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**Surface Warfare Officer Retention:
Analysis of Individual Ready Reserve Survey Data**

22 January 2008

by

**Carol Stoker, Research Associate, and
Alice Crawford, Senior Lecturer
Graduate School of Business & Public Policy**

Naval Postgraduate School

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Prepared for: Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California 93943



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Abstract

This study is the second in a series funded by the Chief of Naval Personnel to address low retention of officers in the Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) community. Low junior officer retention is a concern, particularly with respect to SWO women—whose numbers have steadily declined since the repeal of the *Combat Exclusion Act* in 1994.

Studies conducted in this area have found that family-related factors, as well as leadership and culture factors (including morale and lack of mentoring), push both men and women out of the Navy. Nonetheless, the Navy’s primary effort to improve retention has been to introduce the Surface Warfare Officer Continuation Pay (SWOCP) in 1994 and, subsequently, to offer a Critical Skills Retention Bonus. Retention bonuses have not offset the non-monetary concerns, particularly for women. The present study focuses on the non-monetary factors that have received little attention in the past with respect to changes that could be made to improve retention. The findings apply to both men and women.

Unlike previous studies that have assessed intentions of SWOs to stay or leave, the current study is based on a survey of officers who have actually made the decision to leave active duty and who are now in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR).

The data show that family-related factors are the highest-rated influences on the decision to leave active duty; this holds true for both men and women and older vs. younger year groups. Women felt more strongly than men about the influence *some* of these factors had on the decision to leave active duty, but the similarity between the opinions expressed by men and women was surprising. Further, monetary incentives have less influence on retention than family or leadership factors. “Total military pay” was more important to men than to women, but still



placed lower on the list than many other factors that caused men to leave active duty.

Other findings are reported that concern mentoring, gender issues, feelings about the separation decision, and incentives that could encourage this group to consider returning to active duty. More women than men would consider returning, and improvements in leadership were mentioned most often by all groups as a change that needs to be made to improve retention. Finally, recommendations are made for training interventions and research to address leadership issues.

Keywords: Surface Warfare Officer (SWO), retention, Individual Ready Reserve (IRR)



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We appreciate the quick turn-around and support from Navy Personnel Command (Pers-9), which included our survey in its Individual Ready Reserve muster package for Surface Warfare Officers, ensured that the survey was taken, and mailed the responses back to us. The Command's professionalism enabled us to have the unique opportunity of collecting the opinions of officers who have left active duty.

We also thank and express our appreciation to Ms. Karey Shaffer and her staff members David Wood, Chris Woodis and Jeri Larsen for their exceptional administrative support and guidance for this project.

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Executive Summary

This study is the second in a series funded by the Chief of Naval Personnel to address low retention of officers in the Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) community. Low junior officer retention is a concern, particularly with respect to SWO women—whose numbers have steadily declined since the repeal of the *Combat Exclusion Act* in 1994.

Studies conducted in this area have found that there are family-related factors, as well as leadership and culture factors (including morale and lack of mentoring), that push both men and women out of the Navy. Nonetheless, the Navy's primary effort to improve retention has been to introduce the Surface Warfare Officer Continuation Pay (SWOCP) in 1994 and, subsequently, to offer a Critical Skills Retention Bonus. Retention bonuses have not offset the non-monetary concerns, particularly for women. The present study focuses on the non-monetary factors that have received little attention in the past with respect to changes that could be made to improve retention. The findings apply to both men and women.

Unlike previous studies that have assessed intentions of SWOs to stay or leave, the current study is based on a survey of officers who have actually made the decision to leave active duty and who are now in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). During the summer of 2006, Navy Personnel Command (NPC) (PERS-93)—formerly Naval Reserve Personnel Center—conducted a mandatory muster of select IRR members, both officers and enlisted. SWO personnel in the IRR were included. The Naval Postgraduate School, thanks to the support and cooperation from NPC (PERS-93), was able to include a retention survey in the package for all mustering SWOs to receive, complete, and return.

The IRR officers who took this survey represent year groups from 1983 to 2005. The officers in year groups prior to Year Group 1994 (YG94) did not have the option of taking the SWOCP in exchange for a commitment to stay through two Department Head tours, which might have meant their decision-making process was significantly different



than those in later year groups. In recognition of the fact that SWOs in YG94 and later had a different retention decision-making environment than those in YG93 and earlier, the survey analysis in this report separates the respondents into two different year group categories—those in YG93 and Earlier and those in YG94 and Later. All responses are also analyzed by gender. Of the total 551 respondents, 65 percent were in YG94 and Later (70 percent of that group were men), and 35 percent were in YG93 and Earlier (93 percent were men, which meant that the number of women was so small—10—that in most cases the Earlier women’s data were not analyzed).

The demographics of the two year groupings at the time of the IRR muster differed in many ways. The men in YG93 and Earlier are older, more senior, stayed on active duty longer than the Later group, and fewer of them chose the IRR to avoid the risk of being recalled. More of these men are married with dependent children and have unemployed spouses. Thus, we would expect their separation decisions to be different from the men and women in YG94 and later. We would also expect to be more interested in the perspectives of the younger group in that their experiences and perceptions should be more representative of the current environment for junior SWO officers. Oddly enough, however, the data actually show more similarities than differences between the two groups.

Findings

1. Family-related factors are the highest-rated influences on decision to leave active duty; this holds true for both men and women and older vs. younger year groups. Women felt more strongly than men about the influence some of these factors had on the decision to leave active duty. This supports data gathered in other studies based on intentions to leave or stay.
2. Leadership and culture issues have a strong influence on retention and probably cannot be offset by monetary incentives in most cases.
3. Monetary incentives have less influence on retention than family or leadership factors. “Total military pay” was more important to men than to women, but still placed lower on the list than many other factors that caused men to leave active duty.



4. Mentoring is a positive retention factor for both men and women.
5. Discrimination against women—sometimes subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle—and other complex gender issues still exist and can affect retention.
6. The majority of respondents do not regret the decision to leave active duty, but more women than men might consider returning to active duty.
7. Changes in the Navy concerning family and leadership issues are seen as incentives to return to active duty; monetary factors are less influential. For example, the highest-rated factor—overall time spent away from home—was answered “Yes, I would consider returning if there were improvements...” by 17 percent of the men and 28 percent of the women. When including “Maybe” responses, the number who might consider returning jumped to 37 percent for men and 52 percent for women. The second-highest item for women was changes to SWO leadership; 25 percent of the women said “Yes” they would consider returning if leadership changed, with a jump to 40 percent when the “Maybe” answers were included. These are sizeable proportions of the groups!
8. The fact that a proportion of IRR members can identify changes that would make them consider returning to active duty is a positive finding for the community as senior leadership considers retention issues for active duty SWO officers.
9. When respondents were asked, “What ONE thing should be done to improve SWO retention?”, leadership (which includes items related to morale and culture) was the top-rated response for YG94 and Later men (36%) and women (49%) and YG93 and Earlier men (46%).
10. While it is not clear why we have put so much emphasis on monetary incentives for retention to-date while excluding most other issues (except for recent initiatives involving 360-degree feedback and life-work balance), this study and others suggest that the time is right to consider implementing changes that address non-monetary issues. Put very simply, since there are things the Navy can’t change, we should work on some things that we can.

Recommendations

The following recommendations identify initiatives that can influence the retention decisions of both men and women.



1. Analyze 360-degree feedback data available at The Center for Naval Leadership to identify specific areas of leadership that require emphasis in training and education.
2. Should initial analyses of the 360-degree feedback data support it, expand the use of such feedback to communities in the Navy not currently using it. The automated 360 program as part of the SMARTS system is inexpensive and may have the potential to improve leadership more than training interventions. For example, it is known that when leaders derail, it is often due to some fatal flaw known by others but not to them because they did not get the proper feedback. While subordinates rarely give such feedback to seniors, 360-degree feedback provides a vehicle for autonomous input.
3. Review needs for leadership training at various points in the continuum for SWO officers. This effort has already been started by the present authors, and tentative findings suggest that Department Head training is the most important point for changes because Department Heads have the most impact on Division Officers. Such training should explicitly address the relationship between leadership and retention—both the positive and the negative practices and associated outcomes. For example, senior officers must become more aware of the enormous impact they can have on retention when they make their people work unnecessarily long hours while they are in port or on shore tours.
4. Strengthen knowledge of mentoring as an important retention and developmental factor at all points in the leadership continuum. Senior officers cannot be “too busy to mentor.”
5. Strengthen knowledge of important leadership factors when men are leading women. This should be done at key points in the training continuum. (This was a recommendation in the first report in this series.)
6. Analyze costs and benefits of detailing more women to fewer ships. Focus on assigning women as Department Heads to ships that have women on board. (This, too, was a recommendation from the first report in this series.)
7. Continue and accelerate (where possible) all life-work balance initiatives such as geographic stability, telecommuting, and off- and on-ramps. This research shows that these items are important to both men and women.
8. Revise this survey and administer it to other Navy IRR communities.



Introduction and Background

This study is the third in a series sponsored by the Chief of Naval Personnel (N1) to address the issue of retaining women in the Navy's Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) Community. The results, however, provide recommendations to improve retention of both men and women SWOs.

While waiting on funding from N1, NPS researchers solicited help from a thesis student to do preliminary work in the area. Graham (2006) conducted interviews and focus groups with men and women SWOs who had not reached their minimum service obligation. Many of these officers intended to leave the Navy, or at least Surface Warfare; many were unsure, but most had very negative opinions of the SWO community and lifestyle. These were opinions that had also been heard in earlier studies.

When the funding arrived for NPS researchers to take a look at these issues, the decision was made to switch the focus to "successful" women SWOs (women who had committed to stay through two Department Head tours or were senior) to determine what these women might have in common (Crawford, Thomas, Mehay & Bowman, 2006). The motivation of these women was the same as for men: they love driving ships; they are tough and thick skinned; they enjoy the camaraderie and challenges of succeeding in a difficult environment; and they have had mentors—both male and female—who have helped them to succeed (and some who have convinced them to stay in Surface Warfare). Quantitative data that examined the patterns of SWO retention, interviews with SWO men, and patterns of retaining women in the private sector were also reported in this study.

The present study reports on a survey of SWO men and women who have left active duty.



Problem and Objective

Low junior officer retention has been the topic of numerous research efforts. Studies have shown that SWOs who lateral transfer to other communities stay in the Navy longer than those who stay with the Surface Navy (Stoloff, 2007). The Navy needs a healthy retention rate in the SWO community to ensure an adequate number of officers continue on active duty to meet required manning levels at the Department Head level and beyond.

Stoloff (2007) shows that for FY80-97 cohorts, retention is 32 percent for men, and 20 percent for women. He further notes that the gap widened when the *Combat Exclusion Act* was repealed in 1994. In fact, male retention has increased since that point in time, but the retention of women has declined. The steady decrease of retention for women SWOs was also shown by Crawford et al. (2006). Regardless of the gender of those leaving the Surface Navy, all avenues of policy change that could improve retention should be explored.

The objective of this study is to examine the separation decisions made by a select, sizable sample of SWOs now in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) who have already separated from active duty service. This study analyzes the separation data, and then considers the meaningful policy implications that could help the Navy improve SWO retention.

The Navy's previous studies on retention of Surface Warfare Officers have gathered "intention" data from SWOs by means of surveys, focus groups, and interviews. That is, the respondents offered input regarding their future plans to separate or stay on active duty. This IRR Survey study is the first formal research study to examine the separation decision already made by SWOs who have separated from active duty.

Table 1 displays SWO retention rates for officers who accepted the Surface Warfare Officer Continuation Pay (SWOCP) in year groups 1995 through 1999. That is, for each year group (YG), the table presents the percentage of officers who chose



to take the SWOCP and, hence, continued on to Department Head School and subsequent Department Head tours.

**Table 1. SWO Retention Rate Tracking of “SWOCP-takers”
(as of October 2007)
(Navy Personnel Command (PERS-41))**

	YG99	YG95	YG96	YG97	YG98
Rate	31%	35%	35%	35%	30%

Respondents to the IRR survey primarily span year groups 1983 to 2001. Retention rates prior to 1995 are not very pertinent for this study, as the *Combat Exclusion Law* repealed in 1994 significantly changed the career decision-making process for women officers. While Table 1 does not track retention for all respondents’ year groups, the tracking data for year groups 1995-1999 is fairly representative of the trend experienced by the SWO community at the time of administration of the survey.

Retention Analyses from Previous Studies

Stoker and Mehay (2005) examined previous qualitative and quantitative studies impacting retention of SWO women. Their study found that retention of SWO women is primarily impacted by two general factors: a work-personal life imbalance (mostly family-related factors) and a dissatisfaction with the SWO culture.

Stoker and Mehay (2005) found that “Work/Personal Time Balance” and “Overall Time Spent Away from Home” are strong reasons that SWOs choose to separate from active duty. The impact that a SWO career has on the work/family balance strongly influences the retention decision for SWOs, particularly women SWOs. Crawford et al. (2006) also documented the concerns these women have over potential conflicts between staying successful as a SWO and also finding fulfillment as wives and mothers. Thus, unlike more senior women SWOs, this younger generation is not fully satisfied by their career alone; they “want to have it all.”



