



Impact of OPTEMPO on Retention of U.S. Personnel in Europe

Authors: Ann H. Huffman, Amy B. Adler, Carol A. Dolan,
Jeffrey L. Thomas and Carl A. Castro

U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe

Presented at American Psychological Association
Annual Meeting San Francisco, CA

OPTEMPO Report Series #11



Purpose

- Present workload and retention findings based on data from the U. S. Army, Europe & Seventh Army and U. S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe OPTEMPO/PERSTEMPO study.



Outline

- Summary of Findings
- OPTEMPO Model
- Literature Review
- Research Question
- Method
 - Participants
 - Instruments
- Analysis Plan
- Survey Results
 - Career Intentions: OPTEMPO Differences by Rank
 - OPTEMPO and Staying in the Army
 - Overall Reasons for Staying in the Army
 - OPTEMPO and Leaving the Army
 - Overall Reasons for Leaving the Army
 - Comparing Perceptions and Behavior
 - Predicting who Leaves the Army
- Interview Data
 - Overview of OPTEMPO and Career Intentions
 - OPTEMPO Balancing Act - Sustaining Readiness
- Discussion: Research Question
- Backup Slides
- Point of Contact



Summary of Findings (1 of 2)

This technical brief presents the findings from a two-year longitudinal study designed to assess the impact of operations and personnel tempo on soldier and unit readiness.

- Junior-enlisted soldiers were the most likely to report that they intending to leave the Army compared to NCOs and Officers; for junior-enlisted soldiers, being in combat arms was the biggest predictor of intent to leave the military.
- Travel and adventure, and the likelihood of being promoted were endorsed most often as reasons to stay in the Army.
- Regardless of their actual career intention, soldiers and officers reported OPTEMPO was a reason to leave the Army; of all the OPTEMPO-related factors, “work hours” was the most endorsed OPTEMPO-related reason to leave the Army.
- Although work hours was frequently endorsed as an important reason to leave the military, there were no actual differences in average weekly work hours among those intending to stay, those intending to leave, and those undecided.
- For those soldiers and officers intending to leave the military, the vast majority endorsed “pursue other interests” as a reason for leaving (84.5%), followed by work hours (77.6%), military lifestyle (75.9%), pursue education (74.1%) and base pay (74.1%).

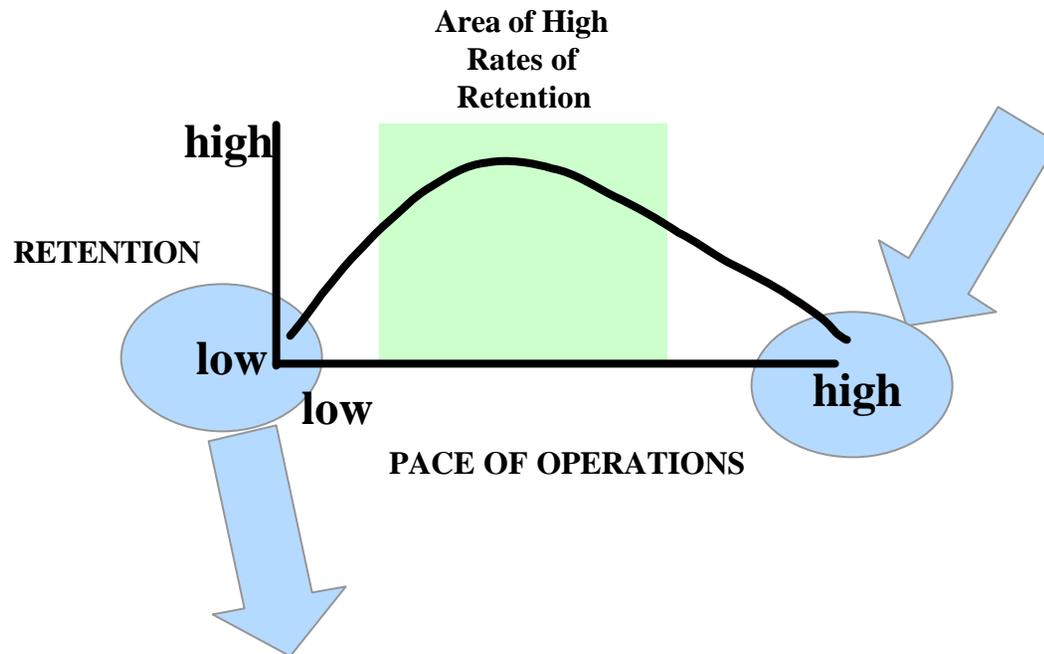


Summary of Findings (2 of 2)

- For NCOs, being in combat arms, working fewer days per week, and not having deployment experience all predicted intent to leave the Army.
- For Officers, lack of deployment experience predicted intent to leave the Army.
- Interview data confirmed the complex pattern of results in the survey data. Soldiers and leaders cited OPTEMPO as both a reason to leave the military and a reason to remain in the military.
- In terms of the deployment findings, army personnel reported intending to leave the military when deployments were too long, too frequent, too unpredictable, and poorly planned. They were more likely to intend to stay in the Army when deployments included personal challenges and professional opportunities.
- In terms of the findings about long work hours, soldiers reported intending to leave the military when they had to work long hours because of mismanagement but did not mind the work hours when the tasks were necessary and relevant.
- OPTEMPO plays a role in career decision making but it occurs within a broad context of command climate and it is this context that determines the impact of OPTEMPO on career intentions.



OPTEMPO Model



The pace of military operations has increased in the past 10 years, while the size of the military has decreased.

About 38% of Army personnel are intending to leave the military when their obligation is complete (GAO, 1999).





Literature Review: Rank & Unit Type

- Soldier rank and the type of unit type they belong to (i.e. combat arms, combat support, and combat service support) are predictive of career intentions.

- In retention research, military rank was consistently a predictor of career intentions. Junior-enlisted soldiers are more likely to report that they are intending to leave the service than non-commissioned officers and officers.

- Huffman, Adler, Dolan & Castro (2000)
- Elig, Wright, & George (1999)
- Castro, Huffman, Adler & Bienvenu (1999)

- Soldiers who were part of a combat arms unit were more likely than non-combat arm soldiers to report that they were planning to leave the military before retirement.

- Adler, Castro & Bartone (1997)
- Castro, Huffman, Adler & Bienvenu (1999)



Literature Review: OPTEMPO

- Research on the impact of OPTEMPO on soldier retention reveals a complex set of findings.

