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Battlefields and Boardrooms
*Women's Leadership in the Military
and the Private Sector*

By Nora Bensahel, David Barno, Katherine Kidder, and Kelley Sayler



Center for a
New American
Security

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Cover Image

U.S. Army Spc. Rebecca Buck, a medic from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, provides perimeter security outside an Iraqi police station in the Tarmiya Province of Iraq, March 30, 2008.
(TECH. SGT. WILLIAM GREER/U.S. Air Force)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Executive Summary	5
II. Introduction	7
III. Women in the Workforce: 50 Years of Growth	8
IV. Comparing Career Challenges and Opportunities	13
V. Recommendations	27
VI. Conclusion	33
Appendix: Military Service Member Demographic Profile in 2012	40

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About the Authors

Nora Bensahel is a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security.

David Barno is a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security.

Katherine Kidder is a research associate at the Center for a New American Security.

Kelley Sayler is a research associate at the Center for a New American Security.



BATTLEFIELDS AND BOARDROOMS:
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN THE MILITARY
AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

By Nora Bensahel, David Barno, Katherine Kidder, and Kelley Sayler

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Battlefields and Boardrooms
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The end of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan marks the close of the first era where women rose through the military ranks into significant leadership roles. As the first female graduates of the service academies from the class of 1980 approach the 35th anniversary of their commissioning, the moment offers an opportunity to reflect upon the individual and institutional characteristics enabling the rise of women into senior leadership roles across the services.

Similarly, significant changes in legislation and social trends throughout the 1970s produced an expanding cohort of female executives within the private sector. While their experiences are clearly different from those of their military counterparts, comparing the experiences of women in these two distinct communities permits an assessment of the challenges and opportunities that women face throughout their careers that lead to or hinder their success – and, ultimately, the success of their institutions, by enabling them to draw on the full range of the nation’s talent.

While the number of women in senior leadership positions has increased greatly during the past 35 years, their numbers at the top remain small. Despite significant institutional changes, only four women have ever attained the rank of four-star general or admiral, and women serve as Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of only 26 Fortune 500 companies. In addition to challenges at the highest levels of leadership, **women at all levels of the military and private sector share a number of challenges related to retention and promotion, parenthood and family, compensation and negotiation, mentorship and career advancement, and workplace climate.** Both groups stand to benefit from comparing their experiences – to uncover common challenges, address obstacles to success, and identify organizational best practices.

Additionally, some of the challenges facing women in the military and the private sector serve as

leading indicators for the workforce as a whole. A growing body of literature on the millennial generation indicates that the career preferences of both male and female employees are shifting. Studies indicate that even more than financial compensation, “work/life balance is one of the most significant drivers of employee retention.”¹ This means that addressing the challenges that women face will likely benefit *both* male and female employees.

Recommendations for Both the Military and Private Sector

- Improve leadership training and development programs for women at the early stages of their careers.
- Actively solicit feedback from women, particularly junior women, about how to address the challenges they face, and implement some of their recommended solutions.
- Establish a public dialogue between the most senior military and private sector women on improving women's leadership and career development.
- Jointly conduct leadership and skills programs for female high school and college students.
- Help female veterans transition effectively and fairly to the private sector.
- Improve data collection about retention and attrition of talent.
- Include men in the solution, through initiatives like the UN's HeForShe campaign.

Recommendations for the Military

- Ensure that the first women to serve in combat positions are set up for success.
- Expand the current test programs for military sabbaticals.
- Consider more formal mentorship programs for women.
- Conduct detailed exit interviews with departing leaders.

Recommendations for the Private Sector

- When surveying applicants and employees, ask whether they have served in the military, not whether or not they are veterans.
- Assign newly employed veterans both veteran and non-veteran mentors.
- Improve the onboarding process for veterans.
- Help educate non-veteran employees about the military/veteran experience.
- Provide phased transitions into work in the private sector.
- Promote access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).

II. INTRODUCTION

Women are an ever-increasing presence in the U.S. military. While largely limited in their roles and functions in generations past, expanded opportunities for women in the military and the demands of more than 13 years of war have seen a historic rise in both the absolute number and proportional representation of women in each of the nation's services, and thus in the female veteran population. As America's veterans return home from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, female veterans will face special challenges in transitioning out of the services and into the private sector. But these challenges will occur in an environment that also poses broader challenges for female leaders of all types. The two communities have much to learn from each other.

Like women in the military, women in the private sector world have seen an expansion in opportunities in the last four decades. Today, women are the CEOs of 26 Fortune 500 companies – up from one in 1972 – and continue to increase their numbers among executive positions that were once the sole province of men.² As with their military counterparts, these women have faced significant challenges in moving to the top ranks of the private sector and remain underrepresented there despite steady improvements.

Much attention has been paid to gender dynamics in corporate America in recent years, but the literature leaves a significant gap with respect to the experiences of women in the military. Most scholarship on female leaders focuses on workforce integration or gender issues; this report focuses on women as leaders. It builds upon the existing literature, bridging the gap between military and civilian professional women's experiences. Additionally, this report integrates findings from extensive group and individual interviews with women in both the private sector and the military at each stage of their careers. We interviewed

current and retired general and flag officers as well as chief executive officers and other leaders in the private sector in order to compare their experiences as they rose to the highest levels of their respective institutions.

Most scholarship on female leaders focuses on workforce integration or gender issues; this report focuses on women as leaders.

This report examines the career paths of professional women through the ranks of the U.S. military and private sector. In particular, it emphasizes the experiences of women in the officer corps, and focuses largely (though not exclusively) on female officers in the Army, as their career paths and evolving roles were most heavily influenced by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Where data is available, the analysis of women in the private sector focuses largely on the career paths of senior women in Fortune 500 companies, while placing their experiences in the larger context of professional women. The report outlines the challenges and opportunities that professional women (and their employers) face across sectors, drawing out lessons learned and best practices and identifying where reform is necessary.

III. WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE: 50 YEARS OF GROWTH

The number of women serving in the military and working in the private sector increased exponentially starting in the 1960s and 1970s, as the women's movement and societal shifts opened up new opportunities and provided new protections.³ The interaction of changing norms and policies profoundly affected the proportion of women in the workforce. In 1960, women comprised 32.3 percent of the U.S. workforce; by 2012, they comprised 47 percent of the labor force.⁴

Although women currently constitute a significant percentage of both the military and private sector workforces, the number of women in leadership positions remains limited. In the military, for example, only four out of the 38 serving four-star officers are women.

Increasing Opportunities for Women

THE MILITARY

The laws, policies, and practices surrounding the role of women in the military have evolved considerably since Congress created the Army Nurse Corps in 1901, thus officially establishing the first opportunities for women in the military.⁵ Though women served in both world wars, it was not until the passage of the Army-Navy Nurses Act in 1947 (P.L. 80-36) that women achieved the rank and pay afforded their male counterparts. The Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 (P.L. 625) made provisions for women in the regular Army during peacetime, though it capped women's contribution at 2 percent of the total force; it further limited female officers to 10 percent of the officer corps, or 0.2 percent of the total force. The law also limited women's career progression to the grade of O-5 (Lieutenant Colonel or Commander) for all of the services except the Marine Corps, which limited progression to O-6 (Colonel).⁶ Restrictions on the number of women allowed in the military – and limitations on their career progression – were

Allowing women to serve in these specialties will ultimately not only provide a route to the senior-most positions in the Army and Marines, but also place women at the forefront of the most vital – and dangerous – missions that each service provides.

not lifted until the Women's Armed Services Integration Act was amended in 1967.⁷

While the 1976 admission of women to the service academies proved to be a turning point in the role of women in the military, substantial limitations remained. The combat exclusion policy barred women from serving in combat positions, and restrictions existed for some non-combat positions as well.⁸ In January 1994, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin issued a memorandum entitled "Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule," which enabled the services to allow women into many new career fields. At that point, the Air Force and Navy opened all positions except special operations forces and Navy submarines to women. Navy submarines were opened to female officers in 2012 and will be open to female enlistees in December 2014.⁹ However, ground combat positions and units in the Army and the Marine Corps remain closed to women.

In January 2013, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta ended the combat exclusion policy for all of the services, though the services were given a three-year evaluation period to ensure that all

Women in Combat Since 9/11

Although most women in the military ostensibly serve in support roles, women have also borne the weight of battle in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and other combat operations during the past 13 years. Between the initiation of conflict in 2001 and December 2011, 289,512 female service members deployed to combat zones, comprising 11.8 percent of all service members deployed. In the Army alone, 86,524 women deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan during this time period, and comprised 11.4 percent of all Army soldiers deployed to Iraq.¹¹

Though women were technically excluded from combat positions during these wars, the characteristic lack of front lines in insurgencies and the demands of supporting troops in battle put many women in combat situations anyway. Across the services, 67 of the more than 3,500 service members killed in action in Iraq and 33 of the more than 1,800 killed in action in Afghanistan were women; an additional 900 women were wounded in action in both theaters.¹² Furthermore, there is evidence that women across the military performed well in combat roles. As of April 2014, 9,134 women had received Army Combat Action Badges for “actively engaging or being engaged by the enemy;” 147 had received the Army Commendation Medal with V device;¹³ 13 had received Bronze Star Medals with V device; one had received the Legion of Merit with V device; and two had received Silver Stars for “gallantry in action against an enemy of the United States.”¹⁴

Partly as a result of the high performance of women in combat situations during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff unanimously recommended the lifting of the combat exclusion policy, which was formally rescinded on January 24, 2013.¹⁵ In conjunction with this change, the services must “undertake an evaluation of all occupational performance standards to ensure they are up to date and gender-neutral” by January 1, 2016.¹⁶

occupational performance standards are gender neutral. This means that by January 1, 2016, all billets will be open to women by default, unless the Secretary of Defense grants specific exceptions to the policy. On that date, women will be allowed to serve in most if not all of the approximately 237,000 positions from which they had been previously barred.¹⁰

The importance of this policy shift lies beyond the mere numbers. Each military service has a core culture centered on the preeminence of combat leadership and combat units – personnel billets and units that traditionally have been exclusively male. While the Air Force and Navy have opened all their combat positions (except special operations) to women in recent years, women entering these career fields will take years if not decades to reach the senior-most general and flag officer ranks.