There has been considerable discussion over the rigidity of the SWO career path and how this particularly impacts women who want to take time out to start a family. At one point, it looked as though the new career path, which leaves a window of time on shore between second Department Head tour and the Executive Officer/Commanding Officer tours would be seen by women as an appropriate time to start their families. Instead, the women interviewed by Crawford et al. (2006) expressed concern that they would get selected for Individual Augmentation during that time and that most shore tours, such as those in the Pentagon, require very long hours anyway.

Parcell (2007) discussed this “push” factor for women SWOs. She commented that there may be little an employer can do to change work-life imbalance, but if it is related to policies, “the Navy needs to minimize inhospitable workplace practices and consider personnel management policies that can provide for a better work/life balance” (Parcell, 2007, p. 19).

Retention is also affected by the unique community of Surface Warfare Officers, which is characterized as having a “traditional, relatively authoritarian leadership style, sea-duty-intensive careers, strenuous at-sea work schedules and a very competitive environment for JO’s” (Stoker & Mehay, 2005). Some women report dissatisfaction with the culture due to feeling marginalized by the male-dominated organization. Crawford et al. (2006) note that this can be a problem particularly when there are very small numbers of women on board ships and when women role models are lacking—particularly women who are married with children. SWO women don’t see role models of how they want to live their lives; they conclude that the choice between career and family is mutually exclusive, and they leave.

Studies also show a low level of morale in the SWO community, which is found to be a contributing factor to low retention, particularly for women. The Navy’s Quick Poll Survey Report in 2004, for example, showed that 79 percent of women and 61 percent of men ranked SWO morale in the top five reasons for wanting to



leave the Navy (Newell, Whittame & Uriell, 2004). In fact, for women, SWO morale was the third highest factor in the list.

This morale factor is, of course, related to culture and also to another key dissatisfier for SWOs—that of leadership. Stoker and Mehay (2005) found that SWO junior officers express a general disillusionment with and lack of faith in their leadership, which spans from the immediate supervisor level (Department Head) through Executive Officer, Commanding Officer, and higher. In general, the low estimation of leadership is defined by micromanagement, a “zero defect” mentality, and a general lack of faith that honest, hard work is rewarded. In fact, leadership is a leading factor for leaving the military—the second leading factor according to results from the Defense Manpower Data Center exit survey (Hoover, Randolph, Elig, & Klein, 2001).

Crawford et al. (2006) confirmed that, even with the women who had chosen to stay, there is concern about negative leadership. For example, many reported that they work unnecessarily long hours only because there is a norm that no one leaves until a senior officer leaves, regardless of whether or not work is done. Such poor leadership practices, in turn, impact work-life balance and family time. (This may be an example of “inhospitable workplace policies” mentioned above.) This study also showed that good leadership practices, such as strong mentoring, positively affect retention for both men and women.

The Navy has implemented one promising leadership initiative: a 360-degree feedback system to give leaders feedback from direct reports, peers, and seniors on what they may not know about their leadership. This feedback is managed by a Navy contractor (PDI) and given by a coach to leadership at the flag officer level, some O-6-level officers (those attending the Navy Corporate Business Course), Prospective Commanding Officer/Prospective Executive Officer School, Department Head School, and Division Officer School. A separate system managed by Center for Naval Leadership is pilot testing an automated 360 system aboard Navy ships,



which is actually part of a bigger measurement system called SMARTS (Pfautz, 2007). Both systems have the potential of improving leadership.

While the Navy is also beginning to explore some “life-work balance” initiatives such as telecommuting and sabbaticals, primary retention efforts to-date have focused on monetary incentives—primarily the Surface Warfare Officer Continuation Pay (SWOCP) and the Critical Skills Retention Bonus (CSRB). The SWOCP reflects the Navy’s effort to increase the number of SWOs who choose to stay in the community on active duty through two afloat Department Head tours. The SWOCP contracts are offered to officers who are selected for assignment as a Department Head on a surface vessel and will complete Surface Warfare Department Head School. The SWOCP was \$50,000 at the time it was offered to the group surveyed here. In return for the pay, the officers are obligated to complete Department Head School and the subsequent two afloat Department Head tours (or the single longer tour that has been determined by PERS-41 to be a two-tour equivalent). The SWOCP program was introduced in 1999. The first officers who were able to take advantage of the SWOCP were those officers in year group 1994.

The impact of the bonus on retention is ambiguous. Crawford et al. (2006) found that the rise in retention after the introduction of the SWOCP may be confounded by patriotism in response to the Global War on Terror, and, in the group studied, SWOCP did not impact the retention decision. Parcell (2007) notes that:

The SWOCP likely has had a positive effect on community retention, although perhaps it is smaller than originally anticipated. However, it does not appear to have helped close the gap between male and female SWO retention. This suggests that retention policies other than direct compensation may need to be developed. (Parcell, 2007, p. 18)

Stoloff (2007) examined retention as a function of years of service, marital and family status, accession source, competitiveness of college attended and college major. He comments that selection policy interventions based on his findings could impact retention but are not a reasonable solution to the problem. He queries, “If selection and classification policies do not provide a solution, where else



should the Navy turn?” (Stoloff, 2007, p. 2). He goes on to comment on the ambiguity of the effects of the SWOCP.

An important point was made by Newell et al. (2004) in their recommendation to increase the SWOCP based on the 2004 Quick Poll results. The authors noted that their recommendation was based on the intentions expressed in the survey and that, “The link between stated intentions and what people would actually do is strong but imperfect” (Newell, et al., 2004, p. 64). The present study provides the opportunity to examine the impact of the family, leadership, and monetary factors on retention from the perspective of SWOs who have actually left active duty. Specifically, we hope to add our results to those of others’ to identify actionable recommendations.

The Individual Ready Reserve (IRR)

Military Service Obligation (MSO):

Every officer who joined Navy active duty after June 1, 1984, has a military service obligation (MSO) of eight years. The vast majority of officers commissioned through OCS or NROTC must serve the first four years on active duty. A very limited number of officers with ROTC commissions have a three-year active duty obligation. Members commissioned from the US Naval Academy (USNA) must serve five years on active duty. A member who serves on active duty for less than his MSO must fulfill his contract by either affiliating with the Navy Reserve and becoming a drilling Reservist or by joining the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). These two organizations are briefly discussed below.

After completing their MSO, members may voluntarily stay in the IRR or may leave the IRR by resigning their commission.

Overview of the Ready Reserve:

The US Navy has both an active duty and Ready Reserve force. As of November 6, 2007, there were 336,596 Navy personnel on active duty, and as of September 2007, there were 128, 421 in the Ready Reserve. The Navy Ready



Reserve has two categories: Individual Ready Reserve (IRR), with 58,488 persons, and Selected Reserve, with 69,933 persons. The Selected Reserve consists of Full-time Support (FTS) persons (whose active duty careers focus on administration and training of the Navy Reserve) and drilling Selected Reservists (SELRES) (who complete 48 drills plus two weeks of annual training per year). The drilling Selected Reservists are the first to be activated.

Requirements for Participation in the IRR:

The Secretary of the Navy may order any Ready Reserve member (including those in the IRR), without their consent, to active duty for not more than 24 consecutive months, per USC Sec 12302. Members of the IRR cannot drill for pay or retirement points, nor are they eligible for annual training. However, they may perform additional duty for pay, such as Additional Duty Training (ADT), Active Duty for Special Work (ADSW), or voluntary mobilization. They also may earn retirement points through completing correspondence courses.

As long as a member completes a "satisfactory year," meeting the minimum requirements of IRR participation, he may stay in the IRR. The requirements include providing current information to the Navy on member address, marital status, dependency status, military qualifications, civilian occupational skills, and availability for service. Each IRR member is also required to annually submit a certificate of physical condition. Members who wish to have their time in the IRR count as "qualifying years" towards retirement must earn additional points beyond the minimum requirements. One key benefit of staying in the IRR versus completely leaving the military is that IRR members may receive retirement pay and benefits at age sixty if they have performed twenty qualifying years of service.

Failure to fully comply with the IRR Annual Reporting Program can result in the member being involuntarily recalled to 45 days of additional active duty. Typically, each IRR member receives an Annual Screening Letter with instructions on how to complete these annual requirements by mail or on-line.



In recent years, during the Global War on Terrorism, the Navy has increased its interest in ensuring IRR members fully comply with their annual reporting requirements. Per VADM J.C. Harvey, N1, CNO, in a January 2007 message:

Annual musters not only afford us the opportunity to collect required information but also allow our FTS and SELRES at the Naval Operational Support Centers (NOSCs) to remind IRR members that there are a lot of opportunities available to them through either more active IRR participation, affiliation with the SELRES, or volunteering to mobilize in support of the GWOT in an IA status.

Timeline of the SWO Career Path

It is important to review the time of each of the various milestones of a SWO's career in order to understand some of the survey responses and also to understand at what key career milestones the respondents chose to leave active duty.

The career path for a SWO involves a series of milestones:

SWOSDOC: Traditionally, officers attended a six-month SWO Division Officer School (SWOSDOC) held in Newport, Rhode Island, before beginning their first sea tour. Year group 2002 was the last year group to attend SWOSDOC. Officers in Year group 2003 were the first group to go directly to their first sea tour after commissioning. SWOSDOC was replaced by computer-based training and on-the-job training on board ship, followed by three weeks at SWOS in Newport at approximately the 18-month point.

First Division Officer (DIVO) Tour: This is typically a two-year sea tour.

Second DIVO Tour: This is typically an 18-month sea tour.

Shore Tour: Typically an officer is given two-year orders for this shore tour. If he selects to accept Surface Warfare Officer Continuation Pay and attend Department Head School, he may be able to spend up to three years on this shore tour.



Department Head (DH) Training: This consists of a two-month training in Dahlgren, Virginia, followed by a six-month DH School in Newport, Rhode Island. Officers must start DH School no later than seven and one-half years after their date of commissioning.

First DH Tour: This typically is an 18-month tour.

Second DH Tour: This is typically an 18-month tour. There are some opportunities for SWOs to combine both DH tours on the same ship and reduce the length of their combined first and second DH tours.

By the end of the second DH tour, after including some pipeline training, it has typically been approximately 10-12 years since a SWO's commissioning. After the second DH tour, there is more variation in the SWO career path. Also, by the conclusion of the second DH tour, a member's Lieutenant Commander selection board has already met and, if selected, he has likely already been promoted to O-4.

Post-DH Shore/Sea Tour and War College/First Joint Tour: The order of these two tours is interchangeable. After these two tours, a member is roughly at 15 ½ years of service. Members are selected for Commander after about 15 years of service, which would be during the second of these two tours. Also, by the conclusion of these tours, a member has been screened for command, enabling him to assume subsequent Executive Officer (XO) and Command Officer (CO) tours.

XO/CO Fleet Up: Combined, these tours last about three years.



Timeline of SWO Promotions

Table 2. Flow Points for Surface Warfare Officers

Rank	Flow Point	Promotion Opportunity
Ensign (0-1)	-	-
Lieutenant J.G.(0-2)	2 years	AFQ (footnote)
Lieutenant (0-3)	4 years	AFQ
Lieutenant Commander (0-4)	9-11 years	80 +/- 10%
Commander (0-5)	15-17 years	70 +/- 10%
Captain (0-6)	21-23 years	50 +/- 10%

Source: BUPERS (PERS-412)

Footnote: AFQ denotes All Fully Qualified

Table 2 reflects “flow points” during a SWO’s career. The flow points are the typical years of service each member has at the time of promotion to each rank. As the table reflects, the promotion opportunity shrinks for each higher rank above Lieutenant.

Key Milestones Concerning the Decision to Separate:

In review, there are several key career milestones that are factors in a SWO’s decision to separate from active duty:

The MSO Factor: Officers must remain on active duty for four years (five if commissioned through the USNA). At the four-year point, they typically will have just been promoted to the rank of 0-3.

The SWOCP Factor: Officers must attend DH School no later than at the point of reaching seven and one-half years of commissioned service. So, the decision to take the SWOCP—which will commit a person to attending DH school and to completing the two subsequent DH tours—is made prior to attending DH tour. (Technically, officers must apply for the SWOCP prior to graduation from



Department Head School; however, most officers make the application decision prior to starting the school.)

Based on two factors above, we see that the first “window of opportunity” for most SWOs to separate from active duty is roughly between four and seven years of active commissioned service. This is when most SWOs are recent 0-3s and have completed their DIVO tours, but have not yet attended DH School.



Methodology

The FY2006 IRR Muster:

During the summer of 2006, Navy Personnel Command (NPC) (Pers-93), formerly Naval Reserve Personnel Command, conducted a mandatory muster of select IRR members, both officers and enlisted. The purpose of the muster was to “assess the overall readiness of the IRR, update our records and provide IRR members with information on current mobilization and Selected Reserve opportunities.” The “on-site” muster required that the designated IRR members report to their local Navy Operational Support Center (NOSC) on a specified date. The members were notified that the muster would last approximately two to four hours and that they would be required to complete several forms to update and verify NPC’s records. They were also notified that every participating member would be paid, by direct deposit, a Muster Duty Allowance of \$161.94.