High OPTEMPO negatively impacted soldier retention

- Giacalone (2000)
- Adler, Bartone & Castro (1997)
- Sullivan (1985)

High OPTEMPO positively impacted retention rates

- Castro, Huffman, Adler, & Bienvenu (1999)

The relationship between retention and OPTEMPO was neutral or limited

- Sticha, Sadacca, DiFazio, Knerr, Hogan & Diana (1999)
- Hosek & Totten (1998)
- Reed & Segal (2000)



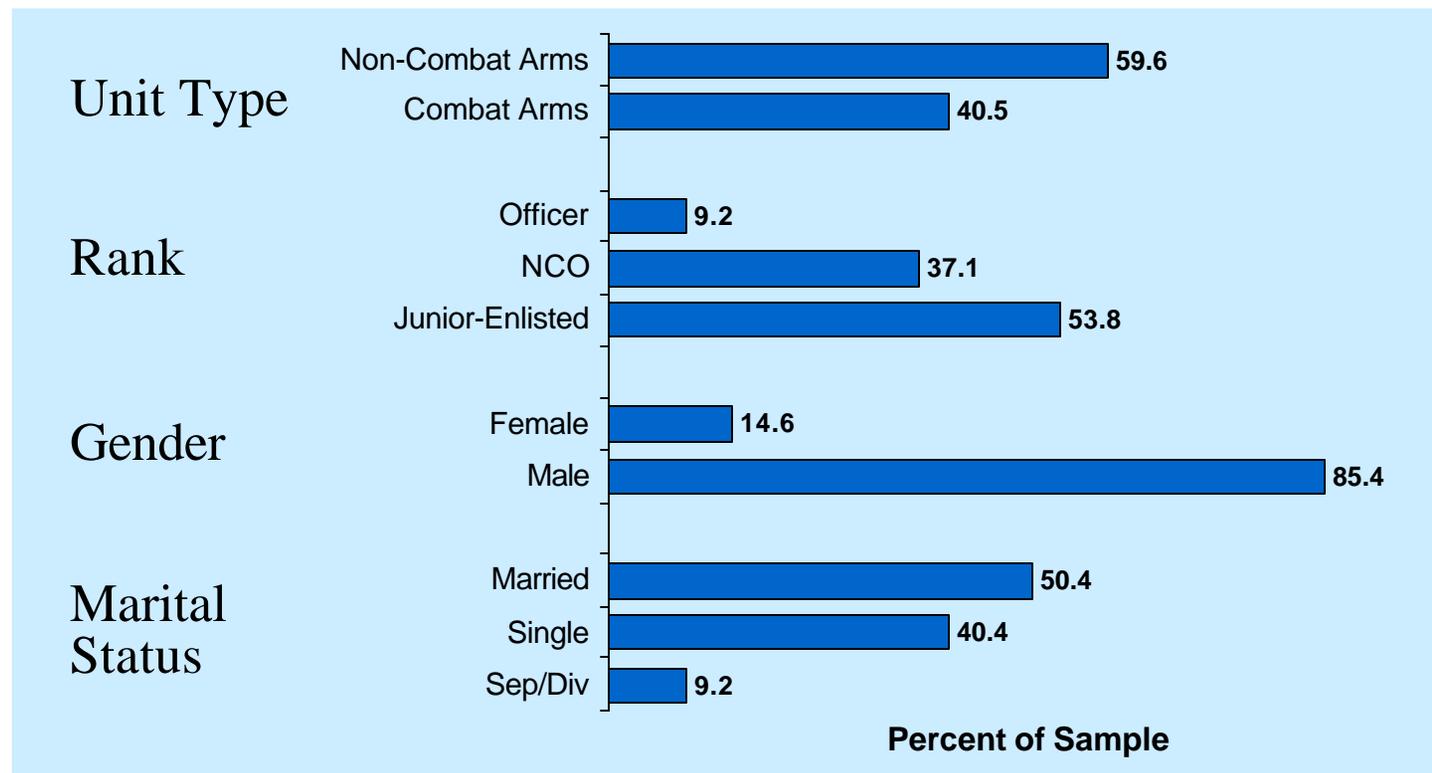
Research Question

- What impact does OPTEMPO have on soldiers' career decision-making?



Method: Participants

- Data were collected from May 1999 to December 2000.
- Participants were 1,592 active duty army personnel stationed in Germany.



Note: Numbers may not sum to 100% because of rounding.



Method: Instruments (1 of 2)

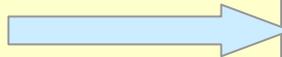
Self-report Behaviors

OPTEMPO Measures

- Work Hours
- Work Hours on Day Off
- Days Worked per Week
- Days on Temporary Duty Assignment
- Deployment History
- Days on Training Exercise

Retention

- Career Decision



- Definitely stay in until retirement
- Probably stay in until retirement
- Definitely stay in beyond present obligation, but not until retirement
- Undecided
- Probably leave upon completion
- Definitely leave upon completion of current obligation



Method: Instruments (2 of 2)

Reasons for Career Decision

Soldiers were asked to what extent issues influenced their intentions to leave or remain in the military.

Interview (N=381)

What is your career intention?

Which factors would you say have influenced your decision?

What would it take for you to remain in the Army?

How much is the pace of operations or workload a factor in your decision?

SAMPLE ITEMS:

Deploying a lot in recent years

Expecting to deploy a lot in the future

Going on a lot of training exercises

Job Satisfaction

My likelihood of being promoted

Military lifestyle/community

Stability gained from military lifestyle

Educational opportunities

I want to pursue my education

I want to pursue other interests



Analysis Plan

- The study used based on multiple types of measures.
-

Descriptive

Career intentions

Perceptions - What impacts their decision to stay?
What impacts their decision to leave?

How do perceptions compare with actual experiences?

Predictive

What variables are key in predicting career intentions?

