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CANADIAN
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CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

RETENTION STRATEGY




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CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

RETENTION STRATEGY





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MINISTER'S FOREWORD



The members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are dedicated to Canada and its people, protecting and defending the nation's interests at home and abroad. These courageous individuals choose a career in which they are asked to commit themselves wholeheartedly to ensuring that Canada is *Strong at home, Secure in North America, and Engaged in the world*. Our people are the heartbeat of the CAF – we cannot protect the interests of Canadians and maintain peace and stability without the tireless dedication of our brave soldiers, sailors, and aviators.

The CAF Retention Strategy is an important step in our work to provide for our people and their families so that they are well-supported, diverse, and resilient. The Government of Canada and the Department of National Defence must meet the needs of these brave individuals and provide for them throughout their careers. Consequently, we will inspire our members to continue their commitment within the CAF. This is fundamental to maintaining a healthy Armed Forces that can continue to protect Canadian interests at home and around the world. Facing unprecedented challenges, new and emerging threats, and reflecting on shortcomings of our history, it is essential that we improve the support we provide to our members. In doing so, our members can embrace their pride in and dedication to the CAF. To all those who continue to faithfully carry out their duties at great personal sacrifice, I join Canadians in thanking you for your dedicated service.

Recognizing the enduring service of our members, we renew our commitments in supporting them and their families. Our organization must embrace the culture change needed to ensure that we are providing a safe, inclusive, and fulfilling work environment for all our members; one in which Canadians can see themselves and their values reflected; where diversity is welcomed and supported; and which supports the retention of our members throughout their careers in defence of the country. This change, championed by the Chief Professional Conduct and Culture and supported in the activities of efforts like the Retention Strategy, will provide our members with a work environment they can thrive in. Through the Retention Strategy, we will keep our valued members in uniform so that we can continue to deliver on our commitment to Canadians wherever, whenever asked.

We know that change is constant and accelerating and that the retention of our members is an outcome of many interactions of personal and work experiences. The Retention Strategy gives us the leverage needed to explore these interactions, to provide a new perspective on how to address them, and to elevate the voices of those who have been previously underrepresented in our approaches to address concerns in the CAF. The perspective of every CAF member can inform the steps we take to improve retention. By taking the extra, and necessary, steps to ensure that previously underrepresented voices are brought to the forefront, we can better address unique concerns, supporting a more inclusive approach to retention, and ultimately improve retention for the entirety of the CAF. With this Strategy, we have the direction and guidance on how to think and be aware of the multitude of interactions CAF members experience and better understand people's needs across the CAF. While we cannot know the future, the Strategy will help us evolve with our changing environment, identifying and responding to needs as they arise in the future.

It brings me great pleasure to present the CAF Retention Strategy. Invested leadership, sustained support, and growing awareness of how to aid people at all levels in the CAF is key to responding to the needs of our members. I request your backing and leadership in advocating for the improvements needed to support our great soldiers, sailors, and aviators in uniform. Thank you for your enduring contributions to making the CAF work environment one which supports its people in a life-long career, and provides a rewarding experience for all who wish to serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anita Anand'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light grey background.

The Honourable
Anita Anand
Minister of National Defence

CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF FOREWORD



I am proud to announce the release of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Retention Strategy, again renewing our commitments to better support our people and their families in their service to Canada. As articulated in Canada's Defence Policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, people are the most valuable resource in the CAF. It is not simply enough to attract the best and brightest. We need to provide the support necessary to ensure a full and fulfilling career in order to retain our members and their valuable experience. The CAF Retention Strategy is therefore aimed at guiding both broad and targeted activities to improve the experience of all CAF members so that you and your families feel supported and empowered to continue a challenging but extremely rewarding career in uniform.

Successful retention of our members is a complex, multi-faceted endeavour. While the Strategy will initiate operational and procedural changes, it is also designed to align and work in collaboration with our other efforts which support broader culture change – the recent establishment of the Chief of Professional Conduct and Culture, the Total Health and Wellness Strategy, and the CAF Human Resources (HR) Strategy currently in development. The Retention Strategy will be an enabler of the culture change that the CAF is pushing towards, engaging in measures to ensure that the concerns of all our members are heard and addressed. These will include: the undertaking of new governance structures to ensure that retention maintains its place at the forefront of leadership consideration; the review of and subsequent changes to, existing measures and activities to better identify and address the concerns of our members; and the development of targeted analysis and subsequent retention efforts on specific areas of concern. Through the efforts and activities guided by the Strategy, our organization will better understand the changing needs of our team, and how best to support you or your family face the challenges of tomorrow.

Grounded in research and responding to evidence, the Retention Strategy provides the guidance necessary to address current and historical concerns in a focused fashion. It establishes the means to keep our finger on the pulse of the entire CAF, so we are prepared to continuously identify and address the needs of all our members. The Strategy is designed to grow and evolve as necessary, instituting an evergreen effort to respond to the changing environment around us, the operational needs of the CAF, and more notably the needs of our members and their families now and in the future. Whether you are away from family, facing personal hardship, or performing duties that put you and others in danger, your contributions are highly valued. In honouring and supporting your stalwart loyalty, this Strategy commits to better acknowledging, understanding, and providing for your needs so that the CAF of tomorrow provides greater opportunity, greater support, and greater inclusivity to all of its members from each corner of this country. It is crucial that leaders throughout the CAF embrace and employ the efforts of retention. It is imperative that our leaders internalize this approach to effectively support our members. At each level, I expect leadership to support this effort and for each individual to proactively commit to fostering a culture of retention, buying into the activities, and ultimately seeking to improve the CAF experience both in your work and in your daily interactions.

The CAF is at a point of transformation change, where outdated past practices, new global challenges, and an extant vision for defence places a renewed focus on people and how best to champion their needs as our most valuable resource. The CAF today must prepare for the emerging needs of tomorrow and I am confident that you will rise to that challenge. Retention is an ongoing effort and a shared responsibility across the organization and the leaders that represent it. As your Chief of the Defence Staff, I commit to supporting your needs and those of your families through this Strategy and its initiatives. Likewise, I expect the same commitment from you as we grow a more inclusive and better-supported retention culture.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'W.D. Eyre'.

W.D. Eyre
General
Chief of the Defence Staff

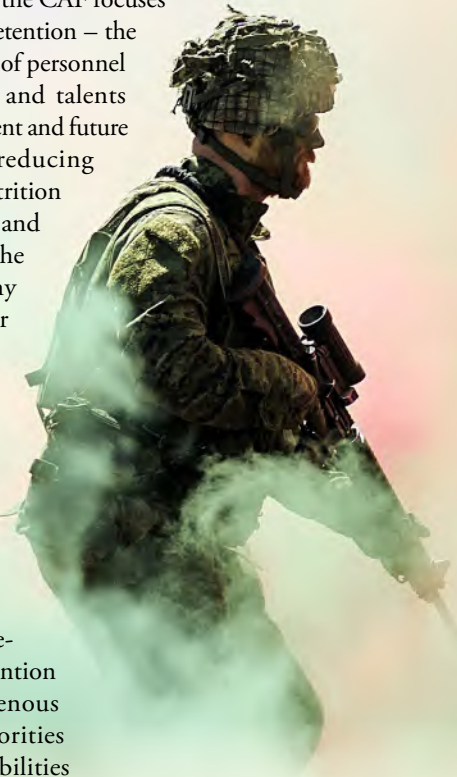
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People are not only the key to the success of any organization, people are the very centre of all aspects of our organization. Whether it is keeping planes in the air, ships afloat, or bringing rounds onto targets, nothing moves without our highly trained and dedicated people managing the fight, wherever it takes place. As such, the Department of National Defence (DND) and Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are renewing their commitments to support people so that we continue to offer a rewarding, empowering, inviting, and safe workplace so that our members are motivated to continue their careers in uniform. Retention in the CAF context is the ultimate outcome of all aspects of an individual's personal and professional experiences as a member of the military, recognizing that these lived experiences are different across many influencing factors. Understanding how an organization, its policies, and its people influence the experience of others is the key to managing retention so that the CAF workforce is strong, sustained, ready, and able to respond in defence of Canada, Canadians, and our interests. The CAF Retention Strategy, therefore, offers insights into how we can better manage the activities which influence the retention of CAF members. This will result in better-informed decisions and efforts that will produce improved retention outcomes, both in aggregate and across diverse groups and CAF capabilities.

The CAF Retention Strategy presents our renewed approach to managing retention, designed to flexibly respond to emerging and changing needs for today's CAF members and the CAF members of tomorrow, and the new demands that might be asked of them. The Strategy responds to needs identified by the Government and associated oversight organizations, and the vision for the CAF presented in the Defence Policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged*. The Strategy is designed to feed awareness, drive principled approaches to support people, and help inform policy influencers and decision makers to make more effective decisions impacting CAF members. Through guiding and managing activities that influence retention, this Strategy contributes to the awareness and transformation needed to help bring about the culture change required in the

CAF in order to overcome prior shortcomings, better prepare for the future, and continue to deliver its mandate by retaining our valuable CAF members. As such, the CAF Retention Strategy aligns with the greater CAF Human Resources Strategy, which aims to optimize the workforce to better respond to the needs of tomorrow and develop the DND/CAF into an employer of choice for Canadians.

Retention, broadly, refers to an organization's ability to keep its employees. However, it is more than just numbers – higher rates of retention can be a sign of organizational well-being. When an organization values its employees – investing in their well-being and offering a positive and safe workspace – employees will perform better and are more committed to the organization, increasing retention. Retention in the CAF focuses on increasing healthy retention – the continued employment of personnel with core capabilities and talents needed to conduct current and future operations – and reducing *unhealthy* attrition – attrition that is both *avoidable* and *dysfunctional*. Within the CAF, we see unhealthy attrition in particular areas. This includes certain occupations (e.g., logistic occupations), certain years-of-service groups – particularly within the first year of service and after 20 years of service, and populations historically underrepresented¹ within the retention data (women, Indigenous Peoples², visible minorities and persons with disabilities (PWD)).



¹ The term “Underrepresented Populations” in the CAF Retention Strategy speaks to survivors of sexual misconduct/gender-based violence, LGBTQ2+ individuals, and designated groups in the *Employment Equity Act* comprising of women, visible minorities, PWD, and Indigenous Peoples.

² Section 3 of the *Employment Equity Act* establishes that Aboriginal peoples (meaning persons who are Indians, Inuit or Métis) form part of a designated group. In keeping with modernizing language perspectives, the CAF Retention Strategy employs the language of Indigenous peoples in place of the legal term Aboriginal peoples. Language inconsistencies between the CAF Retention Strategy and Legislation or Regulation should be interpreted in favour of terminology codified in Legislation and Regulation.

The Strategy can be conceptualized into three key elements aimed at improving the awareness of how to better manage retention outcomes and how to sustain their efforts to ensure lasting progress.

1. The first element involves exploring the strategic landscape of retention to create better awareness of how retention should be approached and considered. This includes understanding the multiple aspects of retention, such as:
 - Influencing factors of retention identified as organizational or transaction factors, leadership or relational factors, and personal factors;
 - Better understanding the current challenges facing CAF members;
 - Better understanding the intersectional factors that can impact all CAF members;
 - Estimating the future challenges that might face the CAF; and
 - Understanding the interconnectivity of retention to other Human Resources (HR) practices or influencing factors central to a person's perceived experience.
2. The second element involves the principles which guided the development of the Retention Strategy and the retention outcomes we seek to influence. Understanding how this Strategy was shaped and the ways that the organization, leaders, and individuals at all levels can influence people's desire to remain within the CAF is paramount to instilling a culture of retention.
 - **Leadership Responsibilities:** Leaders are a substantial influencing factor of retention, they can mitigate and protect members from harmful issues. Every leader will embrace their responsibility to consider retention when they deal with their personnel, and understand that early, effective, and frequent intervention can offset unhealthy attrition;
 - **Credibility:** With evidence-based information, clear and consistent communication, and effective leadership, the Retention Strategy will be – and will be seen by members to be – a reasonable, effective approach to keeping valued members in uniform;
 - **Value, Diversity and Inclusion:** Being an inclusive workforce demands that every member be not just able, but encouraged to bring their authentic selves to work, including the full spectrum of their talents and professional potential, and be invested in their contribution to effectively deliver our organizational mandate. The Strategy will support the diversity and inclusion of every member of the CAF, including directing actions to bring to light the concerns of underrepresented populations;
 - **Employment with Dignity:** The CAF must work to ensure that all CAF members respect the dignity of all persons within the CAF, regardless of gender identity, race, sexual orientation, language, rank, component, or any other element of a person's identity. While CAF members have a job to do, they are first and foremost individuals who require, deserve – and will receive – autonomy, respect, and a safe work environment;
 - **Strengthen Families:** Military service places unique demands on members' families. Therefore, retention decisions, policies, and programs must recognize and respond to familial needs as appropriate;
 - **System Flexibility and Individual Choice:** While operational success remains the primary objective, the CAF must balance institutional and service requirements with members' personal aspirations to the extent possible. Retention initiatives must be flexible enough to reasonably adapt to members' needs, providing an enriching career that enables personal aspirations;
 - **A One Force Approach:** The Strategy will consider the entire force, with the solutions proposed taking into account the complexity of the retention challenges across the various occupations, demographics, and components of the CAF;
 - **Effective Communication:** Communication will be frequent, two way, and shared with members of the Defence Team so that they understand the benefits and services designed to retain them as members;

- Evidence-Based: Some data are available, but current evidence related to retention and attrition is limited and does not accurately reflect the experience of all CAF members. Going forward, actions will be taken to regularly collect a fuller picture of the experience for all CAF members. Efforts under the Strategy will be based on research into actual attrition rates, differentiating between healthy and unhealthy attrition, examining factors influencing members' decisions to remain in the CAF or depart from it; and
 - Targeted Retention: Retention is not “one size fits all”. This Strategy will support the targeting of specific occupations, at specific locations, at specific ranks, and at a specific time in order to fulfill the requirements of the CAF to deliver on its mandate. It will also support the targeting of specific circumstances, demographics, and other factors, as appropriate.
3. The third element of the Strategy is composed of the Lines of Effort (LOE), which are designed to guide activities in a sustained and deliberate fashion to bring about lasting change to improve the retention outcomes for the CAF. The LOEs of the Retention Strategy are as follows:
 - Strengthen Governance;
 - Engage Leaders to Promote a Culture Supportive of Retention;
 - Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention;
 - Communicate Priorities and Promote Activities to Support Retention;
 - Support CAF Members' Careers; and
 - Support the Health and Wellness of CAF Members and their Families.

Through these three elements, the CAF Retention Strategy enables behavioural and cultural change at both the organizational level and permeating down to the individual interactions of people across the entirety of the CAF. By supporting and championing the elements above, the CAF will begin tangible improvements in the short, intermediate, and long terms, guided and advised by an identified governing body and Retention Program Office (RPO) to sustain, monitor, and course correct the retention efforts in an evergreen fashion.

As retention itself is an outcome, indicators will signal to the RPO whether the influencing activities are delivering tangible results and whether adjustments are necessary to ensure effective and deliberate management of CAF retention efforts which include the consideration of underrepresented populations (see Annex A). The Strategy's LOEs and associated strategic outcomes are expressed in Logic models contained in Annex B, and the specific action items associated with the strategic objectives are found in Annex C. To measure the effects resulting from the Strategy and its associated activities, Annex D contains a Performance Management Framework (PMF) which includes indicators to signal progress or regression of the strategic outcomes associated with retention.

For as much as the Strategy does illuminate the issues associated with retention, there are areas today where we continue to lack strategic awareness on the influences of retention. Limited information relating to groups

historically underrepresented in retention data affects the ability to develop targeted retention efforts that will effectively address the concerns of these groups. Annex E unpacks and discusses some of the available data and analytics-driven research performed, and provides insights that can help guide improvements. As the DND/CAF and Canada writ large have had a contentious history with some specific populations who form part of Canadian society, there are areas where we continue to have limited retention and attrition data because it is expected that there is unequal participation, or potential for disparate impacts. Informed by and developed in response to Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), Annex A socializes the need to further investigate and address retention issues for underrepresented populations. Annex C provides directed action items to build on this analysis and develop targeted retention efforts for all CAF members, such as that all voices of the CAF are heard and supported in the goal of a fulfilling lifelong career within the CAF.

The CAF Retention Strategy is the culmination of the research and analysis into how the CAF can better manage retention in a deliberate, sustained, and evergreen fashion. As an enabler of culture change designed to flexibly orient activities to respond to current and emerging needs, this Strategy forms part of the broader behavioural and organizational approaches to reimagining the future of defence, and supporting the people instrumental to delivering that mandate.



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1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Firstly, this document recognizes that the CAF is a community, from members undergoing their initial training to the most seasoned and high-ranking member. As such, the writing of this document reflects the connection, the immersion, and the ownership that each member, and each leader impacted by this document, possesses. This is *our* CAF, these are *our* members and we must always work towards providing the best military career experience to all its members.

Retention: The ability of an organization to retain its employees; wherein employees remain within the organization for the entirety of their career.

Attrition: The loss of members via resignation, retiring or dismissal.

Unhealthy Attrition: attrition that it is both avoidable (when the member chooses or feels forced to leave for reasons that are within the organization's control) and dysfunctional (when otherwise-contributing members leave).

The purpose of this document is to guide the CAF in the development of strategic efforts to retain members. This will take the shape of targeted retention strategies and better Human Resources (HR) practices, informed by CAF evidence of member attrition and current retention efforts, as well as research into HR practices to influence the factors of retention that are within the organization's control.

This document identifies what is retention and attrition in the CAF and why a strategy is needed – the CAF, overall, appears to have a

good retention rate. However, as is demonstrated in this document, an overall high rate of retention can mask problem areas, and a lack of strategic oversight into resolving the issues can result in multiple disjointed or repetitive efforts that miss the mark on core problems. Further, maintaining a healthy organization means more than taking in the information as is. It requires consideration of the past, present, and future issues, efforts, and influencing factors. To continue to grow the force and keep it healthy, we must ensure we are providing valuable members with the best possible opportunity to stay within the CAF. In our steps towards addressing retention, we must adhere to key principles, laid out in section 5. By employing these principles within the activities that will support our LOEs, we can ensure that we are progressing towards our goal – to retain CAF talent and reduce unhealthy attrition.

1.1 What Is Retention

Broadly speaking, retention is an organization's ability to keep its employees. Retention can be represented with a simple calculation: the percentage of its employees an organization has kept over a given timeframe. However, retention is more than just a number; it is also a sign of *organizational well-being*. Employees perform better and are more committed to remaining in an organization that values them as people, is invested in their well-being and growth, and offers a positive workplace. These aspects will, in return, increase retention. Increased and continued retention ensures a higher level of productivity with long-standing employees who have gained significant experience and specific qualifications.

Retention in the CAF is the continued employment of personnel with core capabilities and talents needed to conduct current and future operations. While the CAF aims to improve retention, it cannot be done at the cost of mission success. Instead, the aim is to have healthy retention within the diverse populations across various occupations, ranks, elements, and components of the CAF. Healthy retention can be seen as the continued service of members with the talent and capabilities needed to sustain the institution's mission. It is not retention for its own sake, but rather retention with the purpose of ensuring the CAF can continue to meet its purpose in the defence of Canada.

1.2 Why We Need a Retention Strategy

At any given time, the Government of Canada can call upon the CAF to undertake missions for the protection of Canada and Canadians and to maintain international peace and stability (Department of National Defence, 2018). As such, it is critical that the CAF builds and maintains full force. An essential component of this effort is to

Retention is not only about creating solutions for problems we are aware of, but also employing a strategy lens to both HR data and concerns of members in order to provide the best possible career experience, ensuring members are committed to a long-standing career in the CAF.

ensure that we are retaining our members throughout their careers. Retention is not only about creating solutions when there is already a glaring attrition issue, it is also about employing a strategic lens to the HR data and concerns of members. This will help ensure that we provide the best possible career experience so that members are committed to a long-standing career in the CAF. In developing a retention strategy, we must consider three key challenges:

1. Operational Mandates and Requirements: Each of the Services and occupations within the CAF require a certain number of personnel to remain relevant and capable;
2. Legislated Mandates: The CAF is a reflection of Canadian Society. Therefore our membership must reflect that society and the numbers of military members from the underrepresented groups need to be accounted for and may vary over time (e.g., women and Indigenous Peoples in the CAF); and
3. Dissatisfiers: These are mostly the reasons why members want to voluntarily release from the CAF. Research has narrowed this down, and although further data analysis will be required, it certainly highlights areas for improvement to reduce voluntary releases.

While each of these challenges must be taken into account, the third one – dissatisfiers – is a key focus of the Retention Strategy. To improve our retention rate, we must address historical and current problems whilst confronting potential future problems pre-emptively. Moving forward, this Strategy requires that the CAF focuses on addressing three main areas: establish organizational means to respond to global changes by considering their impact on Canadian society and our operating environment; targeted retention efforts; and effective governance.

Responding to Changes and Evolution in Canadian Society and the CAF Operating Environment

As the nature of the CAF operating environment changes and as society evolves, the CAF must look forward to how it can recruit and retain members who will continue to strengthen the force through their skills and experience and who reflect the values and diversity of Canadian society. The Retention Strategy responds directly to the retention initiatives identified in Canada's Defence Policy, *Strong, Secured, Engaged* (SSE), and supports the ongoing diversity initiatives in the CAF. The complexities of these factors highlight the need for a focused and structured

approach to retention. Although progress has been made through previous efforts, further retention success can be realized through overarching organizational changes and targeted retention efforts in order to address key problem areas (i.e., lack of diversity and representation or addressing stressed occupations) within the CAF. The CAF must adapt to the evolving needs of current members, and proactively prepare for the emerging or changing needs of prospective recruits, with a more comprehensive approach to retention in order to best sustain CAF capabilities.

The Strategy will strike a balance between supporting the needs of personnel with the requirements of the institution. The Retention Strategy provides the framework to guide and support efforts that must be planned, developed and delivered within the CAF in order to address current retention requirements and prepare for future CAF needs. The Strategy provides guidance on ways, means, and ends to ensure sustainable operational excellence at home and abroad through organizational change and targeted retention efforts.

Our success in retaining our members depends on the *continuous renewal of our commitment* to provide them with an inclusive, welcoming, and healthy work environment with rewarding and meaningful careers, all while supporting their personal needs from enrollment to their last day in uniform. Ultimately, mission success is contingent on people as our most valuable resource, and we must value and rigorously support our people so that the dedicated, highly skilled and professional sailors, soldiers, and aviators are engaged and empowered in their duties.

Targeted Retention Efforts

On average, the number of CAF members who leave the organization is stable and represents only a small portion of the overall force – between 8 and 9% annually.³ However, the low overall rate of attrition masks the impact that attrition has on critical capabilities and the overall operational effectiveness of the CAF. Furthermore, it is beneficial for the CAF to proactively develop and

Targeted retention, focusing on specific questions and detailed analysis, includes intersectional analysis on specific occupations, demographic groups and capability levels to identify key problem areas and will inform the development of effective and directed retention efforts.