Members selected for this muster were in specific communities deemed by the Bureau of Navy Personnel (BUPERS) to be “High Demand/Low Density,” such as the special warfare community. In the previous IRR muster held in 2005, the SWO Community was not considered High Demand/Low Density. For the 2006 IRR Muster, however, BUPERS chose to consider the SWO Community High Demand/Low Density and include SWO personnel in the muster.

Navy Personnel Command electronically sent various forms and documentation to the NOSCs, along with instructions that the mustering IRR personnel were to receive hard-copies of the appropriate forms, complete and submit them at the conclusion of the on-site muster period. Of the approximately 58,000-59,000 total members of the IRR in 2006, NPC selected approximately 4,000 members for participation in the muster.

In the spring of 2006, NPC mailed letters to 1,154 SWOs (11XX designators), requiring them to attend the summer 2006 muster. After the IRR muster was



conducted, NPC reported that 567 of the 1,154 responded and received orders. The command assumed that the SWOs who did not respond might not have received the orders, due to inaccurate addresses, or they might have disregarded the mailed instructions. Of these 567 SWOs who responded and were sent orders, the command reported that 522 actually attended the muster.

The SWO IRR Survey

The Naval Postgraduate School, thanks to the support and cooperation from Navy Personnel Command (Pers-9), was able to include in the muster package a SWO IRR retention survey (see Appendix A) for all mustering SWOs to complete and return. After the conclusion of the IRR Muster at each NOSC, the NOSCs mailed the completed retention surveys to NPC, which consolidated the forms and forwarded them to the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS).

The surveys were received in the mail by NPS in fall 2006. The three-page survey was titled “Individual Ready Reserve Surface Warfare Officer Survey” and had numerous pointedly SWO-specific questions. The NOSCs were instructed to only distribute the survey to SWOs. NPC reported that 522 SWOs actually attended the IRR muster. However, after researchers removed surveys that were identified through written comments as being completed by non-SWOs, NPS still received 551 completed surveys. It is possible that some non-SWOs were inadvertently administered the survey, or it may be that NPC reported the incorrect number of completed surveys, but it is not possible to discern this from the survey data.



Survey Results and Analysis

Year and Gender Groups in the Data Analysis

Surface Warfare Officer Continuation Pay (SWOCP) introduced a new factor impacting a SWO's decision to separate or stay on active duty. As discussed earlier, starting with YG94, Department Head-screened SWOs were offered sizable additional pay if they signed a contract to complete Department Head (DH) School and the two subsequent DH tours. In addition to basically forcing the separation decision to occur before the start of Department Head School, the SWOCP also implied that participating officers would need to wait until completing their Department Head tours before again having the opportunity to separate. The officers in year groups prior to YG94 did not have the option of signing this type of contract, which might have meant their decision-making process was significantly different than those in later year groups. In recognition of the fact that SWOs in YG94 and later had a different retention decision-making environment than those in YG93 and earlier, the survey analysis in this report separates the respondents into two different year group categories—those in YG93 and Earlier and Those in YG94 and Later. Responses are also classified by gender for each question, as there is particular interest in determining the whether the factors influencing the separation decision are different for men than for women.

Table 3. Total Number of Respondents by Year Group and Gender

Year Group	Men	Women	Total
94 and Later	276 (70%)	119 (30%)	395 (100%)
93 and Earlier	146 (93%)	10 (7%)	156 (100%)

There were 46 respondents who did not respond to Question 7, which asked for one's year group, but who did respond to Question 8, which asked for one's birth year. For purposes of survey data analysis, the assumption is made that a



respondent, on average, is commissioned at about age twenty-one—a fairly common age to be upon graduation from college. If a twenty-one-year-old person received his commission in 1994, he would have a birth year of 1973. Those respondents born in 1973 and later who did not provide a year group, were categorized into the “YG94 or Later” group and those born prior to 1973 were categorized into the “YG93 or Earlier” group.

To facilitate meaningful comparisons across gender and year group categories, the responses to each survey question are presented in terms of percentages. The category of women respondents in YG93 or Earlier is the only category that has too few respondents to use percentages alone. For this category, the actual number of women is presented in parentheses next to the percentage figure. We begin the presentation of the data with the demographics of the survey respondents.

The other demographics of the respondents are summarized in Table 4 and shown in full in Appendix B.



Table 4. Summary of Respondent Demographics

	YG94 and Later Men	YG94 and Later Women	YG93 and Earlier Men
Are Married	59%	67%	82%
Have Children	30%	28%	69%
Age Range	25-37	25-37	41-53
Rank	90% = 0-3/0-4	80% = 0-3/0-4	93% = 0-4/05
Active Duty Spouse	3%	34%	2%
Unemployed Spouse	13%	5%	34%
USNA	29%	37%	34%
NROTC	47%	51%	38%
OCS	17%	7%	23%
Career Stage at Separation	79% by End of DIVO Tours	83% by End of DIVO Tours	59% by End of DIVO Tours
Had Job Offer when Left AC	47%	38%	52%
Chose IRR to Avoid Risk of Recall	34%	43%	10%

Responses to Survey Questions

IRR versus Selected Reserve Affiliation Decision

Respondents were asked the following question: “Why did you separate and join the IRR rather than becoming a drilling Navy Reservist?” Four response options were provided: “Risk of Recall/Mobilization,” “Did not want to anything to do with the Navy,” “I did not know enough about Navy Reserve opportunities,” and “Other.”



Some respondents commented under “Other” as their only response and some respondents commented under “Other” in addition to selecting one of the three closed-ended options.

Table 5. IRR versus SELRES Decision for YG94 and Later by Gender
(Percentage)

	Risk of recall/ mobilization	Did not want to continue with Navy	Did not know enough about Reserve	Other/ Additional Comment	No Response
Men	34	14	4	48	0
Women	43	10	2	44	1

- Of the three response options (not including additional comments) provided in the survey, most respondents chose not to affiliate with the Navy Reserve as a drilling Selected Reservist (SELRES) because they did not want to risk being recalled back to active duty. This reason is slightly stronger for women than for men.
- While only a small percentage of respondents selected the option, “I did not know enough about Navy Reserve opportunities,” the actual percentage of respondents who did not have adequate information about the Reserve to make an affiliation decision may be higher. Several respondents’ written comments state they did not affiliate with the Navy Reserve because they received an “exit bonus” or severance pay package from the Navy and, hence, were ineligible to drill for pay. In reality, members who receive separation pay are eligible to receive drill pay as a Navy Reservist, but later, if they become eligible for a Reserve retirement pay, will have to pay back the separation pay. Several other respondents’ comments state they had “twice failed to select” to the next higher paygrade and, hence, were unable to continue service in the Navy Reserve. However, in reality, members can twice fail to select while on active duty and then affiliate with the Reserve. Once Reservists, they are allowed two more failures. Even then, Lieutenant Commanders are still allowed to drill until they reach 20 years of commissioned service, after which they would be discharged. Hence, both of these types of comments reveal possible misunderstanding of the eligibility rules for affiliation with the Navy Reserve.



Written Comments for YG994 and Later:

- Among respondents’ written comments, the perceived time commitment associated with being SELRES is the primary reason for the decision to go into the IRR rather than to affiliate with the Navy Reserve.
- Women, more frequently than men, comment that they feel it would be too difficult to meet the time commitment required by the Navy Reserve while also tending to a family and additionally, in some cases, while the spouse is on active duty.

Table 6. Why IRR versus SELRES for YG93 and Earlier by Gender
(Men-Percentage; Women-Percentage/Frequency)

	Risk of recall/ mobilization	Did not want to continue with Navy	Did not know enough about Reserves	Other/ Additional Comments	No Response
Men	10	1	8	79	1
Women	22(4)	6(1)	6(1)	66(8)	0

- A smaller percentage of respondents in YG93 and Earlier than of those in the more recent year groups indicates that they did not affiliate with the Navy Reserve due to concern of being mobilized.

Senior Officer Presence in the IRR

It is important to review several aspects of the Navy Reserve billet system to best understand why a seemingly large number of senior officers are in the IRR.

Junior officers—LCDR and below—typically are able to maintain a pay status in the Navy Reserve. While a few pay billets for junior officers require selection by a board, the vast majority of junior officer billets can be filled without selection by a board. However, senior Reserve officers must be selected by a board for pay billets. Every year, a national selection board is held to select O-5 and above officers to fill applicable Reserve billets. Billet assignment duration is typically two years; each year, tenure in roughly half the Reserve senior billets expires, resulting in a sizable annual inflow and outflow of senior officers in pay billets. The number of senior



officers applying for billets outnumber the number of available pay billets. Officers who are not selected for a pay billet may retire, if eligible, or may transfer to the IRR.

While in the IRR, officers may continue to apply for billets in subsequent boards in hopes of rejoining the Navy Reserve in a pay status. In this way, the IRR acts as a sort of revolving door for senior officers in the Navy Reserve. Some senior officers enter the IRR directly from active duty and choose merely to remain in the IRR to reach retirement eligibility, with no intention of being a drilling Navy Reservist. However, a great many senior officers in the IRR are previously drilling Reservists and are in a virtual “holding pattern” in the IRR while they seek to regain a pay billet in a future selection board.

The respondents in YG94 and Later, as compared to those in YG93 and Earlier, are much more likely to be junior officers than senior officers. Hence, it is reasonable to expect more respondents in YG93 and Earlier, than in the later group, to be prior drilling Reservists.

Written Comments for YG93 and Earlier

- For respondents in YG93 and Earlier, the majority of written comments regarding why they are in the IRR rather than a drilling Reservist indicate that they already were previously in the Navy Reserve and were “promoted out of a pay billet.” This type of comment implies that they were transferred from the Navy Reserve into the IRR due to being in a paygrade that requires board selection for a billet and that they were not selected for a pay billet. As this YG93 and Earlier group has relatively more senior officers than the other group, it is not surprising that more of its respondents have already been in the Navy Reserve, as mentioned above.
- Similar to the comment from respondents in YG94 and Later, comments from respondents in the earlier year groups also reveal that difficulty in meeting the Navy Reserve’s time commitment is a reason for staying the IRR.

Factors That Influenced the Decision to Leave Active Duty

The survey asked respondents the following question: “To what degree did the following factors influence your decision to leave active duty?” Respondents



were provided with a list of 28 factors that might have influenced their separation decision. They were asked to rate the degree of influence of each factor using the following four options: “Very Strong Influence,” “Strong Influence,” “Minor Influence,” and “No Influence.”

The following sections provide two tables—one for YG94 and Later and one for YG93 and Earlier—with the order of magnitude of each factor’s influence on the separation decision for respondents. The percentage listed next to each factor represents the percentage of respondents who felt each factor was either a “Very Strong” or a “Strong” Influence.

Following each of the two year group summary tables, a more detailed examination of each factor’s degree of influence on the respondents’ separation decision is provided.

Comparison of 28 Separation Factors—YG94 and Later

Table 7. Degree of Influence of Factors on Separation Decision for YG94 and Later by Gender

<u>"Very Strong" or" Strong" Influence—Year Group 94 and Later</u> (Percentage)			
<u>Factors in Order of Influence</u>	<u>% Men</u>	<u>% Women</u>	<u>Factors in Order of Influence</u>
1. Strain on family life/family separation	70	75	1. Strain on family life/family separation
1. Overall time spent away from home.	70	74	2. Ability to start/grow a family.
2. Imbalance between work and personal time.	64	72	3. Imbalance between work and personal time.
3. Ability to start/grow a family.	63	66	4. Overall time spent away from home.
4. Uncertainty of work schedule.	48	54	5. Uncertainty of work schedule.
5. Quality of leadership in SWO community.	47	50	6. Balancing my Navy career with a spouse's career.
6. Morale in the SWO community.	40	44	7. Quality of leadership in SWO community.
7. Work load/hours in port.	36	41	8. Work load/hours in port.
8. Insufficient geographic stability in tours.	35	41	8. Morale in the SWO community.
8. Work load/hours while at sea.	35	40	9. Work load/hours while at sea.
9. Separation from my children while deployed.	31	32	10. Ability to develop personal relationships



10. Ability to develop personal relationships.	30	32	10. Insufficient geographic stability in tours.
11. "Zero defects" SWO environment/honest mistakes punished.	28	30	11. Separation from my children while deployed.
12. Balancing my Navy career with a spouse's career.	25	28	12. Lack of SWO role model.
13. Lack of SWO role model.	20	26	13. Lack of SWO mentor.
14. Amount of total military pay and compensation.	19	21	14. "Zero defects" SWO environment/honest mistakes punished.
14. Lack of SWO mentor.	19	17	15. Existence of sexual discrimination.
15. Lack of opportunity for funded graduate education.	16	15	16. Lack of opportunity for full-time graduate education.
16. Opportunities for promotion.	15	12	17. Lack of opportunity for funded graduate education.
17. Unable to lateral transfer to another community.	14	10	18. Lack of opportunity for one-year sabbatical.
18. Recognition (FITREPs/Awards, etc.).	13	9	19. Amount of total military pay and compensation.
19. Lack of opportunity for full-time graduate education.	12	8	20. Recognition (FITREPs/Awards, etc.).
20. Amount of SWO Continuation Pay.	7	8	20. Unable to lateral transfer to another community.
21. Amount of Critical Skills Bonus.	6	6	21. Opportunities for promotion.
21. Lack of opportunity for one-year sabbatical.	6	6	21. Amount of SWO Continuation Pay.
22. Navy medical benefits.	5	6	21. Navy medical benefits.
23. Navy retirement benefits.	2	4	22. Amount of Critical Skills Bonus.
23. Existence of sexual discrimination.	2	3	23. Navy retirement benefits.

