittering
Peterborough
PE8 6DL

Telephone: 01780 781650
Website: www.raf-ff.org.uk



RAF FF SURVEY REPORT