³ Includes Regular Force component and the Primary Reserve subcomponent of the Reserve Force, excluding transfers between them.

Targeted Retention Example:

Logistics Occupations: key questions would look to determine if there are identified issues existing across elements for which members are considering leaving the force, or this occupation. Are the cultural differences between the elements? Can there be aspects mandated to be the same for an occupation that spans all three elements? Intersectional analysis would be conducted to assess to see if there are differences between underrepresented populations/YOS.

implement a retention strategy while attrition numbers are positive – it does not serve the CAF to be complacent until a problem develops. Capabilities and skills that are in high demand across Canadian society are equally in high demand within the CAF. Technicians, medical specialists, logisticians, and those knowledgeable in developing technologies and specific domains such as cyber operations, represent elements that speak to the requirement for focused retention: these individuals are challenging to recruit, critical to operational effectiveness, and possess skills in high demand across Canadian society.

In addition to these specialties, each CAF member has their own lived experiences and each individual adds value to our organization. Targeted retention efforts – developing retention efforts to address specific occupations, circumstances, or underrepresented populations – will also contribute to ensuring that the CAF is representative of Canadians by researching, analyzing, and addressing retention related concerns that affect underrepresented groups (i.e., women, Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities, LGBTQ2+ members, and PWD). Such concerns can be missed in the aggregated data, which often reflects the views of the majority. The CAF is strengthened by diversity and must acknowledge that in improving inclusivity, we better support our members and help the CAF to respond to demographic and operational changes going forward.

Effective Governance

CAF-wide strategies must take an over-arching view of the issues at hand, ensuring that the recommendations and decisions rendered are evidence-based with insights gained from research, in order to best inform decision makers and governance bodies. The strategies must incorporate internal research and analysis, along with best practices uncovered by external research published from credible sources. Such strategies must set up the institution for ongoing success and allow for growth and adaptability

in order to meet current and future needs. To effectively move forward with the Retention Strategy, and to prevent a recurring need to redevelop a new strategy, there needs to be a dedicated governing body identified or developed to take on the implementation and ongoing maintenance of the Strategy efforts. This is reflected in LOE 1. In identifying this body of governance, the CAF will be able to build on existing investments, advancing a holistic approach that addresses both professional and personal dimensions of members' lives. These actions, in turn, will allow the CAF to better harmonize policies and programs to achieve tactical, operational, and strategic sustainability within the institution.

1.3 Who Is this Strategy For?

The Strategy provides direction to L1 and L2 organizations for the development and implementation of measures to improve retention within the CAF. However, the Retention Strategy will also impact the CAF at multiple levels – from influencing leaders and better informing decision-making within headquarters to the individual activities and interactions within formations and units. The ongoing development of an operational culture that emphasizes respect, equitable treatment, support for people, advancement of the team, and honour in serving Canada are all core elements influencing retention throughout the CAF. The role of leadership is central to the Strategy's purpose, focus, and efforts in influencing retention. Moreover, leadership is critical to ensuring operational and strategic stability of key capabilities and organizational needs while advancing new initiatives.

The Retention Strategy is aimed at the retention of all CAF members within the Regular Force (Reg Force) and Reserve Force (Res Force) – men, women, Indigenous Peoples, visible and ethnic minorities, PWD, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, two-spirited and other non-conforming or non-heteronormative (LGBTQ2+) individuals. People join the CAF for a variety of reasons (e.g., adventure, job security, career aspirations, lifestyle, benefits, etc.). Similarly, reasons for attrition vary. For example, family demands, work-life balance, and civilian opportunities can all impact individual decisions to remain or depart from the CAF. Management of these influencing factors is a core leadership responsibility that can help ensure that members are empowered to serve in a productive, respectful, and inclusive workplace that maximizes their contributions to the mission. In order to retain our valued CAF members for the full length of their careers, it is essential that we have a clear understanding

of what prompts them to leave, as well as what draws people to join and remain a part of the CAF.

HR research shows that people are committed to their organization because they feel respected in a healthy work environment, their work matters and has purpose, they have trust in leadership, and the organization is caring, competent, and compensatory. These elements are the building blocks of a healthy professional culture. As such, *culture* is a core driving factor of retention – not only policies, pay, and processes. New strategies and initiatives within the CAF (and the Defence Team overall) are contributing to incorporating health, wellness, and reasonable accommodation into the culture of the CAF and Department of National Defence (DND). Our CAF culture strives to be one that champion's teamwork, respect, and honour in, and for, our members who uphold service before self. The CAF's culture is defined by its ethos – fundamental values and principles which include duty, integrity, teamwork, and humanity. The CAF culture is centred on members living and leading the profession of arms as the CAF grapples with the “paradox of people” – they are our greatest strength and our greatest challenge. The CAF is in the business of unlocking the potential from their personnel to ensure strength in our force and operational effectiveness.

The Retention Strategy considers how to support the needs of the individual in order to improve overall operational readiness and achieve the CAF mandate. Supporting and developing members who have internalized the purpose, values, and meaning of the CAF is a core element of successful retention at the individual and team levels. If we are to foster retention, we must impel our members to integrate our *raison d'être* – to embrace *why people serve* – in order to create unity of purpose and commitment and encourage members to maintain a career within the CAF over the longer term. At the same time, the Strategy must focus on the needs of the institution to develop those capabilities required for the current and future operating environments. This will enable the institution and its members to better support the CAF goals to defend Canada and support its interests and values at home and abroad.



1.4 Vision

As articulated in *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE) (Department of National Defence, 2017a), the CAF's objectives are to “keep our talented people in uniform with a welcoming and healthy work environment” (p. 22), “place a new focus on recruiting and retaining underrepresented populations” (p. 23), “aspire to be a leader in gender balance in the military” (p. 23) and “ensure a truly integrated [CAF] that provides effective operational output” (p. 68). To meet these and support other related SSE objectives, we must reduce unhealthy attrition and remove barriers for those who want and have the capacity and desire to continue to serve in order to better maintain operational effectiveness and achieve Canada's defence mandate. The CAF Retention Strategy will exist within the broader CAF HR Strategy, which strives to optimize our workforce, increase our operational and institutional effectiveness, and ensure that we are an employer of choice within Canadian society.

Vision

A CAF environment – rooted in the strength of military families and relying on the professional excellence of its members – which considers the uniqueness of each member to effectively respond to operational and personnel needs, in order to achieve operational success at home and abroad well into the 21st century.

2 WHERE WE ARE: INVESTING IN VALUABLE MILITARY PERSONNEL

2.1 The Strategic Landscape

Two broad strategic considerations inform the Retention Strategy and will impact its implementation: the current and future operating environment, and the institutional expenses and resource pressures created by attrition. The CAF must be able to maintain a skilled force across a broad range of capabilities while meeting requirements in critical occupations facing shortages. To better meet current needs or capability gaps as identified in SSE, Ombudsman reports, other HR Strategies, and related CDS Orders, the CAF must identify and address aspects of the CAF work environment that negatively impact retention. The CAF is committed to investing in a strategy to develop, implement, and sustain the environment, systems, and processes appropriately at every level of the organization. Such action is critical to our collective institutional health, as CAF capabilities suffer when essential members are compelled to leave due to organizational factors such as outdated personnel policies or lack of flexibility in our military personnel management system.

Research on CAF attrition and retention over the past three decades has shown that dissatisfiers related to attrition are largely unchanged. These include factors such as job dissatisfaction, geographical instability, lack of career progression, undesirable postings, and dissatisfaction with senior leadership. In 2009, a retention strategy was developed with a number of initiatives meant to address attrition factors including recruiting and selection, basic training, career/employment management, personnel tempo, career/family balance, and leadership. In two separate reports in 2016 (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2016a; 2016b), the Auditor General of Canada (AG) found that, even though overall attrition remained

low, Army Reserve units had difficulty retaining their trained soldiers, and “several occupations have been understaffed for many years because of issues with recruiting, training, or retention” (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2016b, p. 12). They recommended that the CAF both design and implement a retention strategy for the Army Reserve and develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate measures to optimize retention for each occupation. The AG found that, while action had been taken on some aspects, the 2009 strategy had not been fully implemented. Since 2014, a number of initiatives have been rolled out, including a revision of the 2009 strategy, a call for retention tools and revised HR policies, a new recruitment and retention strategy specific to the Canadian Forces Health Services (CFHS), Op EXPERIENCE (an aviation-specific retention initiative), and the “Strengthening the Army Reserve” initiative (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2016a).⁴

The future operating environment is complex and challenging. The rise of adversaries who possess both economic and technological capabilities, the increase in urbanization, and the ever-growing lethality and complexity of weapons all combine to shift the human element of war. The future operating environment envisioned by the CAF is one where human skills and abilities remain key to success on the battlefield: whether that battlefield is virtual, conventional, or conducted within complex contested sea, air, and land environments. At the same time, resources required to recruit and train CAF personnel are finite and must be carefully conserved. Attrition, broadly, impacts institutional flexibility by consuming resources and training personnel unnecessarily.

⁴ Actions identified here are demonstrative of the work that the CAF has done, but do not reflect all actions taken that impact or relate to retention.

To support new approaches that will emerge from the Force Mix and Structure Design⁵, there is an urgent need for focused efforts to address new and developing operational shortages while operating in a resource-constrained environment where every training resource is critical. Experienced members are the backbone of the CAF – they represent a huge investment in training and the development of skills and deliver invaluable experience and knowledge in support of CAF operations. While recruits are, of course, essential to the CAF, to expect recruitment of new personnel to fully compensate for the loss of experienced members is to invite greater expense, greater resource demands for training, and more importantly, the loss of expertise and knowledge that has already been cultivated. This balancing of the need to address operational shortages in the face of resource constraints shapes the Retention Strategy's approach and perspective.

Underrepresented Populations (Women, Indigenous Peoples, Visible Minorities, LGBTQ2+ Individuals and Persons with Disabilities⁶)

The CAF must reflect Canadian society by becoming an increasingly diverse and inclusive community, and one which improves operations by recognizing the value of individuals' unique experiences and backgrounds. While the retention efforts in the Strategy will support all members of the CAF, there must also be consideration of the

retention issues affecting underrepresented populations, as their experiences can identify different areas or add nuances to the various approaches to retention efforts. For the purposes of this Strategy, the term "underrepresented" will refer to those underrepresented in data, occupations, and in the CAF as a whole (women, Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities, PWD, and LGBTQ2+ individuals). The CAF has established representation goals for women,

Indigenous Peoples, and visible minorities (25.1%, 3.5%, and 11% representation rates respectively) set for 2026. However, present rates of representation fall short of these goals. Currently, there are no CAF-set targets for LGBTQ2+ individuals or PWD.

Statistics Canada (2021e) has identified that lesbian, gay, and bisexual members represent about 3.3% of the Canadian population,⁷ and as Canada becomes a more accepting and inclusive country we can expect that this number will increase as people feel more comfortable identifying as their true selves. As such, we can also expect that there will be an increase in potential recruits who identify as part of the LGBTQ2+ population. While it has not been determined whether representation goals will be established for this particular group, we must ensure that the CAF is a welcoming and inclusive space such that LGBTQ2+ individuals are accepted, safe, and encouraged to join and maintain a career with the CAF. PWD are also identified as part of our underrepresented populations in the Retention Strategy. PWD encompasses not just disabilities which are physical, but also mental, sensory, learning, or psychiatric. The CAF has a duty to accommodate disabilities to ensure that members and applicants are able to serve while still subject to Universality of Service. The CAF also has a responsibility to ensure that injury is prevented to the extent possible and that members who suffer injury or disability in service – mental or physical – receive proper care. Data related to attrition and retention dissatisfiers for PWD is limited and needs to be investigated further. As with the other groups, additional data collection and research are needed to effectively support PWD and ensure that those who are able to serve in the CAF are enabled to do for the extent of their career.

While the *Employment Equity Act* (EEA) imposes a legislative requirement to address underrepresentation for persons in designated groups (women, Indigenous peoples, visible minorities, PWD and LGBTQ2+ individuals), the CAF is committed to going beyond the parameters of the EEA. While neither LGBTQ2+ nor PWD is identified as a Designated Group within the CAF, the Retention Strategy recognizes that these groups remain underrepresented in the related data, and provides direction to address this and better serve our members.

Retention efforts must speak to all members of the CAF, ensuring the CAF reflects Canadian Society, and supports the CAF in being a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all our members.

It is crucial to collect data to better respond to the concerns of underrepresented populations in the CAF, as they relate to retention.

⁵ The Force Mix Structure Design will realign the DND and CAF structures, leveraging business analytics tools to present a clear picture of the overall Force Employment, Force Generation and institutional landscapes.

⁶ Members of visible minorities and PWD are legally defined terms. Refer to Section 3 (Definitions) of the *Employment Equity Act*.

⁷ While information on transgender people is not yet collected, Statistics Canada has put in place measures to collect this information in the future (Statistics Canada, 2020f). Similar information was not yet available for other members outside of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals.

The CAF is committed to being inclusive of all its current and future members. In order to be inclusive, the CAF must acknowledge that underrepresented populations within the organization face unique or disparate challenges while serving. These challenges might include increased risk of being victims of misconduct, harassment, and discrimination; facing barriers to progression; and/or differing senses of belonging or alienation dependent on the level of inclusivity in the workplace. Currently, there are broad efforts underway to change the CAF culture to better support and reflect the needs of all who wish to serve. It is the responsibility of the organization to assess the factors influencing attrition and retention for underrepresented populations to ensure that the various groups of individuals who make up the CAF are appropriately considered when developing retention plans. In so doing, the CAF will strengthen its membership and will improve its attraction and retention of diverse members.

Ongoing and developing strategies addressing these issues:

- The Path to Dignity and Respect: The Canadian Armed Forces Strategy to Address Sexual Misconduct
- The Sexual Misconduct Response Centre
- The CAF HR Strategy
- Defence Team Total Health and Wellness Strategy
- Integrated Conflict and Complaint Management (ICCM) Program
- DND and CF Code of Values and Ethics
- The Canadian Armed Forces Ethos: Trusted to Serve
- Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention (Bill C-65)
- Hateful Conduct (DAOD 5019-0, Conduct and Performance Deficiencies and CF Military Personnel instruction)

In development:

- Chief Professional Conduct and Culture
- 2020 CAF Inclusion Strategy AKA Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Code of Professional Military Conduct – Concept Paper

Culture Change (Sexual Misconduct, Hateful Conduct, Discrimination, Harassment and Violence, Employment Inequity, and Abuse of Power)

Culture is a key driving force for effective retention. The CAF culture does not currently reflect an understanding and compliance with CAF values and ethos. This includes a recognition that inclusion, equality and diversity must be fostered in order to maximize operational effectiveness. Moreover, unacceptable rates of harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct threaten the creation of a truly inclusive environment. Recently there has been a call for the CAF to undergo significant culture change such that it eliminates harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct and embraces the diversity and values of Canada, where members will feel safe, valued, and welcomed. We recognize that in light of the current crisis, trust in the Defence Team leaders has been negatively affected, and thus must be rebuilt. We also acknowledge that CAF members have previously shared their dissatisfaction with senior leadership via the CAF Retention Survey – making this a longstanding issue. To eradicate unacceptable behaviour and practices and ensure systemic barriers and inappropriate conduct are dismantled, the CAF has stood up a new L1 organization – Chief Professional Conduct and Culture (CPCC) – to help address these critical shortcomings. The mission of the CPCC will be to “align Defence culture and professional conduct with the core values and ethical principles we aspire to uphold as a National Institution.” The overall vision is that the “CAF will continuously progress their culture and governance to better embody shared professional values and ethos that embrace the diversity and values of Canada, wherein all members thrive in a dignified, equitable, respectful, and inclusive institution, while continuously delivering and supporting operational excellence.” (Department of National Defence, 2021). In light of this, the Retention Strategy itself is designed to be one of a number of enablers of culture change. Through effective governance, targeted retention, subsequent action items, and other efforts, the Strategy will support a culture in which members can thrive in fulfilling careers, where the CAF will represent an employer of choice as a respectful and inclusive institution.

COVID-19 – A Learning Opportunity About Retention in the Face of Global Events

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a unique opportunity to consider the actions and flexibility needed to ensure retention in the face of large-scale events that have national and global impacts on health and the economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has had undeniable impacts across the nation and the world. Throughout Canada, COVID-19 has widely impacted people's physical and mental health, as well as affected the economy with emergency shutdowns, quarantine orders, and business closures. The full impact of the pandemic has yet to be realized, however, the CAF should be prepared to feel the broad ripple effects of this global outbreak for years to come, whether they be in the economy, facing the greater Canadian population, or the CAF's own members.

The effects of the pandemic on Canadians encourage us to take a critical look at how the CAF can best support members in times of crisis. As noted in the 2020 Speech from the Throne, women have been particularly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily due to job losses from closures in public-facing industries. In addition, women have either reduced time in the workplace, left work entirely, or are not looking to return to the workforce due to a lack of dependent-care options or other financial considerations. Further, women were more frequently the primary caregiver for dependents and were responsible for the majority of tasks within the home, regardless of employment status (Statistics Canada, 2021c). The UN Women (as cited in Statistics Canada, 2020i) states that the uneven distribution of work at home and within society impacts labour force participation, job quality, and physical and mental health stressors for women. Inequitable work distribution (Statistics Canada, 2021d) contributes, in part, to the current body of evidence that those with children, and women in particular, are experiencing significantly higher mental health impacts related to the pandemic than men and those without children (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2020e). The numerous influencing factors above might render it more challenging for a woman to continue her employment in the face of competing interests such as family or social responsibilities. If intersectional issues are not deliberately studied, and mitigated as applicable, women may repeatedly face greater push factors in times of turmoil, contributing to poorer retention outcomes.



Other groups within Canadian society may also face impacts from the pandemic differently than others, or in greater magnitudes than the average. Although there is no specific dataset related to COVID-19 as of yet, for some groups we can deduce from earlier and related data on the potential impacts. For example, identified LGBTQ2+ Canadians are primarily composed of sub-groups (i.e., a younger age bracket and gender identity other than male) that are particularly impacted by factors such as job loss and/or lack of safe home space, leading to increased risk of homelessness, and increased experiences of harassment and/or discrimination (Statistics Canada, 2020j). Like LGBTQ2+ individuals, Indigenous people (Statistics Canada, 2020a), PWD, and some visible minority groups (Statistics Canada, 2020d) are disproportionately impacted by economic turbulence, with some of these groups experiencing higher rates of unemployment or reduced hours during the pandemic than the national average. This compounds the potential impact of COVID-19, as these groups tend to experience higher poverty rates, a greater likelihood of working in public-facing positions, and/or of having pre-existing health conditions. All of these factors increase the risk of disproportionately negative outcomes arising from the COVID-19 pandemic whether they be financial, physical, or relating to mental health. Further, LGBTQ2+ individuals (Statistics Canada, 2020j), members of the Indigenous population (Statistics Canada 2020c; 2020g), visible minority groups, and PWD (Statistics Canada, 2020g) were more likely to experience increased discrimination, as well as more likely to report increased symptoms of poor mental health during the pandemic.

When considering the potential impact on our own members, and how such events might affect retention efforts, some forward thinking is beneficial to better anticipate potential problems and prepare solutions. A sudden lack of childcare may cause unanticipated stress on military families, and diversity in the composition of families or family obligations will not affect each family equally. Either parent may have to make a decision to leave the CAF due to extended lack of childcare or when confronted with the emerging needs of their children during the pandemic. Given the findings from the Speech from the Throne and the prevalence of indicating “support for family” as a concern in the most recent Retention Survey, it may be more likely for women in uniform to take on the role of primary caregiver, opting to leave the force for an undetermined amount of time. Emerging evidence suggests that additional workplace flexibility, family supports, and mental health resources may be needed for members who form part of disproportionately impacted groups, or whose families include visible minorities, Indigenous people, LGBTQ2+ individuals, and PWD.

The pandemic also highlights occupations that may need additional support due to their critical roles, such as the Health Services occupations which already face retention or staffing difficulties. Further, the potential risk of exposure that deployed CAF personnel may face in the line of duty (i.e., a maintained presence in long term care homes), and health complications arising from COVID-19 infection, challenges the DND/CAF to take a renewed look at the protection of CAF members in responding to this threat, as well as the subsequent supports of those who fall ill and may be unable to serve in the same capacity following recovery. As CAF members and their families spend unprecedented time at their respective homes, and acknowledging that the individual living circumstances may present additional risks from prolonged confinement or unhealthy relationships, it should be recognized that CAF members and families may emerge from the pandemic with previously unanticipated needs. A lack of acknowledgement of the risk our members are now taking at home, the impact on their mental and physical health, or limited options for those later impacted by illness, may result in the untimely loss of CAF members to carry out the next mission.

These examples suggest how global events, in this case, a pandemic, may affect members and the operations of the CAF overall in new and challenging ways. The CAF has made adjustments to existing efforts to better provide support to members during these unprecedented times,

such as offering online fitness classes; advising members of the CF Member Assistance Program, and, of course, employing novel work conditions using digital working solutions with virtual meetings and regular staff check-ins. Further analysis will be needed to study the myriad of ways that COVID-19 will impact people, and how the findings could be extrapolated to other global events. Strategic thinking by leaders and clear communication of upcoming operational stressors and potential mitigations will be essential for the CAF to achieve its mission tasks in the face of such unprecedented circumstances.

Post-Pandemic Expectations

In addition to considering how the CAF is impacted and subsequently responds to major global events, we must reflect on the new expectations of our members as the world and Canada transition to a “new normal”. COVID-19 had a tremendous impact on organizational management and business continuity, forcing organizations to embrace new approaches to conducting business and delivering their mandates while supporting local and regional public health measures. Within DND, and particularly the National Capital Region, numerous employees and members have been able to utilize Alternative Work Arrangements such as working from home, working alternate or less typical hours, and employing technologies to collaborate with colleagues and advance work tasks. Although there were hurdles to overcome in the early stages of the Business Continuity Plan, working from home and some other alternative work arrangements have proven to be effective for a number of employees and members in supporting their personal needs, as well as advancing work in new and creative fashions. The flexibility in work arrangements that the pandemic encouraged, and the effectiveness seen within DND in using these arrangements, even in greater numbers than ever seen before, makes it possible that such flexibility will become a more prominent factor for current and new employees and members. This is but one example of the changes implemented to address the constraints of the pandemic. Other changes include increased health measures across Canada, such as reduced in-building capacity, the wearing of masks in close quarters, and the encouragement of staying home with any sign of illness in order to reduce COVID-19 infection. Increased public health measures also considerably impacted the transmission of the more common flu (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2021), providing other incidental health benefits. The positive impact of these measures on our members’ and

employees' health may be worthwhile considerations to sustaining and improving a healthy workplace for all those working within the DND and CAF.