Note: The number of respondents varied slightly for each of the 28 response options; each question had approximately 260-262 male respondents and 104-107 women respondents.

- These factors fall into one of three categories: 1) family/personal time; 2) leadership—factors that either senior Navy leadership or immediate leaders can control such as morale, culture, sexual discrimination, or hours in port; and 3) benefits, some guaranteed (e.g., retirement pay), and some not, such as graduate education, or a lateral transfer. However, there is overlap among some of these factors. For example, work hours in port is widely reported as a leadership factor—senior leaders keeping people longer than necessary or “Navy Leadership” putting too many requirements on ships. On the other hand, are hours while deployed hard requirements or the result of leader preferences? In this report, work/load hours in port is counted as a leadership factor,



while work/load hours at sea is not. In the analyses that follow, work hours at sea rank lower as an influence on separation than work hours in port. This is consistent with earlier research by Crawford et al. (2006) in which officers repeatedly said that they didn't mind being deployed—it was doing the work that they enjoyed about the Navy. It was long hours in port that were demoralizing and considered unnecessary. This is one of several items that should be improved on a follow-on survey to more specifically determine what respondents are reacting to. Similarly, is recognition a function of leadership or can it be seen as a “benefit”? This item was included here as a benefit.

- There are seven family/personal factors, and these ratings (when ordered from highest to lowest) place as the top four for both men and women. If the list is broken into thirds, other family/personal factors appear in the second third of women's ratings. There are 10 leadership items, and these appear in the first and second thirds of the list for both men and women. Last, there are 11 benefit items, and with a few exceptions, these items appear in the bottom third of the ordering of the ratings. The exceptions are “Amount of total military pay,” “Funded graduate education,” and “Promotion opportunities” for men, and the two graduate education items for women.
- It is worth noting that among the benefit items in the bottom third of this list, both men and women rate the bonuses very low as compared other factors that caused them to separate. These factors placed in the lowest four ratings for women and the bottom six for men.
- Not surprisingly, a greater percentage of women (17%) than men (2%) rate “Existence of sexual discrimination” as a very strong or strong influence on separation. In fact, this factor rating is fifteenth (middle of the list) for the women in this year group.
- Given the literature described earlier, the most surprising aspect of these findings is the similarity in the order of the rating of the factors for men and women. Two notable differences are the placement of “Balancing my Navy career with a spouse's career,” (rated sixth highest by women and twelfth by men), and “Amount of total military pay and compensation” (rated fourteenth highest by men and nineteenth by women). “Ability to start/grow a family” is rated high by both men and women, but the percentage for women is nine points higher. “Opportunities for promotion” was rated higher by men than by women.

The table in the previous section presents the percentage of respondents who rate each factor as having either a “Very Strong” or “Strong” influence in the separation decision. In some cases, respondents in a gender/year group category



were fairly split in terms of considering a factor to have a very strong or strong influence. However, in other cases, when evaluating the influence of a factor, respondents sided predominantly with either “Very Strong” or “Strong.”

It may be helpful to shed further light on how extreme an influence respondents consider each factor to be. In this section, we will examine those influential factors that the percentage of respondents considered being predominantly either “Very Strong” or “Strong.” For purposes of this report, if the percentage of respondents rating a factor’s influence as “Very Strong” is within ten percentage points of the percentage rating the influence as “Strong,” it is considered a fairly even split.

Of the 28 factors that were presented in the survey, 21 have a fairly even split of respondents rating them as “Very Strong” or “Strong.” With each of the remaining seven separation factors, respondents’ evaluations weigh more heavily on either “Very Strong” or “Strong,” as presented below.



Table 8. Influence on Separation Factors—YG94 and Later: Differences Greater than 10 Percentage Points between "Very Strong" and "Strong"

Separation Factor	Men		Women	
	Very Strong	Strong	Very Strong	Strong
Imbalance between work and personal time	- ¹	-	46	26
Strain on family life/family separation	43	27	52	23
Separation from children while deployed	23	8	24	6
Ability to start/grow a family	37	26	50	24
Balancing Navy career with spouse's career	-	-	34	16
Overall time spent away from home	-	-	49	17
Uncertainty of work schedule	-	-	34	20

- The three family-specific factors are predominantly “Very Strong” separation decision influences for both men and women in YG94 and Later, although two of these are stronger for women—which is consistent with the literature described earlier.
- Work-personal time imbalance, spouse-member career imbalance, time away from home, and work schedule uncertainty are predominantly “Very Strong” influences only for women.

¹ The “-“ symbol indicates a difference of under 10% for men



Comparison of 28 Separation Factors—YG93 and Earlier

Table 9. Degree of Influence of Factors on Separation Decision for YG93 and Earlier by Gender

<u>"Very Strong" or "Strong" Influence</u>			
(Percentage for Men, Percentage/Frequency for Women)			
Factors in Order of Influence	% Men	% / # Women	Factors in Order of Influence
1. Ability to start/grow a family.	58	50/5	1. Uncertainty of work schedule.
2. Strain on family life/family separations.	53	40/4	2. Imbalance between work and personal time.
3. Overall time spent away from home.	52	40/4	2. Strain on family life/family separation.
4. Imbalance between work and personal time.	48	40/4	2. Ability to start/grow a family.
5. Separation from my children while deployed.	44	40/4	2. Work load/hours while in port.
6. Work load/hours while in port.	35	40/4	2. Opportunities for promotion.
7. Morale in the SWO community.	29	40/4	2. Recognition (FITREPs/Awards, etc.).
8. Uncertainty of work schedule.	28	30/3	3. Ability to develop personal relationships.
9. Work load/hours while at sea.	27	30/3	3. Balancing Navy career with spouse's career.
9. Quality of leadership in SWO community.	27	30/3	3. Overall time spent away from home.
10. Ability to develop personal relationships.	23	30/3	3. Insufficient geographic stability in tours.
10. Amount of total military pay.	23	30/3	3. Morale in the SWO community.
11. Insufficient geographic stability in tours.	22	30/3	3. Quality of leadership in SWO community.
11. "Zero defects" SWO environment/honest mistakes punished.	22	30/3	3. Lack of SWO role model.
12. Opportunities for promotion.	20	30/3	3. Lack of SWO mentor.
13. Lack of SWO role model.	19	30/3	3. Existence of sexual discrimination.
14. Recognition (FITREPs/Awards, etc.).	15	20/2	4. Separation from children while deployed.
14. Lack of SWO mentor.	15	20/2	4. Work load/hours while at sea.
15. Amount of SWO Continuation Pay.	13	20/2	4. "Zero defects" SWO environment/honest mistakes punished.
16. Balancing my Navy career with a spouse's career.	12	20/2	4. Amount of Critical Skills Bonus.



17. Unable to lateral transfer to another community.	10	20/2	4. Navy medical benefits.
18. Navy retirement benefits.	8	20/2	4. Lack of opportunity for one-year sabbatical.
19. Amount of Critical Skills Bonus.	6	20/2	4. Lack of opportunity for funded graduate education.
19. Lack of opportunity for funded graduate education.	6	20/2	4. Lack of opportunity for full-time graduate education.
19. Lack of opportunity for full-time graduate education.	6	10/1	5. Unable to lateral transfer to another community.
20. Lack of opportunity for one-year sabbatical.	5	10/1	5. Amount of SWO Continuation Pay.
21. Navy medical benefits.	3	10/1	5. Amount of total military pay and compensation.
22. Existence of sexual discrimination.	0	10/1	5. Navy retirement benefits.

Note: The number of respondents varied slightly for each of the 28 response options; each question had approximately 140-143 male respondents and 9-10 women respondents.

- None of the ratings for “Very Strong” or “Strong” are as high for those in YG93 and Earlier as in YG94 and Later. There is no way to explain why one group’s ratings are so different from the other’s. Therefore, it is more important to examine the ordering of the ratings—highest to lowest—of the factors when the two groups are compared.
- As with respondents in YG94 and Later, the respondents in YG93 and Earlier place highest priority on family and personal time concerns, with respect to influences on the separation decision. In fact, the five most influential factors for men all relate to the family/personal-work life imbalance. These factors are rated at the top for women as well, although the very small sample size of women in YG93 and Earlier precludes meaningful analysis. In this section, analysis of the responses to Question 12 for those in YG93 and Earlier will be limited to men, unless otherwise stated.
- Interestingly, many of the leadership factors were rated similarly by men in YG93 and Earlier as compared to men and women in YG94 and Later. Attitudes about role models were slightly different for the two groups (fewer respondents in YG93 and Earlier rated that factor as a “Very Strong” or “Strong” influence as compared to the later group), but responses on the influence of the lack of a mentor were similar.
- Theoretically, respondents in YG93 and Earlier should not have been offered the opportunity to accept the SWOCP, since it was first



introduced to officers in later year groups. Of the 157 respondents in YG93 and Earlier, nineteen men and one woman actually responded that the amount of the SWOCP had a very strong or strong influence on their decision to separate. In hindsight, this group may have been reacting to the fact that they were not offered a bonus. It is not possible to compare the influence of the SWOCP across our two year-group categories, since it is primarily not applicable to those in the earlier year groups. This is an item that needs to be changed if this survey is administered again.

- Medical and retirement benefits have a low influence on those in YG93 and Earlier, as with YG94 and Later, although pay was rated slightly higher by the earlier year group.
- In general, the men in YG93 and Earlier followed the same pattern as the later group—rankings were highest for family factors, followed by a mix of family and leadership factors, with benefits primarily in the bottom third of the list. The exceptions were: “Amount of total military pay” (rated tenth), “Opportunities for promotion” (rated twelfth), and “Recognition (FITREPS/awards, etc.)” (rated fourteenth).
- When the “Very Strong” ratings were separated out for this group, only one factor—“Strain on family life/family separation”—was rated predominately in this category (32%) as compared to the “Strong” category (21%).

Current Feeling about Separation Decision

In this question, respondents were asked which of four statements (selecting any that apply) describe their current feeling about their separation decision.



Table 10. Current Feeling about Separation Decision for FY94 and Later
 (Percentage)
 (Listed in order of percentage of respondents who agree with each statement)

	Men	Women
“I do not regret leaving my active duty SWO career at all.”	82	81
“I sometimes wish I had stayed on active duty as a SWO.”	11	8
“My civilian work/lifestyle is not as great an improvement over active duty as I’d hoped.”	7	6
“I would return to active duty if my separation time were not a liability to my promotion prospects.”	3	4

- Men and women share the same order of agreement regarding the four statements. The majority of both genders do not regret leaving their active duty SWO career.



Table 11. Current Feeling about Separation Decision for FY93 and Earlier
 (Men: Percentage, Women: Percentage/Frequency)
 (Listed in order of percentage of *men* who agree with each statement)

	Men	Women
“I do not regret leaving my active duty SWO career at all.”	72	70 (7)
“I sometimes wish I had stayed on active duty as a SWO.”	17	10 (1)
“I would return to active duty if my separation time were not a liability to my promotion prospects.”	5	20 (2)
“My civilian work/lifestyle is not as great an improvement over active duty as I’d hoped.”	4	0 (0)

- Similar to respondents in YG94 and Later, the majority of men and women in YG93 and Earlier do not regret leaving their active duty SWO career at all.

Improvements That Might Lead to Return to Active Duty

This question explores what factors might entice a separated SWO to return to active duty. The following statement is posed: “I would now consider returning to active duty if there were significant improvements in: (*factor*).” Seventeen factors were presented, with the opportunity for respondents to indicate “Yes,” “No,” or “Maybe” for each factor. Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide a written comment, if desired. The following table presents the percentage of respondents who indicated “Yes” in response to whether they would now consider returning to active duty if there were significant improvements in the stated factor.