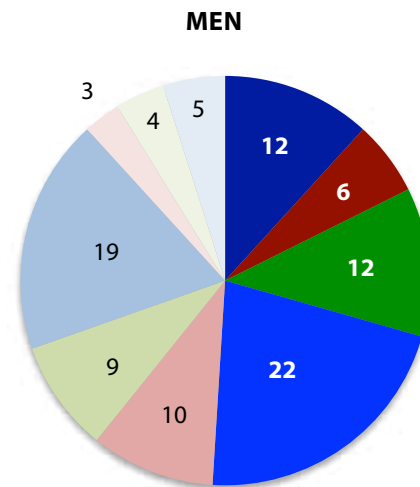
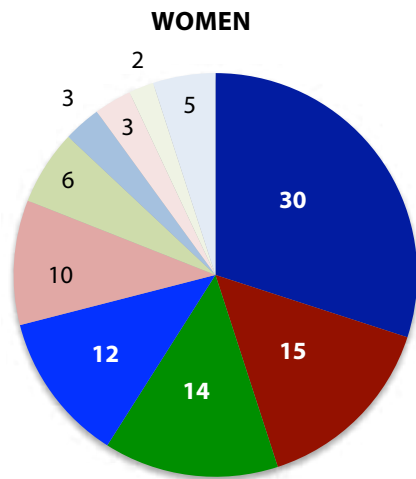
The Army and the Marines still exclude women from most of their core ground combat functions – infantry, armor, and field artillery. At least some of the positions in these branches are likely to be open to women by 2016, which will give female soldiers and Marines the opportunity to participate as equals for the first time. Ground combat remains the core mission that defines each of these services and a principal source of service identity and pride. Much like serving as a fighter pilot in the Air Force or submariner in the Navy, service in the ground combat branches in many ways epitomizes what it means to be a soldier or Marine. Allowing women to serve in these specialties will ultimately not only provide a route to the senior-most positions in the Army and Marines, but place women at the forefront of the most vital – and dangerous – missions that each service provides.

Women’s Participation in the Workforce

THE MILITARY

Since the advent of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973, the total number of women in the military

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE OF MILITARY WOMEN AND MEN BY OCCUPATION



- Administrators
- Supply
- Communications
- Infantry, gun crews, and seamanship
- Craftsman
- Medical
- Electrical
- Electronics
- Other technical
- Non-Occupational

- Administrators
- Supply
- Communications
- Infantry, gun crews, and seamanship
- Craftsman
- Medical
- Electrical
- Electronics
- Other technical
- Non-Occupational

Source: Pew Research Center, 2011.

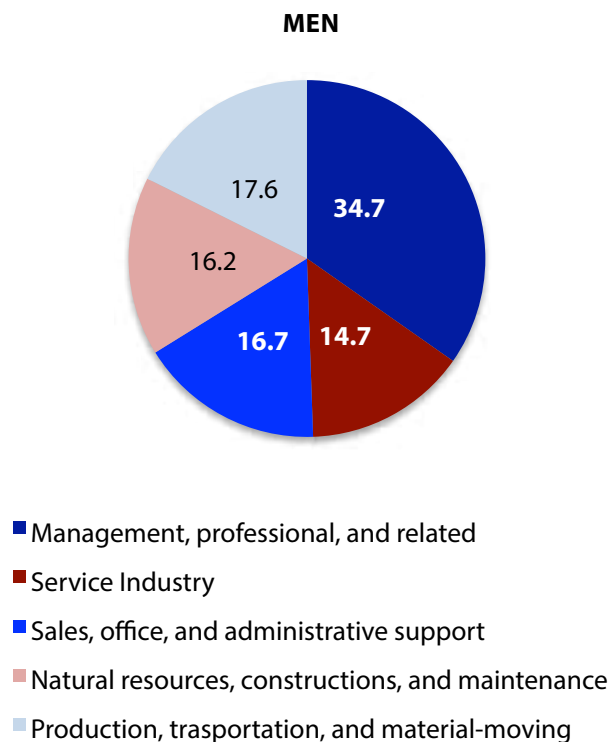
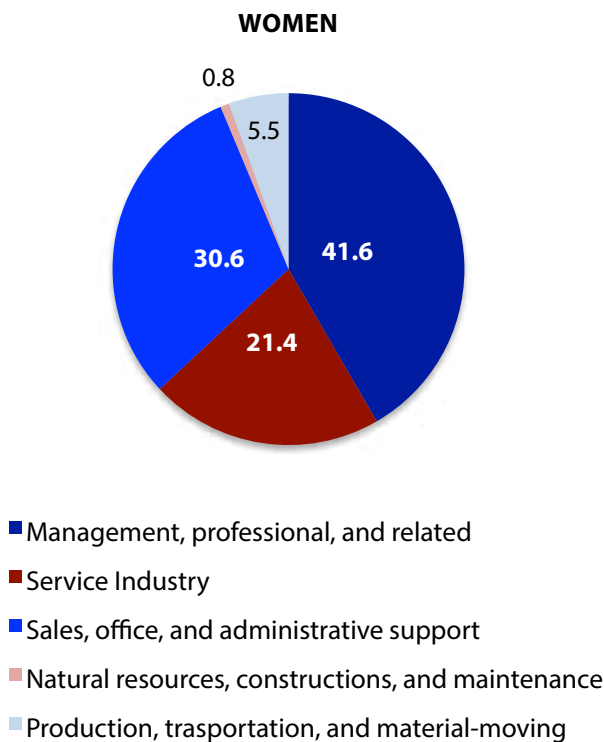
has grown from 34,705 to 202,876 in 2012. Additionally, the representation of women in the officer corps has steadily increased over the same time period, starting at 12,750 in 1972 and reaching 38,574 in 2012.¹⁷ These numbers reflect a substantial increase in the representation of women in the services. As Eileen Patten and Kim Parker note, from 1973 to 2010 “the share of women among the enlisted ranks has increased seven-fold, from 2 percent to 14 percent, and the share among commissioned officers has quadrupled, from 4 percent to 16 percent.”¹⁸ Interestingly, the female active-duty cohort is also increasingly more racially diverse than the comparative male active-duty cohort. While only 16 percent of the active duty male population is African American, for example, 31 percent of the active duty female population is African American.¹⁹

Table 1 shows that across the services, the majority of women serve in administrative positions (30 percent), in the medical field (15 percent), or in the supply/logistics field (14 percent).²⁰ These fields provide skills and experiences that may translate well to the private sector, and – unlike combat specialties – have been open to women for decades.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Women’s participation in the U.S. civilian labor force has also increased substantially in recent decades, rising by over 20 percent between 1962 and 2012.²¹ Indeed, in 2012, nearly 58 percent of women were in the labor force, constituting 47 percent of the total.²² Furthermore, as in the military, the female civilian cohort is more racially diverse than its male counterpart; 11 percent of the female

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF CIVILIAN WOMEN AND MEN BY OCCUPATION



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013.

civilian workforce is non-white compared to 9 percent of the male civilian workforce.²³

As Table 2 shows, civilian women, like their military counterparts, are disproportionately represented in administrative positions. Interestingly, women also constitute a larger percentage of positions in management, professional, and related fields, though within these fields, they are largely concentrated in education, training, and library occupations (9.4 percent); management occupations (9.3 percent); and healthcare practitioner occupations (8.9 percent).²⁴

Women at the Highest Levels of Leadership THE MILITARY

Until 1967, women were barred from attaining the rank of general or flag officer. On June 11, 1970, Anna May Hays and Elizabeth Paschell Hoisington

became the Army’s first female O-7s (Brigadier Generals). As of 2013, only 69 of the roughly 976 general and flag officers (or 7.1 percent) serving in the United States military were women.²⁵

On November 14, 2008 – over four decades after women became eligible to enter the general officer corps – Army Lieutenant General Ann Dunwoody broke yet another barrier, becoming the first woman to be appointed to the military’s highest grade of O-10 (General or Admiral). Since then, three other women have been appointed to four-star rank: Air Force Generals Janet Wolfenbarger and Lori Robinson, and Navy Admiral Michelle Howard.²⁶