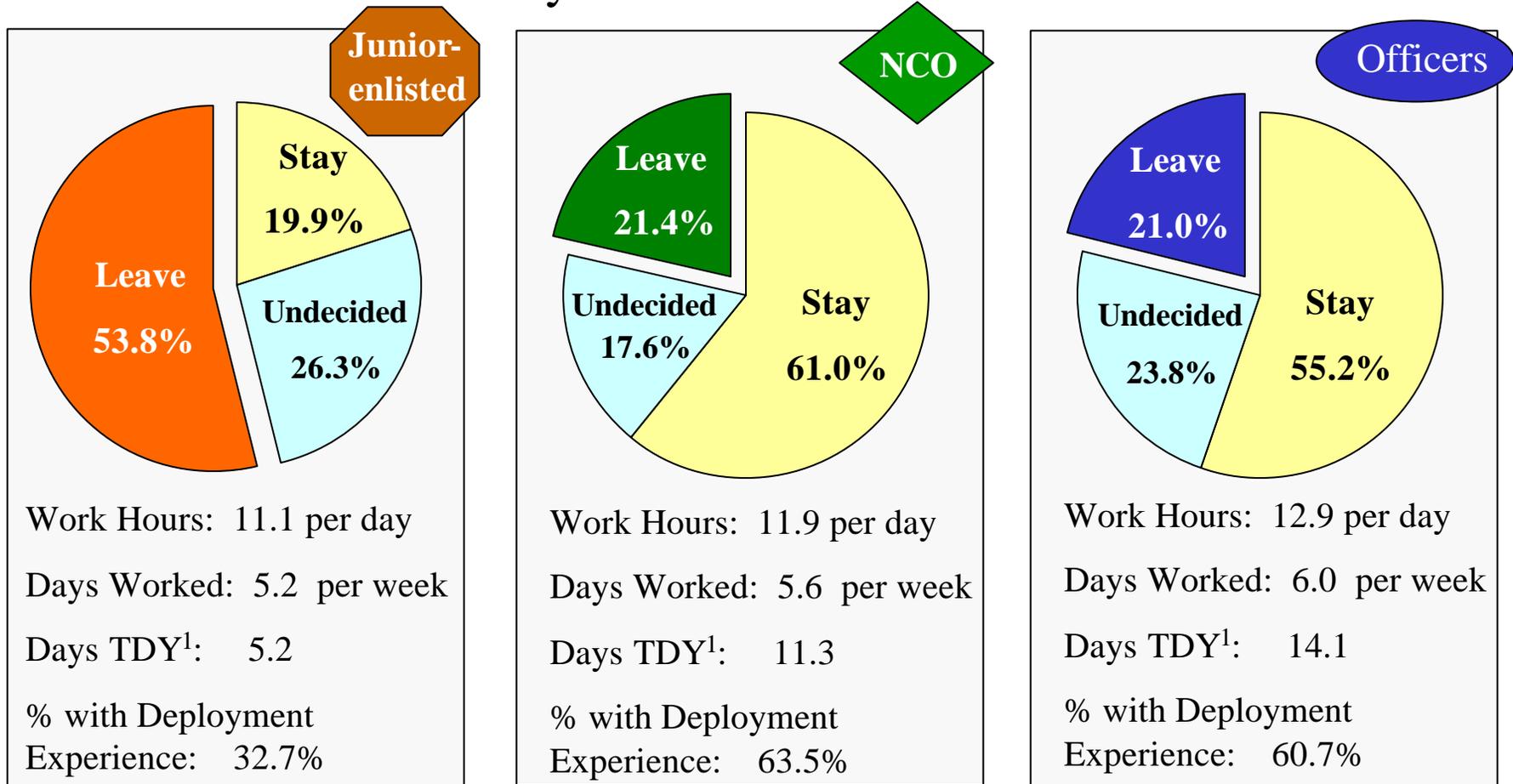
Interviews

Subjective descriptions



Career Intentions: OPTEMPO Differences by Rank

- The junior-enlisted soldiers were the most likely to report their intent to leave the Army.