Looking ahead, solutions to complex and individualistic problems must be comprehensive yet flexible. Solutions must consider the future impacts of current events alongside the potential impacts of our actions taken, and seek out potential efficiencies between strategies, programs, and responsible authorities in order to best address issues and concerns which impact retention. The solutions proposed must meet both the needs of the organization and CAF members while allowing for the identification and targeting of specific occupations, ranks, demographics, qualifications, and skills. The Retention Strategy is not a single resolution to all retention and attrition problems, but rather provides a methodology to support a focused, sustained, and evolving engagement on retention issues. The Strategy requires regular and continuous assessment to identify impactful developments and emerging trends so that decisions and follow-on actions can be taken more rapidly and consistently.

2.2 The Way Forward: A Holistic Approach

Canadian society is ever-evolving, which is to say that demographics, and the perspectives and values of Canadians, have changed and will continue to change. Reflecting these changes and the impact of global influences on military requirements in the future, how the CAF mandate is achieved will also evolve. Internal and external policy changes will impact how members are employed in the CAF and our efforts to retain our valued members must follow suit. Areas that influence retention are far-reaching and found in every step of a member's journey throughout their military career. As such, the only way forward is to take a holistic view of retention. A holistic view considers both the work and personal environments in order to identify the areas in which dissatisfaction resides and those areas that have the potential to become a future concern. It considers organizational efforts in the assessment of retention activities, promotion of the values and services of the CAF, prevention of attrition through proactive measures, and subsequent efforts in support of retention measures when members do choose to leave. This approach will ensure that the CAF addresses factors influencing retention wherever they may reside.

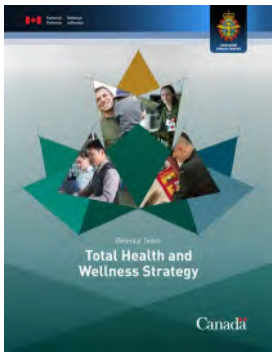
The value and necessity of retaining talent cascades through every element of force generation, force employment, and force management. From recruiting, to training, to employment, an emphasis on retention of the right capabilities, experience, and talents impacts the success of the institution.

The Interconnectivity of Retention

Retention is the outcome of multiple intersecting and influencing factors across the human resource space. The importance of retention, and its impact on all aspects of the CAF, means that the responsibility of retention is not solely within this Strategy. Other strategic initiatives and efforts impact different elements of retention at the individual, group, or capability levels. These include recently developed and in-progress efforts such as:

- The CAF HR Strategy:
 - The CAF Offer
 - The Total Health and Wellness Strategy
 - The Comprehensive Military Family Plan
 - The Employment Equity Plan
 - And other related initiatives, offices and efforts
- respecting individual aspirations, supporting the delivery of focused initiatives, and initiating collaborative efforts to amend major policy instruments to support and align with strategic objectives;
- » The Retention Strategy is a key element of the larger management program outlined in the CAF HR Strategy. The CAF HR Strategy will address many of the institutional factors that impact the development and retention of capabilities. Elements of retention, such as talent management and improving the organizational culture are developed and outlined within this meta-strategy.

Retention is the outcome of multiple intersecting and influencing factors across the human resource space. Other strategic initiatives and efforts will impact elements of retention, and as such the Retention Strategy must work in collaboration and with awareness of the work being done in these and other related areas:



- The CAF Offer: the policies, programs, and practices that provide CAF members with tangible and intangible benefits they perceive to be of value in return for their contribution to the CAF and its goals, including all monetary and non-monetary offerings that the CAF provides;

- » The Adaptive Career Path (ACP) is the CAF employment model designed to provide an enriching career for CAF members. It enables personal aspirations and management of work-life balance, while ensuring operational effectiveness.

- The Total Health and Wellness (THW) Strategy: a strategy developed to “create the necessary conditions which enable our CAF members and Defence civilians to better balance competing demands at work and at home, leading to greater productivity and success”;

- The Comprehensive Military Family Plan: a strategy which includes Seamless Canada and Canadian Forces Base Canada, the plan aims to help stabilize family life for CAF members and their families who have to frequently relocate;
- The Employment Equity Plan: a plan to support the legislative requirement to ensure the creation of equitable employment opportunities and overcome systemic barriers in employment experienced by designated groups, which will support meeting CAF EE goals; and
- Numerous reviews and processes which impact the CAF such as Occupational Analyses, re-enrolment process review, and the Reserve Recruiting Process Review.

In addition to the activities listed above, the concept of retention is interconnected and works in tandem with recruitment and effective HR management. By addressing factors that influence attrition rates now, and proactively addressing those factors that may come up, we ensure that existing and potential recruits are less likely to be impacted by issues facing serving members today. Further, implementing adequate HR practices that apply across the CAF, outside of those currently identified as problems – or potential problems – provides greater support for our members and greater retention overall. This allows us the opportunity to demonstrate to potential recruits that the CAF is an employer that values, cares for, and supports its members. In addition, retention and recruitment efforts are complementary. As we address factors of retention, we can better support recruitment efforts (i.e., if applicants need for more clarity about the military lifestyle). Furthermore, as new members join the CAF, different needs and concerns related to factors of retention may arise or old ones may recur. As such we must be prepared to continually improve how the CAF relates to and supports members.

The growing attention to the member-organization interaction contributes directly to establishing a culture that supports retention in the CAF. Implementing organizational change will impact the overall culture and address broad issues that have an effect on attrition in the CAF. However, there are key groups that consistently experience higher rates of attrition than the rest of the CAF. These groups will benefit from a more immediate and targeted approach to resolve their attrition issues, while the overarching organizational change will be a long term effort with lasting effects.

An effective Retention Strategy requires a **dual approach**. On the one hand, factors that affect CAF attrition issues can be traced to select occupations and personal circumstances. Therefore, **targeted retention** is the most relevant, highlighting gaps *currently* requiring immediate attention (and ideally in advance of such a need) and focusing efforts on them. At the same time, high-level, **CAF-wide** dissatisfiers are routinely identified by CAF members who share their views through surveys and focus groups, which are aimed at understanding the factors impacting the well-being of members and, ultimately, the drivers of attrition. Minimizing the cause/source of these dissatisfiers will help address general causes of attrition.

3 RETENTION VS. ATTRITION IN THE CAF

The landscape that we work within is constantly changing and we must be proactive in identifying and addressing CAF members' needs in order to retain our personnel. The CAF must provide support to our members so that they can meet their full potential and serve for the full extent of their career with honour and satisfaction in their service. Retention is also about keeping the right people – those who positively support the organization with their skills, education, engagement, and dedication. When we talk about retention, it is with the understanding that although the CAF has healthy overall retention, there are still specific demographics and occupations in which unique attrition issues have been identified.

A low attrition rate masks the impact of the loss of a few members in key capabilities. When a member leaves, they take with them years of knowledge, experience, education, and skills that are not easily replaced. Even members with fewer years' experience represent the loss of unique skills, knowledge, and investment in training when they choose to leave the CAF. Members with the technical, cognitive, social, and leadership skills required to carry out the CAF mission must be selected, trained, and promoted from within the CAF at significant expense. The unanticipated release of personnel, even in low numbers, can create critical shortcomings in the ability to maintain operations

and can take years and substantial resources (personnel, material and financial) to correct. This effect can be even more problematic with the loss of personnel with key skills and expertise in specialized domains – personnel whose skills and knowledge are also in high demand in Canadian society.⁸

Despite the negative impact that attrition can have, some attrition is expected and even desirable. When members who are not performing as expected, or who decide a career in the CAF is not a good fit for them, are released, they open opportunities for new and existing members to progress. Similarly, when members who have served and contributed to the CAF retire upon reaching compulsory retirement age (CRA), advancement opportunities are opened up. This movement of existing members and the influx of recruits are essential to reconstituting the CAF over time. It is not the goal of this Strategy to prevent all attrition. Rather, it is *unhealthy attrition* that is problematic and is the focus of this Strategy.

- **Unhealthy attrition:** attrition that is both *avoidable* (when the member chooses or feels forced to leave for reasons that are within the organization's control) and *dysfunctional* (when otherwise-contributing members leave).



⁸ More details on the points brought forward here and within Section 3 overall can be found in Annex E: Data Details.

However, looking solely at the attrition data only addresses the issues retroactively. Addressing unhealthy attrition and supporting the retention of CAF members depend on addressing the reasons for their departure. What resources must exist and be employed to ensure that our members receive the support needed to continue service in the CAF? Retention efforts must also incorporate the influencing factors of retention for a positive work experience. These factors support members in remaining employed by the CAF and may reflect what motivated a member's decision to join the CAF in the first place.

Understanding Retention – Influencing Factors

Research in organizational psychology and human resources suggests that when people feel valued, respected, and supported in the workplace, and perceive that their organization and leaders care about their well-being, they become more engaged and committed to the organization (Allen & Myer, 1990), perform better (Ricketta, 2008), experience greater job satisfaction (Ricketta & van Dick,

“Even when employees feel a lack of support from their organization, leaders play a critical role by buffering those effects with positive interactions through their subordinates.”

- Audenaert, Vanderstraeten, & Buyens (2017)

2006). Other factors, such as personal suitability or person-job fit also play a role in retention and attrition. If someone feels incompetent, feels the job lacks challenge, or simply does not enjoy their work, they can be motivated to leave – even if they feel supported by the organization.

These and other variables can be influenced by either the organization, through its processes, policies, and support systems, or by leaders through day-to-day interactions

with employees. Some of these factors have been previously categorized as transactional (referring to pay, bonuses, and tangible benefits and interactions) or relational (referring to interpersonal relationships where trust, agreements, and commitment are built) (Department of National Defence, Military Personnel Generation, 2009). The significance and role of leadership in this aspect must be recognized, due to the substantial influence leaders have in the interpretation of policies, the assignment of work, and in fostering a positive (or negative) work environment.

Including leadership, the factors of retention can be grouped into three categories which will help direct efforts and identify the most effective areas of impact when developing and managing overall and targeted retention efforts. These efforts, in turn, will be able to more effectively address retention issues. Key factors that contribute to overall job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and retention and attrition according to the literature, can generally be organized as follows:

- Organizational (Transactional): including job design; workplace culture; training and equipment; and policies and strategies;
- Leadership (Relational): including fostering an environment of inclusivity, civility, and respect, transformational leadership, supporting members through, and maintaining flexibility and planning ahead to reduce the impact on families and reduce work-family conflict; and
- Personal: including person-job fit, perceived fairness, morale, job satisfaction, and psychological distress.

Retention Issues for Underrepresented Populations

The low attrition rate of the CAF overall also masks the loss of members within underrepresented populations – for all of those members recruited, about half of the number of designated group members release.⁹ Losing these members prevents the CAF from maintaining a pool of qualified personnel, while also perpetuating a lack of representation at senior levels, which also influences retention and recruitment activities. Issues of retention for underrepresented populations broadly fit within the identified Organizational, Leadership, and Personal categories, however, there are nuances to the issues affecting these groups. Underrepresented populations face greater challenges from

⁹ Recruits vs. releases is tracked for identified designated groups (women, Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities) See Annex E: Data Details. Attrition rates for PWD not currently available.

harassment and discrimination than the majority, and may feel a lack of inclusivity in the culture¹⁰ (e.g., addressing sexual misconduct in the CAF, as well as cultural unsafe practices¹¹ and discrimination against Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities, and LGBTQ2+ members). These factors must be addressed through CAF-wide culture change initiatives in order to have a lasting impact. The efforts stemming from the Retention Strategy must also support this culture change, ensuring that actions and initiatives fully incorporate the views and concerns of underrepresented populations, such that every member of the CAF is supported to thrive and have a full career in the CAF.

By better understanding the impact the organization can have when making adjustments to these variables and applying those adjustments through actions and initiatives, we can contribute to a culture in which retention will be a key consideration when developing policies, processes, and initiatives. With this information guiding the CAF, the organization is better prepared to build on existing organizational efforts to ensure the CAF is not just a workplace that people want to join, but one where people want to stay.

To address these areas in which attrition is high, we must look at who is leaving and why. The data related to attrition, supplemented by the research providing insights on the experiences of different groups, is invaluable in developing targeted retention efforts. By analyzing attrition data, specific demographics with particular irritants that impact attrition can be identified and appropriate actions crafted to address the identified issues.

3.1 Attrition in the CAF

The average rate of attrition from the CAF (Reg Force and P Res) is generally between 8% and 9%. This rate compares favourably with the Canadian labour market, including both the private (10.2%) and public sectors (4.7%) (Coburn & Cowan, 2019).¹² The CAF rate of attrition is also lower than that of many of our allies.¹³ With such positive numbers, why does the CAF need a

strategy for retention? These numbers hide areas of unhealthy attrition, areas that can impact how effectively the CAF can complete its missions, and how truly representative of Canadian society it can be. To identify where an attrition problem exists, we need to look past the overall number and dig deeper. CAF research identifies attrition by years of service, gender, occupation, and rank amongst other factors. Generally speaking, unhealthy attrition in the CAF can be identified in recruits within the first year; members with 20-25 years of experience; specific occupations; and women, Indigenous Peoples, and visible minorities in the CAF.¹⁴

A better picture of who is leaving the CAF can be developed by regularly employing a Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lens to the attrition data and conducting intersectional analysis. Taking a broad demographic lens, Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis (DGMPPRA) analysis of attrition by gender and years of service already reveals women and men generally have comparable rates of attrition up until 20 years of service, at which point the rate of attrition for women is markedly increased, and these departures tend to be senior ranking members. If we also consider attrition rates by gender and occupation, logistical occupations are identified as having high attrition rates, which as of 2020, is comprised of an estimated 42% women.¹⁵ These pieces of information should be used as indicators of where and how analyses can be conducted to uncover more details on who it is that is leaving the CAF, providing us with potential targets for retention efforts. While broader efforts supporting gender equity would help the retention of women overall, and notably support those occupations with a higher number of women as members, intersectional analyses can also lead to findings requiring further investigation. Are there occupations where women seem unable to enter or are more likely to leave when they do get in? If so, we must consider why this is happening, and how best we can address it. These types of questions must also be posed in consideration of attrition related to other underrepresented populations in the CAF – Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities, PWD, and LGBTQ2+ members. While we have data on the attrition rate of most of the designated groups, (See Table 1) there

¹⁰ See Annex A for further details.

¹¹ Culturally unsafe practices are those that “diminish, demean or disempower the cultural identity and well-being of an individual” (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2002, p. 9).

¹² Percentages for the private and public sector represent voluntary turnover. Involuntary turnover for private and public sector are 5% and 1.7% respectively.

¹³ Ex: NZ – 10% (2019-20); AUS – 9.0% (2019-20); UK – 5.7% (2019-20, noted that this also reflects an increased rate of recruitment that year).

¹⁴ Data refers to Reg Force.

¹⁵ Data refers to Reg Force.

Table 1: Average attrition rate by designated group, fiscal year 2017-18 – 2019-20

Average attrition rate by designated group in the CAF, FYs 17/18-19/20*

Designated Group	Regular Force	Primary Reserve	Cadet Organizations Administration and Training Service	Canadian Rangers
Women	7.2%	14.3%	6.8%	5.3%
Indigenous Peoples	8.7%	19.4%	6.6%	6.5%
Visible Minorities	5.9%	10.6%	4.6%	8.2%
Persons with Disabilities	11.1%	13.4%	6.2%	6.7%
Total	7.8%	13.7%	6.8%	5.3%

*Values include component and subcomponent transfers.

is no reported rate of attrition for LGBTQ2+ members. Limited data is strongly impacted by the process of self-identification across Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities, and some members of the PWD groups, and further limits how we can best identify and target areas to address in terms of retention.

Clearly identifying where we see issues of attrition is a critical component to address retention effectively in the future, however, it is not enough. To effectively target retention efforts and ensure that the influencing factors of retention are properly applied, it is necessary to delve into deeper analysis of the “why”.

Attrition in the CAF – Why?

DGMPPRA provides a wealth of information on the CAF, including conducting and analyzing data related to attrition and retention via the Retention Survey, the Exit Survey, and other stand-alone targeted studies such as occupational analyses, which are aimed at understanding the factors impacting the well-being of members and the drivers of attrition. Over the decades of research related to retention and attrition, the reasons for dissatisfaction

have largely remained the same: job dissatisfaction; impact of military lifestyle on spouses/children; career/occupation dissatisfaction, lack of career progression; and dissatisfaction with senior leadership.

When the analysis is broken into demographics, there are indicators for groups and factors which require further analysis to support the development of targeted retention efforts. Analyses conducted on Retention Survey data (Cheng, Myers, Musolino, Yeung, & Eren, 2020), found that there were few significant differences between men and women in their intent to leave the CAF. Where differences are found, analyses indicate that women tend to have higher levels of satisfaction with individual battle training standards, the effects of posting on family, pay and benefits, and organizational leadership compared to male personnel. However, analysis of the open-ended responses to the item “list and discuss the aspects a member is most dissatisfied with” did reveal differences. Here, some¹⁶ women more frequently reported dissatisfaction with items such as: advancement/promotion/Performance Evaluation Reports (PER); training and development; workload and demands; organizational inefficiency; and lack of transparency/fairness related to occupation, in comparison to their male counterparts.

¹⁶ About half the female participants in the Retention Survey responded to this item. As part of qualitative analysis, not all would have mentioned each of these items, or one respondent may have mentioned more than one item.

DGMPRA also conducts targeted studies for occupations to identify specific factors influencing retention and attrition, and is currently conducting Project Horizon – a longitudinal study of the early experiences of CAF recruits in the early phase of their careers, to gain a better understanding of early-career commitment, retention, and attrition. These studies provide valuable insight, however, further work is needed in order to collect or collate information regularly which would allow disaggregation and analysis of issues for all sub-groups of members across the CAF. The 2019 Retention Survey analysis included a suggestion to conduct more qualitative studies via interviews and focus groups to obtain a clearer picture of what the issues are. Such analysis can lead to uncovering issues not previously considered. This can further lead to potentially investigating issues that are not currently covered and allow them to be considered from a strategic perspective.

Underrepresented Populations in Retention and Exit Surveys' Data

Both the Retention and Exit Surveys provide the opportunity for members to self-identify as a member of underrepresented populations, however, the rate of self-identification of underrepresented populations in the surveys is quite low, limiting our awareness of retention dissatisfiers specific to those groups. This makes it challenging to come to conclusions that can be generalized to the underrepresented population and be effectively addressed within this Strategy. As such, and as discussed above, the results are not disaggregated by underrepresented populations, with the exception of women in the CAF. To address this lack of data, a primary concern is to investigate how to collect information on underrepresented populations in greater numbers and analyze it more frequently. This may be possible through targeted outreach for survey response, more specific response options, or additional analysis via focus groups and interviews. This must be approached with sensitivity and awareness that respondents may be hesitant to bring forward information. They may fear the impact on their work lives or their career, or simply not be ready to discuss the issue in a formal format. This can be particularly true for victims of discrimination and/or harassment. It is crucial that members feel safe in sharing information, and that data and research are collected from a variety of sources if survey data is not available or feasible. Doing so will allow us to acquire a better understanding and create better actions to support our members and the broader culture change efforts in development.



In terms of general reasons why members of underrepresented populations leave, these include issues such as discrimination and harassment, barriers to fulfilling employment, and lack of inclusivity. Broad cultural changes are needed to effectively address a majority of these issues – such as misconduct, racism, discrimination, and inclusion – and can be supported appropriately through the application of GBA+ at the outset of developing action plans for the Retention Strategy. We must ensure that the Retention Strategy works with other strategies and developments on culture change such that addressing systemic issues (such as discrimination, harassment, and bias) are supported within our efforts going forward. In other cases, there are aspects that can be specifically tackled within retention, for example, women report that there is a lack of detail, transparency, and accuracy in the information they receive regarding training (e.g., fitness training). For other groups, additional analysis is needed to identify specific issues. However, harassment and discrimination are identified as considerable issues for Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities, LGBTQ2+ members, and PWD. Targeted retention efforts must take into consideration the needs and concerns of these subgroups in order to ensure they are effectively addressed.

The Reserve Force

Attrition by component must also be considered when looking at attrition and retention data. While the overall rate of attrition from the CAF is quite low, when broken down between Res Force¹⁷ and Reg Force, there is a stark difference – the Primary Reserve (P Res) experiences an attrition rate almost double that of the Reg Force (an estimated 15%¹⁸ vs. 8-9%) while attrition rates for Canadian Rangers (Rangers) (4.8%) and Cadet Organizations Administration and Training Service (COATS) personnel (9%) are comparable or better than that of Reg Force.¹⁹ Res Force attrition, however, can be driven by different factors than those of the Reg Force – for example, Army reservists include a large portion of students who may leave the reserves for full-time work, or transfer to the Reg Force.

Broadly speaking, the dissatisfiers are similar for both components, with both P Res and COATS also identifying family-related concerns, lack of opportunities, and civilian obligations as reasons to leave (Pearce, 2020; Butler, Eren, Bremner, & Budgell, 2013).²⁰ However, it's important to view Res Force attrition with a different lens than Reg Force. While there are similar reasons for leaving the CAF between Reg and Res Force members, the factors which influence Res Force members' decision to leave can differ from that of Reg Force members. As recommended for the data on Reg Force members, deeper and more detailed collection and analysis into Res Force attrition data will provide a clearer picture of where attrition problems exist and how best to target retention efforts. Not only will this allow the development of more effective retention efforts for the Res Force, but by acknowledging the details that demonstrate the differences within similar dissatisfiers in broad CAF-wide efforts, it ensures that concerns within the Res Force are heard and can be appropriately addressed in order to have the best opportunity to retain Reservists.

Going Forward

It is imperative that the CAF make effective use of the data it has at the strategic level. The CAF is fortunate to

have a plethora of data within retention and exit data surveys, in addition to considerable research providing information related to the experiences of CAF members and the factors influencing retention. In many cases, this data can be paired with information on an individual's marital status, age, gender, first official language, rank, etc. which should be taken into account when developing retention plans and initiatives. Additional demographic dissection and intersectional analysis of the "reasons for leaving" will give a better picture of who is most likely to leave and why.²¹ Considering different occupations and demographics at different levels will uncover the areas where retention efforts will result in the most impactful and efficient results. Further analysis through other methods of study such as focus groups, interviews, and longitudinal studies will improve our understanding of what is driving attrition. This will allow us to tease out the details of why members leave, or consider leaving, allowing for better application of the influencing factors of retention and subsequent development of retention efforts.

In addition to conducting intersectional analysis, we must carefully consider what is being asked in the surveys and other studies and seek opportunities to get more of the retention story, focusing on emerging issues impacting CAF members and their families. Although there is considerable disaggregation of data already (rank, gender, YOS, marital status), the Retention and

Exit Surveys do not break down their results by Indigenous members, visible minorities, PWD, nor do they identify issues of harassment, although the question is asked in the surveys. This information must be considered as part of retention efforts, supporting current CAF actions, such as the Indigenous Strategy, the Policy on Hateful Conduct, and the amendment to the Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Regulations (Bill C-65). It has to be kept in mind that the data collected from members is

Reasons for attrition and retention differ across the spectrum of individuals that make up the CAF. We must delve into diverse sources of data and integrate different methods to achieve a full picture of the problem space and develop better solutions to identified problems.