These numbers are likely to increase as the number of women attending service academies – and subsequently commissioning as officers – continues to

expand. More than 4100 women have graduated from West Point since it opened to women in 1976. In 2014, the percentage of female cadets in the incoming class reached an all-time high of 22 percent, a 6 percent increase from 2013.²⁷ Similarly, at the United States Naval Academy, women account for 19 percent of the Class of 2015.²⁸ However, these numbers reflect relatively arbitrary caps on the number of women who may enter. The admissions office at West Point, for example, sets a goal for the percentage of women in each class. For many years, that goal was set between 14 and 20 percent of the admitted class, and women constituted around 16-17 percent of each matriculated class. West Point has expanded that goal to above 20 percent, so that the percentage of female graduates would be closer to the percentage of women serving in the Army officer corps – which explains the increase to 22 percent in 2014.²⁹ Yet, as the West Point board of visitors has noted, this assures that its “demographic future will replicate the Army’s demographic past at best.”³⁰ The prospective opening of most (if not all) combat leadership positions to women makes such caps seem entirely unnecessary. If supply and demand are allowed to flow freely, the percentage of female students at the service academies could well increase until the percentage equals or exceeds that of male students.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

In the civilian sector, women have faced similar barriers to advancement. It was not until 1972 that a woman, Washington Post CEO Katharine Graham, first took the helm of a Fortune 500 company.³¹ Today, 26 Fortune 500 CEOs are women – a historic high of 5.2 percent.³² Women also occupied approximately 15 percent of all executive officer positions and 17 percent of Fortune 500 board seats in 2013 – up from 13.6 percent in 2003.³³ As Judith Warner notes, however, the proportion of women on all boards and in top management positions has remained largely unchanged over the past decade

– suggesting an enduring “glass ceiling.”³⁴ Beyond this elite cadre, the representation of women in senior management roles varies widely by field, reaching a high of 29 percent and 31 percent in commercial banking and accounting, respectively – two fields in which women constitute a majority of the workforce.³⁵

In contrast to women in the military, women in the civilian sector have, since 1988, outnumbered men in college enrollment and, since 2002, outnumbered men in the attainment of undergraduate business degrees.³⁶ Women account for nearly 60 percent of all undergraduate degrees as well as 37 percent of MBAs.³⁷ These credentials have not, however, translated into comparable representation at the highest levels of private sector leadership.³⁸

IV. COMPARING CAREER CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Though there are many differences between a military and civilian career, our research identified six key issues that women in the military and in the private sector face throughout their careers: promotion paths and rates of promotion; parenthood and career flexibility; mentors and sponsors; compensation and negotiation; workplace climate; and managing dual professional careers. We discuss each of these below, in both the military and civilian contexts.

1. Promotion Paths and Rates of Promotion

In contrast to the private sector, the military has defined, structured rates of promotion for all service members. This has not, however, translated into equitable promotion paths because the combat exclusion policy has barred women from a number of assignments that are considered key to upward mobility. While most of these assignments will open to women in January 2016, the challenges of addressing perceptions of gender bias and improving the retention of women will remain for both the military and the private sector.

THE MILITARY

Our interviews suggest that women join the military for many of the same reasons that men do: primarily to serve their country, but also to gain skills, to learn discipline, to determine what they want to do next, and to gain access to military benefits.³⁹

The recent lifting of the combat exclusion policy will likely increase the representation of women in the top positions over time. While the existing system may not intentionally exclude women from the most senior ranks, Department of Defense (DOD) policies restricting the role of women in ground combat have limited women's promotion potential "in practice because the combat-related career fields and assignments from which women are

barred are considered to be career-enhancing."⁴⁰ Further, "since it is generally illegal to consider... gender in promotion selection decisions, institutional bias [has been] more likely to affect how members become competitive for promotion than the promotion selection process itself."⁴¹ Nearly 65 percent of all O-7s (one-star generals or admirals) across the services hail from tactical occupations, where women have largely been excluded, especially in the Army and the Marine Corps. Nearly 80 percent of officers achieving the grade of O-10 (four-star general or admiral) originated from tactical operations fields.⁴² One female retired general officer told us that she frequently felt that her peers assessed her differently not because of her gender but because she served in a non-combat role; she felt that men in non-combat roles were equally discounted by their peers.⁴³

Of the services, women in the ground forces (the Army and Marines) have had the most limited opportunity for advancement, because so many billets and units have remained closed to them. As discussed above, many if not all of these positions will open to women by January 1, 2016. But it will be at least several decades, if not more, until the effects of this policy change could alter the demographics of the military's highest leadership levels. Officers promoted to O-7, the one-star level, generally have at least 23 years of service, and officers appointed to O-10, the four-star level, often serve 10 or more years beyond that point.⁴⁴ That means that even the best newly commissioned female officers who start serving in combat positions in January 2016 will not be promoted to O-7 until 2039, and to O-10 some time in the mid-2040s. It may take even longer for a robust pipeline of exceptional female officers to follow behind them.

The women who are already serving in the top ranks of the military are being promoted less frequently than their male peers. According to the Military Leadership Diversity Commission, only half as many female O-6s (Colonels) are selected

Women leave their employers at higher rates than men, even when their family and career characteristics – including marital status, number of children, and type of employer – are similar.

for promotion to O-7 (Brigadier General) in the Army, as compared with their male counterparts. Thirty-seven percent of female Army Brigadier Generals are promoted to O-8 (Major General), compared to 41 percent of all Brigadier Generals who are promoted to that rank.⁴⁵

Our interviews suggest that some military women are indirectly barred from serving in assignments that would improve their prospects for promotion – which, if true, constitutes de facto discrimination. As one female junior officer observed, “I see a lot of requests [from senior leaders] for aide-de-camps, and often the first requirement is having attended Ranger school [which is closed to women]. They’re not saying they’d prefer a male, but you know they really would. And being an aide-de-camp is a huge networking opportunity, so it creates a giant weird ripple effect that shuts out other opportunities.” A female mid-career officer separately mentioned, “In one job that I competed for, I was told that they didn’t want a female because of perception issues” that would be involved in having a more senior male officer working closely with a more junior female officer.⁴⁶

Despite these challenges, women continue to rise through the ranks, and may even be outperforming their male peers in some areas. In the DMDC 2012 *Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of*

Active Duty Members, when asked the gender of their immediate supervisor, 87 percent of men and 76 percent of women reported that their direct supervisor was male, while 13 percent of men and 24 percent of women reported that their direct supervisor was female.⁴⁷ These data points indicate that while men make up the majority of supervisory positions, in the fields where women are allowed, women are excelling.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

In the private sector, female retention in civilian jobs is actually higher than male retention during the second through fifth years of employment. From years seven through 12, however, female retention falls below that of male retention. Interestingly, this trend is not due to differences in family or career characteristics; women leave their employers at higher rates than men, even when their family and career characteristics – including marital status, number of children, and type of employer – are similar.⁴⁸ Several female senior executives we interviewed argued that improving the number of women serving at senior levels requires improving retention so there is a greater talent pool to choose from. As one executive put it, “If there are 10 men versus one woman in the [applicant] pool for a specific spot, even if they are all equally qualified, the woman only has a 10 percent chance of getting hired.”⁴⁹

Many women who remain in the workforce face additional challenges related to promotion paths and promotion potential. In their survey of employed MBA graduates, Nancy Carter and Christine Silva found that “men were more likely to be at a higher position at the time of the survey than were women, even after taking into account total experience, time since MBA, first post-MBA job level, industry, and global region of work at the time of the survey.”⁵⁰ Additionally, among those who were surveyed, 62 percent of men – and only 48 percent of women – were at the mid-manager level or higher. This discrepancy was particularly

pronounced at the CEO/senior executive level, where men were represented at twice the rate of women.⁵¹ Our interviews suggest that the women who do serve in these senior positions are more likely to be found in support units, such as human resources, marketing, and communications, rather than in the core business units of large corporations.⁵²

Reflecting such disparities, women were also more likely than men to report perceptions of gender bias in the workplace. While only 8 percent of men reported that they “felt [they] were passed over for a promotion or opportunity at work because of [their] gender,” nearly twice as many women – 15 percent – did so.⁵³ Yet our interviews show that some women face a different kind of gender bias when they do get promoted. One junior woman at a financial company told us, “One year, three women were promoted to general manager, but no men were. It made people wonder whether the [company] was trying to meet a quota.” Another junior woman in the same interview group responded, “That’s more insulting than if they hadn’t promoted the women at all.”⁵⁴

2. Parenthood and Career Flexibility

Parenthood and career flexibility are major concerns for women in the military as well as for those in the private sector. Military and civilian women report bearing disproportionate familial responsibilities and, therefore, believe that they are disproportionately impacted by maternity leave and childcare policies that do not meet their families’ needs. In the military, such challenges are compounded by unpredictable schedules and lengthy deployments, which generate additional stresses for families. These factors, in turn, have a strong negative impact on the retention of women.