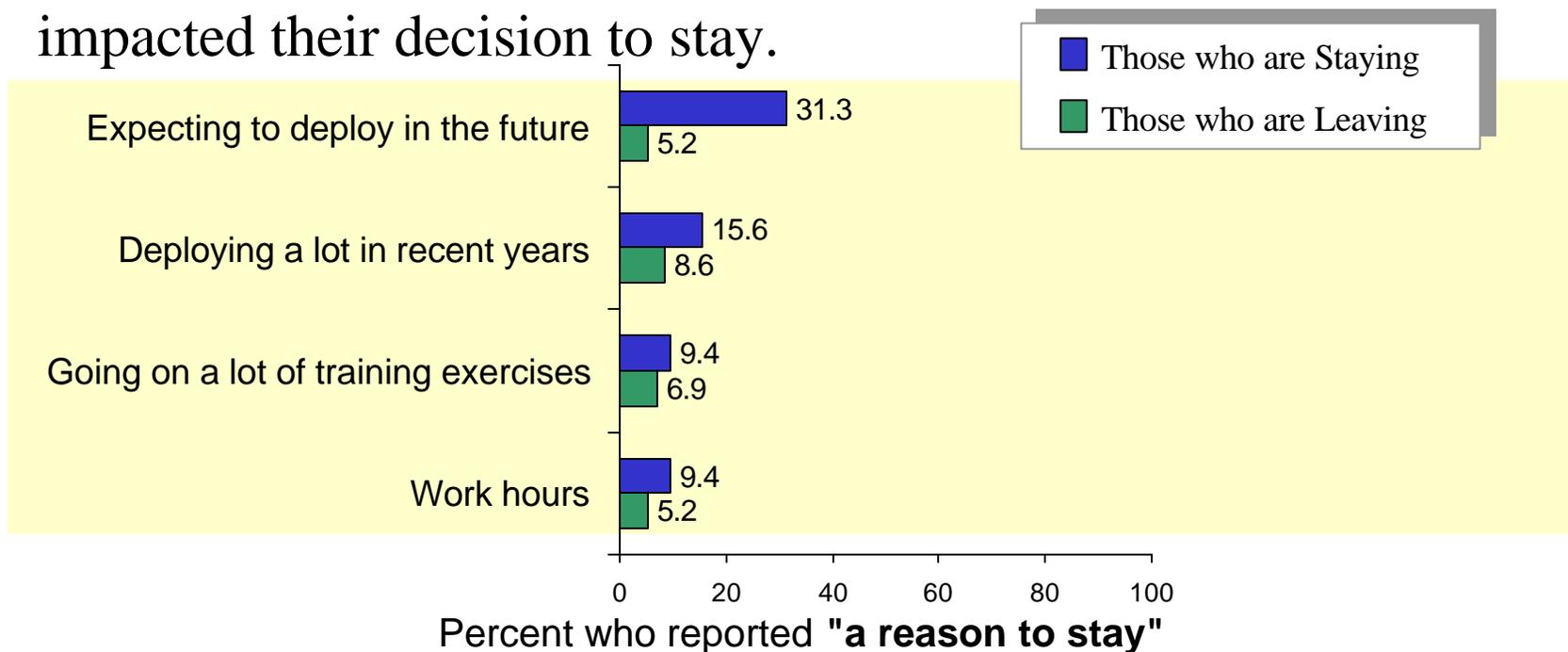


¹in the last 6 months



OPTEMPO and Staying in the Army

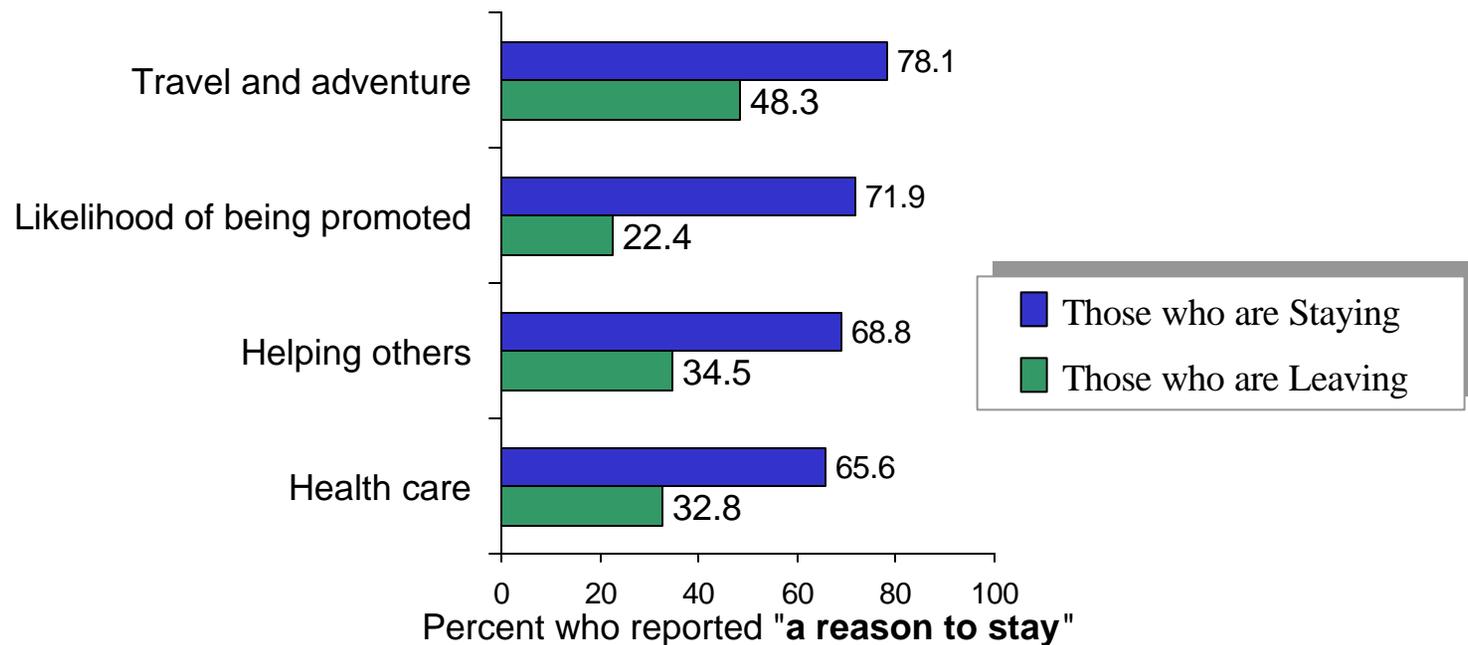
- Although not primary reasons for staying in the military, OPTEMPO-related reasons for remaining were endorsed by some soldiers and officers.
- For those soldiers and officers who are staying in the Army, almost one-third stated “expecting to deploy in the future” impacted their decision to stay.





Overall Reasons for Staying in the Army

- When soldiers described what impacts their career intentions¹, the most reported reasons for staying in the military were not OPTEMPO-related.
- Travel and adventure, and the likelihood of being promoted were endorsed most often as reasons to stay in the Army.