**Table 12. Potential Influences on Returning to Active Duty: "Yes"
Responses for YG94 and Later by Gender²
(Percentage)**

MEN	Yes	Yes	WOMEN
1. Overall time spent away from home.	17	28	1. Overall time spent away from home.
2. Work load/hours in port.	15	25	2. Quality of leadership in SWO community.
2. Certainty of work schedule.	15	21	3. Morale in the SWO community.
3. Ability to lateral transfer to another community.	14	21	3. Certainty of work schedule.
4. Geographic stability.	13	20	4. Work load/hours in port.
4. Opportunities for promotion.	13	19	5. Geographic stability.
4. Morale in the SWO community.	13	17	6. Ability to lateral transfer to another community.
4. Quality of leadership in SWO community.	13	16	7. Opportunities for one-year sabbatical.
5. Work load/hours at sea.	11	16	7. Opportunities for full-time graduate education.
6. Amount of total military pay and compensation.	9	13	8. Work load/hours at sea.
6. Opportunities for full-time graduate education.	9	13	8. Opportunities for funded graduate education.
7. Amount of SWO Continuation Pay.	8	11	9. Amount of total military pay and compensation.
7. Opportunities for funded graduate education.	8	9	10. Amount of SWO Continuation Pay.
8. Opportunities for one-year sabbatical.	7	9	10. Amount of Critical Skills Bonus.
9. Navy retirement benefits.	6	8	11. Opportunities for promotion.
10. Amount of Critical Skills Bonus.	5	7	12. Navy medical benefits.
10. Navy medical benefits.	5	6	13. Navy retirement benefits.

- Among respondents in YG94 and Later, for each “potential improvement factor” presented, proportionately more women than men indicate they would consider returning to active duty.
- After “Overall time spent away from home,” personal time-related and leadership factors are most influential for both men and women.

² The number of respondents varied slightly for each of the 17 response options; each question had approximately 257-264 male respondents and 110-111 women respondents.



- Opportunities for promotion are more important to men than to women.
- Quality of leadership and morale in the community is high on the list for both men and women, although women consider SWO leadership and morale to be potential “rejoin drivers” at nearly twice the rate as do men.
- The benefit, “Ability to lateral transfer to another community” is high on the list for both men and women.
- Improvements in monetary factors (i.e., SWOCP, military pay, and a bonus), as well as indirect monetary factors (i.e., retirement and medical benefits), have relatively little influence in enticing both men and women respondents to return to active duty.

In addition to those respondents who say they *would* consider returning to active duty (as presented above), some respondents indicate that they *might* consider rejoining. In fact, in the gender-specific tables below, we see that a sizable percentage of respondents indicate they either would or might (combined) be influenced to rejoin, given improvements in certain factors. However, there are still more negative than positive responses, which is consistent with the feelings about the separation decision (Table 24)—showing that the majority do not regret their decision to leave active duty.



Table 13. Potential Influences on Returning to Active Duty for Men in YG94 and Later: Combined “Yes” and “Maybe” Responses (Percentage)

	Yes	Maybe	Combined Yes & Maybe
1. The overall time spent away from home.	17	20	37
2. Geographic stability.	13	16	29
2. Work load/hours in port.	15	14	29
2. Ability to lateral transfer to another community.	14	15	29
3. Certainty of work schedule.	15	13	28
4. Quality of leadership in the SWO community.	13	13	26
5. Morale in the SWO community.	13	12	25
5. Amount of total military pay and compensation.	9	16	25
6. Work load/hours at sea.	11	13	24
7. Opportunities for promotion.	13	9	22
7. Amount of SWO Continuation Pay.	8	14	22
8. Opportunities for one-year sabbatical.	7	14	21
9. Opportunities for full-time graduate education.	9	11	20
10. Amount of Critical Skills Bonus.	5	14	19
10. Navy retirement benefits.	6	13	19
11. Opportunities for funded graduate education.	8	10	18
12. Navy medical benefits.	5	12	17

- The top “Combined” factor is the same as the top “Yes”-only factor—overall time spent away from home. Over a third of men in YG94 and Later feel that improving the overall time away from home would or might cause them to consider rejoining active duty.
- Pay and benefits remain in the lower positions of these ratings.



Table 14. Potential Influences on Returning to Active Duty for Women in YG94 and Later: Combined “Yes” and “Maybe” Responses (Percentage)

	Yes	Maybe	Yes/Maybe
1. The overall time spent away from home.	28	24	52
2. Certainty of work schedule.	21	21	42
3. Geographic stability.	19	21	40
4. Ability to lateral transfer to another community.	17	22	39
5. Work load/hours in port.	20	18	38
5. Quality of leadership in the SWO community.	25	13	38
6. Morale in the SWO community.	21	14	35
7. Opportunities for one-year sabbatical.	16	18	34
8. Opportunities for full-time graduate education.	16	17	33
9. Opportunities for funded graduate education.	13	19	32
10. Work load/hours at sea.	13	18	31
11. Amount of total military pay and compensation.	11	13	24
12. Navy medical benefits.	7	16	23
13. Amount of SWO Continuation Pay.	9	13	22
13. Amount of Critical Skills Bonus.	9	13	22
14. Opportunities for promotion.	8	13	21
14. Navy retirement benefits.	6	15	21

- When combining the “Yes” and “Maybe” responses for YG94 and Later, women are still more interested than men in returning to active service given potential improvements in specific factors. In fact, over half of these women would or might consider rejoining were there an improvement in the overall time spent away from home.
- The pattern of lower ratings for pay and benefits holds for this group.



Table 15. Potential Influences on Returning to Active Duty: "Yes" Responses for YG93 and Earlier by Gender³
(Percentage/Frequency)

MEN	Yes	Yes	WOMEN
1. Work load/hours in port.	18	40/4	1. Opportunities for promotion.
2. Geographic stability.	16	30/3	2. Geographic stability.
3. Overall time spent away from home.	15	30/3	2. Morale in the SWO community.
3. Opportunities for promotion.	15	20/2	3. The overall time spent away from home.
4. Quality of leadership in SWO community.	14	20/2	3. Work load/hours at sea.
4. Amount of total military pay and compensation.	14	20/2	3. Work load/hours in port.
5. Morale in the SWO community.	13	20/2	3. Certainty of work schedule.
6. Opportunities for funded graduate education.	12	20/2	3. Amount of Critical Skills Bonus.
7. Certainty of work schedule.	11	20/2	3. Amount of total military pay and compensation.
7. Navy retirement benefits.	11	20/2	3. Opportunities for one-year sabbatical.
8. Ability to lateral transfer to another community.	10	20/2	3. Opportunities for funded graduate education.
8. Work load/hours at sea.	10	20/2	3. Opportunities for full-time graduate education.
8. Opportunities for full-time graduate education.	10	10/1	4. Ability to lateral transfer to another community.
8. Amount of SWO Continuation Pay.	10	10/1	4. Quality of leadership in SWO community.
9. Opportunities for one-year sabbatical.	9	10/1	4. Amount of SWO Continuation Pay.
9. Navy medical benefits.	9	10/1	4. Navy retirement benefits.
10. Amount of Critical Skills Bonus.	6	10/1	4. Navy medical benefits.

³ The number of respondents varied slightly for each of the 17 response options; each question had approximately 257-264 male respondents and 110-111 women respondents.



- Similar to YG94 and Later, personal time-related, leadership/morale-related factors, and the opportunity for promotion have the greatest influence on respondents' consideration of returning to active duty, while incentive-related factors (benefits, pay, education, etc.) and workload at-sea are least influential.

As was done with the later year group category, we now turn to the gender-specific tables displaying the combined "Yes" and "Maybe" responses to the potential rejoin factors.

Table16. Potential Influences on Returning to Active Duty for Men in YG93 and Earlier: Combined "Yes" and "Maybe"

(Percentage)			
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Combined Yes & Maybe</u>
1. The overall time spent away from home.	15	18	33
2. Amount of total military pay and compensation.	14	16	30
3. Geographic stability.	16	12	28
3. Work load/hours in port.	18	10	28
4. Opportunities for promotion.	15	10	25
4. Morale in the SWO community.	13	12	25
5. Quality of leadership in the SWO community.	14	10	24
5. Navy retirement benefits.	11	13	24
6. Certainty of work schedule.	11	12	23
6. Opportunities for funded graduate education.	12	11	23
7. Ability to lateral transfer to another community.	10	12	22
7. Opportunities for full-time graduate education.	10	12	22
8. Work load/hours at sea.	10	11	21
8. Opportunities for one-year sabbatical.	9	12	21
9. Amount of SWO Continuation Pay.	10	9	19
9. Navy medical benefits.	9	10	19
10. Amount of Critical Skills Bonus.	6	7	13



- About one-third of men in YG93 and Earlier would or might consider returning to active duty were there improvements in the overall time spent away from home.
- Incentive-related factors (benefits, pay, education, etc.) and workload at-sea are least influential.

Potential Actions to Improve SWO Retention

The majority of the survey questions are closed-ended, meaning respondents were presented with options to select or to agree or disagree with statements. While closed-ended questions are best suited for quantitative analysis (frequencies, averages, etc.), such questions do not permit respondents to select an answer other than one provided in the survey. Open-ended questions, however, provide respondents with an opportunity to address an issue not previously addressed in the survey or to elaborate further on specific issues.

Questions 15 and 16 in the SWO IRR Survey are open-ended questions designed to provide such opportunities to the respondents. Many, but not all, of the respondents provided written comments to these two questions. Based on the topics addressed in the comments, various issues were identified; the comments were thus categorized into appropriate issue groups. Some respondents offered numerous comments that addressed several different categories. Therefore, the total number of respondents does not equal the total number of comments. It should also be noted that many of the issues identified are not discrete issues and may overlap into other issues.

In Question 15 of the survey, respondents were asked, “In your opinion, what ONE thing should be done to improve SWO retention?”



Table 17. Potential Retention Measures Generated from Respondent Comments Men in YG94 and Later

Potential Area of Improvement	Percentage⁴/Number of Comments⁵
SWO Leadership and Culture	36% (78)
Includes:	
Mentoring/counseling	5% (11)
In-port Work Hours	3% (7)
Other Comments about Leadership	17% (36)
SWO Treatment of People/Mentality	3% (7)
SWO Quality of Life/Morale	8% (17)
Work Load/OPTEMPO	16% (34)
Includes:	
Deployment/Sea Shore Rotation	10% (21)
Work Stability/Certainty of Schedule	3% (7)
Work Load Level Overall	3% (6)
Family/Home/Personal Time	7% (14)
Business Process/Organization	10% (20)
Includes:	
Organizational focus/processes	6% (12)
Training/SWOS	4% (8)
Career Path/Detailing	14% (31)
Includes:	
Promotions/Accessions/FITREPs	5% (12)
Career Tracks/Assignments	9% (19)
Incentive Programs	12% (25)
Includes:	
Pay (Pay, SWOCP, etc.)	9% (19)
Graduate Education	3% (6)
Misc.	6% (13)

⁴ Total percentage of 101% due to rounding error.

⁵ Men in YG94 and Later provided 215 issue-specific comments to Question #15.



Respondents feel that improvements in three general areas—SWO leadership, culture and work/life balance—would improve SWO retention. Many comments reflect a feeling that SWO leadership—at the Department Head level and upwards—does not support or nurture its more junior officers, rather that leadership is overly focused on exerting authority or its own career promotion. Examples of these leadership-related comments include: “Too much worrying about own career at DH level and not being a good role model/mentor for Junior SWO’s” and “Remove the God complex in CO’s.”

Of course, some of these three areas overlap; for instance, leadership can greatly influence culture and morale. One respondent states: “I think morale is a big deal—make JO’s, DH’s, CO’s happy and the positive effect ripples throughout the command and individual careers. My first CO was extremely effective at this and made me want to stay. My second CO didn’t trust me [...] made us feel really helpless, like our hands were tied. This made me want to get out ASAP.”

Similarly, another respondent’s comment reflects the interaction between strong leadership and morale among junior officers and overall workload: “A stronger emphasis must be placed upon respecting the junior officer community and the amount of work and devotion given to support the Navy (i.e., no hazing of JO’s, better training of JO’s in handling of division, etc.”

Overall, respondents do not indicate in their comments that improving the level of pay would improve retention. One respondent even states: “Decrease the SWO Continuation pay bonus. Monetary incentive programs keep the wrong people and are often done to shield deeper issues.”



**Table 18. Potential Retention Measures Generated from Respondent
Comments: Women in YG94 and Later**

Potential Area of Improvement	Percentage/Number of Comments⁶
SWO Leadership and Culture	49% (51)
Includes:	
SWO Treatment of People/Mentality	11% (11)
SWO Quality of Life/Morale	12% (12)
Mentoring/counseling	5% (5)
In-port Work Hours	6% (6)
Other comments about leadership	15% (17)
Work Load/OPTEMPO	10% (10)
Includes:	
Deployment/Sea Shore Rotation	2% (2)
Work Stability/Certainty of Schedule	8% (8)
Family/Home/Personal Time	10% (10)
Business Process/Organization	3% (3)
Includes:	
Training/SWOS	3% (3)
Career Path/Detailing	18% (19)
Includes:	
Promotions/Accessions	5% (6)
Career Tracks/Assignments	9% (9)
Sabbatical	4% (4)
Incentive Programs	5% (5)
Includes:	
Pay (Pay, SWOCP, etc.)	3% (3)
Graduate Education	2% (2)
Misc.	5% (5)

⁶ Women in YG94 and Later provided 103 issue-specific comments to Question #15.