¹⁷ The Res Force has four subcomponents: Primary Reserve, Canadian Rangers, Cadet Organizations Administration and Training Service, and the Supplementary Reserve

¹⁸ This includes Component Transfer rate of an estimated 2.9%.

¹⁹ P Res, Rangers and COATS data provided by DGMPPRA; represents average attrition over 10 years, up to 2019-20. Data on Supplementary Force was not available.

²⁰ P Res also specified dissatisfaction with the job and dissatisfaction with pay and benefits amongst the top five reasons, while COATS also identified dissatisfaction with personal administration and personal conflict(s) with the unit member(s) or leadership.

²¹ Caution must be taken in approaching these type of analysis to avoid survey burden and the risk of subgroup members feeling identified, as well as ensure that the results remain generalizable.

voluntary and thus information availability is dependent on a member's willingness to provide it. This can present challenges in the form of low response rates, particularly from members representing smaller demographic groups who are more often called upon to share their views through surveys and focus groups. Despite this difficulty, options must be considered and investigated regarding how to obtain relevant data so that it can be better employed in effective retention actions. Such options should include stronger and more frequent communications on the purpose and use of research and the importance of engagement with all stakeholders, including members.

The CAF is a collection of communities, with different experiences, pressures, and career paths. The experience of a Cyber Operator, and their retention model, differs radically from that of an infantry soldier, just as that of a Reservist differs from that of a Reg Force member. Likewise, the pressures and demands that impact retention will be unique to each community. As such, retention goals and targets for occupations or demographics must be unique to each community. The focus on group behaviour is foundational to the success of targeted retention programs. Individual decisions about whether to remain or to leave the CAF matter and are impacted by local factors. However, the pressures which drive attrition within specific communities, be it demographic groups or occupations, vary and require unique group-level approaches to address.

3.2 Current Efforts

Existing sources such as the Annual Military Occupation Review (AMOR) and the Preferred Staffing Level (previously Preferred Manning Level) will be a significant part of the overall retention efforts, wherein the outcomes of these activities will help direct retention activities – identifying where problems may exist and need further investigation. Programs and processes such as these will be part of the broad network of information that is needed for effective retention. Currently, these processes guide efforts in personnel production and training and identify occupations experiencing operational shortages. In addition to these processes are the current measures relating to data collection and analysis which provide retention-related information – for example, attrition data, retention and exit surveys, and break out analyses by occupation. Other activities already work in the realm of retention and as such, communication and alignment with these activities is crucial to advance a comprehensive and unified

Still in development, the CAF Offer embodies the philosophy that CAF members make a unique contribution to the Profession of Arms; that members serve under unique conditions; and there is a distinct impact of service life on their families. The CAF Offer represents the establishment, maintenance, and adaptation of a suite of programs, policies and practices, ensuring that all members and their families are appropriately recognized for their contribution to the Nation. The philosophy, as well as its guiding principles, and framework was approved as of June 2021.

Additional success has been realized in the development and upcoming release of the CAF Offer Interactive Guide: an online portal with which members can view all of the policies, programs, practices and other elements of the CAF Offer. Its release is anticipated in early 2022.

approach. These include the CAF Offer which provides an inventory of programs concerning compensation as well as benefits and career and work/life balance, and more specifically the ACP framework, a CAF employment model designed to improve the ability of members to move between Reg and Res Force for a seamless transition between components. The ACP framework is designed to provide members with equitable access to the multiple career employment opportunities within the CAF. Once completed the ACP framework will provide considerable support to retention efforts as it will leverage a CAF member's knowledge, skills, abilities, and other attributes common to all CAF occupations, while recognizing that their capacity, family circumstances, or interests may change over time. The completion of the ACP framework will be a considerable step and a key component towards supporting the broader retention efforts.

The Retention Strategy recognizes the extensive work that is already being done to inform HR processes for the betterment of CAF members. There have been considerable efforts put forth to provide exemplary services to the members of the CAF. The Strategy aims to build on these existing efforts, to provide an overarching strategic view to the related data, and bring a retention lens to the collaborative development of ongoing and upcoming strategies, initiatives, programs, and processes so that identified dissatisfiers are incorporated and addressed. Additionally, it will provide the direction necessary to build in the tools to pre-emptively identify and address new or recurring dissatisfiers that can lead to unhealthy attrition.

The Retention Strategy will complement existing work, encouraging greater alignment between the new and existing efforts, and allowing for the opportunity to develop new initiatives or programs as needed, to best address unhealthy attrition.

3.2.1 Strategies, Programs and Processes (Underway and in Development)

There are numerous undertakings within the CAF that are in alignment with the approach of the Retention Strategy, some of which can have considerable and obvious impact on the influencing factors of retention. Others

may be more indirect or subtle, but nonetheless are valuable for their impact on factors of retention – the opportunities to retain CAF members can be found in every interaction between the member and the organization. Projects, initiatives, and processes that work to improve that experience make the CAF a better place to work and contribute to improving retention rates across the CAF, both in targeted demographics and occupations, as well as broadly across the organization. The table below identifies a non-exhaustive list of these enterprises.

With the collaborative work of the Retention Strategy and the various actions in effect or in development, the organization will be able to secure a comprehensive approach to overall retention, as well as support and guide targeted retention efforts.

Table 2: Sample of current actions which support retention (underway or in development)²²

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defence Leadership Symposiums • Indigenous Strategy • Adaptive Career Path • My Transition Guide • Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Modernization • Full-Time Summer Employment (SSE 81) • Compensation for Employers of Reservists Program • Total Health and Wellness Strategy • Seamless Canada • Balance: The CAF Physical Performance Strategy • Military Career Transition Website • Operation EXPERIENCE • CAF HR Strategy • Occupation Analysis studies • Employment Equity Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief, Professional Conduct and Culture • Joint Directive on GBA+ and Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace & Security (UNSCR WPS) Agenda • Diversity Strategy (to be replaced by CAF Inclusion Framework and Action Plan) • Universality of Service Review • Canadian Armed Forces – Accreditation Certification Equivalency Improvement • Comprehensive Military Family Plan • Military Spousal Employment Network • Operation GENERATION • First Principles Review of Military Total Rewards (the CAF Offer) • Renewal of the CAF Ethos: Trusted to Serve • Canadian Army Modernization Strategy • Reservists' Assistance Program
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²² Due to the nature of retention, there are numerous initiatives that can influence a member's decision to remain in the force. Table provided is not exhaustive.

4 LOOKING TO THE FUTURE – RETENTION IN THE CAF

A career within the CAF is not an easy undertaking. There are high expectations placed on members in their support of the CAF in missions and postings. In return for this dedication of service, the CAF must respond with care and support that demonstrates to members that their dedication is valued. It is with careful consideration that our leaders must best support the needs and desires of our members while meeting the operational needs of the CAF.

Retention is multifaceted and its factors truly touch on every aspect of a CAF member's journey. The research on attrition, retention, and experiences of CAF members and their families, as well as secondary research literature coincide and will help us shape our actions going forward. It directs our focus and provides general guidance on how to make improvements. However, it is not enough to use this information blindly or attempt to apply quick-fix



solutions to immediate problems. Further analysis will be needed. Change at the organizational level will require in-depth policy and program analysis to determine what is effective and what needs to change to better speak to the influencing factors of retention. Clarity of communication regarding work being done, as well as options, programs, and benefits that support the retention of our members, remains an issue and, as such, further assessment needs to be done on how to best improve communications with our members. In addition, work must be done to develop a retention monitoring framework to ensure that the efforts made are effective and adequately address concerns. Most importantly, these changes require the support of our leaders. Without this support, not only will these retention efforts fall to the wayside, the retention issues which have existed for decades will likely continue in some form in the future.

This Strategy will proactively guide the institution in retention efforts, maintain evidence-based decision-making, provide guidance and tools on how to identify and address areas of retention-related concerns, and support continuous analysis and improvements. It views retention-related data – attrition data, retention/exit survey results, stand-alone studies, and information from focus groups and interviews – as symptoms to be investigated further, in order to identify areas of concern in which the influencing factors of retention can be addressed. Additional analysis, guided by the identified factors and attrition issues, must be conducted by the responsible parties to better determine which factors apply to the stressed demographics, and what type of solution will best meet members' needs while still meeting the requirements of the CAF. It is not possible to prevent every member from leaving, nor should that be the goal. Rather, the Strategy will support healthy attrition (such as when a member reaches CRA or when there is a lack of fit between the member and organization) while addressing dissatisfiers causing unhealthy attrition. Further, the Strategy will support expanded considerations on “retaining talent” – for example through component transfer (to or from the Reg Force) there is an opportunity to retain talent within the CAF more broadly, or even the potential to retain talent through public service within for the broader Defence Team to the support the defence of Canada.

The Retention Strategy is part of a suite of strategies that support the CAF (e.g., the CAF HR Strategy, the THW Strategy). Some of the programs and initiatives stemming from these other strategies will also support retention. With the existing programs, initiatives, structures, and processes, as well as other synergistic strategies in development, it is crucial that the governing bodies of these various factors work in collaboration, to encourage alignment and prevent redundancy. As such, the Retention Strategy acknowledges the areas of potential coordination in the relevant LOEs below and supports the development of a governing body that can further the collection and coordination of retention-related information.

Retention is a dynamic leadership challenge. Leaders must be encouraged to incorporate influencing factors of attrition and retention in meeting personnel needs and must be provided with the information and tools to do so. Further, not all tasks in the CAF are equally desired, and the needs of service and operations must take precedence over other factors. The key leadership challenge remains to support the needs of the individual while meeting the demands of operations and reduce the impact that decisions have on group morale, cohesion, and structure. The organizational support resulting from the efforts of the Strategy will buoy leadership decision-making so that it is better balanced and better armed to effectively tackle and address the requirements of the CAF, and the personnel needs of our members. In order to implement effective retention efforts, the CAF must incorporate the concept that the opportunity for retention efforts resides in every stage of a member's career. The approach going forward is to incorporate the consideration of influencing factors of retention such that the CAF becomes an organization that better supports members in their careers and, to the extent possible, their lives.

It is critical to identify future retention requirements before it is too late to react, the impact of a shortage is felt, and the organization is negatively impacted.

5 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The CAF Retention Strategy was developed with the following guiding principles in mind. These principles are also broadly applicable to how we conceive of ways to improve and manage retention outcomes. Guiding influencing activities, while reflecting on these principles in our individual interactions, will help the organization and individuals alike to positively influence retention outcomes across the CAF.

5.1 Leadership Responsibilities

“Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them.”

– Colin Powell, prior Commander of the US Army Forces Command.

The influence leaders have on shaping the CAF members’ experience is far-reaching. Leaders at all levels are positioned to promote, encourage, and support healthy personnel retention at all stages of members’ careers. Leaders are a substantial influencing factor of retention, they can mitigate and protect members from harmful issues. However, ineffective leadership can negatively influence retention. As such, our CAF leaders are responsible as the first line of defence against

unhealthy attrition. A key component of leadership is the establishment and maintenance of trust between a member and their Commanding Officer (CO), such that concerns can be brought forth and are subsequently addressed efficiently and effectively. Without this trust, true and effective leadership is not possible. Every leader will embrace their responsibility to consider retention when they deal with their personnel and understand that early, effective, and frequent intervention can offset unhealthy attrition. Leaders are empowered, and directed, to implement retention efforts.

5.2 Credibility

Credibility is “the quality or power of being trusted and believed in.” The Strategy’s credibility will be the key to its successful implementation. With evidence-based information, clear and consistent communication, and effective leadership, the Retention Strategy will be – and will be seen by members to be – a reasonable, effective approach to keeping valued members in uniform. This will, in turn, strengthen the credibility of the organization.

5.3 Value, Diversity, and Inclusion

Every Canadian has the right to a non-discriminatory workplace. Further, “Diversity in the CAF is about championing, respecting and leveraging the unique differences, backgrounds, talents, and cultural perspectives amongst members to enable an inclusive environment where everyone feels empowered to contribute their full potential in the execution of their military duties” (Department of National Defence, 2017b, p. 2). All military personnel possess valuable knowledge, experience, and perspectives that represent force multipliers during domestic and international operations, bringing unique skills and adding further capabilities to the CAF. A diverse and inclusive institution is, and will continue to be, a driver of success. Being an inclusive workforce demands that every member be not just able, but encouraged to bring their authentic selves to work, including the full spectrum of their talents and professional potential, and be invested in their contribution to effectively deliver our organizational mandate. The Strategy will support the diversity and inclusion of





every member of the CAF, including directing actions to bring to light the concerns of underrepresented populations. This demand sets a high bar in program implementation: that programs and activities are equitable for all CAF members regardless of their various intersecting identity factors such as background, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, etc. GBA+ will be conducted and its findings will inform the development of Retention Strategy Action Plans to ensure that any developing practices or efforts are implemented in ways that are equitable and support all members of the CAF in their careers.

5.4 Employment With Dignity

Dignity, the state or quality of being worthy of honour or respect, is fundamental to well-being. Workplace dignity is reflected in respectful and inclusive interactions with leaders and teammates, and organizational practices and processes that support members feeling respected, included, and having fulfilling work. The CAF must work to ensure that all CAF members respect the dignity of all

persons within the CAF, regardless of gender identity, race, sexual orientation, language, rank, component, or any other element of a person's identity. Efforts under the Retention Strategy must integrate these concepts as part of their development to ensure that they support employment with dignity, reflecting the CAF members' commitment to serving in the Forces. While CAF members have a job to do, they are first and foremost individuals who require, deserve – and will receive – autonomy, respect, and a safe work environment.

5.5 Strengthen Families

Military service places unique demands on members' families. Therefore, retention decisions, policies, and programs must recognize and respond to familial needs as appropriate. The CAF will recognize the unique needs of all military families, including but not limited to, families with diverse dependent-related circumstances, same-sex families, service couples, and families with exceptional circumstances. Non-service couples²³ have pressures and demands that in many cases exceed those of service couples. Research shows that non-military partners to



²³ Couples in which only one partner is a member of the CAF.

CAF members suffer economically from postings and are impacted by the demands of a CAF lifestyle in different ways than service couples. The differing economic pressures and demands of non-service couples impact attrition amongst CAF members who must balance the needs of partners who have civilian employment not easily transferred between provinces or regions of the country. The influencing factors of retention are widespread and many initiatives and activities, such as Seamless Canada²⁴, will support the overarching efforts. In addition, the retention governing body will consider retention efforts from the perspective of the needs of families that are from different segments of the CAF community.

5.6 System Flexibility and Individual Choices

Today's CAF member is looking for more choice in career planning. While operational success remains the primary objective, the CAF must balance institutional and service requirements with members' personal aspirations to the extent possible. Retention initiatives must be flexible enough to reasonably adapt to members' needs, providing an enriching career that enables personal aspirations. Existing and in-development efforts, such as the Adaptive Career Path, must be leveraged to meet the needs of the members while also supporting the institutional goals of the CAF.

5.7 A One Force Approach

The Strategy will consider the entire force, with the solutions proposed taking into account the complexity of the retention challenges across the various occupations, demographics, and components of the CAF. The CAF will embrace and engage members across the entire force. We will start by removing the barriers that impede efficient movement between Reg and Res Forces. We will also more broadly consider the value of retaining the core CAF member talent that exists within services such as the Canadian Rangers, COATS, in addition to leveraging the ability to retaining our members within these parts of the organization or even within the public service of the broader Defence Team. Flexibility and mobility will allow us to balance the needs of the institution and those of our members, while retaining them, with their talents and skills for the purpose of supporting the defence of Canada.



5.8 Effective Communication

Communication will be frequent, two-way, and shared with members of the CAF so that they understand the benefits and services designed to retain them as members. Easy to understand benefit packages will be developed so members understand the breadth of services and benefits available to them and their families. Further, there must be clear communication upwards to leadership regarding the needs of members in advance of and throughout their careers, including how to implement effective retention measures to meet those needs, and how doing so ultimately impacts the operational effectiveness of the CAF.



²⁴ An initiative which helps CAF members and their families move seamlessly from one province or territory to another.



5.10 Targeted Retention

Retention is a complex issue and varies according to environment, geographic region, occupation, career stage, family situation, gender, age, and other identity factors. Retention cannot be “one size fits all”. This Strategy will support the targeting of specific occupations, at specific locations, at specific ranks, and at a specific time in order to fulfill the requirements of the CAF to deliver on its mandate. It will also support targeting specific circumstances, demographics, and other factors, as appropriate. Targeted retention will incentivize members, striking a balance between the needs of personnel and those of the institution. Targeted retention and other efforts under the Retention Strategy do not represent an end state. Rather, the Strategy will be employed as an evergreen effort, to be flexible in its response to retention and attrition research, addressing existing factors of attrition and preemptively addressing potential factors of attrition as identified.

5.9 Evidence-Based

Retention efforts to combat unhealthy attrition will be evidence-based and supported by research. Anecdotes can provide insight and direction, aiding in detecting attrition factors that may not be currently seen in the data. Anecdotal evidence must be interpreted as potential guides for additional research and must be carefully considered and assessed to ensure collective efforts are appropriately directed. Other sources of evidence such as, but not limited to, focus groups, interviews, and secondary related sources for data must also be incorporated to ensure a full picture of the issue. Current evidence related to retention and attrition is limited and does not accurately reflect the experience of all CAF members. Going forward, actions will be taken to regularly collect a fuller picture of the experience for all CAF members. Efforts under the Strategy will be based on research into actual attrition rates, differentiating between healthy and unhealthy attrition, and examining factors influencing members’ decisions to remain in the CAF or depart from it.



6 THE STEADY STATE

The Strategy will result in an evergreen process that engages in ongoing collection and analysis of attrition and retention data to assess and address current and upcoming attrition concerns. Adhering to the proposed principles, the CAF Retention Strategy will focus on retaining CAF talent and reducing unhealthy attrition by addressing dissatisfiers, investigating and addressing institutional factors that could contribute to the occurrence of misconduct leading to release and removing barriers, while maintaining operational effectiveness to achieve Canada's defence mandate. It is essential to understand that the

efforts guided by this Strategy are aiming for a long term impact and change which may take years to fully realize.

The CAF Retention Strategy will be successful when the CAF has reached a steady state of continually incorporating forward thinking to govern, implement, adjust and promote people-focused policies and programs to address unhealthy attrition, such that attrition rates are predictable and manageable.



7 LINES OF EFFORT, STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

In support of the Steady State to retain CAF talent and reduce unhealthy attrition, the LOEs identified within this section will work towards the following long term outcomes:

- CAF talent is retained in identified targeted areas;
- Occupational capabilities required for defence of Canada are sustained; and
- Reduction in unhealthy attrition of CAF talent.

Underrepresented Populations

The LOEs are aimed at supporting all members of the CAF. With the limited information available, retention issues for underrepresented populations appear to remain under broader categories which identified a need for clearer communications, better support from leaders, support of CAF members' careers, and support of the health and wellness of CAF members and their families. However, this approach only provides a start. All efforts implemented under the Retention Strategy Suggested Action Plan will undergo GBA+ in order to ensure that

issues faced by underrepresented populations in those areas are brought to light and properly addressed. Further, and in support of ongoing retention efforts, additional data on underrepresented populations must be collected and analyzed more regularly in relation to Retention and Exit Surveys' information to ensure we can better target and address issues. These actions are necessary to ensure that the governance body and RPO, to be established, have the information required to make knowledgeable recommendations and decisions which address concerns of underrepresented populations and support the broader culture change effort.

Interconnectivity of the LOEs

In implementing the Strategy and following the LOEs, it is essential to be aware of the interconnectivity of the LOEs with each other (i.e., governance and integrating and aligning; supporting CAF careers; and supporting families). While the LOEs direct a focused effort, progress in one area will necessarily impact the other. For example: supporting CAF members' career goals may also support CAF member families, such that opportunities for progression are better supported through improved childcare options when moves are required; improvement in communications of training requirements may also influence and better support talent management efforts; that support for a CAF member's career and/or family can have direct impacts on their health. Overall, the success of all LOEs relies directly on the success of LOEs 1, 2, and 3 – Strengthen Governance, Engage Leaders to Promote a Culture Supportive of Retention, and Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention.

To ensure success, supplementary documents including logic models for the LOEs, related actionable items, and a Performance Management Framework can be found in Annexes B, C, and D, respectively. Using these tools, responsible parties will be better positioned to identify and conduct the work needed to advance the efforts of the LOEs, and ultimately, the Strategy itself.

Gender Based Analysis + provides a rigorous method for the assessment of systemic inequalities, as well as a means to assess how diverse groups of women, men, and gender diverse people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The "plus" in GBA+ acknowledges that we all have multiple characteristics that intersect and contribute to who we are. GBA+ considers many other identity factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability, and how the interaction between these factors influences the way we might experience government policies and initiatives.

Using GBA+ involves taking a gender- and diversity-sensitive approach to our work. Considering all intersecting identity factors as part of GBA+ is a Government of Canada commitment.

LOE 1: Strengthen Governance

A retention strategy that delivers a significant and lasting impact requires organizational structures which integrate the comprehensive retention efforts into strategic priorities. This Strategy calls for the development or identification of two bodies; a RPO and a governing body. The preference would be to select a governing body from existing CAF governance structures, so as to not introduce redundant oversight. The Canadian Forces Personnel Management Council (CFPMC) could be such a body as it provides a forum for senior advice to the Chief of Military Personnel (CMP) on exercising their delegated functional authorities on military personnel matters. The CFPMC will receive strategic HR recommendations, identify organizational priorities, identify key stakeholders, provide direction in integrating and aligning efforts to reduce redundancy, and direct downward through the RPO to direct the necessary implementation.

A RPO dedicated to the implementation and ongoing maintenance of this Strategy will be able to collate and analyze attrition and retention information from external and internal research, as well as related information from advisory groups and reports which support underrepresented populations. The RPO will also collaborate with stakeholders at all levels, and maintain awareness of various strategies such as the Diversity Strategy, CAF HR Strategy, and others, in order to develop effective solutions that speak to the needs and concerns of members on an ongoing basis. The RPO group will be able to effectively report and table retention efforts and deliver strategic recommendations based on this information upwards to the governing body. The aspect of providing the RPO the ability to direct and track implementation efforts is key. Currently, a RPO with the power to direct and ensure accountability of actions does not exist. As such, efforts to address HR concerns remain “siloed” and do not receive the benefits of an overarching strategic view. A robust performance management framework will be developed for greater evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement of retention efforts. Monitoring and measurement activities will employ GBA+ and be informed by the findings to track and further identify and address key dissatisfiers for specific groups of the CAF that result in their departure from the CAF.

Strategic Objective 1.a.: Engage with leaders to identify responsibilities and establish a Retention Governance Structure.

Outcomes:

Short Term:

- Retention efforts are prioritized, sustained, and progressing as a high priority for the CAF

Mid Term:

- Retention efforts are responsive to the changing needs and priorities of retention in the CAF

Strategic Objective 1.b.: Implement retention monitoring framework that provides information to leaders and programs for better evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement.