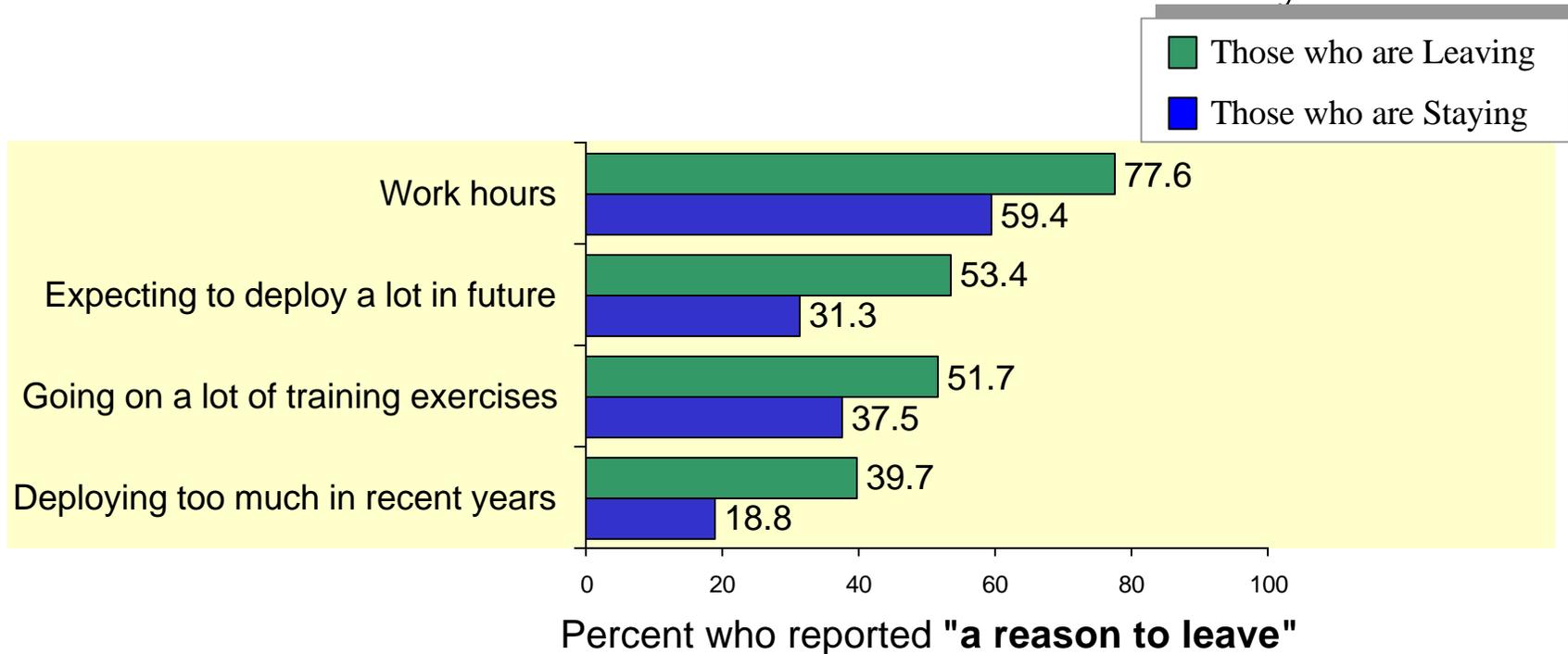


¹Survey Intention survey



OPTEMPO and Leaving the Army

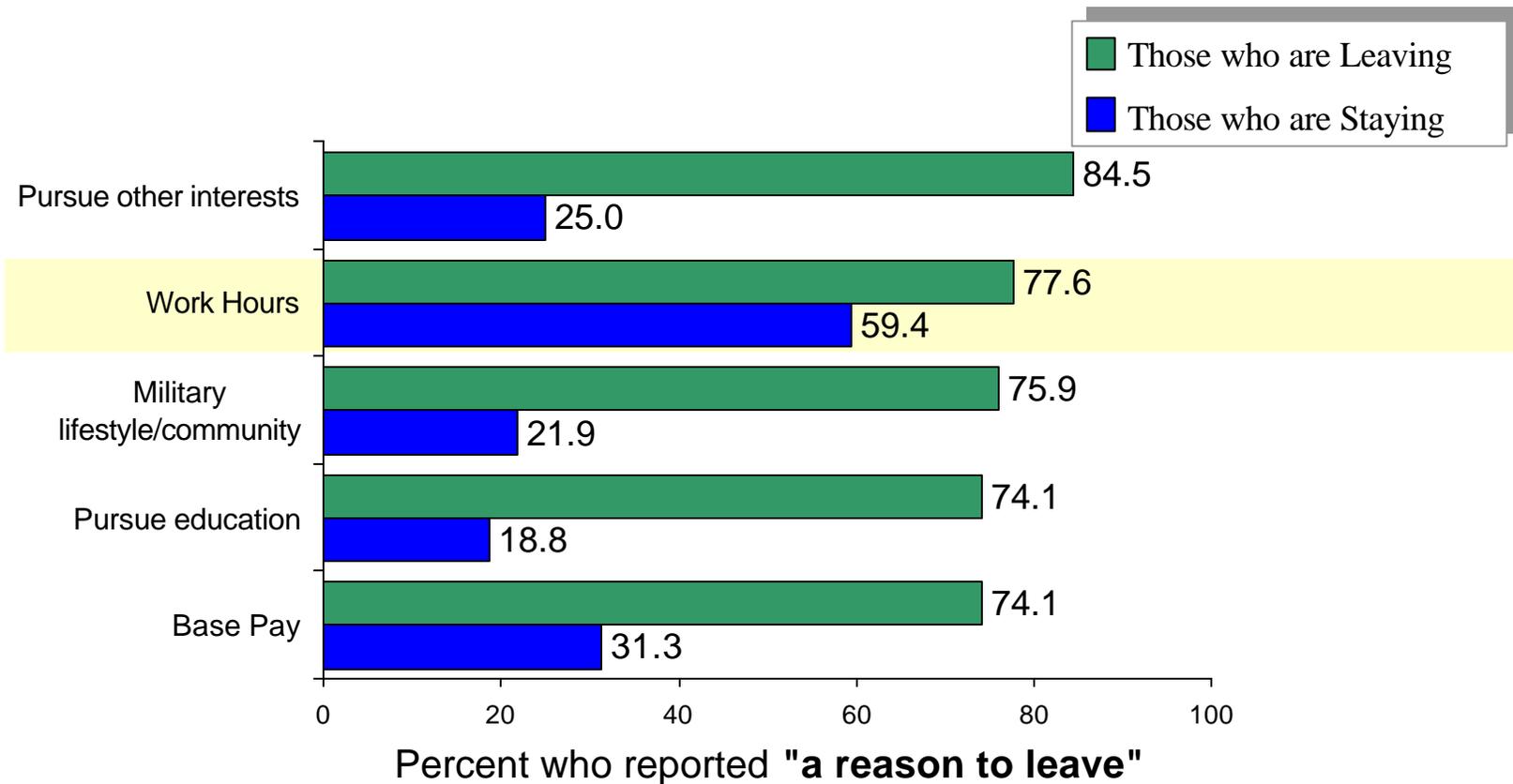
- “Deploying a lot,” “expecting to deploy a lot in the future,” and “going on a lot of training exercises” moderately impacted soldier’s and officer’s career intentions.
- “Work hours” was endorsed the most by soldiers and officers as an OPTEMPO-related reasons to leave the Army.





Overall Reasons for Leaving the Army

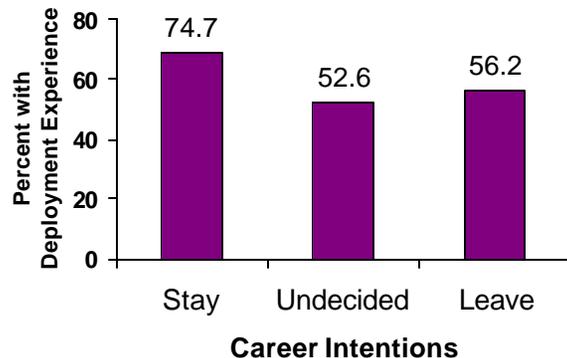
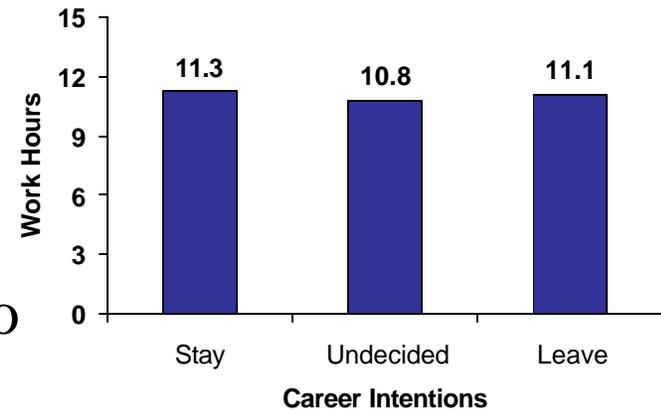
- “Work hours” was the only OPTEMPO measure that was cited by the majority of soldiers and officers as a reason to leave the Army.