THE MILITARY

According to the Department of Defense 2012 *Demographic Profile of the Military Community*, approximately 52 percent of active duty service

members have children. Overall, 5.2 percent of active duty service members are single parents; 11.8 percent of female active duty service members and 4 percent of male active duty service members are single parents. Additionally, of those women who are married, 48 percent are married to a fellow service member (as compared to only 7 percent of married military men; see the appendix for more demographic details).⁵⁵

Pregnancy and maternity leave policies can make it difficult for women to balance the physical demands of both their military career and childbirth. Female soldiers interviewed stated that pregnant women “aren’t seen as real soldiers” or are seen as a “burden and a liability to their unit” because of duty limitations. Others report being told early in their careers, “if you want to be successful, you shouldn’t have kids.”⁵⁶

Current maternity leave policies vary by service, but generally provide between 6 and 8 weeks of paid leave for new mothers. Unlike many civilian jobs, women must pass their service’s physical fitness test six months after giving birth.⁵⁷ One female junior Army officer noted that there is a disconnect between maternity leave policies and childcare availability: she received six weeks of maternity leave, but military day care centers “won’t accept a baby until they’ve had their eight-week check up... so you’re just stuck in this weird limbo for two weeks.” She also noted that post-partum physical training (PT) programs can be dangerous, because they are run by non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and officers who receive limited training.⁵⁸ A different female junior officer told us that she was a certified post-partum physical training instructor, but that she had only received three days of training and did not feel that she knew enough to be able to be an effective instructor.⁵⁹

Beyond the early stages of motherhood, a major concern among women in the military is access to childcare. In 2007, the Joint Economic Committee

of the U.S. Senate found that “unmet childcare needs impact military readiness” and disproportionately affect female service members (37 percent of mothers had missed work due to childcare issues, as opposed to 7 percent of fathers).⁶⁰ Additionally, over 20 percent of respondents to a 2006 RAND survey on the childcare needs of military families reported that it was “likely or very likely that child-care issues would lead them to leave the military.”⁶¹ Such pressures are more pronounced in dual-military and single-parent families. One junior enlisted woman we interviewed bluntly stated, “If you’re a dual military couple with a kid, one of you has to get out.”⁶²

While all single parents face challenges balancing work and family demands, military single parents face some challenges that their civilian counterparts do not. Typical days begin much earlier in the military than in the civilian sector, with mandatory PT beginning as early as 6 a.m., when childcare may be difficult to arrange. One senior leader we interviewed noted, “daycare is always a problem for my soldiers. They can’t always get off at exactly at [5 p.m.] to go pick up their kids.” Competing duties include overnight guard duty, overnight field exercises, weeks-long training deployments and simply long office hours for members of military staffs. Again, these demands affect both male and female single parents,⁶³ but women may be disproportionately affected since they are almost three times more likely to be single parents than their male counterparts.

Perhaps the most difficult balancing act for parents in the military are long months of separation in combat zones or in other rotational overseas deployments. Data reveal that time away from families due to the frequency and length of deployments over the last 13 years is “the top reason for soldiers to leave the Army.”⁶⁴

Many of the military women we interviewed emphasized that the needs of the military should

and do come first – that the unpredictable and demanding nature of military service, particularly in times of war, requires the full engagement of all service members, regardless of gender or family status. Nevertheless, they believed that some policy changes could address some of the challenges discussed above without affecting training and readiness, or putting individual needs above the needs of the military. For example, most Child Development Centers (CDCs)⁶⁵ are open from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m.⁶⁶ Extending CDC hours of operation would provide greater options for military parents, especially single parents, who unexpectedly need to work late or are responsible for overnight duties.

Military career paths are far less flexible than career paths in the private sector, due in part to legal requirements. The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) and its Reserve counterpart, the Reserve Officer Personnel Management Act (ROPMA), require officers to hit critical career targets on a fixed timeline – leading to an “up or out” system.⁶⁷ Therefore, there are strong career penalties associated with alternative paths – whether that includes extended time away for maternity or paternity leave, civilian education, or external developmental opportunities.

The services are currently experimenting with sabbaticals for a limited number of test opportunities. In the 2009 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress permitted legislative authority for the services to enact “pilot programs on career flexibility to enhance retention of members of the Armed Forces.”⁶⁸ The Navy was the first service to pilot the program in 2012, with the Air Force and Army following suit. The Air Force Career Intermission Pilot Program, for example, enables up to 40 service members (20 officers and 20 enlisted) to take a one-time, one- to three-year sabbatical from the service “to meet personal or professional needs outside the service and then seamlessly return to active duty.”⁶⁹ The key element of this program,

and those of the other services, is that they extend the timelines noted above by the number of years of the sabbatical. For example, an Air Force officer commissioned in 2008 would normally be considered for promotion to Major in 2017. If he or she were to take a two-year sabbatical under this program, he or she would then have until 2019 to be considered for this promotion, providing greater flexibility.⁷⁰

Such pilot programs, while small, are providing initially positive results. The Navy, for example, recently promoted all three people who were being considered for promotion using that extended timeline.⁷¹ This demonstrates that participation in the program does not harm future promotion prospects, which may increase the number of U.S. naval personnel interested in participating in the future. Despite their early promise, however, these programs remain very small and limited, and are a very long way from being instituted throughout the force.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Male academics and corporate executives are far more likely to have a stay-at-home partner than their female counterparts. In academia, 20 percent of men and 5 percent of women have partners outside the labor force.⁷² This trend is even more pronounced among private sector executives, with 60 percent of male executives in a Harvard Business School survey – and only 10 percent of female executives – reporting a stay-at-home partner.⁷³ Indeed, the survey found that men received more spousal support than women, allowing them to work longer hours or relocate in pursuit of career advancement.⁷⁴

Private sector women face additional challenges with regard to parenthood. Despite the slow but steady increase in the number of women at the highest levels of leadership, “executives of both sexes consider the tension between work and family to be primarily a woman’s problem.”⁷⁵ This, in turn, can limit female career advancement or

Millennials in the Workforce

Many members of the workforce find an inherent tension balancing the demands of work and family life. While a long-standing phenomenon, expectations about “work-life balance” are markedly different among members of the millennial generation who see the roles of work and life differently.

Millennials, generally defined as those individuals born in the 1980s and 1990s,⁸² exhibit a stronger desire for “work-life balance” than their predecessors. Studies indicate that even more than financial compensation, “work/life balance is one of the most significant drivers of employee retention.”⁸³ Employees are increasingly becoming less willing to forgo their children’s sporting events or time with a spouse in order to climb the corporate ladder.

The changing expectations of the entire millennial generation – men and women alike – demonstrate that the demands placed on working mothers are a leading indicator for the demands of the generation as a whole.⁸⁴ This suggests making reasonable, flexible accommodations to better support employees in both the military and private sector.

even female participation in the workforce. As a study of professional women who had opted out of the workforce found, 60 percent of respondents reported having left their careers due to a lack of spousal support and a resultant childcare or domestic burden.⁷⁶ For this reason, female parents are significantly less likely than male parents to participate in the workforce. Although 93.3 percent of all fathers with children under the age of 18 are in the paid workforce, this is true for only 70.5 percent of mothers.⁷⁷ Additionally, 69 percent of those women who chose to exit the workforce noted that they would have remained in the workforce had flexible work arrangements or alternative options like unpaid sabbaticals been an option.⁷⁸

After having left the workforce, often for reasons related to childcare, women may face additional challenges in returning to their careers. A study by the Center for Work Life Policy found that only 40 percent of the 89 percent of women who were interested in returning to their careers were successful.⁷⁹ Of those who *were* successful, the women lost 16 percent of their earning power on average, and 22 percent had to accept a lower title than they had held when they exited the workforce.⁸⁰

The private sector is starting to experiment with new benefits that would provide female employees with more options in planning their careers and their families. Beyond work-from-home schedules and flextime, some Silicon Valley companies are offering insurance coverage for female employees (and spouses of employees) who want to freeze their eggs, even in cases of non-medical necessity. Facebook already offers this benefit; Apple employees will be eligible in January 2015. While the decision has been controversial – particularly since some people believe that it sends the message that motherhood and careers are not compatible at the same time – it may become an increasingly recognized way for women to keep their options open.⁸¹

3. Mentors and Sponsors

Mentors and sponsors play a key role in the advancement and retention of women in both the military and the private sector. Mentorship often occurs more formally in the military than in the private sector, since it is seen as an important part of professional development. But some companies in the private sector also have formal mentorship programs, and women (and men) in both sectors often find mentors informally through their supervisors and other personal connections. However, even though women and men report roughly equal levels of mentorship in the private sector, men are more likely to have sponsors who advocate on their behalf – which disproportionately benefits their careers.

THE MILITARY

The military prides itself on the emphasis given to developing junior officers. As such, the role of mentorship – inextricably linked in the military to the concept of leadership – should naturally be strong. The Army, for example, strongly emphasizes development and differentiates between three principal ways of developing others: counseling, coaching, and mentoring, wherein mentoring is defined as a “future-oriented developmental activity focused on growing in the profession.”⁸⁵ Leadership fundamentally relies on mentorship, as those with experience share the wisdom and guidance from their experience with their less experienced subordinates. Admiral Michelle Howard, the first woman to be promoted to four-star rank in the Navy (and who is also African-American), recently stated, “I don’t believe mentors have to look like you to be good mentors or your protégé must look like you. The folks who work for me and work with me my whole career have not looked like me, and as a leader I’m obligated to help them be successful.”⁸⁶

In the military context, as in the private sector context, mentorship yields benefits to both the mentor and the mentee. Additionally, as a hallmark of true leadership, “all professional Army leaders consistently prepare themselves for greater responsibilities while mastering core leader competencies ... they also mentor and develop the leadership of the future force.”⁸⁷ Army doctrine also states, “More than a matter of following formats and structured sessions, mentoring by strategic leaders means giving the right people an intellectual boost so that they make the leap to successfully operating and creatively thinking at the highest levels.”⁸⁸

Indeed, according to the *DMDC 2012 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members*, 79 percent of female service members and 84 percent of male survey members had a “professional relationship with someone who advised (mentored) [them] on military career development

or advancement.”⁸⁹ Seventeen percent of female service members and 15 percent of male service members reported that they did not have a mentor, but that their gender did not have anything to do with the lack of mentorship. One percent of male respondents – and 4 percent of female respondents – reported that they lacked a mentor, and that their gender was a factor. While overwhelmingly the minority, the percentage of respondents who felt they lacked a mentor due to their gender is four times higher among women than among men.