Outcomes:

Short Term:

- Retention Strategy decision-making and improvement plans are evidence-based

Mid Term:

- Retention efforts are responsive to the changing needs and priorities of retention in the CAF

LOE 2: Engage Leaders to Promote a Culture Supportive of Retention

Leadership is both a critical component of improving retention and one of the top reasons members leave, or consider leaving, the CAF. As such, going forward, leadership will engage in and actively work towards a culture that encourages retention within the CAF. Leaders are essential to creating a culture where people are welcomed and involved. Leaders at all levels must recognize and be able to act on the opportunities to promote retention efforts throughout a military member's career. Leaders with direct jurisdiction over members must be able to identify areas of concern and engage in retention efforts as early as possible in order to respond to the operational needs, as well as the quality of life needs of members, and appropriately to ensure fulfillment. Further, they must be able to identify if a member is unwilling or unable to perform and be able to identify and utilize the appropriate resources to assist members to perform to the best of their ability. The actions of leaders will show they respect and value their subordinates.

Strategic Objective 2.a.: Empower leadership to invest in activities to support a culture of retention.

Outcomes:

Short Term:

- Leaders are empowered to address and implement retention efforts

Mid Term:

- Leaders' behaviours reflect a climate that supports retention



LOE 3: Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention

The influencing factors of retention are broad and touch every aspect of a member's career. Current efforts and new developments, such as the ACP framework, must be considered, integrated, and/or aligned to ensure that activities accurately reflect this broad nature and avoid redundancy, providing the best supports for our members. A comprehensive approach to retention requires a collective effort. This Strategy recommends increased stakeholder collaboration to ensure that the concerns and needs of the member and the institution are addressed in all areas that retention efforts can impact. Only through collaborative, integrated, and aligned efforts can we ensure momentum and adequacy in addressing current retention concerns, identifying areas to target retention efforts and pre-emptively manage potential problems. Support from processes such as the Military Employment Structure (MES) studies of occupations, AMOR, as well as the Personnel Generation Committee, along with analytics provided from the unit level, are foundational to ensuring that retention efforts remain focused on core capabilities and human resource requirements of the organization. Additional analysis is needed to better identify attrition and retention issues for women, Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities, PWD, and LGBTQ2+ members. While this will require additional data collection from survey sources, methods should also include interviews, focus groups, and secondary sources (i.e., Defence Advisory Groups (DAG), Sexual Misconduct Response Centre (SMRC), Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services (CFMWS), and subsequent reports) to obtain a more comprehensive picture for these groups. This approach must be supported by data and an aligned and consistent suite of policies, procedures, programs, and services.

The Retention Strategy calls for a targeted retention plan to address areas with increased attrition, and a comprehensive review of the policies and programs to address areas for improvement to support ongoing retention efforts. While anticipating that existing initiatives and other efforts have undergone GBA+, this must be confirmed, and subsequent targeted retention efforts must undergo GBA+ to ensure all member issues are appropriately addressed. This will lead to increased retention in targeted areas, greater support and flexibility for members, and more relevant policies and programs that better meet the needs of our members and the organization.

Strategic Objective 3.a.: Design and execute a targeted retention plan to mitigate unhealthy attrition in areas of concern.

Outcomes:

Short Term:

- Retention efforts are targeted at the demographic, occupation group, and capability levels
- Targeted retention analysis is included in force planning activities

Mid Term:

- CAF members are satisfied in their career with the CAF

Strategic Objective 3.b.: Conduct a comprehensive review of Personnel Policies and Programs, in relation to identified areas of concern for retention, to better support members.

Outcomes:

Short Term:

- Personnel policies and programs accurately address areas related to retention

Mid Term:

- CAF members are satisfied in their career with the CAF

Strategic Objective 3.c.: Stakeholders collaborate to integrate and align efforts to manage retention issues.

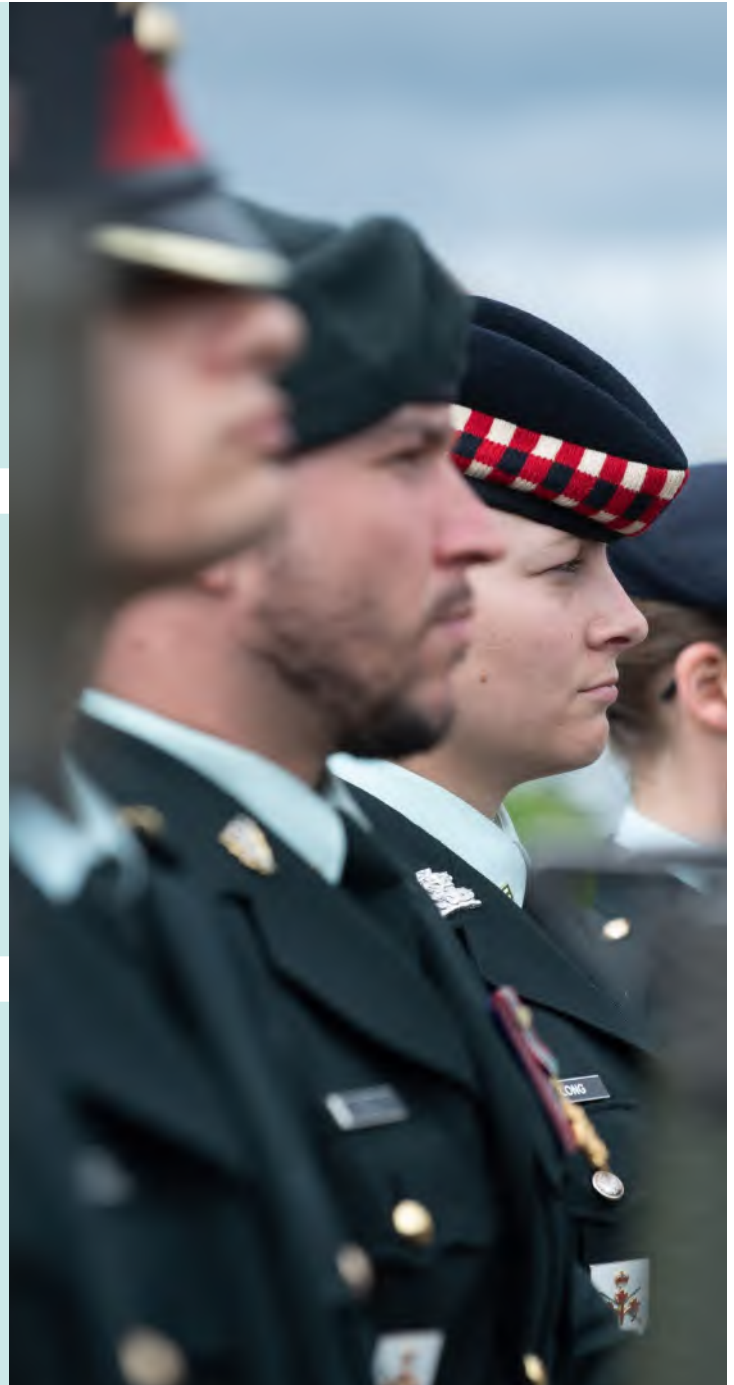
Outcomes:

Short Term:

- Stakeholder collaboration has an impact on the integration and alignment of retention efforts

Mid Term:

- CAF members are satisfied in their career with the CAF



LOE 4: Communicate Priorities and Promote Activities to Support Retention

The efforts of this Strategy will co-exist with and harmonize the existing efforts and programs, and the multitude of benefits that the CAF provides. However, ensuring that these efforts and benefits are clearly communicated is essential to ensuring that members are aware of them and have the opportunity to access them. Communications on retention and related activities will be clear and consistent throughout the CAF. Communication will be frequent, direct, and transparent, with consideration to

the needs of the members, to identify issues and ensure members understand the benefits, services, and options designed to retain them as members, and that the CAF is undertaking efforts to support them. Good communication is an early intervention to unhealthy attrition.

In addition to existing and upcoming retention activities and initiatives, military personnel need to see the efforts put forth by the CAF and the values in being a member. As such, promotion of the rewards and value of being a member of the CAF – not only the benefits and services that are offered to members, but the pride in the history and role of the CAF in Canada – is essential. Doing so encourages our members to integrate our *raison d'être* and why people serve to create unity of purpose and commitment.

Strategic Objective 4.a.: Increase awareness of retention-related activities/initiatives through improved communication.

Outcomes:

Short Term:

- CAF members have awareness of the benefits and options within the CAF throughout their career

Mid Term:

- CAF members choose options to be retained throughout their career

Strategic Objective 4.b.: Strengthen the organization's credibility through transparency and communication of priorities.

Outcomes:

Short Term:

- CAF members are aware of CAF improvement efforts and the organization's priorities to support them

Mid Term:

- CAF members choose options to be retained throughout their career



LOE 5: Support CAF Members' Careers

Retention efforts begin the moment a person considers becoming a member of the CAF. Every interaction between the member and the organization is an opportunity to develop a relationship built on mutual respect and trust. By providing support and earnestly investing in the member throughout their CAF career, the organization demonstrates the value and respect it has for the member. Such actions instill in the member a sense of respect and trust in the organization, as well as dignity, honour, and pride in their role in the CAF. The strategic objectives included in this LOE are focused on 4 key areas of influence:

- a. Improve talent management efforts to select and place applicants in occupations that match their interests, skills, abilities, and aptitudes;
- b. Improve the path to Operationally Functional Point (OFP) practices to gain efficiencies in the overall process;
- c. Provide CAF members with supportive career management to achieve their goals and reduce irritants related to a career in the CAF; and
- d. Improve the transition process for efficiency, clarity, and more flexible short, medium, and long term options to retain members.

These have been identified as areas needing improvement, as well as significant areas of impact for establishing and maintaining a positive relationship between the member and the organization throughout their career. Due to their significance, each is elaborated on further below.

In any healthy relationship, there must be an effort made on both sides to make it work well, and the relationship between the CAF and its members is no different. While the CAF must do everything it can to provide appropriate support via a multitude of methods, so too must the member be aware and acknowledge the demands of service in the CAF – this is the symbiotic nature of serving in the CAF. The member is to support the organization in its mission; to put service before self; and to endure any number of difficulties as part of service life as required. The CAF must be equally committed to its members and provide the support to not only allow members to be the best version of themselves, but to also encourage members to remain and support the organization with pride throughout their serviceable years.

Strategic Objective 5.a.: Improve talent management efforts to select and place applicants in occupations that match their interests, skills, abilities, and aptitudes.

The recruiting and selection process is the first interaction that members have with the CAF – an opportunity for both sides to put their “best foot forward.” Open, honest dialogue in this first stage provides potential members with realistic career expectations, enabling a richer understanding of the CAF and their chosen occupation. It is also where the CAF can ensure that there is a “good match” between the applicant and the organization, where new members are selected and placed, not only according to the needs of the organization, but also with consideration of their skills, knowledge, interests, and education. Improved communications and transparency related to CAF life and occupation training requirements (length of time, physical requirements, etc.) can set appropriate expectations for members. This provides recruits with the information they require early enough to discern if they are not a good match for the CAF. Additionally, GBA+ in this area may indicate separate needs that can be met for underrepresented groups. With these aspects in consideration, we can more effectively allocate training resources, and contribute to minimizing preventable attrition of valuable members during basic and initial occupations training.

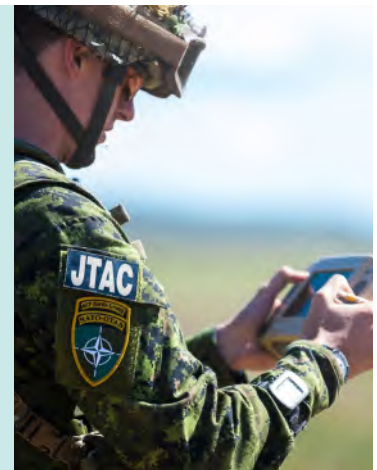
Outcomes:

Short Term:

- CAF talent management processes support members through job selection and placement during their careers

Mid Term:

- CAF members are placed in suitable occupations that match their interests, skills, abilities, and aptitudes to the career field



Strategic Objective 5.b.: Improve the path to Operationally Functional Point (OFP) practices to gain efficiencies in the overall process.

After recruiting, it is imperative to get members to OFP without delay, as there is a risk of losing those the CAF has worked so hard to recruit and train. When faced with a wait of months or years for their first developmental period (DP1), members can be presented with, or perceive, other opportunities outside the Forces which can be realized more immediately.

Outcomes:

Short Term:

- The path to OFP process is clear and timely

Mid Term:

- CAF talent is being retained through the path to OFP

Strategic Objective 5.c.: Provide CAF members with supportive career management to achieve their goals and reduce irritants related to a career in the CAF.

Once a member has been integrated into the CAF, so begins a lifelong relationship. A core part of this relationship is through the member's growth in their career as a serving member. Providing a career management experience in which members are supported in their personal fulfillment and achievement of their goals addresses barriers to progression and supports work-life balance, which would greatly contribute to reducing career-related friction. Career management is no longer simply a matter of providing required training. Supportive career management must involve the member, considering their aspirations and expectations and allow them to be challenged and grow as an individual as well as a CAF member, while also considering their changing needs to the extent possible. Members should be part of their career development, with better knowledge of the opportunities available to them and the requirements for potential career paths as they continue in their CAF journey.

Outcomes:

Immediate:

- Career management practices support CAF members to achieve their career goals

Mid Term:

- CAF members are satisfied in their career with the CAF

Strategic Objective 5.d.:

Improve the transition process for efficiency, clarity, and more flexible short/ medium, and long term options to retain members.

At some point in every career, a member will transition out of the CAF.

While not an area that is initially considered when one thinks "retention," this transition process provides an important strategic touch point where the CAF can implement retention measures.

Currently, the transition group notes that members are made aware that other options for transitioning are available within the CAF, including being able to apply for an occupational or a component transfer, or to a Commissioning Plan.

Expanding on these options such that short, medium, and long term choices are available would provide greater opportunity for valued members to continue to contribute to the CAF.

Despite all efforts, valuable members will still leave. It is the desire and aim of every organization that the only ones to leave will be those at the end of their careers or those for whom the CAF was not a good fit, making way for new members and leaders. However, unhealthy attrition is not something that can be entirely avoided. As such, it is beneficial to ensure that the transition process, which is the last interaction a member has with the CAF, is a positive one. By ensuring that the member is well informed and that the transition process is collaborative and is not long and arduous, military members can leave feeling that they were supported through every stage of their career. This furthers the chances that the member will become an ambassador for CAF – relating their positive experiences and encouraging others to join and, perhaps most importantly, spreading the values of the CAF.

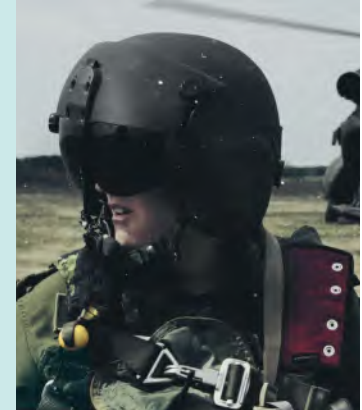
Outcomes:

Short Term:

- CAF members have awareness of the benefits and options within the CAF throughout their career

Mid Term:

- CAF members choose options to be retained throughout their career



LOE 6: Support the Health and Wellness of CAF Members and their Families

Preventable medical release of members who are otherwise productively contributing to our success represents a significant loss of capability. Medical releases remain considerably higher than the historical average.²⁵ The Strategy will support a better understanding of medical release trends, including those related to PWD, as appropriate, which will help to identify areas for further investigation into possible activities and plans aimed at reducing injuries or illness, as well as improving the physical, spiritual/

moral, and mental health of members as well as their work-life balance.

Recognizing that the families of service members play a central role in their lives and are key influencers in their decisions to stay or leave the CAF, retention efforts must support and accommodate the needs and concerns of CAF members and their families. Further, the CAF must consider that the needs of families will differ depending on what constitutes “family” and the impact family has on the member. In doing so, members and their families will develop trust and greater confidence that family life can be balanced with CAF service. Retention decisions, policies, and programs must recognize and reflect the varied and unique family needs of our CAF members. Improved family well-being and work balance lead to increased retention of members.

Strategic Objective 6.a.: Understand and address the needs and concerns of CAF members and their families to better balance family life with CAF service.

Outcome:

Short Term:

- CAF members and their family’s needs to balance family life with CAF service are understood and services are aligned to provide support

Mid Term:

- CAF members and their families balance family life with CAF service



Strategic Objective 6.b.: Identify and address issues affecting CAF members’ health and wellness to reduce injuries and illnesses leading to medical release.

Outcomes:

Short Term:

- Improved physical health, mental health, and work-life balance of CAF members

Mid Term:

- CAF members experience fewer injuries and illnesses that impact their careers



²⁵ To note, a number of recent releases reflect a clearing of the backlog of files. However, medical release trends should still be analyzed to reduce injuries and illness.

ANNEX A:

UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATIONS IN THE RETENTION STRATEGY

Understanding and addressing not only the dissatisfiers of underrepresented populations, but also the intersectional nature of those dissatisfiers, is a key aspect of ensuring that retention efforts are inclusive and incorporate the voices of all CAF members. Furthermore, understanding and addressing dissatisfiers of underrepresented populations is an essential part of how the Retention Strategy contributes towards and supports a diverse and inclusive work environment in the CAF. A noted area of concern is that information on underrepresented populations within the Retention and Exit Surveys' data is comparably limited; however, there is research focusing on these groups and the obstacles they face which may affect retention. Retention is related to all aspects of employment and is an outcome of effective HR management. The Strategy focuses on addressing dissatisfiers that apply across the CAF and informing the organization in order to develop better measures, introduce intersectional analysis²⁶ to the extent possible, and develop subsequent targeted action plans. The subsections below highlight some key issues that each underrepresented group may face both within their professional and personal lives. By taking these insights into consideration when developing retention efforts, we can provide better services and contribute to positive change in order to better support our members who wish to continue to serve.

Women in the CAF

Women make up an estimated 50.3% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2020h) and 47.4% of the labour force (Statistics Canada, 2021b), but only 16.3% of the Reg F and Res F P Res. While there is a push to recruit more women into the CAF to reach the goal of 25.1% representation, that is only half of the battle. We must also ensure that retention efforts address the concerns of women because about half of the number of recruited women release in the same timeframe; we cannot “fill the bucket” with a hole in the side.

There is some evidence that certain dissatisfiers associated with voluntary release may be more prevalent amongst women than men (i.e., lack of fit with military lifestyle, dissatisfaction with advancement/promotion/PER, training and development, and workload demands). The LOEs within the Strategy are directed at addressing these concerns broadly, but tangible impacts will be driven through the implementation of Action Plans, and particularly by ensuring that more effective and varied methods of analysis (i.e., interviews and focus groups) are conducted in order to better inform targeted retention efforts.

Women in Canada already face a number of issues in the workplace and for instance, women are 60% less likely than men to move from middle management to executive ranks (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2017). Other research shows that 34% of women report a lack of female role models as a contributing factor to the lack of female leadership (Randstad Canada, 2019). Further, when faced with questions as to why women aren't occupying more leadership roles, 27% of men (Randstad Canada, 2019) felt it was because of a lack of qualified and skilled candidates, yet women earn the majority of post-secondary diplomas at about 58% (Statistics Canada, 2016); indicating a bias in the perception of the qualifications of women for leadership positions. In addition, other issues that women face at work include non-inclusive spaces – wherein underrepresented populations are made to feel like “others” because of their differences, lack of accommodations and flexible work arrangements. Some intersectional analysis from studying perceptions on harassment and racism revealed that racism often was experienced differently based on the intersection of gender, religion, and/or race. For example, it was found that racial discrimination was more prevalent towards racialized individuals who also were women, and these mirror recent findings in reports on missing and murdered Indigenous women (Waruszynski, MacEachern, & Giroux-Lalond, 2019). The latter issues and examples described above, if addressed, could be particularly beneficial for retention

²⁶ This type of analysis relies heavily on self-identification and having a large enough sample size from the population so that conclusions drawn are more accurate, without risking the anonymity of respondents.

when considering that women tend to be primary caregivers most often, and the various issues described demonstrate gender bias. All these factors can negatively affect access to opportunities for leadership roles, career advancement, and the preponderance of women as role models or mentors to aspiring leaders within the CAF.

DGMPRA identifies challenges and barriers for women which, if unmitigated, risk perpetuating and/or increasing those dissatisfiers identified in the Retention and Exit Surveys. For example, while women report general satisfaction with early career training, they are more likely to report a lack of detail, transparency, and accuracy in the information received regarding training (such as fitness requirements) and CAF occupations. Other data suggests that more women than men believe they were treated unfairly (e.g., lack of respect) or that there were disadvantaged (e.g., due to maternity leave) with respect to training and development in that these would have been delayed or overlooked due to their maternity leave. As is the case in other Canadian workplaces, there is under-representation of women at senior ranks which contributes to the lack of mentors and role models to help guide women in their career progression. In addition, representation of women is not uniform across occupations – the majority of women serve in the Logistics and Health Services Branches.

The CAF has engaged in a number of initiatives to address the concerns discussed above such as the Integrated Women's Mentorship Network, the Women in Force Program, the CAF Anthropometric Program, the development of microaggression training and toolkits, as well as changes to maternity and parental leave.

Survivors of Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct can occur to any person in any place however, such harms disproportionately victimize women and other minority individuals. In Canada, 1 in 3 women and 1 in 8 men report having experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in public, while in the workplace 18% of women and 13% of men report having experienced harassment in the past year. Those in health-related occupations, and particularly women, were most likely to report having been harassed. In terms of perpetrators of sexual misconduct, both men and women primarily identified their aggressor to be a client or customer. The next most common source of harassment was their supervisor or manager at 39% and 32% for men and women respectively, followed by a colleague or peer at 35% and 34% for men and women respectively (Statistics Canada, 2018b).

The harmful impacts of misconduct should not come as a surprise as these events are known to be injurious to individuals and organizational culture. Workplace harassment results in lower self-rated physical and mental health, as well as higher levels of reported stress. Workplace harassment and misconduct also contributes to reports of job dissatisfaction, and a weakened sense of belonging to the organization. Even more concerning is that sexual assault and misconduct tend to be one of the most underreported crimes, with only 4% being reported to police (Statistics Canada, 2019c).

Sexual misconduct is a serious problem in the CAF, and similar instances of misconduct or gender based violence are of concern, particularly because the majority of victims tend to be women or other gender minorities. In 2018, it was found that women were much more likely to experience some form of sexual assault, and that about half of all victims stated that a peer was the perpetrator (Statistics Canada, 2019b). As of 2019-20, 16.7% of CAF members identified as victims of harassment. Data from the SMRC reveals that 688 members contacted their office in 2019-20. While this statistic also includes members looking for advice on how to address issues or requesting support tools (i.e., Chain of Command and/or friends of victims) 70.7% of the cases were related to sexual assault or inappropriate behaviour.