Like their male counterparts, women in YG94 largely comment that the key ways to improve retention lie in improving SWO leadership and culture and work/life balance. Women respondents offer interesting insights into the work/life balance, including: “My husband is a submariner and I was a SWO. During our first three years of marriage, we only spent 11 days in a row together at any time. That’s no way to live your life.” Another women comments on areas for improvements: “Stability and consistency—too hard to have a family, especially for a women.”



Table 19. Potential Retention Measures Generated from Respondent Comments: Men in YG93 and Earlier

Potential Area of Improvement	Percentage⁷/Number of Comments⁸
SWO Leadership and Culture	46% (41)
Includes:	
Mentoring/counseling	8% (7)
In-port Work Hours	7% (6)
SWO Treatment of People/Mentality	8% (7)
SWO Quality of Life/Morale	10% (9)
Other Comments about Leadership	13% (12)
Work Load/OPTEMPO	13% (12)
Includes:	
Deployment/Sea Shore Rotation	9% (8)
Work Stability/Certainty of Schedule	2% (2)
Work Load Level Overall	2% (2)
Family/Home/Personal Time	8% (7)
Business Process/Organization	6% (5)
Includes:	
Organizational focus/processes	3% (3)
Training	2% (2)
Career Path/Detailing	17% (15)
Includes:	
Promotions/Accessions/FITREPs	6% (5)
Career Tracks/Assignments	11% (10)
Incentive Programs	10% (9)
Includes:	
Pay (Pay, SWOCP, etc.)	10% (9)
Misc.	1% (1)

⁷ Total percentage is 101% due to rounding error.

⁸ Men in YG93 and Earlier provided 90 issue-specific comments to Question #15.



Comments from men in YG93 and Earlier continue on the theme of improving leadership and culture and work/life balance. This group offered numerous comments regarding improving mentorship, including “Establish a culture of mentoring vs. weeding out.” Several comments also describe the SWO community as having an “eat your young” and “zero defect mentality”—these and other respondents’ comments reiterate that the community leadership style has a negative influence on retention.

Additional Respondents’ Comments Regarding SWO Retention

In Question 16 of the survey, respondents were asked, “Any final comments about SWO retention?”

Table 20. Other Retention-related Comments: Men in YG94 and Later

Retention-related Comment	Percentage ⁹ /Number of Comments ¹⁰
SWO Leadership and Culture	43% (29)
Includes:	
Leadership/Mentor	24% (16)
Morale/Mentality/QOL	19% (13)
Work Load/OPTEMPO	9% (6)
Family/Personal Time	10% (7)
Business Process/Training/Organization	10% (7)
Career Path/Detailing	6% (4)
Rewards for Performance	6% (4)
Pay/SWOCP	5% (3)
Misc. (Includes positive comments)	10% (7)

Additional comments from men in YG94 and Later continue to stress the importance and interaction between improving leadership, work/life balance and

⁹ Total percentage is 99% due to rounding error.

¹⁰ Men in YG94 and Later provided 67 issue-specific comments to Question #16.



SWO culture. One respondent comments, “Improved leadership would improve/impact many categories (morale, workload, quality of life, fleet performance, mentorship, fleet readiness...)”

Another man comments, “The reason I (and hundreds of other) SWO’s left are pretty similar—it’s not about the pay necessarily (although it helps) it [is] more due to leadership, excessive time constraints, and the stress of Navy/military life.”

A comment from a man who separated recently (in 2003) offers a rather chilling opinion of SWO leadership:

There is a bubble in the 0-6, 0-5, 0-4 ranks of 2 kinds of officer, 20% are there because they love to serve, are true servant leaders and everything an officer should be. The other 80% are not of traditional officer caliber and we are so short of officers in those paygrades we retain and promote them anyway. I would rather, and almost did, clean my ears out with a 9mm pistol than ever serve under one of those officers ever again. I loved being at sea, strike and surface warfare, AT/FP and most of all my division and strike team, I miss them all, but nothing is worth enduring the results of the poor quality of leadership of that 80 percent, sir/ma’am.

Table 21. Other Retention-related Comments: Women in YG94 and Later

Retention-related Comment	Percentage¹¹/Number of Comments¹²
SWO Leadership and Culture	29% (10)
Work Load/OPTEMPO	9% (3)
Family/Personal Time	24% (8)
Business Process/Training/Organization	3% (1)
Rewards/Promotions/Accessions	15% (5)
Career Path/Detailing	6% (2)
Pay/SWOCP	9% (3)
Misc. (Includes positive comments)	6% (2)

¹¹ Total percentage is 101% due to rounding error.

¹² Women in YG94 and Later provided 34 issue-specific comments to Question #16.



In addition to continuing with themes articulated by other respondents, women in YG94 and Later commented particularly strongly regarding the strain on family/personal life. Comments from these women include: “SWO pipeline is not conducive to dual military family.” “My main reason for getting out was my desire to not go to sea and leave my children—being a SWO and a mother is incompatible.” And, “Being a SWO was a great experience, but [it is] impossible for women to be at sea and [be] devoted wives and mothers.”

One woman comments on how leadership directly impacts quality of life:

As a DIVO looking at the Department Head’s lives was enough to make me wish to never be one. They worked longer hours than they should have. Some of it was because of the captain’s demands but some was because they thought it would look better. The command climate should be better oriented to getting the job done and sending people home to their families, regardless of time.

Table 22. Other Retention-related Comments: Men in YG93 and Earlier

Retention-related Comment	Percentage/Number of Comments¹³
SWO Leadership and Culture	50% (10)
(Includes one mentoring comment)	10% (2)
Work Load/OPTEMPO	5% (1)
Family/Personal Time	5% (1)
Rewards/Promotions/Accessions	10% (2)
Career Path/Detailing	10% (2)
Pay/SWOCP	5% (1)
Misc. (Includes positive comments)	15% (3)

Dissatisfaction with SWO culture/morale and the work-life imbalance are predominant themes among comments from this group.

¹³ Men in YG93 and Earlier provided 20 issue-specific comments to Question #16.



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Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Low junior officer retention is a concern for the SWO community because the Navy needs a healthy retention rate to ensure an adequate number of officers continues on active duty to meet required manning levels at the Department Head level and beyond. Of particular concern is the retention of SWO women—whose numbers have steadily declined since the repeal of the *Combat Exclusion Act* in 1994.

The SWO lifestyle is unique, and certain aspects of it will never change; the lifestyle of going to sea appeals to some and not to others. Previous research suggests that for many who do like the lifestyle, there are family-related factors, as well as leadership and culture factors (including morale and lack of mentoring), that push both men and women out of the Navy. Retention bonuses have not offset these concerns, particularly for women. Many successful women in the Navy today are also looking for fulfillment as wives and mothers; they “want to have it all.” The Navy may not be able to fully address these issues, but all of the research—including the present study—points to factors that can be changed to impact retention.

The Navy’s previous studies on retention of Surface Warfare Officers have gathered “intention” data from SWOs by means of surveys, focus groups, and interviews. That is, the respondents offered input regarding their *future* plans to separate or stay on active duty. This study has examined separation decisions in a survey of officers who have actually made the decision to leave active duty and are now in the IRR. This IRR survey study is the first formal research study to examine the separation decision already made by SWOs who have separated from active duty.

During the summer of 2006, Navy Personnel Command (PERS-93)—formerly Naval Reserve Personnel Center (NRPC)—conducted a mandatory muster of select IRR members, both officers and enlisted. SWO personnel in the IRR were included.



The command reported that 522 actually attended the muster. The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), thanks to the support and cooperation from NRPC, was able to include a SWO IRR retention survey (see Appendix A) in the package for all mustering SWOs to receive, complete, and return. NPS actually received 551 useable surveys; there is no explanation for the discrepancy in the numbers.

The Surface Warfare Officer Continuation Pay (SWOCP) was introduced beginning with YG94. At this time, Department Head-screened SWOs were offered sizable additional pay if they signed a contract to complete Department Head (DH) School and the two subsequent DH tours. In addition to basically forcing the separation decision to occur before the start of Department Head School, the SWOCP also implied that participating officers would need to wait until completing their Department Head tours before again having the opportunity to separate. The officers in year groups prior to YG94 did not have the option of signing this type of contract, which might have meant their decision-making process was significantly different than those in later year groups. In recognition of the fact that SWOs in YG94 and later had a different retention decision-making environment than those in YG93 and earlier, the survey analysis in this report separates the respondents into two different Year group categories—those in YG93 and Earlier and those in YG94 and Later. All responses are also analyzed by gender. Of the total 551 respondents, 65 percent were in YG94 and Later (70 percent of that group were men), and 35 percent were in YG93 and Earlier (93 percent were men, which meant that the number of women was so small—10—that in most cases the Earlier women’s data were not analyzed).

The demographics of the two year groupings at the time of the IRR muster differed in many ways. The men in YG93 and Earlier are older, more senior, stayed on active duty longer than the later group, and fewer of them chose the IRR to avoid the risk of being recalled. More of these men are married with dependent children and have unemployed spouses. Thus, we would expect their separation decisions to be different from the men and women in YG94 and later. We would also expect to be more interested in the perspectives of the younger group in that their experiences



and perceptions should be more representative of the current environment for junior SWO officers. Oddly enough, however, the data actually show more similarities than differences between the two groups.

What Influenced Survey Respondents to Leave Active Duty?

Survey respondents were asked to identify the influence of 28 factors (see Table 8) on their decisions to separate from active duty. The percentages were recorded for those who said a factor's influence was a "Very Strong Influence" or "Strong Influence." The other choices were "Minor Influence" or "No Influence." These factors can be divided into one of three categories: 1) family/personal time; 2) leadership—factors that either senior Navy leadership or immediate leaders can control such as morale, culture, sexual discrimination, or hours in port; and 3) benefits, some guaranteed (e.g., retirement pay), and some not, such as graduate education or a lateral transfer. However, there is overlap among some of these factors. For example, work hours in port is widely reported as a leadership factor—senior leaders keeping people longer than necessary, or "Navy Leadership" putting too many requirements on ships. On the other hand, are hours while deployed hard requirements or the result of leader preferences? Work load/hours in port are counted as a leadership item in this report. Similarly, recognition could be seen as a function of leadership or as a benefit; it was counted here as a benefit.

Data were tabulated to show the percentage of respondents that rated each factor as a "Very strong" or "Strong" influence on their decision to leave. There are seven family/personal factors, and the ratings for four of these factors are higher than any of the others on the lists for both men and women in both year groupings. If the factors are listed highest to lowest and divided into thirds, the remaining family/personal factors are in the second third of the lists. While rated similarly by men and women, the ability to start a family and balancing one's career with a spouse's are more influential items for women than for men. When the data are analyzed only for "Very strong" influences, more of the women rated family factors as having been the strongest influences.



There are 10 leadership items on the survey, and these appear in the first and second thirds of the list for both men and women. Having a mentor is slightly more important to women than to men. However, regardless of the gender involved, studies have shown that mentoring has a strong, positive impact on retention in the military.

Last, there are 11 benefit items; with a few exceptions, these items appear in the bottom third of the lists. Some exceptions appeared in the middle of the lists, however. For men, these were amount of total military pay, funded graduate education, and promotion opportunities; for women, these were the two graduate education items. It is worth noting that among the benefit items in the bottom third of this list both men and women place the bonuses very low on the list of factors that caused them to separate. These factors placed in the bottom four of the ratings list for women and the bottom six for men.

- **Conclusion 1:**

Family-related factors are the top-rated influences on decision to leave active duty; this holds true for both men and women and older vs. younger year groups. Women felt more strongly than men about the influence some of these factors had on the decision to leave active duty. This supports data gathered in other studies based on intentions to leave or stay.

- **Conclusion 2:**

Leadership and culture issues have a strong influence on retention and probably cannot be offset by monetary incentives in most cases.

- **Conclusion 3:**

Monetary incentives have less influence on retention than family or leadership factors. "Total military pay" was more important to men than to women, but still placed lower on the list than many other factors that caused men to leave active duty.

- **Conclusion 4:**

Mentoring is a positive retention factor for both men and women. Not surprisingly, a greater percentage of YG94 and Later women (17%) than men in that group (2%) and in YG93 and Earlier (0%) rate



“Existence of sexual discrimination” as a very strong or strong influence on separation. Crawford et al. (2006) had a similar finding, with some women reporting that they have felt marginalized by either poor male leadership, well-intentioned but unaware male leadership, or simply the small numbers of other women as role models and mentors in the community.

- **Conclusion 5:**

Discrimination against women—sometimes subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle—and other complex gender issues still exist and can affect retention.

Do Survey Respondents Regret Leaving Active Duty and What Would Make Them Consider Returning?