The impact of leaders as mentors plays a significant role in retention. Several of the military women we interviewed mentioned the ability to approach their leadership and the sense that they were “taken care of” by their leadership as motivators to remain in the military.⁹⁰ Interviewees perceive good leaders and mentors as those who communicate effectively and create environments where subordinates feel comfortable approaching their mentors and leaders. Good mentors also provide accountability and encouragement for personal improvement. A number of those interviewed mentioned that negative impressions of senior leadership forced them to reconsider whether or not they were willing to remain in the military; conversely, positive relationships with senior mentors were listed as a common incentive to remain in the military.

Interviewees also discussed gender dynamics within mentoring relationships. A number of those female soldiers interviewed stated that their best mentors tended to be men within their chain of command. Many found it difficult to connect with female mentors for at least two reasons. First, the prevalence of men in leadership roles throughout the chain of command makes it more likely that potential mentors within their respective units would be male. As one woman stated, “there are a lot more male leaders out there, so you just gravitate to that. There weren’t enough women in leadership positions.” Another respondent replied, “If I see a female mentor, I’m going to latch on and

Even though women and men report roughly equal levels of mentorship in the private sector, men are more likely to have sponsors who advocate on their behalf – which disproportionately benefits their careers.

listen to her.” Second, and equally pervasive, many women felt that the competitive nature of having to prove themselves or earn the respect of their fellow soldiers *because* they are women creates an atmosphere where women tend to “bump into each other, to butt heads. It’s not a good relationship.”⁹¹

Many military women also value the significant role of mentoring their subordinates. As one interviewee stated:

As late as my fourteenth year in, I thought about getting out. When times are bad, it makes me wonder what I’m doing here. I saw a lot of bad leaders, but I knew that soldiers need good role models. But I want to be a role model and mentor myself, and there are so many good female leaders. I don’t want good soldiers to have bad leaders.⁹²

Many military women are aware that other military women may see them as role models, and that they are still trailblazers in many areas. After discussing the challenges that she faced in her heavily male-dominated unit, one female junior officer said, “We’re making it easier for the women coming after us.”⁹³ Several junior officers also believed that the growing numbers of women in military leadership positions would open up even more opportunities

for military women in the future. One pointed out that “there are already more women at junior levels than there were 20 years ago, so in the coming years, there will be more women at senior levels.” Another woman simply stated, “Nothing will change people’s minds more than having a woman demonstrate what she can do.”⁹⁴

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Mentorship levels for both men and women in the private sector are significantly lower than those in the military. Indeed, a 2008 Catalyst survey of 4,000 MBA alumni found that 26 percent of women – and 28 percent of men – reported having a mentor at the time of their first job.⁹⁵ This did not, however, result in commensurate benefits in compensation. On the contrary, entry-level salaries for mentored men were roughly \$9,000 higher than those for mentored women.⁹⁶ Furthermore, while mentored men were paid over \$6,700 more than their mentorless male peers, mentored women received only \$660 more than unmentored women.⁹⁷

Similarly, having a mentor increased the likelihood that both men and women would enter their “first job assignment at a higher rank with a greater level of responsibility” than their peers; however, men enjoyed a disproportionate benefit from mentorship.⁹⁸ Mentored men “were 93% more likely to be placed at mid-manager level or above than men without a mentor.”⁹⁹ For women, mentorship increased these prospects by 56 percent.¹⁰⁰

One reason for this disparity is the differing levels of seniority between male and female mentors. The mentors of men tend to be more highly placed within the respective organization – 62 percent of men compared to 52 percent of women reported having a senior executive level mentor – resulting in disproportionate benefits for mentee advancement.¹⁰¹ Highly placed mentors were better able to advocate on behalf of their mentees, helping them to secure more senior positions, higher salaries, and assignments that were considered to be critical for job

growth. In contrast, the mentor’s gender did not have an appreciable impact on mentee advancement.¹⁰² Many of the women we interviewed had never had a female mentor, and some of the most senior women pointed out that there were no women ahead of them to serve as mentors. Nevertheless, these women all reported that they had benefited tremendously from male mentors who had invested time and energy in promoting their careers.¹⁰³

Given the importance of senior-level mentorship and the gender disparities in having a highly placed mentor, some organizations have established formal mentorship programs. For example, in an effort to achieve gender balance by 2015, Unilever established a program in which it paired executive board members with female managers who had development goals in the board members’ respective areas of expertise.¹⁰⁴ Some companies simply match up new employees with someone more senior and ask them to meet on a regular basis. The women we interviewed at one particular Fortune 500 company with such a program gave it slightly mixed reviews. Most said that it was very helpful, and provided guidance and a perspective on the company without being too formally structured. However, some said that formal programs are ineffective, and that they were better off finding independent mentors in their particular lines of business. One female senior executive said, “Mentorship has to happen organically, where the mentor takes an inherent interest in that person.”¹⁰⁵

4. Compensation and Negotiation

There are stark differences between compensation and negotiation in the military and private sector. While compensation in the military is standardized and non-negotiable for individuals meeting set criteria – resulting in absolute gender equality for compensation – pay disparities between men and women in the private sector vary widely by field. These disparities may be due to the reluctance of many women to self-promote their work and to negotiate their salaries.

THE MILITARY

In the military, almost all substantial compensation is tied to rank and time in service.¹⁰⁶ Careers and promotion boards are managed centrally, with officers competing throughout their service career with their peers who entered the military in the same year. Reports evaluating performance are issued annually or upon a change of job or rater. These reports assess performance and potential, as well as leadership characteristics. Even the most talented, high-potential candidate cannot move rapidly ahead of his or her peers; promotions are closely tied to years of service, and occur only at predictable times in a career.

As a result, all individuals of the same rank and time in grade receive the same base pay. This means that service members do not negotiate their salaries. As one female soldier observed, “You don’t have to ask for a promotion or a raise or another job ‘as a woman,’ you just get it. It’s easier to navigate [than the civilian sector].”¹⁰⁷ Indeed, 72 percent of all veterans reported feeling unprepared to negotiate salary and benefits upon transitioning to the civilian sector.¹⁰⁸

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

While full-time working women aged 16 to 24 earn 88.9 percent of the earnings of their male counterparts across all occupations – peaking at 90.2 percent for 25 to 34-year-olds – pay equity does not hold with age.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, women’s earnings precipitously decline for 35 to 44-year-olds to 78.1 percent of men’s.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, the pay gap between men and women can be far more pronounced in some professional fields than others. For example, one study that controlled for age, race, work hours, and education found that female computer scientists earn 89 percent of their male counterparts’ salaries, whereas women in medicine earn 71 percent and women in finance earn 66 percent.¹¹¹ A different study similarly found that female accountants make 76 percent of their male counterparts’ salary, while female financial

advisors make 73 percent and brokerage clerks make 71 percent.¹¹²

In addition, compensation disparities may be due to certain sociological factors, including negotiation and self-promotion strategies. As several studies have concluded, women are significantly less likely than men to negotiate an employer’s initial salary offer. For example, one study of recent MBA graduates found that men were eight times more likely to negotiate their starting salary and additionally reported negotiating more frequently than women.¹¹³

Similarly, women are less likely to self-promote their work or to request promotions for which they are qualified. For example, a Lloyds TSB study found that women were 8 percent more likely than men to be qualified for promotion, but often did not ask for one.¹¹⁴ Some of this reticence may be explained by the so-called confidence gap between men and women (see text box), which suggests that women undervalue their organizational worth. This dynamic also affects career expectations: men report that they expect significantly higher starting salaries than women, and they are more likely to apply for positions for which they are only partially qualified.¹¹⁵ As an internal HP study found, female HP employees generally applied only to positions for which they were 100 percent qualified; in contrast, men applied to positions for which they were 60 percent qualified.¹¹⁶ Jenny Ming, the CEO of Charlotte Russe, a women’s clothing company, described the same dynamic: “For a lot of women, myself included, sometimes we get to a point that we’re almost too comfortable in our position and we almost have to be doing the work of a new job before we feel we are deserving of the title.”¹¹⁷ This difference has compounding effects throughout the course of an individual’s career.

The underlying cause of women’s reluctance to assertively negotiate their salaries or to seek

The Confidence Gap

By **Sam Arras**

While institutional and systemic issues can significantly hinder women's career advancement, individual patterns may interact with underlying structural problems to limit women's career progress. In a May 2014 article, Katty Kay and Claire Shipman coined the term "the confidence gap" to describe what they saw as one of the biggest, yet most elusive and misunderstood, barriers for women in professional careers: an underlying lack of confidence.¹²¹ They argued, "It isn't that women don't have the ability to succeed; it's that we don't seem to believe we *can* succeed, and that stops us from even trying."¹²²

A growing field of research in recent years has shown that, despite overwhelmingly clear competence levels, there is a pervasive lack of confidence among professional women – especially relative to their male peers. This confidence deficit is particularly important as an increasing body of evidence has shown that professional success "correlates just as closely with confidence as it does with competence."¹²³ As women surpass men in the number of college and graduate degrees earned, and account for a larger share of the workforce than ever before, women remain vastly underrepresented in senior leadership positions. While cultural and institutional barriers are undoubtedly key factors, Kay and Shipman suggest that a lack of confidence may be an additional hurdle that stands between women and their potential to succeed.