A number of studies and reviews have been published which highlight areas of concern, and provide recommendations to the CAF on how to address and eradicate sexual misconduct. In response, the CAF has implemented the SMRC, and The CAF Sexual Misconduct Response Strategy titled: The Path to Dignity and Respect. While some progress has been made, more work is needed as affected members still struggle with seeking workplace support and because the behaviours which harm others are still occurring. Recent allegations of sexual misconduct and investigations into the CAF culture demonstrate the continued need to address a violent and sexualized CAF culture. The DND/CAF has established a new level one organization titled Chief, Professional Conduct and Culture which is focused squarely on improving the CAF culture so that behavioural problems in the CAF are eradicated. Each of the efforts listed above are aimed towards making necessary improvements in the CAF culture surrounding sexual misconduct, so that all members are safe and supported in their work environment.

Indigenous Peoples in the CAF

An estimated 4.9% of Canadians self-identified as Indigenous on the 2016 census, compared to the 2.8% of CAF members who self-identified as such in 2020-21. Work still remains to reach the representation goal of 3.5% and this cannot be done solely through recruitment. Indigenous individuals continue to face barriers that impact their health and participation in the labour force, as well as having to overcome poorer health and education outcomes arising from historical and generational harms, resulting in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder/Residential School Syndrome for example (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014). Historical trauma from assimilation policies, systematic abuses, and neglect creates intergenerational harm, evidenced by the stark increase in risk of suicide correlated with a parent or grandparent who attended an “*Indian Residential School*”.²⁷ Negative outcomes relating to poverty, traumatic experiences, access to healthcare and education facilities include poor mental and physical health, as well as increased risk of abuse, which further perpetuates poor outcomes facing already marginalized groups such as young people of Indigenous origin (Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, Williamson, Spitz, Edwards, Koss, & Marks, 1998). Indigenous people with First Nations Status are generally younger than the non-Indigenous population, and Indigenous populations are growing at a rate much faster than non-Indigenous populations (Statistics Canada, 2021f). Better awareness of risk factors, barriers to employment, and risk of poor health outcomes should be considered deliberately when thinking about and addressing the diverse needs of Indigenous CAF members and providing opportunities for the younger generation of Indigenous Canadians.

Generally speaking, level of education and access to information and internet services are factors associated with achieving better employment opportunities and better health outcomes. While the rate of educational attainment is higher for those living closer to cities, a large portion of the Indigenous population lives in predominantly rural remote regions including reserves. Both health and education outcomes are affected when there are limited resources and accessibility challenges. For example, education outcomes saw marked improvement for people both living on and living off of reserves over the 2006 to 2016 time period however, the rate of improvement is less

for Indigenous Peoples living on Reserves and the rate of those on Reserve who have obtained a high school diploma is less than half that of a non-Indigenous individual (Statistics Canada, 2021f).

Racism exists in both overt and more subtle forms. For example, overt incidents include increased hate crimes against Indigenous Peoples, the staggering rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people,²⁸ racist slurs or derogatory language, and increased reports of violence and discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic. In more subtle forms, racism can be observed through structural or embedded processes as systemic discrimination (i.e., hiring practices, ignorance or failure to account and consider diverse users, etc.), tokenism, accepting or perpetuating stereotypes, and comments which are based on ignorance or a lack of sensitivity to others’ experiences.

DGMPRA interview analysis has found that microaggressions and subtle racism were still common within the DND/CAF. Even more concerning is the finding that the reported rate of harassment of Indigenous members is twice the rate of reported harassment for a non-visible minority or non-Indigenous member (Leblanc & Coulthard, 2015). Participants reported facing a number of harmful stereotypes that could affect perceptions of their credibility (i.e., uneducated, propensity to drink and gamble, etc.), a sense of “otherness” in treatment because they are Indigenous, a lack of awareness about aspects of cultural importance (i.e., hairstyle, use of terms and practices such as powwow and smudging), and inappropriate questions about “looking Indigenous” (Waruszymksi, MacEachern, & Giroux-Lalonde, 2019). While some participants noted that leaders had been accommodating or acted as advocates, others still found superiors to be racist, unsupportive, and lacking awareness and training. The 2017 Defence Aboriginal Advisory Group report revealed much harsher criticisms, noting that racism and discrimination continue to be a systemic issue through all environments within the CAF. Incidents ranged from microaggressions to full abuse of authority in which members were overtly threatened with reprisal if an incident was formally reported, and repeated incidents demonstrated that abuse of authority was tolerated and protected within the Chain of Command, or was prevalent amongst senior members towards Indigenous subordinates (Burke, 2016).

²⁷ Term ‘Indian’ reflects the language in source material.

²⁸ 2SLGBTQQIA refers to the following individual groups: Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual peoples. For the purposes of this document, these individual groups are typically referenced under the umbrella group of LGBTQ2+.

The discrimination of Indigenous members is pervasive and systemic, affecting the members' sense of belonging, their ability to present their authentic self in the workplace, and their ability to progress their careers within the CAF. In order to combat discrimination and ensure that Indigenous Peoples within the CAF are supported, the CAF must establish a more inclusive culture that promotes diversity, educates in the face of ignorance, and condemns racist and discriminatory behaviours. Some ways in which we can better support Indigenous members include building a better understanding within the DND/CAF of Indigenous history and culture (e.g., considering the differences in the importance and concept of family), providing inclusive and focused training to bring better awareness to issues facing Indigenous members), and improving the availability of support. Improving strategic awareness within the DND/CAF of barriers, unmet needs, and repressed aspects of Indigenous culture will allow the organization to address dissatisfiers for Indigenous CAF members while also creating space for more respectful participation within the Defence Team. In turn, an improved culture and increased representation of Indigenous members will bring a greater breadth of perspectives to policy-design and decision-making. As more Indigenous members see the CAF as a supportive and healthy workplace through these cultural changes, the DND/CAF will capture better data and information from those we retain so that we better understand how to support the health, dignity, and desire to serve in the CAF of our Indigenous members.

The CAF has been working to improve the diversity of the organization and provide better support for our members; as demonstrated by existing efforts such as the Diversity Strategy and its subsequent action plans, the development of the Employment Equity Plan, the Aboriginal Leadership Opportunity Year program, as well as implementing Cultural/Spiritual Accommodations and the construction of lodges. A renewed focus on misconduct within the CAF has highlighted the need to take a stronger stance on harmful behaviours, to support an improved and more inclusive culture for all who serve. Looking ahead, some efforts to propel the CAF towards a more inclusive culture include the DND/CAF Indigenous Strategic Framework, the CAF HR Strategy, the Advisory Panel on Systemic Racism and Discrimination, and changes mandated by the recently amended Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Regulations (Bill C-65).

Visible Minorities in the CAF

Recruitment of visible minority CAF members consistently outpaces the rate of releases over the same period, growing representation within the CAF population (9.6% in 2020-21) and nearing its representation target of 11%. Despite progress towards increasing representation rates and perceptions of better integration within the CAF, research demonstrates that further work remains to better support the CAF members who form part of a visible minority. Acknowledging, studying, and addressing racism, xenophobia, and issues with a disparate effect on visible minority members allow the DND/CAF to mitigate and ultimately eliminate the negative barriers to renewed and empowering service to Canada so that all members can serve to their fullest potential.

Interview and focus-group research revealed that self-identified visible minority individuals generally had positive perceptions towards the CAF fostering a more diverse and inclusive membership however, racist conduct and racist attitudes continue to persist, the effects of which greatly erode the perceived gains in supporting visible minority CAF members. Perceptions of acceptance and belonging were noted as an outcome of ongoing culture change efforts from recent years. Further, Op HONOUR was seen as a key contributor to improved interactions and awareness of issues affecting visible minority members. Despite Op HONOUR not being focused on issues of racism and visible minority groups, improved awareness of treatment and language in the workplace led some focus-group participants to report their belief that a similarly focused operation targeted towards diversity, inclusion, and respect could further improve the treatment of visible minorities and address racism in the CAF.

Despite general improvements concerning the treatment of the CAF's diverse membership, racism and racist conduct remain a problem, and most of the visible minority members canvassed recounted harassment and discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity. As retention is an outcome of all aspects of an individual's experience in a workplace, racism and other harmful behaviours or culture jeopardize not only the individual safety and dignity of some members, but such actions also jeopardize operational effectiveness of the CAF and the credibility required to attract and retain all who wish to serve. Members who identified as a visible minority described having been targeted by a broad range of inappropriate comments including overtly racist slurs, stereotypes, inappropriate humour, and otherwise derogatory comments. In some focus groups, the participants suggested

that some CAF members associate with white-nationalist groups, espousing racist, xenophobic, and undemocratic values which would be incompatible with the CAF Ethos, values, and ethics in the Defence Ethics Programme. Such concerns within the CAF have also been validated in recent years through internal investigations and media reporting (Department of National Defence, DND/CAF Ombudsman, 2019).

In the United States, race and ethnicity-based extremism are identified as the greatest threat to Homeland Security (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2020; C-SPAN 2021). As the United States is Canada's closest and most integrated ally, CAF members often train and deploy alongside members of the American military, and thus there are many cultural and thematic similarities in the obstacles each country faces with respect to Defence. In the United States military, more than 1 in 3 people reported being eyewitness to white nationalism and ideologically motivated racism while serving; the incident rate increased to more than 1 in 2 when the respondent was identified as a visible minority (Bender, 2021). Such a disparity between reported incident rates could be due to the higher prevalence of racist conduct towards visible minorities. It might equally be possible that bias and culture make non-visible minority individuals less likely to report the conduct of another non-visible minority individual, reflecting less-overt racism. Knowing that white-nationalist groups tend to target members of visible minority groups, it is critical that the CAF credibly consider how best to address extremism while protecting and supporting visible minorities who might be targeted or disparately impacted.

LGBTQ2+ in the CAF

LGB members represent about 3.3% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2021e), and while information on transgender people is not yet collected, Statistics Canada has put in place measures to collect this information in the future (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2020f).

LGBTQ2+ is not identified as a designated group in the *Employment Equity Act* (EEA) and there is comparably less information on the needs of these individuals compared to information available on women, Indigenous Peoples, PWD, and visible minorities. Despite not being legally included in the EEA mandate, the needs of LGBTQ2+ individuals should be recognized and

supported because members who are a part of LGBTQ2+ communities disproportionately face discrimination and hardships. These hardships are both outside and within the workplace, which impacts their well-being and ultimately their desire to remain in the CAF. The majority of LGBTQ2+ individuals experience bullying and microaggressions, and many have reported experiencing some form of discrimination. An estimated 53% of LGBTQ2+ members conceal their sexual orientation, including 35% who do not share, or lie about, their personal lives at work; it should be clearly noted however that concealing one's sexual orientation or gender reflects the unsafe environment for those individuals and not a problem with the individual. Many LGBTQ2+ employees continue to work despite toxic language, behaviour, jokes, and in fear of repercussion to working relationships if they were to report their treatment. Working in the context of discrimination and stigma contributes to poor mental health, and feeling the need to conceal one's gender or sexual orientation adds toxic stress and harms the mental health of those members.

The CAF has a history of mistreatment of LGBTQ2+ members, including a ban on LGBTQ2+ members which was not fully removed until 1992, and not acknowledging the rights of transgender people until 1998. While this ban has since been abolished and progress has been made, we must still ensure that LGBTQ2+ members feel safe and thrive within the CAF. Data on the impact of discrimination and harassment of members is limited however the research we have indicates that LGBTQ2+ members are more likely to be victims of discrimination and harassment. While some efforts such as Op HONOUR have contributed to some progress in how LGBTQ2+ members are treated, there remains work to be done across the CAF. Although there has been limited focus specifically on LGBTQ2+ members, especially in comparison to CAF designated EE groups, there is directed support provided through the Defence Team Pride Advisory Organization (DTPAO) which engages in policy and procedure engagement, supports the Positive Space Program, and promotes Government of Canada training involving Diversity. More broadly, there are existing and developing actions, initiatives, and strategies focused on making cultural change to best support under-represented populations, including LGBTQ2+ members (e.g., the Diversity Strategy, the Employment Equity Plan, initiatives in line with the Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Regulations (Bill C-65), Canadian Army Order 11-82 Hateful Conduct, and the Advisory Panel on Systemic Racism and Discrimination.

Persons With Disabilities in the CAF

The term PWD means:

Persons who have a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric or learning impairment and who

- a. consider themselves to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment, or
- b. believe that an employer or potential employer is likely to consider them to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment, and includes persons whose functional limitation owing to their impairment have been accommodated in their current job or workplace. (*Employment Equity Act, 1995, p. 2*)

Many Canadians live with disabilities, in that approximately 22% of the Canadian population aged 15 years or older (6.2 million) declared one or more disability (Statistics Canada, 2018a). Although Canada has made several advancements towards the equitable treatment of PWD such as prohibiting the discrimination of employment on the basis of disability through the Canadian Human Rights Act, numerous Canadians with disabilities report difficulty finding and maintaining employment. Studies report that Canadian PWD face lower employment rates, with approximately 59% of working-age adults with disabilities being employed compared to the 80% employment rate for those without disabilities (Statistics Canada, 2014). In education, PWD face additional barriers in that they face difficulties accessing special educational services and training, and are less likely to hold a post-secondary degree (Kohen, Uppal, Khan, & Visentin, 2010). As a result, PWD are confronted with barriers that limit their access to employment and education and are at a higher risk of experiencing poverty. In light of these obstacles, it is important to incorporate a disability lens when considering important policies and initiatives that can potentially empower PWD in the Canadian workforce.

Historically, PWD have faced discrimination, unfair treatment, or disadvantages that have unfairly affected their work and personal lives due to negative stigmas and stereotypes associated with disabilities. A 2014 Canadian Public Service Employee Survey found that the prevalence of workplace harassment and discrimination was higher for employees with disabilities than those without (Jones, Finkelstein, & Koehoorn, 2018). This harassment can include inappropriate behaviour, acts that demeaned or

caused personal harm, and acts of intimidation. To protect themselves from the unfair and harmful treatment or discrimination, PWD might decide to not share or to avoid disclosing their disability or disability status for fear of negative stigmatization or barriers to employment and promotion. This lack of disclosure can cause PWD to work and live with hidden disabilities and hinder their access to services and any workplace accommodations they might need. This can also result in the denial of one's disability or a reluctance to seek medical resources, which can negatively affect the integration of members with disabilities into the CAF or their retention in the long term (Arrabito & Leung, 2014).

Data on dissatisfiers related to retention for PWD in the CAF is limited as their response rate within the Retention and Exit Surveys is low, rendering it difficult to draw appropriate conclusions while maintaining anonymity. PWD are a designated group in the *Employment Equity Act* which acknowledges that there are existing social, political, and environmental barriers that may prevent their full participation in society. Barriers facing PWD need to be studied and addressed to better allow those who wish to serve to continue their service in the CAF.

In Summary

Whether or not an employee (i.e. CAF member) remains with their organization (is retained) is the result of the interactions they experience. The impact of these interactions can be cumulative, or the impact of a single event may be so severe that it causes a person to leave the CAF. Retention can be increased with both specific retention efforts while also addressing broader issues embedded within the culture of the organization.

Leadership was consistently noted as an effective lever to improving or harming perceptions of racism and harassment in the CAF and respondents generally felt positively about the attitudes and messaging on diversity and inclusion within the CAF. Despite much progress to achieve these positive perceptions, racist and discriminatory conduct remains a persistent concern and ineffective leadership is still commonly cited as a dissatisfier. Both the aggregate retention data and results from interview and focus-group research show that leaders within the CAF can have a very strong impact on the perceptions of support in the workplace and the desire to remain in the CAF. Therefore, careful management of leaders and leadership training can have positive retention effects for underrepresented populations by having leaders who will act appropriately, and intervene in support of the needs of all CAF members.

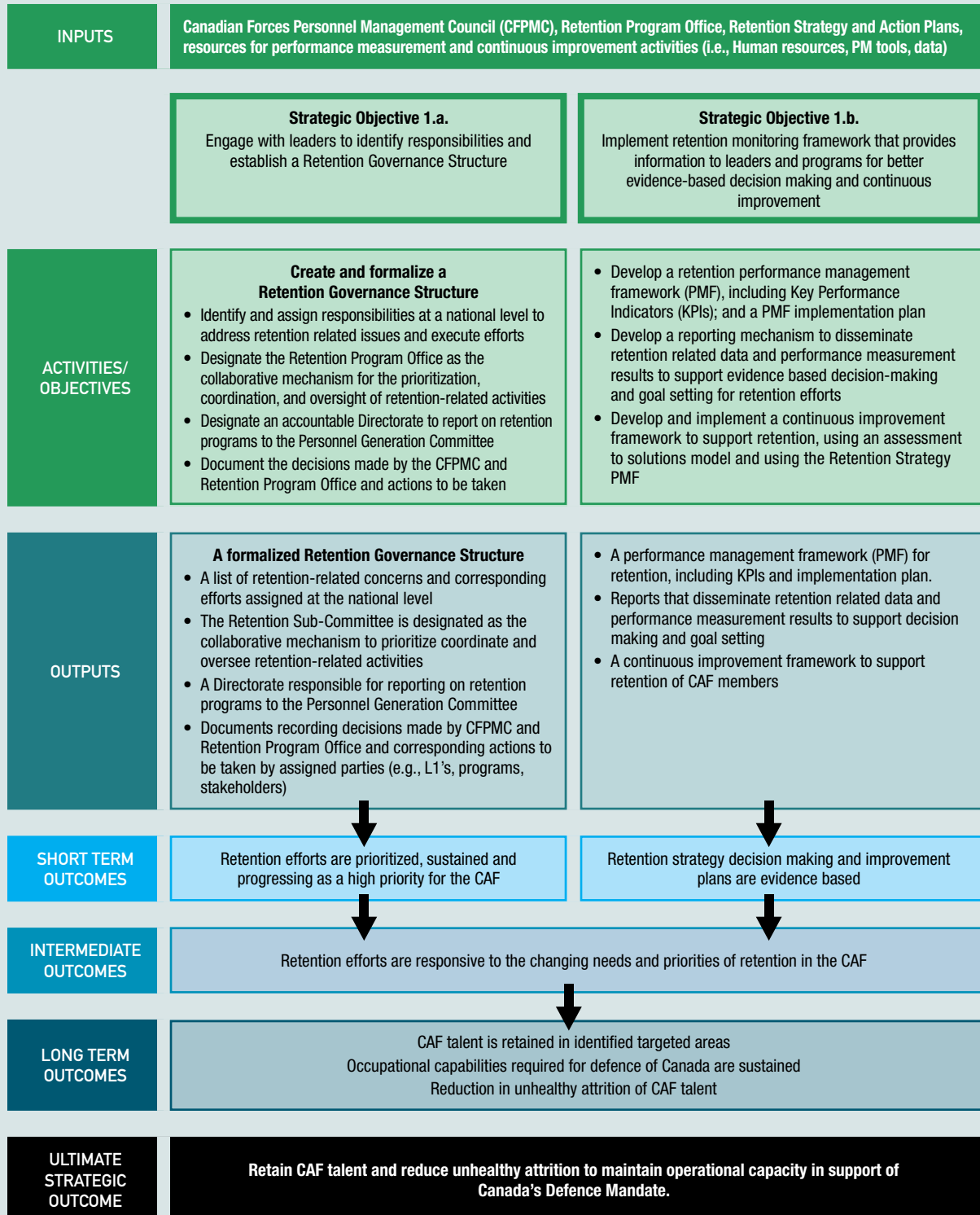
A key challenge to understanding disparate impacts and the magnitude of dissatisfiers facing members of underrepresented populations is the limited data available within the CAF to perform disaggregated intersectional analysis. Barriers to effective intersectional analysis can be addressed through other methods of sampling or investigating other forms of data collection to overcome data or information gaps.

The Strategy uses the Retention and Exit Surveys to identify broad categories of dissatisfaction, which include dissatisfiers specific to underrepresented populations, in order to develop improvements. Acknowledging that there is a lack of data specific to these groups and in particular in relation to the Retention and Exit Surveys' data, the Strategy recommends an action plan which focuses on collecting this information. To ensure that efforts derived from the Strategy are effective, a GBA+ process must be performed for each effort or change relating to the CAF Retention Strategy. Moreover, the RPO must incorporate information from key groups of stakeholders such as DAGs, the SMRC, and the CFMWS. In addition to the analysis needed to gain greater insights into the dissatisfiers specific to these underrepresented populations, and how to best address them, there is a need to delve deeper into the individual factors affecting different outcomes, by performing intersectional analysis. The dissatisfiers and subsequent resolutions may differ greatly depending on a member's identity and the different intersecting points of discrimination. For example, a cisgender woman in the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) who is a single parent of two small children will have different needs, and access to supports, compared with that of a transgender man in the Army. It is therefore imperative that all actions and initiatives deriving from this Strategy undergo rigorous GBA+, and that future data analytics support intersectional analysis to the extent possible in order to obtain sufficient information for the CAF to provide the best possible support for all its members.

The CAF has recognized the importance of workplace flexibility, family support, and health resources for disproportionately impacted groups within the CAF, including women, visible minorities, Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQ2+ individuals, and PWD. There are several initiatives and strategies in place committed to modernizing the CAF health system and removing existing barriers and stigmas associated with getting help as well as identifying and providing the necessary care and training for those in need (Department of National Defence, 2017a). More broadly, the CAF actively promotes awareness, education, and training through various programs in order to foster lasting cultural change and reduce negative stigmas and workplace harassment (e.g., the Diversity Strategy, the Employment Equity Plan, Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Regulations (Bill C-65)). With proper implementation and consideration of all players in the retention space, the Retention Strategy can contribute to making the CAF an inclusive institution in which all of our members can thrive in a dignified, equitable, and respectful manner.