Comparing Perceptions and Behavior

- Although 77.6% of the sample¹ reported “work hours” as a reason to leave, there was no significant difference in work hours between those who were leaving and those who were staying.



- NCOs and Officers who have deployed were more likely to stay in the Army than NCOs and Officers who have never deployed, $\chi^2(2, N=724) = 15.92$, $p < .05$.

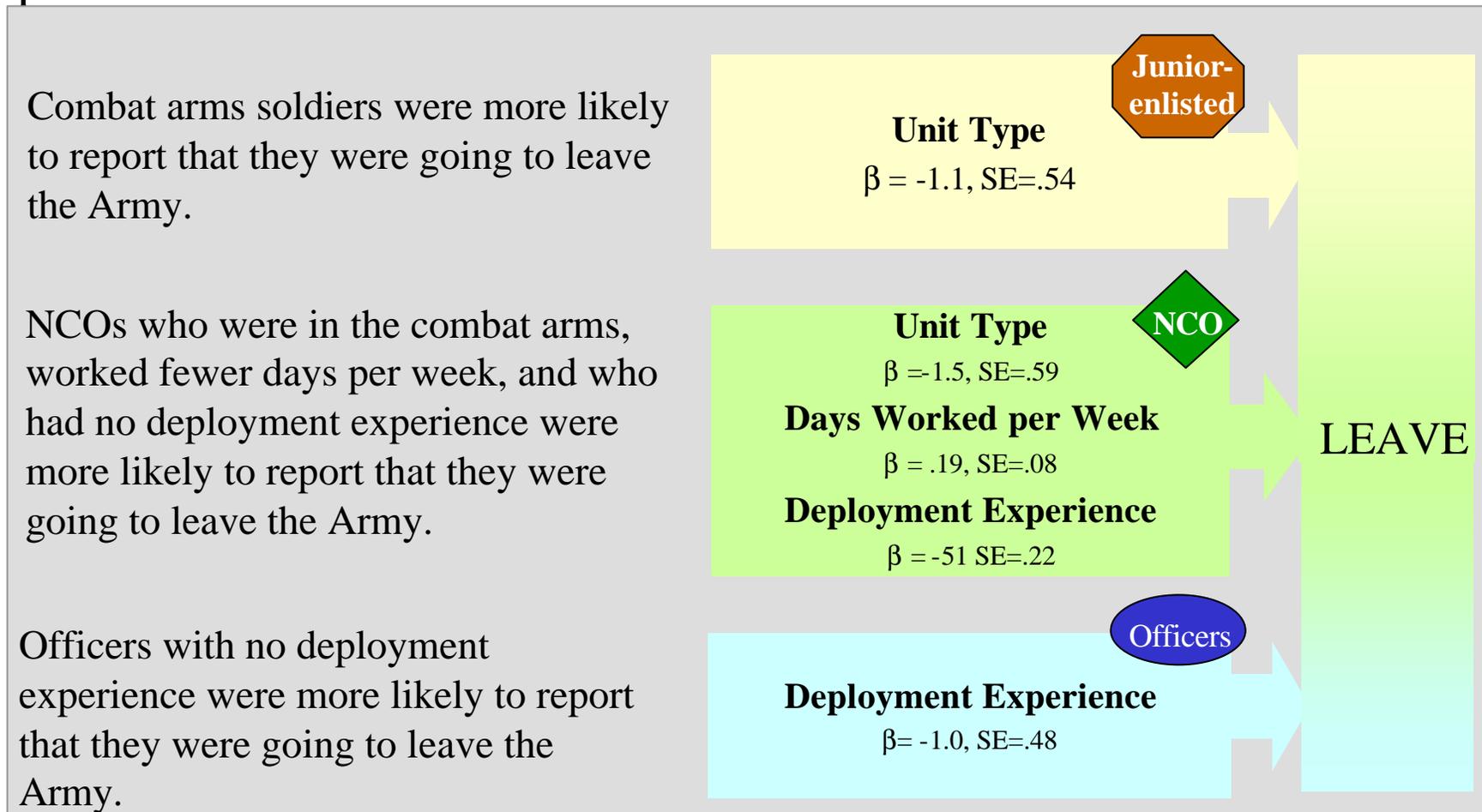
- For all rank groups, there were no differences among career intention categories and days on training exercise.

¹ who reported they were leaving



Predicting who Leaves the Army

- Unit type and deployment experience were the strongest predictors of career intentions.





Interview Data (1 of 2)

Junior-enlisted

Why they are Leaving?

- Initial enlistment plans

“My life goals where to enlist for three, get money for college, and then get out of the military and attend college.”

- Quality of Life

- Disillusioned with Army

“Most of the day you sit around and then when it gets close to quitting time, the unit finds work for us to do.”

- Low job satisfaction

- Weak Leadership

- **OPTEMPO**

“I am used to long work days and hours and I don't have any issues with the current deployments. But in my career I have been on 14 deployments for over 30 days. It is not so much the deployments themselves, but their frequency. I get tired of that.”

Why they are Staying?

- Career development

- Personal Benefits (e.g. travel, education)

“When you sign up, you know it, that is what you are there for, that's what you do.”

- **OPTEMPO**



Interview Data (2 of 2)

Officers

NCO

Why they are Leaving?

- No expectation of change
- Lack of opportunity

"[In the civilian world] I can make a lot more money, work a lot less hours, and see my kids."

- Not meeting personal goals
- Impact on family

- **Workload**

"The demand of training and deployment is too high --the stress constantly put on us".