The majority of YG94 and Later men (82%) and women (81%) and men YG93 and Earlier (72%) do not regret leaving active duty. Their feelings about improvements that might lead them to return to active duty were assessed by having them respond to 17 factors with “Yes,” “No,” or “Maybe.” The factor most frequently rated “Yes” for all three groups was “Overall time spent away from home” (17% of men and 28% of women), followed closely by a cluster around “Work load hours in port,” “Certainty of work schedule,” Geographic stability,” “Ability to lateral transfer to another community,” “Quality of leadership in the SWO community,” and “Morale in the SWO community.” Improvements in monetary factors (i.e., SWOCP, military pay, and a bonus), as well as indirect monetary factors (i.e., retirement and medical benefits), have relatively little influence in enticing both men and women respondents to return to active duty. When “Maybe” responses were included in the highest rated item, the percentages who would consider returning jumped to 37 percent for men and 52 percent for women.

More women than men indicated they would consider returning to active duty, and women rated leadership and morale closer to the top of their lists (second and third, respectively) than did the men. Further, this is a sizeable proportion. For example, 25 percent of women said “Yes,” they would consider returning to active



duty if changes were made to SWO leadership. Another 15 percent said “Maybe” to this same item.

The previous study in this series found that women outside of the military who left organizations such as law firms wanted to return to their careers later. The fact that the women in this study do not regret leaving active duty is not necessarily inconsistent with the possibilities of their rejoining should the opportunity arise after changes were made.

- **Conclusion 6:**

The majority of respondents do not regret the decision to leave active duty, but more women than men might consider returning to active duty. Changes that would serve as incentives for women to return concerned family and leadership issues; monetary factors were seen as less influential.

What One Thing Could Be Done to Improve SWO Retention?

The last area of the survey asked for open-ended comments to the question, “What ONE thing should be done to improve SWO retention?”

Table 23. Categories of Open-ended Comments on One Thing That Could Be Changed to Improve SWO Retention, by Year Groupings
(Percentages)

	YG94 and Later Men	YG94 and Later Women	YG93 and Earlier Men
Leadership and Culture	36	49	46
Family/Personal Time	7	10	8
Work Load/Optempo	16	10	13
Business Processes	10	3	5
Career Path/Detailing	14	18	17
Incentive Programs	12	5	10
Misc.	6	5	1



It is not surprising from the data shown above that leadership, culture, and morale items are items that the respondents commented on most frequently. However, the list is slightly different from the factors that respondents rated earlier for the influence on their separation decisions. The factors shown in Table 23 differ because respondents are singling them out as factors that could be changed. Whether or not all of these things can be easily changed is another matter, but the data should serve as a focus for serious consideration by the community for retention of officers now on active duty.

- **Conclusion 7:**

The fact that IRR members can identify changes that would make them consider returning to active duty is a positive finding for the community as senior leadership considers retention issues for active duty officers.

- **Conclusion 8:**

Leadership and culture are at the top of the list of things that should be changed to improve SWO retention.

While this survey included some items that should be changed or reworded if it is conducted again in the future, it presents solid evidence that the SWO community can make changes that should positively affect retention. The strong responses to negative leadership practices, which in turn affect some of the family-related factors, are given weight both by other studies and by the agreement between men and women/younger and older year groups. The most unambiguous survey items are those relating to monetary incentives and benefits, and those were consistently at the bottom of the lists. The evidence upholds the statement heard many times in interviews and focus groups with SWOs in previous studies, “It’s not about the money.”

Given the low impact of monetary incentives, the inability of the community to change some of the family-related factors due to the nature of the job, and the non-appeal of selection and classification solutions discussed earlier, the answer to the question of where the Navy turns now has to be “to leadership practices.”

Additionally, in the words cited earlier by Parcell (2007), “There may be little an



employer can do to change work-life imbalance, but if it is related to policies, [...] the Navy needs to minimize inhospitable workplace practices and consider personnel management policies that can provide for a better work/life balance.”

▪ **Conclusion 9:**

While it is not clear why we have put so much emphasis on monetary incentives for retention to-date while excluding most other issues (except for recent initiatives involving 360-degree feedback and life-work balance), this study and others suggest that the time is right to consider implementing changes that address non-monetary issues. Put very simply, since there are things the Navy can't change, it should work on some things that it can.

The following recommendations identify initiatives that can influence the retention decisions of both men and women.

1. Analyze 360-degree feedback data available at The Center for Naval Leadership to identify specific areas of leadership that require emphasis in training and education.
2. Should initial analyses of the 360-degree feedback data support it, expand the use of such feedback to communities in the Navy not currently using it. The automated 360 program as part of the SMARTS system is inexpensive and may have the potential to improve leadership more than training interventions. For example, it is known that when leaders derail, it is often due to some fatal flaw known by others but not to them because they did not get the proper feedback. While subordinates rarely give such feedback to seniors, 360-degree feedback provides a vehicle for autonomous input.
3. Review needs for leadership training at various points in the continuum for SWO officers. This effort has already been started by the present authors, and findings suggest that Department Head training is the most important point for changes because Department Heads will have the most impact on Division Officers. Such training should explicitly address the relationship between leadership and retention—both the positive and the negative practices and associated outcomes. For example, senior officers must become more aware of the enormous impact they can have on retention when they make their people work unnecessarily long hours while they are in port or on shore tours.



4. Strengthen knowledge of mentoring as an important retention and developmental factor. This should take place at all points in the leadership continuum. Senior officers cannot be “too busy to mentor.”
5. Strengthen knowledge of men leading women at key points in the training continuum. (This was a recommendation in the first report in this series.)
6. Analyze costs and benefits of detailing more women to fewer ships. Focus on assigning women as Department Heads to ships that have women on board. (This, too, was a recommendation from the first report in this series.)
7. Continue and accelerate (where possible) all life-work balance initiatives such as geographic stability, telecommuting, and off- and on-ramps. This research shows that these items are important to both men and women.
8. Revise this survey and administer it to other Navy IRR communities.



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Appendix A. IRR SWO Survey

INDIVIDUAL READY RESERVE SURFACE WARFARE OFFICER SURVEY

The following survey is designed to study the reasons why people leave the U.S. Navy. We plan to use your collective responses to examine employee turnover. Your responses will remain completely confidential so please do not put your name anywhere on this form. Thank you for taking time to answer these questions.

Please circle the answer that best applies

1. What is your current pay grade?	0-1 0-1E	0-2 0-2E	0-3 0-3E	0-4 0-4E	0-5
2. Are you:	Male		Female		
3. What is your marital status?	Never married Married		Divorced/Separated Widowed		
4. If married, describe your spouses' s employment status.	Not employed Active Duty		Full-time/non-military Part-time/non-military		
5. How many dependent children do you have? (under 21)	None	One	Two or more		
6. What was your commissioning source?	USNA	NROTC	OCS	LDO Other Service/Maritime Academy Other enlisted commissioning program	
7. What is your Year Group?	90	94	98	02	
	91	95	99	03	
	92	96	00	04	
	93	97	01	Other: _____	
	8. What is your birth year?	19_____ (fill in year)			
9. At what stage of your career did you separate off active duty?	During DIVO		Executive Officer		
	End of DIVO		Other: _____		
	During DH		End of DH tours		
10. Did you have a job offer when you left the military?	Yes		No		

Check the answer that most applies

11. Why did you separate and join the IRR rather than become a drilling Navy Reservist?	
a. I did not want to run the risk of being recalled/mobilized.	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I did not want anything to do with the Navy.	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I did not know enough about Navy Reserve opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Other (comment): _____	<input type="checkbox"/>



12. To what degree did the following factors influence your decision to leave active duty?	Very Strong Influence	Strong Influence	Minor Influence	No Influence
a. Imbalance between work and personal time.				
b. Strain on family life/family separation.				
c. Ability to develop personal relationships.				
d. Separation from my children while deployed.				
e. Ability to start/grow a family.				
f. Balancing my Navy career with a spouse's career.				
g. Overall time spent away from home.				
h. Insufficient geographic stability in tours.				
i. Work load/hours while at sea.				
j. Work load/hours while in port.				
k. Uncertainty of work schedule.				
l. Opportunities for promotion				
m. Recognition (FITREPS/Awards, etc.)				
n. Unable to lateral transfer to another community.				
o. Morale in the SWO community.				
p. Quality of leadership in SWO community.				
q. "Zero defects" SWO environment/honest mistakes punished.				
r. Amount of SWO Continuation Pay.				
s. Amount of Critical Skills Bonus.				
t. Amount of total military pay and compensation.				
u. Navy retirement benefits.				
v. Navy medical benefits.				
w. Lack of opportunity for one-year sabbatical.				
x. Lack of opportunity for funded graduate education.				
y. Lack of opportunity for full-time grad education.				
z. Lack of SWO role model.				
aa.Lack of SWO mentor.				
bb.Existence of sexual discrimination.				



Check ALL statements that apply

13. What describes your current feeling about your separation decision?	
a. I do not regret leaving my active duty SWO career at all.	
b. My civilian work/lifestyle is not as great an improvement over active duty as I'd hoped.	
c. I sometimes wish I had stayed on active duty as a SWO.	
d. I would return to active duty if my separation time were not a liability to my promotion prospects.	

Check the answer that best applies

14. I would now consider returning to active duty if there were significant improvements in:	Yes	No	Maybe
a. The overall time spent away from home.			
b. Geographic stability.			
c. Work load/hours while at sea.			
d. Work load/hours in port.			
e. Certainty of work schedule.			
f. Opportunities for promotion.			
g. Ability to lateral transfer to another community.			
h. Morale in the SWO community.			
i. Quality of leadership in the SWO community.			
j. Amount of SWO Continuation Pay.			
k. Amount of Critical Skills Bonus.			
l. Amount of total military pay and compensation.			
m. Navy retirement benefits.			
n. Navy medical benefits.			
o. Opportunities for one-year sabbaticals.			
p. Opportunities for funded graduate education.			
q. Opportunities for full-time graduate education.			
r. Other (comment):			

15. In your opinion, what ONE thing should be done to improve SWO retention?
--

16. Any final comments about SWO retention? (Write on back of this sheet, if needed)
--



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Appendix B. Demographics of Survey Respondents

Paygrade

Table 1. Respondents (YG94 and Later) by Paygrade and Gender
(Percentage)

	0-1	0-1E ¹⁴	0-2	0-2E	0-3	0-3E	0-4	0-4E	0-5	No Response
Men	0	0	5	1	74	2	14	1	1	1
Women	1	0	17	0	76	0	3	1	1	1

- The predominant representation among respondents in paygrades 0-3 and 0-4 likely corresponds with the fact that the majority of SWOs would have reached their first separation decision as 0-3s and the next separation decision as 0-4s.

Table 2. Respondents (YG93 and Earlier) by Paygrade and Gender
(Percentage/Number of Respondents)

	0-1	0-1E	0-2	0-2E	0-3	0-3E	0-4	0-4E	0-5	No Response
Men	0	0	1	0	5	1	55	1	37	1
Women ¹⁵	0	0	0	0	10 (1)	10 (1)	60 (6)	0	20 (2)	0

- As compared to the 395 respondents in the more recent year groups, the 156 respondents in YG93 and Earlier are much more senior in rank. A fairly low percentage of these respondents are in ranks of 0-3 or lower.

¹⁴ "0-1E," "0-2E," etc., denotes that the officers hold the stated rank and are prior enlisted.

¹⁵ Throughout this report, actual numbers of respondents (frequencies) are presented in parentheses next to the percentage for women in YG93 or earlier.



Martial Status

Table 3. Marital Status of Respondents in YG94 and Later by Gender (Percentage)

	Never Married	Married	Divorced	Widowed	No Response
Men	37	59	3	0	1
Women	30	67	2	0	1

- Over half of the men and about two-thirds of the women in these later year groups are married.

Table 4. Marital Status of Respondents in YG93 and Earlier by Gender (Percentage/Number of Respondents)

	Never Married	Married	Divorced	Widowed	No Response
Men	12	82	4	0	1
Women	20 (2)	80 (8)	0	0	0
All	13	82	4	0	1

- As compared to respondents in YG94 and Later, a greater percentage of respondents in YG93 and Earlier are married. As noted earlier, the number of women in this year group is too small for meaningful comparisons.

Spouse's Employment Status (If Respondent is Married)

Table 5. Spouse's Employment Status for YG94 and Later by Gender (Percentage)

	Active Duty	Full-time, Non-military	Not employed	Part-time, Non-military	Not Applicable
Men	3	38	13	6	41
Women	34	28	5	1	32



- A much higher percentage of women have spouses on active duty.
- A lower percentage of women have spouses who are unemployed.

Table 6. Spouse’s Employment Status for YG93 and Earlier by Gender
(Percentage/Number of Respondents)

	Active Duty	Full-time, Non-military	Not employed	Part-time, Non-military	Not Applicable	No Response
Male	2	32	34	14	17	1
Women	10 (1)	70 (7)	0	0	20 (2)	0

- The percentage of spouses not employed is higher among respondents in these earlier year groups than among those in the later year groups. This may be a function of this group being older (see Table 17) and of a generation in which fewer wives worked outside the home than in the later group.

Number of Dependent Children

Table 7. Number of Dependent Children for YG94 and Later by Gender
(Percentage)

	None	One	Two or more	No Response
Men	70	13	14	2
Women	72	16	12	0

- Most respondents do not have dependent children.
- This finding is not consistent with the large number of Navy personnel who say they are leaving to start a family, unless this group has not yet had sufficient time to do that.