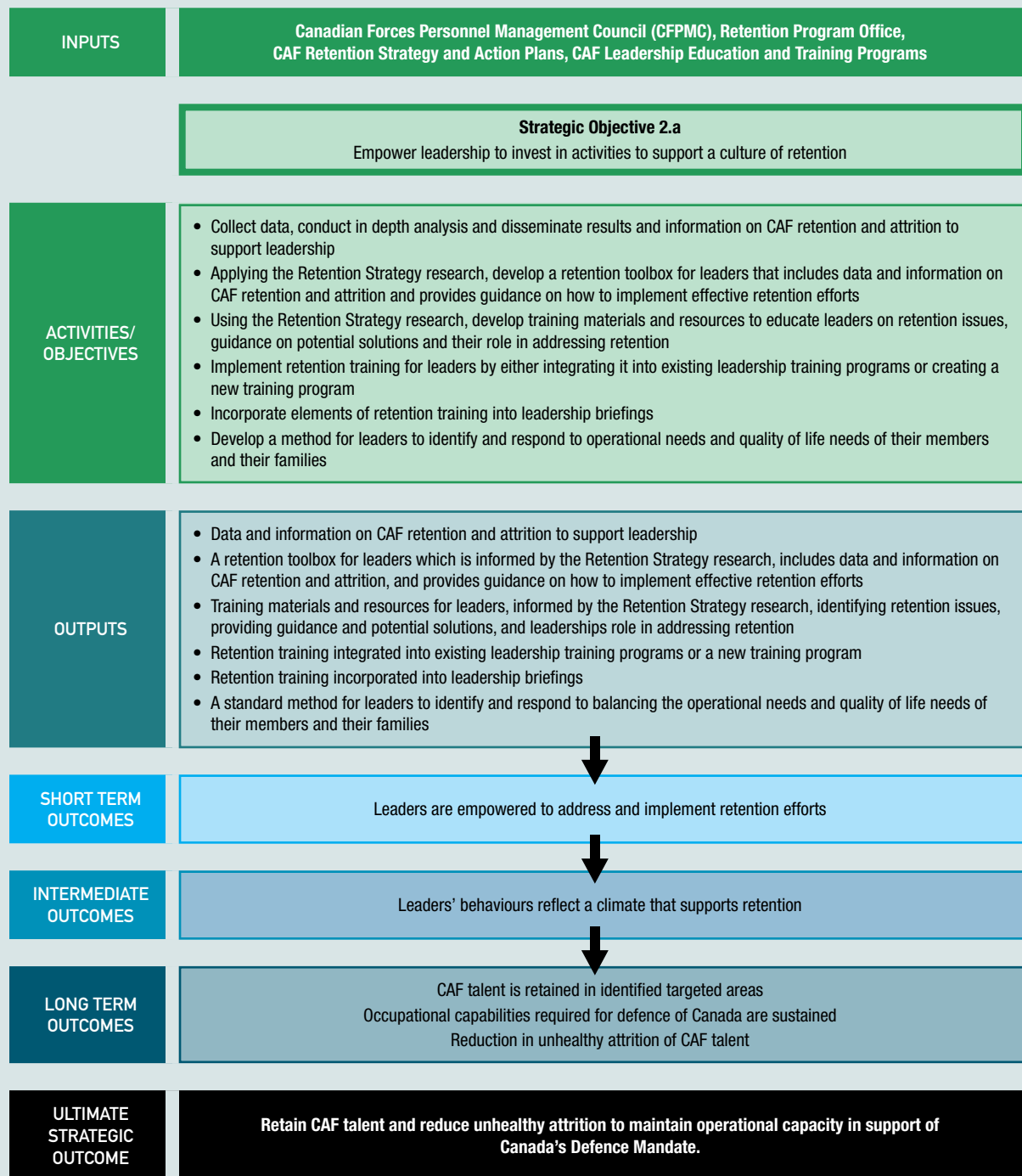
ANNEX B: LOGIC MODELS BY LOE

LOE 1: Strengthen Governance



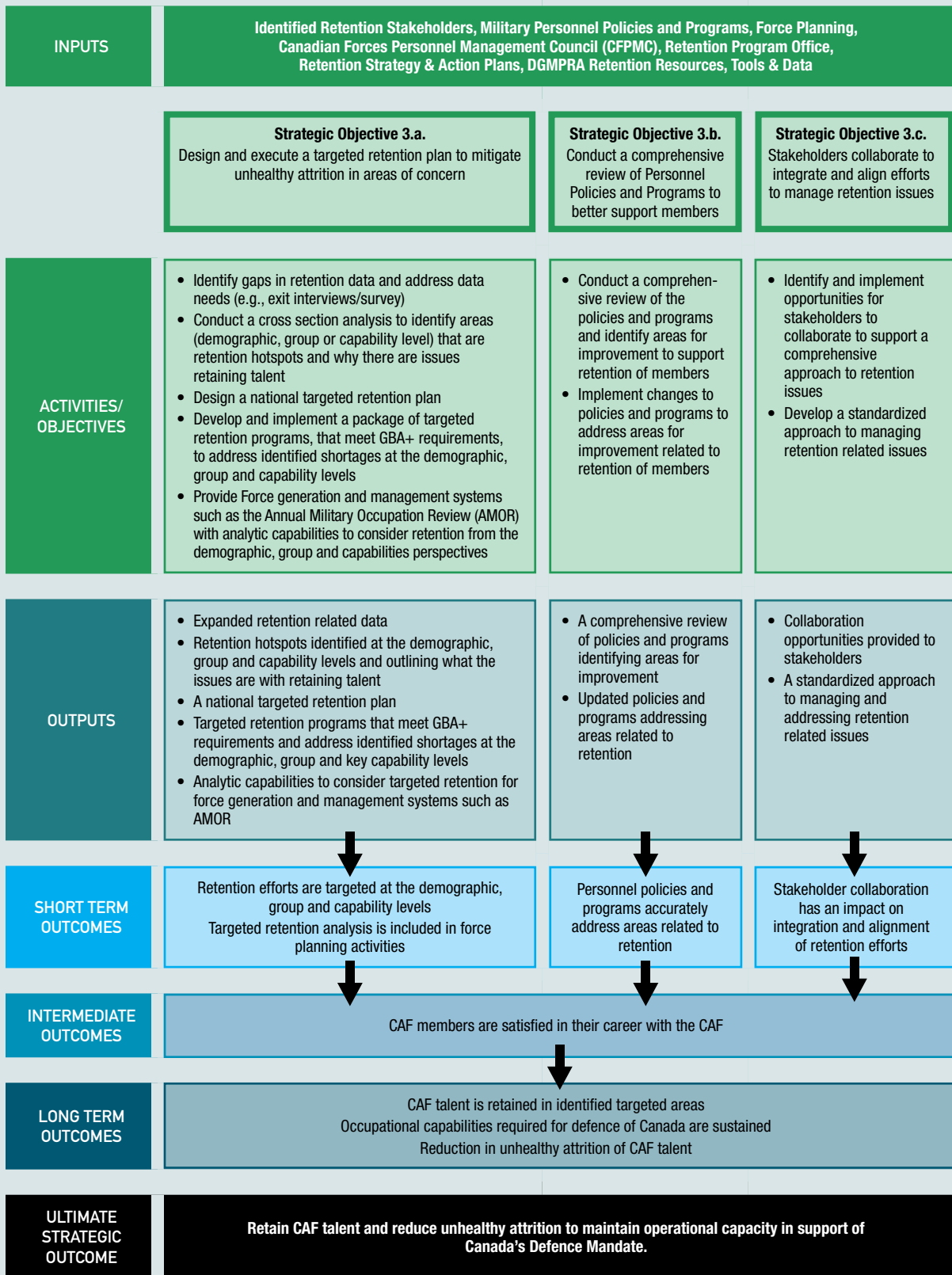
CAF = Canadian Armed Forces

LOE 2: Engage Leaders to Promote a Culture Supportive of Retention



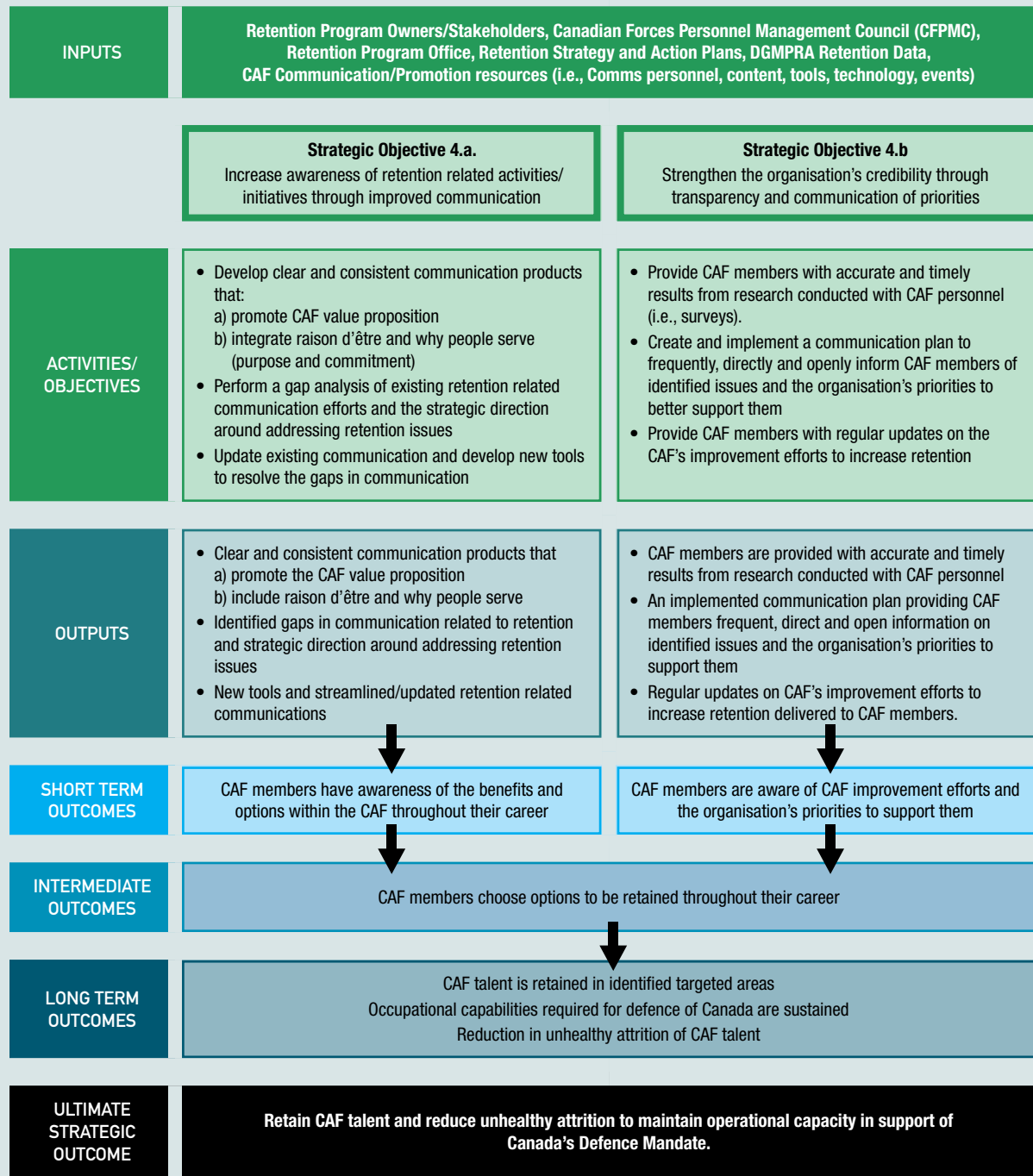
CAF = Canadian Armed Forces

LOE 3: Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention



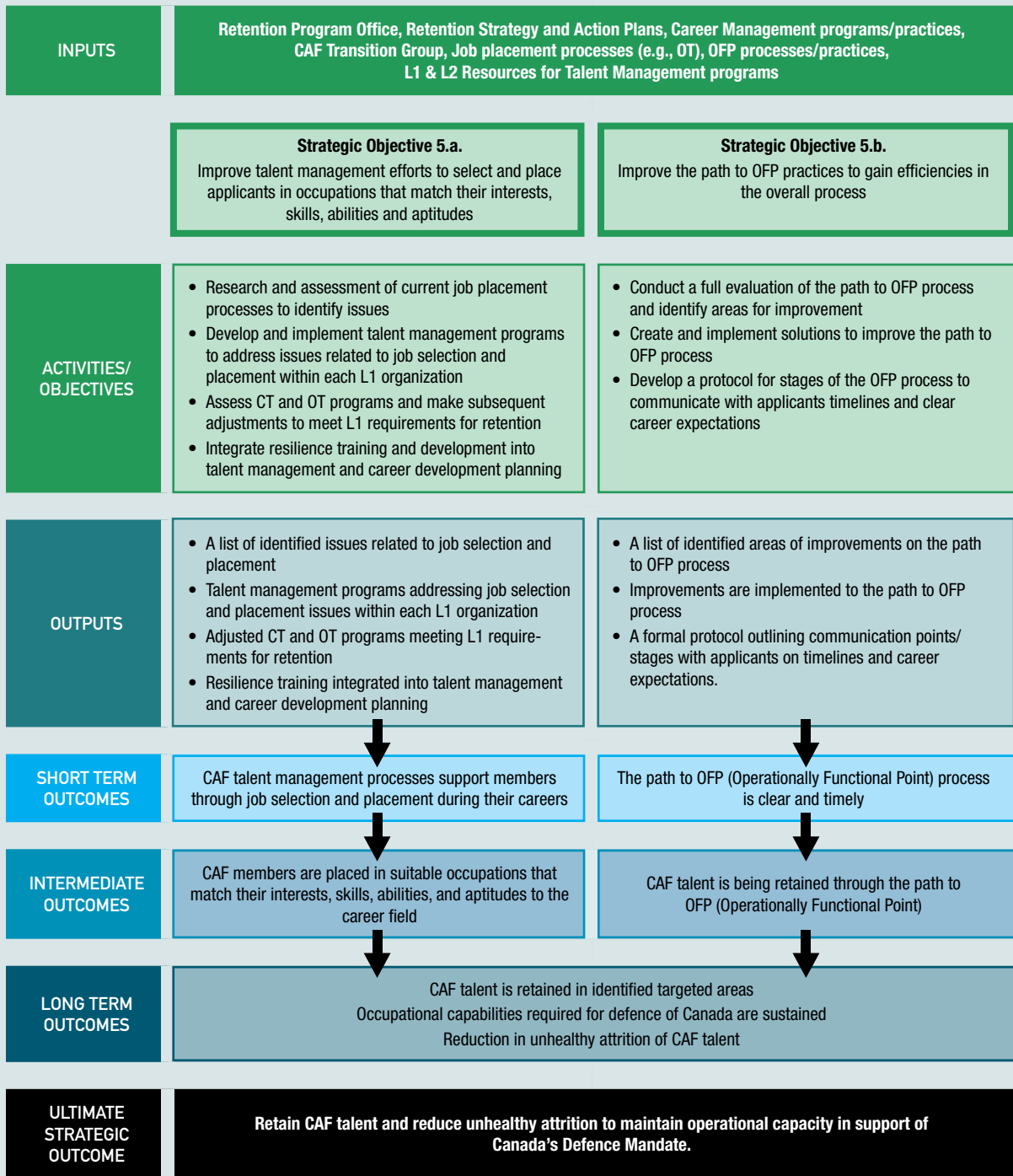
CAF = Canadian Armed Forces

LOE 4: Communicate Priorities and Promote Activities to Support Retention



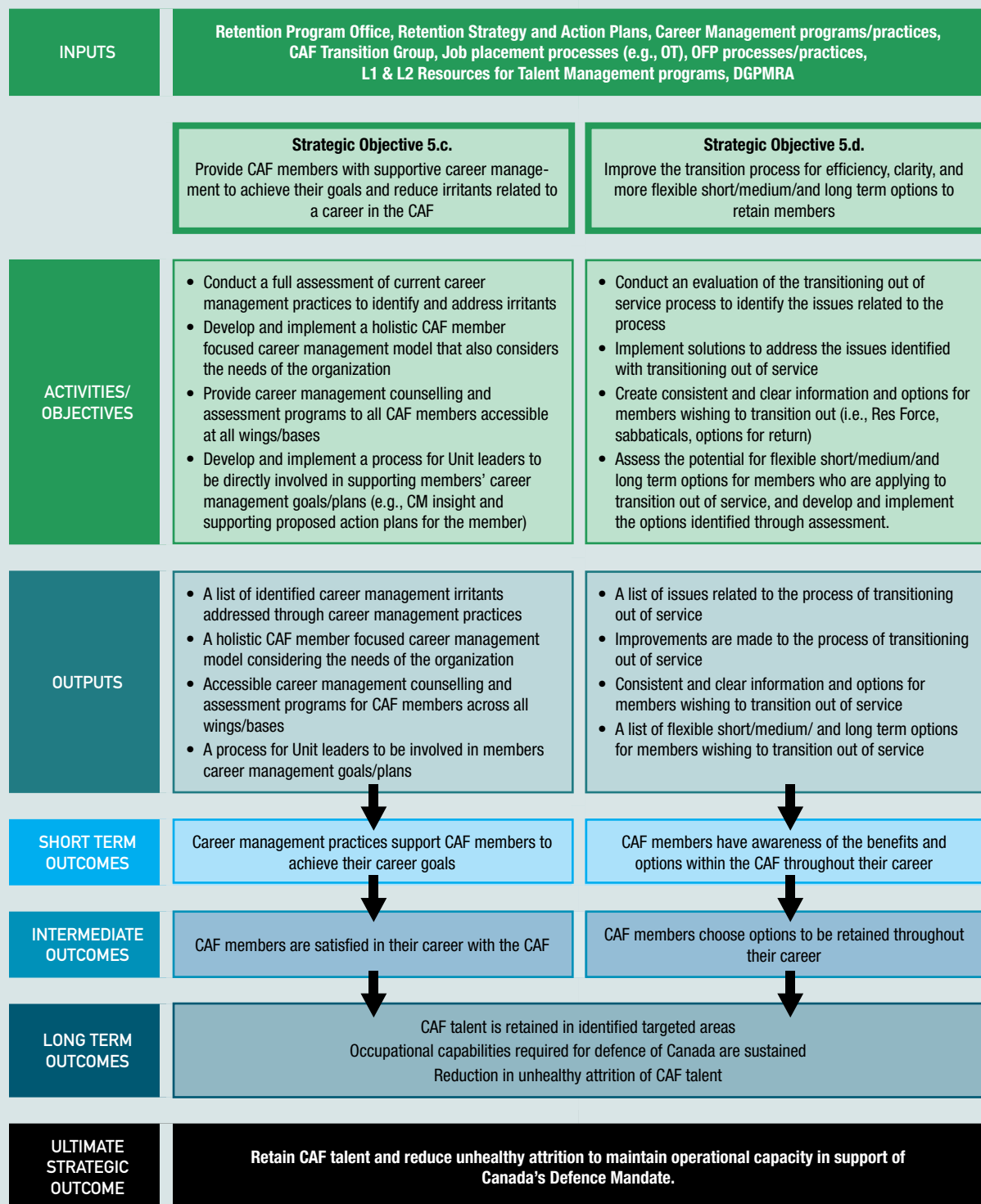
CAF = Canadian Armed Forces

LOE 5: Support CAF Members' Careers



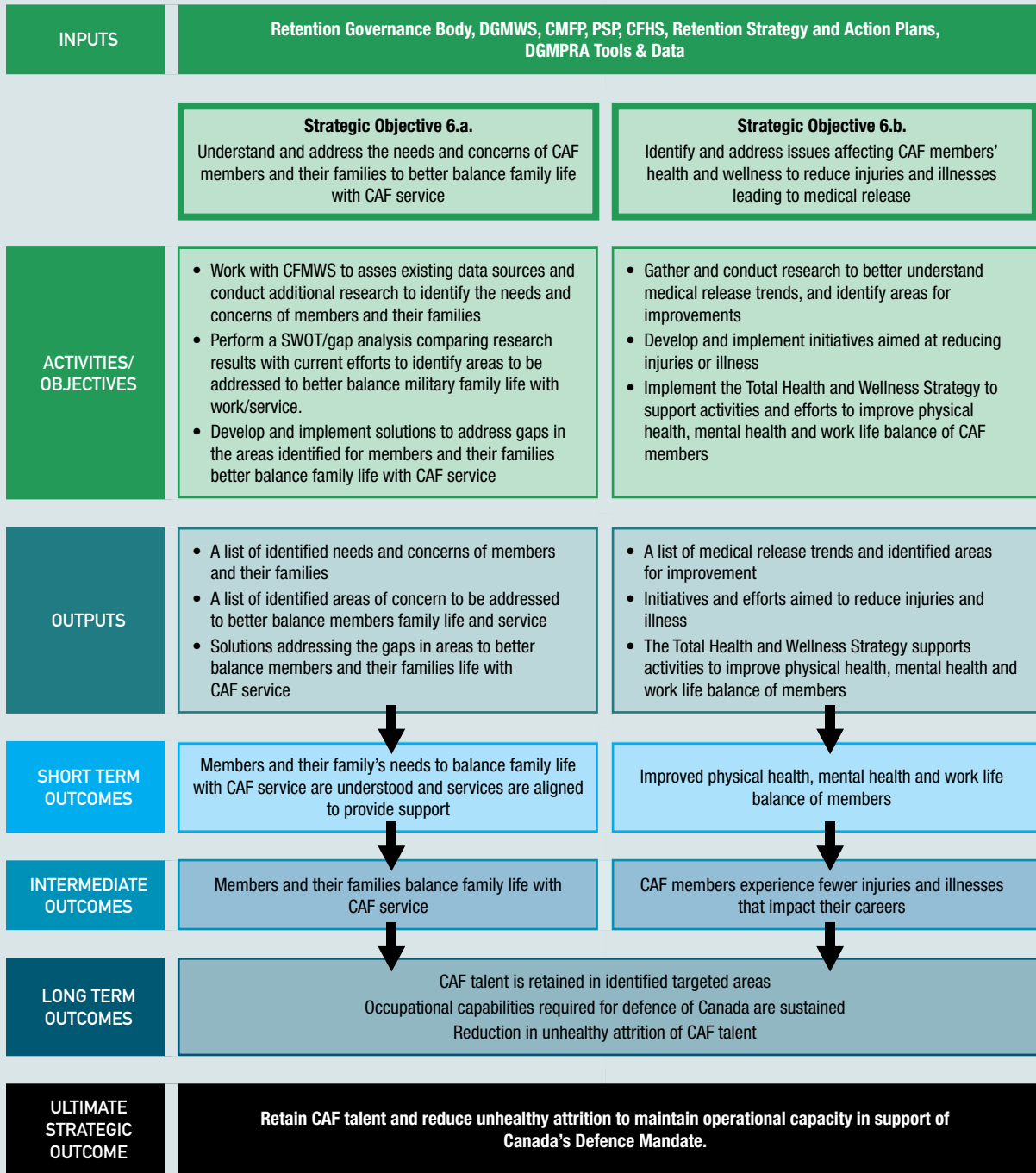
CAF = Canadian Armed Forces

LOE 5(2): Support CAF Members' Careers



CAF = Canadian Armed Forces

LOE 6: Support the Health and Wellness of CAF Members and their Families



CAF = Canadian Armed Forces

ANNEX C:

ACTION ITEMS BY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

All action items related to the development and reporting of retention-related measures are subject to GBA+ requirements to ensure that the concerns of all members of the CAF are heard and addressed. Doing so ensures that all members are represented in our efforts.