- **OPTEMPO**

"I've been in worse situations -- Deployments have some advantages, like travel and meeting new people, but also disadvantages - being away from your family."

Why they are Staying?

- Stability
- Personal opportunity
- Satisfaction with job

"I've adjusted to the Army well - I realize the needs of the Army, and well, I love a challenge."

- Duty, Patriotism
- Opportunity to Lead
- Exciting work

- **OPTEMPO**



Overview of OPTEMPO and Career Intentions

- In the current study, the impact of OPTEMPO on soldier retention reveals a complex pattern.

VARIABLE	LEVEL OF IMPACT	CAREER INTENTION
Reasons for Career Decisions		
Work Hours	High Impact	LEAVE
Training Exercises	Moderate Impact	LEAVE
Future Deployments	Moderate to High Impact	LEAVE
Past Deployments	Low to Moderate Impact	LEAVE
Reported Experiences		
Work Hours	No Impact	---
Training Exercises	No Impact	---
Deployment Experience ¹	High	STAY
Subjective Description		
OPTEMPO	None to High	MIXED

¹Deployment experience had no impact on retention for junior-enlisted soldiers.



OPTEMPO Balancing Act - Sustaining Readiness (1 of 2)

- Data indicated that deployments had both a positive and negative impact on career intentions for army personnel.

Army personnel reported intending to leave the military when deployments were:

- too long
- too frequent
- too unpredictable
- poorly planned



Soldiers were more likely to stay in the military when deployments included an opportunity for:

- excitement
- use of skills
- leadership experience
- relevant training





OPTEMPO Balancing Act - Sustaining Readiness (2 of 2)

- Although the perception of long work hours had a negative impact on career intentions, survey data demonstrated that actual self-reported work hours were similar for soldiers who were leaving and for those who were staying in the military.

Soldiers were more likely to leave the military when they had to work long hours because of:

- weak leadership
- poor planning
- lack of resources
- staff shortages
- boredom



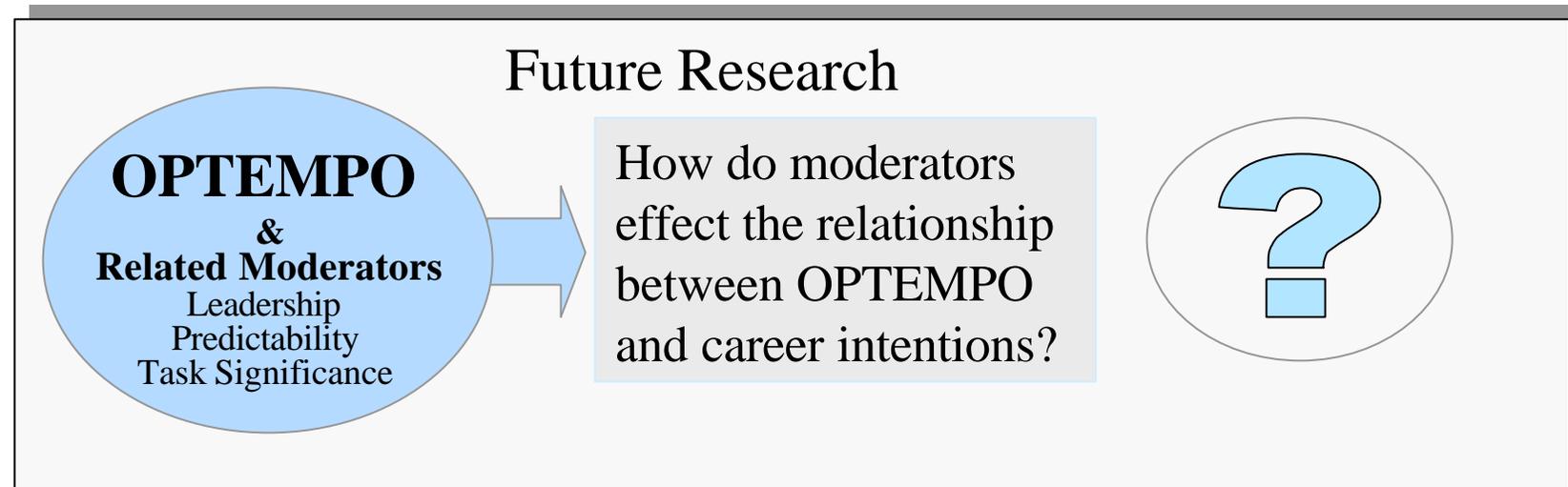
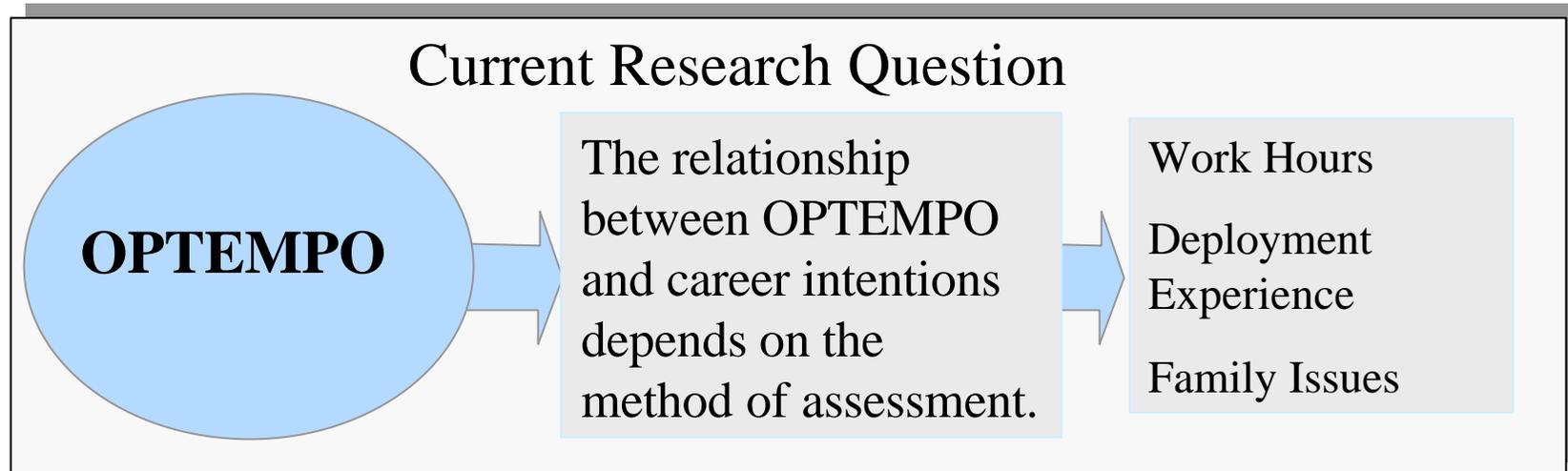
Soldiers did not mind working long hours when:

- the task was well planned
- they were doing their job
- the task was relevant





Discussion: Research Question





Back-up Slides



Overall Reasons for Staying in the Army by Rank

Reason	Overall (%)	Junior- enlisted (%)	NCO (%)	Officer (%)
Travel and adventure	54.7	50.0	59.0	66.1
Helping others	43.8	34.3	51.3	59.7
Health care	41.2	41.7	47.9	27.4
Stability	36.8	45.1	45.8	38.7
Retirement Benefits	34.7	31.3	37.6	35.5
Educational opportunities	32.7	27.8	40.5	29.0
Likelihood of being promoted	31.5	21.6	37.3	53.2
Pursue education	30.3	25.6	41.0	26.2
Military Lifestyle/community	26.5	15.9	32.2	48.4
Job Satisfaction	25.4	16.5	32.2	40.2



Overall Reasons for Leaving in the Army by Rank

Reason	Overall (%)	Junior- enlisted (%)	NCO (%)	Officer (%)
Work hours	63.3	67.0	55.6	67.2
Pursue other interests	61.1	69.3	41.4	72.1
Working conditions	58.0	65.7	49.6	51.6
Job satisfaction	52.9	60.2	44.3	51.6
Not doing the expected job	51.7	62.3	38.5	50.0
Base pay	51.1	63.1	42.7	37.1
Pursue education	50.1	59.7	33.3	45.9
Going on a lot of training exercises	47.2	55.4	37.3	43.5
Military lifestyle	45.7	58.5	33.9	35.5
High workload on family	43.3	42.6	39.3	55.7



Point of Contact

Dr. Amy Adler
ATTN: Medical Research Unit
CMR 442
APO AE 09042-1030

Phone: DSN 371-2626 FAX: DSN 371-3170
Commercial: 06221-172007
Amy.Adler@hbg.amedd.army.mil

Authors of this Report: Ann H. Huffman, Amy B. Adler, Carol A. Dolan,
Jeffrey L. Thomas and Carl A. Castro



SOLDIER CAREER DECISION SURVEY



U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research
U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command

Privacy Act/Informed Consent Information

ver: 2 June 2000

Retention Survey 2

1) **Authority:** 10 U.S.C. Sections 136 and 5 U.S.C. 552a; Executive Order 9397

2) **Disclosure:** I consent to the use of my answers by staff of the U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe/Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (USAMRU-E/WRAIR), to compile statistics of group data. I understand my name or any other data from which I could be recognized will not be available to anyone beyond the professional staff conducting the study. I understand I have the right to withdraw my consent to participate in the study at any time.

3) **Purpose:** USAMRU-E/WRAIR is conducting a survey of soldier attitudes about retention and career decision making.

4) **Uses:** I understand the purpose of this survey is to develop information to benefit soldiers and units, and that I may not directly benefit from this survey.

 Social Security Number

 Date

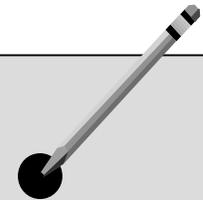
 Signature

RESULTS ARE CONFIDENTIAL!

Instructions:

- Use a #2 pencil

- Mark your answer by filling in the bubble completely like this:



SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER:

0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

RANK:

E	1
O	2
WO	3
	4
	5
	6
	7
	8
	9

TODAY'S DATE:

MONTH	DAY	YEAR
JAN	0	2000
FEB	1	2001
MAR	2	2002
APR	3	2003
MAY	4	2004
JUN	5	
JUL	6	
AUG	7	
SEP	8	
OCT	9	
NOV		
DEC		

Which best describes your career intentions?

Remain in same MOS/Branch	<input type="radio"/>
Change to different MOS/Branch	<input type="radio"/>
Leave active duty but remain in reserves/guard	<input type="radio"/>
Leave active duty after obligation	<input type="radio"/>
Undecided	<input type="radio"/>
Other: _____	<input type="radio"/>

What is your MOS/Branch?

Did you decide to re-enlist during your most recent re-enlistment window? Yes No Not Applicable Undecided

Do you have a mentor in the military?

Yes No

How many years do you have left in your military obligation?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Indefinite
<input type="radio"/>							

Did you receive a re-enlistment bonus?

Yes	<input type="radio"/>
No	<input type="radio"/>
Not Applicable	<input type="radio"/>

May we contact you for a **confidential interview** about your career decision? YES NO

If YES, please provide the following information and someone from the USAMRU-E staff will contact you:

NAME: _____ ADDRESS: _____
(Please print)

TEL (DSN): _____ E-MAIL: _____ (Home): _____

How **much** does each of the following **affect your career decision?**

	DOES NOT APPLY	BIG REASON TO REMAIN	SMALL REASON TO REMAIN	NO IMPACT	SMALL REASON TO LEAVE	BIG REASON TO LEAVE
1. Deploying a lot in recent years	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Expecting to deploy a lot in the future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Going on a lot of training exercises	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. PCSing a lot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Job Satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. My likelihood of being promoted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Military lifestyle/community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Stability gained from military lifestyle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Lack of stability from military lifestyle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Being a dual military family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Educational opportunities while on active duty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I want to pursue my education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I want to pursue other interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Financial problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Base pay	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Health care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. Retirement benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. Re-enlistment bonus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. Impact of high workload on family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. Spouse's educational goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. Spouse's career goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. Spouse's health needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. Children's health needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. Children's other needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. Being a parent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. Being a single parent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27. Travel/adventure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. Helping others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. Not doing the job I expected to do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. Needs of elderly parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. Working Conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. Work Hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33. Living Conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. Never intended to stay beyond obligation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. Battalion leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. NCO leadership at company level	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
37. Officer leadership at company level	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
38. Army senior leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39. Belief in US military policy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40. Belief in peacekeeping missions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
41. Current US economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
42. Other:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Rate the **promotion opportunities** in your MOS/career field?

very low low medium high very high