Table 8. Number of Dependent Children for YG93 and Earlier by Gender
(Percentage/Number of Respondents)

	None	One	Two or more	No Response
Men	21	8	69	1
Women	10 (1)	20 (2)	70 (7)	0

- Of respondents in these earlier year groups, the majority has multiple dependent children.
- This group may differ from the other because they are older and have had time to start a family.

Commissioning Source

Table 9. Commissioning Source of YG94 and Later by Gender
(Percentage)

	USNA	NROTC	OCS	LDO	Other Service	Other Enlisted	No Response
Men	29	47	17	0	2	3	3
Women	37	51	7	0	3	1	2

- Among respondents in the later year groups, the top source of commissioning is NROTC, followed by USNA, and lastly, by OCS. This order is the same for men and women.

Table 10. Commissioning Source of YG93 and Earlier by Gender
(Percentage/Number of Respondents)

	USNA	NROTC	OCS	LDO	Other Service	Other Enlisted	No Response
Men	34	38	23	1	1	3	1
Women	30 (3)	20 (2)	40 (4)	0	0	0	10 (1)

- Among respondents in the earlier year groups, as with the later year groups, the largest commissioning source is NROTC, followed by



USNA, then OCS. However, in the earlier year groups, there is a higher percentage of respondents commissioned through OCS than in the later year groups.

- The number of newly commissioned officers that flows through OSC varies year to year, as OCS is considered a sort of “valve” for community managers; each year, after determining the level of new accessions from the two primary sources of commissioning—USNA and NROTC—BUPERS accepts the remaining required amount of future officers needed through the OCS channel.

Year Group

Table 11. Year Group of YG94 and Later by Gender¹⁶
(Percentage)

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Men	7	5	5	3	15	31	18	9	5	2	0	0
Women	2	1	3	1	15	28	18	12	12	8	0	1

- The biggest year groups are YG98, YG99 and YG00. These three year groups account for 64% of men, 61% of women.
- Respondents in year groups after YG02 would not yet have completed four years of active service at the time of this survey. They likely were exceptions to the four- or five-year active service obligation.

Table 12. Year Group of YG93 and Earlier by Gender
(Percentage/Number of Respondents)

	1983 ¹⁷	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Men	8	9	12	12	13	9	5	5	6	8	13
Women ¹⁸	17 (1)	0	0	0	17 (1)	17 (1)	33 (2)	0	17 (1)	0	0

- The biggest year groups are YG85, YG86, YG87 and YG93. These four year groups account for 50% of the respondents in YG93 and Earlier.

¹⁶ Table 12 does not reflect non-responses to the Year group question.

¹⁷ Includes respondents in YG83 and earlier.

¹⁸ Total is 101% due to rounding error.



Birth Year

Table 13. Birth Year of YG94 and Later by Gender
(Percentage)

	Prior To 70	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	No Response
Men	4	1	8	7	5	6	8	19	20	9	9	1	1	1
Women	3	2	3	1	2	3	4	18	24	12	12	11	6	0

- The most prevalent birth years are 1976 and 1977. Respondents born in these years would have been 29-30 years old at the time of the 2006 IRR muster, and the whole range is 25-37 years.

Table 14. Birth Year of YG93 and Earlier by Gender
(Percentage)

	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	No Response
Men	7	8	16	19	6	8	7	4	5	4	8	6	1	1
Women	30(3)	0	0	0	10(1)	20(2)	10(1)	10(1)	0	10(1)	10(1)	0	0	0

- Among respondents in the earlier year groups, the birth years range from 1960 to 1972. The most prevalent birth years are 1962 and 1963. Respondents born in these two years would have been 43-44 years old at the time of the 2006 IRR muster, and the whole range is 41-53 years old.

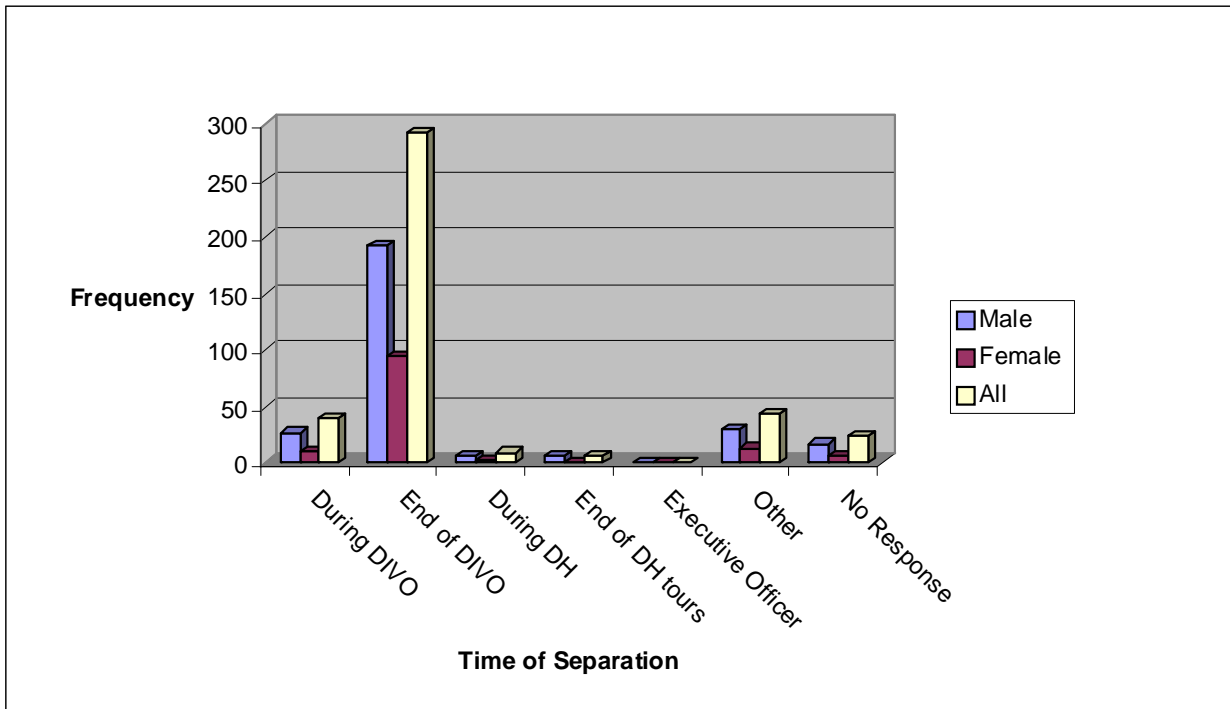
Career Stage at Separation

Table 15. Career Stage at Separation of YG94 and Later by Gender
(Percentage)

	During DIVO	End of DIVO	During DH	End of DH tours	Executive Officer	Other	No Response
Men	10	69	2	2	0	11	6
Women	8	75	2	1	0	10	5



Figure 1. Career Stage at Separation—YG 1994 and Later by Gender (Percentage)



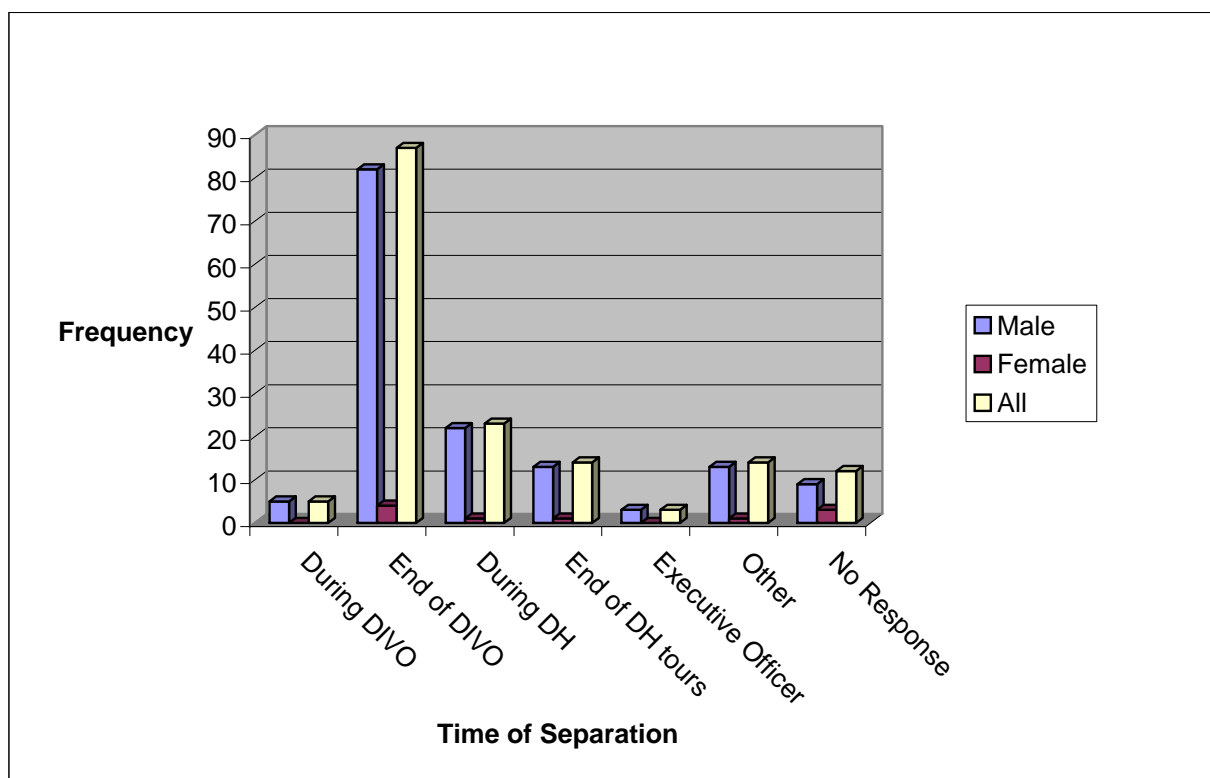
- The majority of respondents separated after their Division Officer tours but before starting Department Head School. This largely corresponds to the separation window of opportunity between the end of the MSO and the beginning of the SWOCP commitment (Department Head School).
- There are few differences between the patterns of men and women. Seventy-nine percent of the men and 83 percent of the women separated by the end of the DIVO tours.

Table 16. Career Stage at Separation of YG93 and Earlier by Gender (Percentage/Number of Respondents)

	During DIVO	End of DIVO	During DH	End of DH tours	Executive Officer	Other	No Response
Men	3	56	15	9	2	9	6
Women	0	40 (4)	10 (1)	10 (1)	0	10 (1)	30 (3)



**Figure 2. Career Stage at Separation—YG 1993 and Earlier by Gender
(Percentage)**



- As compared to respondents in the later year group category, a smaller percentage of respondents in YG93 and Earlier (59 percent for the men) separated after the Division Officer tours, and a greater percentage separated later in their SWO career. However, by far the most prevalent time for separation remains after the DIVO tours for both YG categories.

Had a Job Offer when Left Active Duty

**Table 17. Job Offer at Separation for YG94 and Later by Gender
(Percentage)**

	Yes	No	No Response
Men	47	48	5
Women	38	61	2



- Approximately one-half of the men had a job offer when they separated from active duty, while closer to one-third of the women had a job offer at that time.

Table 18. Job Offer when Separated for YG93 and Earlier by Gender
(Percentage/Number of Respondents)

	Yes	No	No Response
Men	52	45	3
Women	40 (4)	50 (5)	10 (1)

- Roughly one-half of the respondents in the later year groups had job offers when they left active duty.

Notable Differences of the Two Year Group Categories:

As is discussed earlier in this report, the majority of respondents in YG94 and Later are in YG98-00; thus, these respondents would mostly have separated around 2002-2005. This survey was administered in the summer of 2006, so respondents in YG94 and Later represent a sample of fairly recently separated SWOs.

The majority of respondents in YG93 and Earlier are an older group. The majority of them are in YG85-87 and YG93, and most of them separated during the 1989-1992 and 1997-98 timeframe—considerably earlier than the time of administration of the summer 2006 survey. Additionally, this group stayed on active duty longer than the later group.

The active duty SWO “environment” is comprised of many factors, including: current naval policies, operational tempo demands, career opportunities available to women officers, SWOCP contracts, naval leadership trends, and many more. As a result, the active duty SWO environment at the time of separation for those respondents in the later year groups is likely much more representative of the current environment for SWO junior officers than was the separation-era environment for respondents in the earlier year-group category. One should



consider this perspective when reviewing the retention-related survey results in this report.



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- ASDS Product Support Analysis
- Analysis of LAV Depot Maintenance
- Diffusion/Variability on Vendor Performance Evaluation
- Optimizing CIWS Lifecycle Support (LCS)

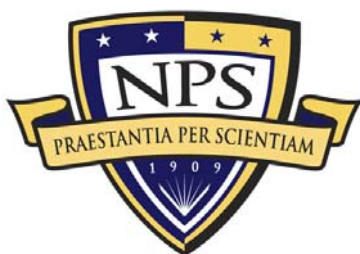
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