Confidence is not just about feeling good. Recent studies have illustrated the way in which this confidence gap affects disparities in pay, promotion rates, and overall performance throughout professional careers. For example, a 2003 study revealed that male MBA graduates of Carnegie Mellon received a starting salary \$4,000 higher, or 7.6 percent higher, than their female counterparts. A primary driver of this discrepancy was that only 7 percent of the women made an effort to negotiate their salary, whereas 57 percent of men did so.¹²⁴ Even seemingly small differences in starting salaries have huge ripple effects when compounded over time. Likewise, promotion rates are also directly affected by the confidence gap. Many women hesitate to put themselves forward for promotions or ask for pay raises, too often believing that good job performance will be recognized and rewarded naturally.¹²⁵

Even women who hold senior leadership positions struggle with confidence issues. In fact, one of the main inspirations for Kay and Shipman's work on the subject was their own lingering sense of self-doubt, despite both being incredibly successful and accomplished in their respective fields. Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer of Facebook and author of *Lean In*, admitted, "There are still days I wake up feeling like a fraud, not sure I should be where I am."¹²⁶ Sharon Napier, the CEO of an advertising agency, recently told *The New York Times*, "We all have this little imposter syndrome that can lead us to say: 'I shouldn't really be here. I was just

in the right place at the right time.' I don't think men do that too much."¹²⁷

The confidence gap was a recurring theme during our interviews with both junior and senior women in the private sector. Almost every female senior executive we spoke with identified it as a problem that limits women's advancement, and said that it is a key challenge that they face in managing the women who report to them. One executive said, "My role is to create confidence that [the women I manage] are as good as they are." Another said, "A big part of what I do is cheer on women." A third female executive said, "I see it. I see it in myself and in the women I manage." When we asked her how to increase women's confidence, she paused for a moment and then said, "I wish I knew."¹²⁸

Interestingly, our interviews with military women suggest that they may struggle less with confidence issues than their civilian peers. Although they acknowledged that sexual harassment was pervasive and that sexual assault was a serious problem in their communities, they also believed that they would be fairly judged on their performance, perhaps due in part to the very structured approach of the military's evaluation and promotion system. A senior NCO told us, "No male or female is going to stop my career. It's going to be on me."¹²⁹ A female junior officer, who had civilian job experience before joining the military, addressed this even more directly: "I read *Lean In*, and I thought, 'obviously.' Because in the Army, that's just what you do."¹³⁰

Stereotypical expectations about male and female behavior in the workplace persist. In one notable study, when asked to assess two identically qualified job applicants, 'Heidi' and 'Howard,' both men and women were more likely to react negatively to 'Heidi's' assertiveness and networking skills and to deem her a less desirable colleague.

promotions could additionally be due to not understanding management expectations or to the perception that assertiveness will negatively impact their reputation – and thus their long-term success – in the workplace. Some evidence shows that stereotypical expectations about male and female behavior in the workplace persist. In one notable study, when asked to assess two identically qualified job applicants, “Heidi” and “Howard,” both men and women were more likely to react negatively to “Heidi’s” assertiveness and networking skills and to deem her a less desirable colleague.¹¹⁸ Based on this and similar case studies, researchers concluded that “success and likeability are positively correlated for men and negatively correlated for women.”¹¹⁹ As a result, women who are assertive can be seen as too aggressive and unlikeable, which then harms their long-term professional reputations.¹²⁰

5. Workplace Climate

Despite a number of policy and legislative changes that have increased protections for women in both the military and private sector, workplace climate issues – and sexual harassment in particular – remain a substantial concern.

THE MILITARY

Growing concerns surrounding Military Sexual Trauma (MST) – defined as rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment – have risen to the forefront of the national consciousness in recent years.¹³¹ According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, 25 percent of female veterans and 1 percent of male veterans are self-reported survivors of MST, though the true percentages are almost certainly higher since not all victims choose to report MST incidents.¹³² Of the women we interviewed who said that they had been sexually harassed,¹³³ the majority said that they chose not to report the incident through official channels. Instead, they chose to deal with the offense privately – often by confronting the offender – in order to avoid drawing attention to themselves, being ostracized, or marked with a permanent stigma.¹³⁴

In recent years, the issue of MST has garnered national attention and spurred action in Congress. On March 10, 2014, the Victim’s Protection Act (an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014), which had been introduced by Senator Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), passed in the Senate with a 97-0 vote.¹³⁵ The act eliminates the “good soldier” defense (wherein an accused service member can cite a record of exceptional military service as a defense against charges of military misconduct), allows victims to state their preference for a military or civilian court handling of their case, and adds an evaluation of command climate (to include handling of sexual assault) as part of commanders’ performance assessments.¹³⁶ The Military Justice Improvement Act of 2013, which Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) introduced to the Senate in November 2013, proposes

further steps to remove the prosecution of courts-martial from the chain of command. The bill remains in floor consideration as of this writing, but has gained support by a growing number of advocacy organizations.¹³⁷

DOD has also introduced a number of policy changes to address this issue. It now provides legal consultations for victims, evaluates command climate as a performance metric for commanders, and facilitates increased communication among MST investigators.¹³⁸ Between 2012 and 2013, the number of reported incidents increased by 50 percent (from 3,374 to 5,061).¹³⁹ Although it is impossible to determine the exact causes of the increase, some of that growth likely reflects an increasing willingness to report MST incidents because of greater trust in the reporting system.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

While reports of the sexual harassment of women have declined in the private sector – down from 34 percent in 1994 – it remains a significant problem, with 24 percent of women reporting that they have experienced harassment in the workplace.¹⁴⁰ Of additional concern, only 41 percent of women notified their employer of the incident.¹⁴¹ While this number is up from 33 percent in 1994, it signals an inherent mistrust that the systems in place can adequately provide recourse.¹⁴² Furthermore, sexual harassment may be greater in some sectors than others. For example, a 2013 *Financial Times* survey of women in the financial industry found that “sexual harassment in finance is ‘rife,’ with 28 percent of women saying they had experienced harassment and an additional 54 percent saying they had faced inappropriate behavior.”¹⁴³

Interviews with senior private sector women, particularly those who began working in the industry in the early 1970s, acknowledge that sexual harassment was prevalent at the beginning of their careers. One female former CEO noted, “sexual harassment was rampant – both verbally

Women in dual-military marriages are almost 50 percent more likely to leave the military than their male counterparts (9.2 percent versus 6.3 percent).

and physically – and there was no recourse because the laws didn’t exist at the time and if you brought it up, you would be fired.”¹⁴⁴

6. Managing Dual Professional Careers

There is no exact analogue to dual military marriages in the civilian world, since most civilians are not required to move to a new location whenever their employers deem it necessary. Nevertheless, dual-professional civilian marriages do face real challenges balancing the career prospects of both partners – and these challenges are exacerbated when professional opportunities are limited to a small number of positions tied to specific locations, such as dual-academic marriages or marriages among medical students applying to residency programs. Furthermore, in such fields, women are often more likely than men to be in a dual professional marriage, which disproportionately limits their careers.

THE MILITARY

According to the 2012 *Demographic Profile of the Military Community*, 7.1 percent of all married officers and 6.2 percent of all married enlistees are in dual-military marriages. 3.8 percent of all men in the military and 20.9 percent of all women in the military are in dual military marriages, comprising 6.6 percent of all married men in the military and 46.5 percent of all married women in the military.¹⁴⁵

The particularly high rates of women in dual-military marriages present unique challenges. Service members typically rotate through jobs on a two- to three-year basis, frequently involving a Permanent Change of Duty Station (PCS) move. Service members who are married to each other may request “joint domicile,” which prioritizes (but does not guarantee) their request to be co-located at the same base.¹⁴⁶ While joint domicile programs keep families intact, they may also limit the job opportunities – and therefore the future career prospects – for one or both service members. Further, although the policy applies equally to men and women, these potential limitations disproportionately affect women since they are seven times more likely than men to be married to a fellow service member.

The high rate of deployment to conflict zones has further complicated dual-military marriages during the past 13 years. Even if both spouses are assigned to the same base, the high operational tempo and frequent unit rotations could lead married couples to spend two consecutive years apart, if the end of one spouse’s deployment gives rise to the beginning of his or her spouse’s deployment.

According to those interviewed, the stress of military life is compounded in dual-military families. One female soldier we interviewed observed that dual-military marriages “often force women out [of the service].”¹⁴⁷ Her view is supported by the data: women in dual-military marriages are almost 50 percent more likely to leave the military than their male counterparts (9.2 percent versus 6.3 percent).¹⁴⁸

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Most civilian dual professional couples face few of the issues discussed above, because they usually have more discretion about when, where, and how long they are employed. However, the challenges of dual-career academic couples provide a good example of how some dual-professional civilians

may face similar challenges to those in dual-military couples. Since academic couples must consider the career prospects of both parties – as well as their geographic proximity – in any recruitment or retention decision, dual-career academic couples can face more limited mobility and greater career constraints than their civilian counterparts. In addition, only 19.4 percent of those with a Ph.D. hold an academic job, further reducing options for dual-academic couples.¹⁴⁹

These challenges are particularly acute for women, who are more likely than men to be in a dual-academic relationship. As a Stanford University survey of the U.S. academic workforce found, 36 percent of all academics have an academic partner; however, this is true for 40 percent of women and only 34 percent of men.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, both men and women were more likely to consider the male partner’s career to be the primary career within the relationship, suggesting that women may be less likely than men to accept growth opportunities that come at a cost to their partner’s career advancement.¹⁵¹

In order to reduce the deleterious effects of these trends, some universities have instituted dual-career programs designed to assist the hiree’s academic partner in identifying a suitable academic position. These programs, for which the spouse is often eligible for one to two years following the initial offer, pair the partner with a vice provost, institutional broker, dean, or department chair in an effort to ease his or her transition.¹⁵² Other approaches include the option of “bridging positions” or fellowships, designed to “to allow the institution time to identify a full-time line or to provide short-term support while a partner searches for a position;” shared positions, in which academic partners share a single tenure track position; or permanent positions, in which the academic partner is offered a new tenure track position.¹⁵³

Medical students jointly applying to residency programs also face challenges in maintaining geographic proximity and in balancing the program preferences and career prospects of both partners. In 2014, 1,850 of the 34,270 applicants to the National Residency Match Program opted for a couple's match, which utilizes an algorithm to "[match] the couple to the highest linked program choices where both partners obtain positions."¹⁵⁴ This process often requires one or both partners to compromise about their geographic or program preference, though 94 percent of couples do successfully match to a residency program.¹⁵⁵

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Women in both the military and the private sector have advanced tremendously in the past few decades. They constitute a growing percentage of both workforces, and leaders in both fields see recruiting and retaining women as a crucial element of maintaining the highest quality personnel. Although their numbers remain small, the women who have been promoted to general or flag rank in the military and to the highest private sector executive positions (sometimes called the “C-suite”) serve as role models and inspire more junior women who seek to follow in their footsteps.

Nevertheless, women in the military and private sector continue to face a range of challenges – some of which are remarkably similar, despite the substantial differences between the two environments. Here we recommend several ways in which leaders in both the military and private sector can help address these challenges, both individually and by partnering together.

Recommendations for Both the Military and Private Sector

- **Improve leadership training and development programs for women at the early stages of their careers.** This is particularly important in the private sector, where the confidence gap often keeps women from advocating effectively for themselves, asking for promotions and raises, and applying for positions that will stretch their capabilities and help them grow. Yet it is also important for junior women in the military, both officers and enlisted personnel. Such programs help them navigate some of the unique challenges of the military environment, but would also help ease their transition to civilian employment when they leave the military. A Defense Business Board study found that 83 percent of military personnel leave the military before 20 years of service,¹⁵⁶ so such programs will help the many young women who will become veterans while still in the early stages of their overall careers.
- **Actively solicit feedback from women, particularly junior women, about how to address the challenges they face, and implement some of their recommended solutions.** Our interviews suggest that women in both the military and in the private sector can not only identify the gaps, issues, and challenges that they face, but also they often have very specific and creative ideas on how to address these problems. Yet they can be reluctant to share these ideas with supervisors, especially at the early stages of their careers when they are less secure in their positions and when they work in large, hierarchical organizations where it can be difficult to determine which person or office would need to take action. If they do share their ideas with superiors who then fail to take their concerns seriously, or if they consistently see no efforts to address their concerns, they will keep these problems and possible solutions to themselves. Broad surveys can help identify general trends and which types of issues are more important than others, but eliciting specific recommendations and solutions requires personal discussion – ideally in confidential focus groups with women at similar stages of their careers.
- **Establish a public dialogue between the most senior military and private sector women on improving women’s leadership and career development.** Women who hold C-suite positions or who serve as general or flag officers have often shared common experiences throughout their careers, and have valuable perspectives on women’s leadership and how to advance women’s careers. Military and private sector senior leaders should partner together to host dialogues on this important issue – through public events, seminar series, research papers, and other ways to ensure that their viewpoints and ideas are as widely disseminated as possible.

- **Jointly conduct leadership and skills programs for female high school and college students.**

Both the military and the private sector have an interest in helping female students develop the leadership and substantive skills they will need to succeed in their careers, since today's students are tomorrow's employees and military personnel. The service academies would be ideal places to host jointly sponsored programs for students to learn basic leadership and professional skills – such as public speaking, interviewing, negotiating, and mentoring – from successful women in both the military and the private sector, as well as learning from each other's experiences and outlooks. Some programs might also focus on specific career fields where women are underrepresented, such as the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and finance. The military services and the corporations that sponsor such programs are likely to directly benefit from them, since they will have an advantage in recruiting female program graduates, and may also indirectly benefit by improving their reputations as good places for women to work.

- **Help female veterans transition effectively and fairly to the private sector.**

Both the military and private sector share the responsibility of ensuring service members leaving the military are prepared effectively to transition into civilian jobs. The military is responsible for providing job transition programs, and the private sector gains more effective employees when this is done well. But while the military's system of basing pay on rank and time in grade may lead to more equitable salaries between men and women while in service, it may also leave individuals woefully unprepared for the rigors of civilian salary negotiation. This inexperience could be particularly harmful to female veterans, who will face additional sociological and structural challenges in their job applications. The private sector needs to be

Advancing the cause of gender equality has too often been seen as a “woman’s issue,” but in order to bring about genuine social and cultural change, men must be an integral and equal partner in the fight for gender equality and women’s rights.

mindful of the need to negotiate fair compensation policies with veterans, particularly for transitioning female service members.

- **Improve data collection about retention and attrition of talent.** Both the military and the private sector would benefit from stronger efforts to collect and analyze long-term data on their departing members – though these must be kept anonymous to ensure employee confidentiality. Exit surveys should capture when employees leave and why, thus identifying key trends and catalysts affecting both retention and attrition. Better understanding the reasons why uniformed and private sector employees depart permits organizational leaders to reexamine incentives and adjust problematic policies. These surveys may also serve as a leading indicator of significant talent flight before it becomes too late to reverse.
- **Include men in the solution, through initiatives like the UN’s HeForShe campaign.** Advancing the cause of gender equality has too often been seen as a “woman’s issue,” but in order to bring about genuine social and cultural change, men must be an integral and

equal partner in the fight for gender equality and women's rights. In both the military and the private sector, the disproportionate number of men in senior leadership positions makes them effective catalysts for meaningful change and the most influential advocates for professional women. At the highest level, men must take an active role in mentoring and sponsoring women ascending in their careers in order to develop the leadership skills and incubate the confidence necessary for them to permeate the top ranks. At the more junior level, men must take more ownership of gender-related issues by promoting awareness, encouraging innovative solutions, and challenging the social norms that have traditionally been dictated by gender stereotypes. Recent initiatives, such as the UN's HeForShe campaign,¹⁵⁷ aimed at engaging men as advocates and agents of change for gender equality, can serve as a model for both the military and the corporate sector.

Specific Recommendations for the Military

- **Ensure that the first women to serve in combat positions are set up for success.** As the military opens combat roles to women, it will be vital to ensure that women are given the proper training – both physical and skills-based – to succeed. Failing to adequately prepare those women who will assume combat roles could have long-term negative consequences for integration. Men must be part of this solution, and the cultures of presently all-male units must be carefully evaluated to assure equitable opportunities to integrate women. Moreover, physical standards that were established based on all-male populations in these units (in some cases without regard to actual task requirements) should be validated rather than automatically sustained.
- **Expand the current test programs for military sabbaticals.** Initial results from these programs seem promising, but very few slots are currently available. This could be a crucial way to retain

military women who are currently choosing to leave the service in order to start families; even small amounts of flexibility may help. But the retention benefits of these programs extend far beyond new mothers (or fathers), since they are open to all military personnel. For example, both men and women who are now leaving the military in order to attend graduate school would be able to do so during a sabbatical and would then return to military service.

- **Consider more formal mentorship programs for women.** Given the importance of mentorship in retaining women in the military, it is critical for the services to underscore the value of mentorship and to incentivize participation in mentorship programs at both the junior and senior levels. The services should convey the benefits of participating in mentoring programs for the cultivation of leadership skills as well as for broader professional development. Such programs should be open to both men and women, but should be optional to ensure that they are not treated as a box-checking exercise. To optimize the value of the programs for all involved, the services should make every effort to match mentors and mentees based upon an alignment of development goals, background, and areas of expertise.
- **Conduct detailed exit interviews with departing leaders.** The services should conduct exit interviews with both male and female leaders who chose to leave the military in order to understand the reasons for their decisions, and to help determine whether and how current policies should be changed to improve leader retention. The ongoing drawdown of the U.S. military creates an environment where significant talent may be lost before the senior leadership understands the causes. In-depth exit interviews could provide valuable insights on ways to help keep the best and brightest men and women in the force.

Including Men in the Solution

By Sam Arras

Over the past 40 years, women have made remarkable progress in both the military and the corporate sector, overcoming institutional barriers, expanding opportunities, and paving the way for future generations. However, advancing the cause of gender equality has been, for the most part, a struggle *for* women, led *by* women. As a result, the importance of including men in the effort has too often been overlooked and underemphasized. In order to address the challenges identified in this report, men must be integral and equal partners – and genuine stakeholders – in the process. In fact, they might be in the best position to help advance lasting change.

Advancing the cause of gender equality must be as much a “men’s issue” as it is a “women’s issue”, and approached as a joint and inclusive effort. Recent initia-

Yet paradoxically, the most effective agents for getting more women into the top ranks may be the men that currently populate them.

tives, such as the UN’s HeForShe campaign, are paving the way in this regard. As UN Women Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson launched the HeForShe campaign, she challenged men to recognize that “Gender equality is your issue too.”¹⁵⁸ It will not be possible to bring about true gender equality if only half the population is invited or encouraged to participate in the process – especially in areas where men numerically dominate the environment and can effectively catalyze meaningful change.

The disproportionate number of men in senior leadership positions means that men are often in the

best position to mentor and advocate for women in earlier stages of their careers. Indeed, throughout our interviews, women in both the military and the private sector said that most of their best mentors tended to be men. In some cases, this was simply because there were no women in the more senior ranks of their organizations. A number of women we interviewed who had female mentors agreed that those mentors and role models offered them important guidance and advice as they rose in their fields. But these same women noted that what truly helped them advance in their careers were what they referred to as “sponsors” – highly placed individuals within an organization who served as advocates¹⁵⁹ – or, as one woman we interviewed put it, who were willing to use their power and authority to “get things done for you.”¹⁶⁰ Almost

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Specific Recommendations for the Private Sector

These recommendations focus on helping veterans transition to the private sector, since we identified ways that the private sector (and military) can work on broader women’s leadership issues above. Most of these recommendations will help all veterans undergoing that transition, but female veterans may particularly benefit from these measures.

- **When surveying applicants and employees, ask whether they have served in the military, not**

whether or not they are veterans. Amazingly, not all veterans even recognize that they qualify for the title; some (incorrectly) believe they must have served in combat or be deployed in order to be considered a veteran. Some of the companies we examined report that applicants and employees are more likely to answer yes to the question “Have you ever served in the military?” than if they are asked “Are you a veteran?” Because women are generally less likely than men to identify themselves as veterans, this will increase their access to any services and support to which they are entitled.

Continued from previous page

without exception, these sponsors were men. This will undoubtedly change as more women progress into senior leadership positions. Yet paradoxically, the most effective agents for getting more women into the top ranks may be the men who currently populate them.

At more junior levels, men might be the most effective catalyst for meaningful change when it comes to affecting the cultural norms and social structures traditionally dictated by gender stereotypes. In the military, as combat roles open up to women, changing the hyper-masculine culture of combat units will be utterly impossible without the advocacy and active engagement of the men who currently serve in them. In the private sector, women find themselves shouldering a much heavier portion of domestic responsibilities than their spouses, drawing significant time away from their potential

hours for work or rest. This imbalance affects women's life choice calculus throughout their careers. As women enter the workplace in greater numbers than ever before, men may need to take on a larger share of domestic responsibilities traditionally shouldered by women. Studies show that in the average dual-working couple, the woman does three times the amount of housework as the man, and four times the amount of childcare.¹⁶¹ In fact, only 9 percent of dual-earning marriages report evenly shared housework, childcare, and earning income.¹⁶² This even holds true at most senior levels of the private sector. For example, one study showed that the highest-earning female executives with young children spent an average of 25 hours a week on caring for children, while male executives spent an average of 10 hours. A different study of Harvard Business School graduates found that while only 17 to 25 percent of female graduates aged 32 to 67 expected that their husband's careers would

take priority over theirs, in actuality this had occurred 40 percent of the time. Furthermore, this expectations gap seems likely to continue. For graduates aged 26 to 31, only a quarter of the women surveyed said they expected their partner's careers to be more important than theirs, but half of the men said their careers would be more important. Expectations about childcare were also quite different: 42 percent of women said they expected to be responsible for the majority of childcare, while two-thirds of men said they expected that their wives would.¹⁶³

As women continue to challenge gender-based stereotypes on the battlefield and in the boardroom, men must make a parallel effort to do so in maintaining relationships and in raising families. Opportunities for women to advance in proportion to their presence in the workforce will never be equitably available until men take ownership of the value and importance of this goal.

- **Assign newly employed veterans both veteran and non-veteran mentors.** Where feasible, military veterans entering the private sector should be assigned two mentors: a veteran and a non-veteran to help ease their transition and address cultural challenges. The military manages hundreds of thousands of moves each year, and provides comprehensive sponsorship and support to newly transferred service members at every base. The private sector could help provide similar support by coupling veteran mentors with non-veteran mentors who have industry experience.
- **Improve the onboarding process for veterans.** Some of the female veterans we interviewed said that the onboarding process was one of the main challenges they faced when transitioning to the private sector.¹⁶⁴ Onboarding processes are fairly formal in the military, since military personnel regularly change jobs every two to three years. In the private sector, however, such processes are often much more informal, and sometimes do not exist at all – and veterans have little experience navigating new work environments independently. By offering veterans more

structured and tailored onboarding processes, employers will help these new employees adapt to their new environments and responsibilities more quickly and thus improve their effectiveness and performance.

- **Help educate non-veteran employees about the military/veteran experience.** Several companies we examined provide ongoing yet simple training to their non-veteran workforce on the basics of military life and military service. This can range from explaining the difference between officer and enlisted ranks to explaining the realities of what deployed service members and their families experience during long separations. These programs sensitize non-veteran employees to the environments in which veterans have served, while also broadening their appreciation of the challenges of transitioning to the private sector and civilian life.
- **Provide phased transitions into work in the private sector.** Part-time job transition programs provide veterans in their first months out of uniform the opportunity to gradually adjust to the new and unfamiliar demands of civilian life and employment. Instead of immediately working for 40 hours a week or more, veterans gradually increase their work hours over several weeks until they reach full-time employment. This phased approach benefits both veterans and employers, since each can use that time to adjust and to address any challenges that arise, increasing the chances that the veterans will succeed in their new positions.
- **Promote access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).** Many employers offer EAPs that help their employees address personal issues that could, or already are, affecting job performance. They provide direct services and referrals in a wide range of areas, such as mental health, drug and alcohol addiction, family issues such as divorce and parenting, wellness and health promotion, and career counseling.¹⁶⁵

EAPs are valuable resources for all employees, but they may be a particularly helpful source of support for veterans who face challenges in transitioning to the private sector and civilian life.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the coming years and decades, women will have expanding opportunities to serve at the most senior levels of the public and private sectors. The ever-growing numbers of female university graduates combined with the still underutilized pool of female talent available for the workforce suggest that this century will be one of monumental growth for women's leadership and participation in all domains.

Both the military and the private sector reflect aspects of this changing dynamic today, and will continue to be key indicators and catalysts for changes in women's leadership in society as a whole. The planned opening in 2016 of most if not all military combat roles to women is one example of this dramatically expanded potential. The slow but steady growth of women studying math and science at the university level is another. In all, there is tremendous potential for the gender composition of the nation's most senior leadership to change dramatically, and to strengthen the country's institutions in the process by providing access to the full range of the nation's talent.

However, women at all levels of the military and the private sector face a number of shared challenges. These include issues of retention and promotion; parenthood and family; compensation and negotiation; mentorship and career advancement; and workplace climate. Both groups stand to benefit from comparing their experiences – to uncover common challenges, address obstacles to success, and identify organizational best practices that can be shared. In the years to come, absorbing the lessons and implementing the recommendations outlined in this report will help women to reach their full potential as leaders in the military and private sector alike.

Implementing the recommendations outlined in this report will help women to reach their full potential as leaders in the military and private sector alike.

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Appendix

MILITARY SERVICE MEMBER DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE IN 2012

40

APPENDIX: MILITARY SERVICE MEMBER DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE IN 2012

	ARMY		NAVY		MARINE CORPS		AIR FORCE		DOD	
Total Active Duty Service Members	546,057		314,339		198,820		328,812		1,388,028	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	472,562	73,495	261,188	53,151	184,829	13,991	266,573	62,239	1,185,152	202,876
Active Duty Officers	98,749		53,209		21,891		65,012		238,861	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	82,714	16,035	44,515	8,694	20,533	1,358	52,525	12,487	200,287	38,574
Active Duty Enlisted	447,308		261,130		176,929		263,800		1,149,167	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	389,848	57,460	216,673	44,457	164,296	12,633	214,048	49,752	984,865	164,302
Married	326,334		165,752		95,081		191,138		778,305	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	291,041	35,293	146,235	19,517	89,753	5,328	160,058	31,080	687,087	91,218
Percent of Active Duty service members in a dual-military marriage	5.2%		4.8%		3.8%		11.3%		6.3%	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	3.0%	19.0%	2.9%	14.4%	2.3%	23.5%	7.3%	28.1%	3.8%	20.9%
Number of Active Duty service members with children	273,417		126,669		65,266		143,307		608,659	
Single Parents	35,822		15,327		5,859		15,463		72,471	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	24,971	10,851	9,618	5,709	4,591	1,268	9,283	6,180	48,463	24,008

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Center for a New American Security

1152 15th Street, NW
Suite 950
Washington, DC 20005

TEL 202.457.9400
FAX 202.457.9401
EMAIL info@cnas.org
www.cnas.org

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1152 15th Street, NW
Suite 950
Washington, DC 20005

TEL 202.457.9400
FAX 202.457.9401
EMAIL info@cnas.org

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