Line of Effort	Strategic Objective	Action item	OPI
1 – Strengthen Governance	SO 1.a. Engage with leaders to identify responsibilities and establish Retention Governance Structure	Designate the CFPMC as the collaborative mechanism for the prioritization, coordination, and oversight of retention-related activities; tasks will include identifying areas of collaboration (For example, CFMWS, Defence Advisory Groups) and ensuring intersectional analysis has been accounted for	DGMP/CMP
1 – Strengthen Governance	SO 1.a. Engage with leaders to identify responsibilities and establish Retention Governance Structure	Designate an accountable directorate to report on retention programs to the Personnel Generation committee	DGMP/CMP
1 – Strengthen Governance	SO 1.a. Engage with leaders to identify responsibilities and establish Retention Governance Structure	Identify and assign responsibilities at a national level (i.e., a RPO) to address retention-related issues and execute efforts	CFPMC with OPIs
1 – Strengthen Governance	SO 1.a. Engage with leaders to identify responsibilities and establish Retention Governance Structure	Document the decisions made by the CFPMC and RPO and actions to be taken	CFPMC

Line of Effort	Strategic Objective	Action item	OPI
1 – Strengthen Governance	SO 1.b. Implement retention monitoring framework that provides information to leaders and programs for better evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement	Develop a retention PMF, including KPIs and a PMF implementation plan	RPO
1 – Strengthen Governance	SO 1.b. Implement retention monitoring framework that provides information to leaders and programs for better evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement	Develop a reporting mechanism to disseminate retention-related data and performance measurement results to support evidence-based decision-making and goal setting for retention efforts	RPO
1 – Strengthen Governance	SO 1.b. Implement retention monitoring framework that provides information to leaders and programs for better evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement	Develop and implement a continuous improvement framework to support retention, using an assessment to solutions model and using the Retention Strategy PMF	RPO
2 – Engage Leaders to Promote a Culture Supportive of Retention	SO 2.a. Empower leadership to invest in activities to support a culture of retention.	Collect data, conduct in-depth analysis and disseminate results and information on CAF Retention and attrition to support leadership	RPO
2 – Engage Leaders to Promote a Culture Supportive of Retention	SO 2.a. Empower leadership to invest in activities to support a culture of retention.	Applying the Retention Strategy research, develop a retention toolbox for leaders that includes data and information on CAF retention and attrition and provides guidance on how to implement effective retention efforts	RPO

Line of Effort	Strategic Objective	Action item	OPI
2 – Engage Leaders to Promote a Culture Supportive of Retention	SO 2.a. Empower leadership to invest in activities to support a culture of retention	Using the Retention Strategy research, develop training materials and resources to educate leaders at multiple levels on retention issues, guidance on potential solutions, and their role in addressing retention	RPO with relevant OPIs (i.e., CDA, Directors of Personnel within Army, Navy, Air Force, CANSOFCOM, Chief of Reserves and Chief of Cadets)
2 – Engage Leaders to Promote a Culture Supportive of Retention	SO 2.a. Empower leadership to invest in activities to support a culture of retention	Implement retention training for leaders by either integrating it into existing leadership training programs or creating a new training program	RPO with relevant OPIs (i.e., CDA, Directors of Personnel within Army, Navy, Air Force, CANSOFCOM, Chief of Reserves and Chief of Cadets)
2 – Engage Leaders to Promote a Culture Supportive of Retention	SO 2.a. Empower leadership to invest in activities to support a culture of retention	Incorporate elements of retention training into leadership briefings	RPO with relevant OPIs (i.e., CDA, Directors of Personnel within Army, Navy, Air Force, CANSOFCOM, Chief of Reserves and Chief of Cadets)
2 – Engage Leaders to Promote a Culture Supportive of Retention	SO 2.a. Empower leadership to invest in activities to support a culture of retention	Develop a method for leaders with direct jurisdiction over members to identify and engage retention efforts as early as possible, in order to respond to operational needs and quality of life needs of their members and their families	RPO (i.e., Commanding Officers and/or equivalent Subject Matter Experts)

Line of Effort	Strategic Objective	Action item	OPI
<p>3 – Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention</p>	<p>SO 3.a. Design and execute a targeted retention plan to mitigate attrition in specific, identified areas</p>	<p>Identify gaps in retention data and address data needs (e.g., exit interviews/survey) to permit intersectional analysis and effective disaggregation of data. Addressing data needs may include actions such as, but not limited to, ensuring the Retention Survey is collected in such a way to disaggregate the data for a greater understanding of dissatisfiers across different areas (occupation, demographic, capability level) regularly; improve ability to collect exit survey data from every releasing member; and gathering, collating, analyzing, exploring supplementary data from other complementary sources (i.e., SMRC and CFMWS); that commanding officers are responsible for ensuring that exit surveys and/or interviews are available to every releasing member</p>	<p>DGMPRA/RPO</p>
<p>3 – Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention</p>	<p>SO 3.a. Design and execute a targeted retention plan to mitigate attrition in specific, identified areas</p>	<p>Conduct intersectional analysis to identify areas (demographic, occupation, capability level) that are retention hotspots and why there are issues retaining talent</p>	<p>DGMPRA/RPO</p>
<p>3 – Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention</p>	<p>SO 3.a. Design and execute a targeted retention plan to mitigate attrition in specific, identified areas</p>	<p>Conduct a longitudinal study on early attrition in recruits and develop a plan to mitigate attrition in this area</p>	<p>DGMPRA</p>

Line of Effort	Strategic Objective	Action item	OPI
3 – Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention	SO 3.a. Design and execute a targeted retention plan to mitigate attrition in specific, identified areas	Design a national targeted retention plan	RPO
3 – Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention	SO 3.a. Design and execute a targeted retention plan to mitigate attrition in specific, identified areas	Develop and implement a package of targeted retention programs, that meet GBA+ requirements, to address identified shortages at the demographic, occupation, and capability levels	DGMPPRA
3 – Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention	SO 3.a. Design and execute a targeted retention plan to mitigate attrition in specific, identified areas	Provide Force generation and management systems such as the AMOR with analytic capabilities to consider retention from the demographic, group, and capabilities perspectives	DPGR
3 – Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention	SO 3.b. Conduct a comprehensive review of Personnel Policies and Programs to better support members	Conduct a comprehensive review of the policies and programs and identify areas for improvement to support retention of members	DGMP – DMPPI
3 – Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention	SO 3.b. Conduct a comprehensive review of Personnel Policies and Programs to better support members	Develop a DAOD on retention to provide the direction and authority for the modification of existing CAF policies related to retention as required	DGMP – DMPPI
3 – Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention	SO 3.b. Conduct a comprehensive review of Personnel Policies and Programs to better support members	Implement changes to policies and programs to address areas for improvement related to retention of members	DGMP

Line of Effort	Strategic Objective	Action item	OPI
3 – Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention	SO 3.c. Stakeholders collaborate to integrate and align efforts to manage retention issues	Identify and implement a Tiger Team/committee for stakeholders to collaborate to support a comprehensive approach to retention issues	CFPMC with relevant OPIs
3 – Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention	SO 3.c. Stakeholders collaborate to integrate and align efforts to manage retention issues	Develop a standardized approach to managing retention-related issues	Retention Committee/ Tiger Team
4 – Communicate Priorities and Promote Activities to Support Retention	SO 4.a. Increase awareness of retention-related activities/ initiatives through improved communication	Develop clear and consistent communication products that: a) promote CAF value proposition b) integrate raison d'être and why people serve (purpose and commitment)	ADM(PA)
4 – Communicate Priorities and Promote Activities to Support Retention	SO 4.a. Increase awareness of retention-related activities/ initiatives through improved communication	Perform a gap analysis of existing retention-related communication efforts and the strategic direction around addressing retention issues	ADM(PA)
4 – Communicate Priorities and Promote Activities to Support Retention	SO 4.a. Increase awareness of retention-related activities/ initiatives through improved communication	Update existing communication and develop new tools to resolve the gaps in communication.	ADM(PA)
4 – Communicate Priorities and Promote Activities to Support Retention	SO 4.b. Strengthen the organization's credibility through transparency and communication of priorities	Provide CAF members with accurate and timely results from research conducted with CAF personnel (i.e., surveys)	ADM(PA)

Line of Effort	Strategic Objective	Action item	OPI
4 – Communicate Priorities and Promote Activities to Support Retention	SO 4.b. Strengthen the organization's credibility through transparency and communication of priorities	Create and implement a communication plan to frequently, directly, and openly inform CAF members of identified issues and the organization's priorities to better support them, including regular communication for leaders at all levels on retention priorities	ADM(PA)
4 – Communicate Priorities and Promote Activities to Support Retention	SO 4.b. Strengthen the organization's credibility through transparency and communication of priorities	Provide CAF members with regular updates on the CAF's improvement efforts to increase retention	ADM(PA)
5 – Support CAF Members' Careers	SO 5.a. Improve talent management efforts to select and place applicants in occupations that match their interests, skills, abilities, and aptitudes	Research and assessment of current job placement processes to identify issues	DGMC
5 – Support CAF Members' Careers	SO 5.a. Improve talent management efforts to select and place applicants in occupations that match their interests, skills, abilities, and aptitudes	Develop and implement talent management programs to address issues related to job selection and placement within each L1 organization	DGMC
5 – Support CAF Members' Careers	SO 5.a. Improve talent management efforts to select and place applicants in occupations that match their interests, skills, abilities, and aptitudes	Assess CT and OT programs and make subsequent adjustments to meet L1 requirements for retention	DGMC
5 – Support CAF Members' Careers	SO 5.b. Improve the path to operationally functional point (OFP) practices to gain efficiencies in the overall process	Conduct a full evaluation of the path to OFP process and identify areas for improvement	DGMC

Line of Effort	Strategic Objective	Action item	OPI
5 – Support CAF Members' Careers	SO 5.b. Improve the path to operationally functional point (OFP) practices to gain efficiencies in the overall process	Create and implement solutions to improve the path to OFP process	DGMC
5 – Support CAF Members' Careers	SO 5.b. Improve the path to operationally functional point (OFP) practices to gain efficiencies in the overall process	Develop a protocol for stages of the OFP process to communicate with applicants' timelines and clear career expectations	DGMC
5 – Support CAF Members' Careers	SO 5.c. Provide CAF members with supportive career management to achieve their goals and reduce irritants related to a career in the CAF	Conduct a full assessment of current career management practices to identify and address irritants	DGMC
5 – Support CAF Members' Careers	SO 5.c. Provide CAF members with supportive career management to achieve their goals and reduce irritants related to a career in the CAF	Develop and implement a holistic CAF member focused career management model that also considers the needs of the organization	DGMC
5 – Support CAF Members' Careers	SO 5.c. Provide CAF members with supportive career management to achieve their goals and reduce irritants related to a career in the CAF	Provide career management counselling and assessment programs to all CAF members, accessible at all wings/bases	DGMC
5 – Support CAF Members' Careers	SO 5.c. Provide CAF members with supportive career management to achieve their goals and reduce irritants related to a career in the CAF	Develop and implement a process for Unit leaders to be directly involved in supporting members' career management goals/plans (e.g., CM insight and supporting proposed action plans for the member)	DGMC

Line of Effort	Strategic Objective	Action item	OPI
5 – Support CAF Members' Careers	SO 5.d. Improve the transition process for efficiency, clarity, and more flexible short/medium, and long term options to retain members	Conduct an evaluation of the transitioning out of service process to identify the issues related to the process	Transition Group
5 – Support CAF Members' Careers	SO 5.d. Improve the transition process for efficiency, clarity, and more flexible short/medium, and long term options to retain members	Implement solutions to address the issues identified with transitioning out of service	Transition Group
5 – Support CAF Members' Careers	SO 5.d. Improve the transition process for efficiency, clarity, and more flexible short/medium, and long term options to retain members	Create consistent and clear information and options for members wishing to transition out (i.e., Res Force, sabbaticals, options for return)	Transition Group
5 – Support CAF Members' Careers	SO 5.d. Improve the transition process for efficiency, clarity, and more flexible short/medium, and long term options to retain members	Assess the potential for flexible short/medium/ and long term options for members who are applying to transition out of service, and develop and implement the options identified through the assessment	Transition Group
6 – Support Health and Wellness of CAF Members and their Families	SO 6.a. Understand and address the needs and concerns of CAF members and their families to better balance family life with CAF service	Work with CFMWS to assess existing data sources and conduct additional research to identify the needs and concerns of members and their families	CFMWS/ RPO

Line of Effort	Strategic Objective	Action item	OPI
6 – Support Health and Wellness of CAF Members and their Families	SO 6.a. Understand and address the needs and concerns of CAF members and their families to better balance family life with CAF service	Perform a SWOT/gap analysis comparing research results with current efforts to identify areas to be addressed to better balance military family life with work/ service	CFMWS
6 – Support Health and Wellness of CAF Members and their Families	SO 6.a. Understand and address the needs and concerns of CAF members and their families to better balance family life with CAF service	Develop and implement solutions to address gaps in the areas identified for members and their families to better balance family life with CAF service	CFMWS
6 – Support Health and Wellness of CAF Members and their Families	SO 6.b Identify and address issues affecting CAF members' health and wellness to reduce injuries and illnesses leading to medical release	Gather and conduct research to better understand medical release trends and identify areas for improvements	CFHS
6 – Support Health and Wellness of CAF Members and their Families	SO 6.b Identify and address issues affecting CAF members' health and wellness to reduce injuries and illnesses leading to medical release	Develop and implement initiatives aimed at reducing injuries or illness	CFHS
6 – Support Health and Wellness of CAF Members and their Families	SO 6.b Identify and address issues affecting CAF members' health and wellness to reduce injuries and illnesses leading to medical release	Implement the Total Health and Wellness Strategy to support activities and efforts to improve physical health, mental health, and work-life balance of CAF members	THWS Sub-Committee/ THW Monitoring Office

ANNEX D: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Strategic Outcome	Outcome Level	Aligned with LOE	Indicator
Retention efforts are prioritized, sustained, and progressing as a high priority for the CAF	Short Term	LOE 1: Strengthen Governance	% of L1s and L2s that identify retention efforts as a priority in their annual business plans (or equivalent documents)
			% of L1s & L2s that report progress on retention efforts
Retention Strategy decision-making and improvement plans are evidence-based	Short Term	LOE 1: Strengthen Governance	% of Retention Strategy decisions and improvements that are advised by data
Stakeholder collaboration has an impact on integration and alignment of retention efforts	Short Term	LOE 3: Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention	# of retention efforts that have been integrated and aligned through stakeholder collaboration
Retention efforts are targeted at the demographic, group, and capability levels	Short Term	LOE 3: Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention	% of retention efforts addressing each of the demographic, group and capability levels identified through evidence
			# of retention efforts that have applied a GBA+ lens to the efforts (i.e., Programs, initiatives, processes)
Targeted retention analysis is included in force planning activities	Short Term	LOE 3: Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention	# of force planning activities that incorporate targeted retention analysis into planning

Strategic Outcome	Outcome Level	Aligned with LOE	Indicator
Leaders are empowered to address and implement retention efforts	Short Term	LOE 2: Engage Leaders to Promote a Culture Supportive of Retention	% of leaders who have attended training on retention and their role in addressing retention
			% of CAF leaders who have completed retention training and understand their role in addressing retention in the CAF
CAF members have awareness of the benefits and options within the CAF throughout their career	Short Term	LOE 4: Communicate Priorities and Promote Activities to Support Retention	% of CAF members transitioning out of service who are aware of all options to be retained
			% of CAF members (current) who are aware of CAF benefits and career options
CAF members are aware of CAF improvement efforts and the organization's priorities to support them	Short Term	LOE 4: Communicate Priorities and Promote Activities to Support Retention	% of CAF members who are aware of the CAF improvement efforts to better support them
Members and their family's needs to balance family life with CAF service are understood and services are aligned to provide support	Short Term	LOE 6: Support the Health and Wellness of CAF Members and their Families	% of CAF members who feel the organization understands their needs to balance family life with CAF service
			DRI 3.4.2 % of CAF who are satisfied with the overall support their family receives from the Canadian Armed Forces
Improved physical health, mental health, and work-life balance of members	Short Term	LOE 6: Support the Health and Wellness of CAF Members and their Families	DRI 3.2.1 % of military personnel who are medically fit for their occupation
			% of CAF members who agree they are able to maintain balance between personal and working life

Strategic Outcome	Outcome Level	Aligned with LOE	Indicator
Personnel policies and programs incorporate evidence to support retention of CAF members	Short Term	LOE 3: Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention	% of personnel policies and programs that incorporate retention data to support the retention of CAF members
The path to OFP (Operationally Functional Point) process is clear and timely	Short Term	LOE 5: Support CAF Members' Careers	Average recruitment time from application to becoming a full CAF member
			% of applicants who are aware of what to expect through the path to OFP process
CAF talent management processes support members through job selection and placement during their careers	Short Term	LOE 5: Support CAF Members' Careers	Of the number of members who have gone through CAF talent management processes, the % who feel the process provided them with sufficient support through job selection and placement
Career management practices support CAF members to achieve their career goals	Short Term	LOE 5: Support CAF Members' Careers	% of members who feel that the CAF career management practices support them in achieving their career goals
Retention efforts are responsive to the changing needs and priorities of retention in the CAF	Mid Term	LOE 1: Strengthen Governance	Average time for the CAF to respond and address an emerging retention need/priority (From the time the need/priority was identified to the time that the CAF responds with a retention effort)
CAF members are satisfied in their career with the CAF	Mid Term	LOE 3: Integrate and Align Efforts in Support of a Comprehensive Approach to Retention	% CAF members who are satisfied/dissatisfied with their career in the CAF
		LOE 5: Support CAF Members' Careers	Top 10 reasons CAF members are satisfied and dissatisfied with their career in the CAF

Strategic Outcome	Outcome Level	Aligned with LOE	Indicator
Leaders' behaviours reflect a climate that supports retention	Mid Term	LOE 2: Engage Leaders to Promote a Culture Supportive of Retention	% of CAF members who feel that leaders are engaged in efforts to retain members
CAF members choose options to be retained throughout their career	Mid Term	LOE 4: Communicate Priorities and Promote Activities to Support Retention	% of CAF members who report they have "considered" leaving the CAF and who have used options to be retained
		LOE 5: Support CAF Members' Careers	% of CAF members who have started the process of transitioning out of service and who choose options to be retained
CAF talent is being retained through the path to OFP (Operationally Functional Point)	Mid Term	LOE 5: Support CAF Members' Careers	% of CAF applicants who become CAF members
CAF members are placed in suitable occupations that match their interests, skills, abilities, and aptitudes to the career field	Mid Term	LOE 5: Support CAF Members' Careers	% of CAF members who report the job they are in is suitable to them and matches their interests
			% of CAF members who indicate that they have the right skills, abilities and aptitudes to do their job
Members and their families balance family life with CAF service	Mid Term	LOE 6: Support the Health and Wellness of CAF Members and their Families	DRI 3.4.1 % of CAF families that feel they meet the challenges of military life
CAF members experience fewer injuries and illnesses that impact on their careers	Mid Term	LOE 6: Support the Health and Wellness of CAF Members and their Families	# of CAF members placed on medical categories

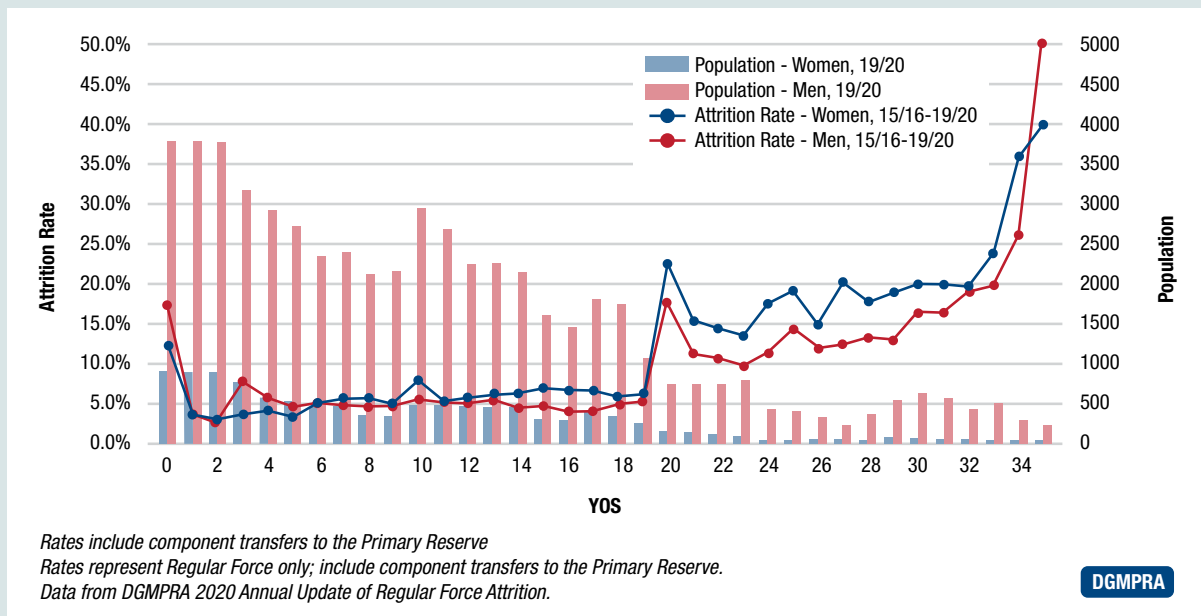
Strategic Outcome	Outcome Level	Aligned with LOE	Indicator
CAF talent is retained in identified targeted areas	Long Term	ALL	Retention rate for each targeted retention area
Occupational capabilities required for defence of Canada are sustained	Long Term	ALL	DRI 3.1.3 % of occupations with critical shortfalls
			DRI 3.1.1 % of Regular Force positions that are filled
			DRI 3.1.2 % of Reserve Force positions that are filled
Reduction in unhealthy attrition of CAF talent	Long Term	ALL	% of unhealthy attrition of CAF members

ANNEX E: DATA DETAILS

Attrition can occur at any stage of a member's career, affecting productivity and corporate memory, flexibility in career management, postings and deployments, and increased workload for remaining personnel which, in turn, impacts morale. The effects of attrition also include the CAF's force expansion plans. When recruits depart early, the task of growing the Forces becomes more difficult. Force generation throughout the ranks of the CAF depends on predictable recruitment and promotion efforts to ensure the long term stability required to strengthen the CAF establishment. The data shows that members are leaving at two key points, in the first year of service and at the 20 to 25 year point. In fact, during the first 90 days of service 1 in 7 recruits leave the CAF, of which 85% do so voluntarily. Not surprisingly, the next key point, 20 to 25 YOS, marks the end of an Intermediate Engagement (IE20 or IE25) at which point a member is eligible for an unreduced pension. With this information in mind, and considering the down-sizing efforts of the 1990s and subsequent recruitment surge in the mid-2000s, we will be left with a large proportion of relatively inexperienced members to take the place of senior members who will be leaving in the coming years.

Using the years of service as a starting point to investigate attrition, additional analysis reveals that there is a difference between men and women and when they leave the service. Recent data indicates that for those with 0-19 years of service, attrition rates are generally similar between men and women, with women having a slightly lower rate of attrition. However, from 20 years onward, they are noticeably higher for women. This identifies an area for deeper analysis into the reasons why women are leaving, followed by subsequent appropriate action planning for targeted retention. On the other end of the Years of Service spectrum, there are recruits. While there is some expectation that attrition will be higher in recruits, the CAF must look into this further to determine if there are specific areas for improvement to reduce early attrition to ensure there are enough recruits at the right stages to replace members who retire. Common reasons for attrition here are family reasons, injuries, not feeling suited for CAF, wrong choice of occupation, and return to school/opportunities. Research has also indicated areas where better communication is needed, such as information on training wait times, the impact on family life,

Figure 1: Rates of Attrition – YOS²⁹.



²⁹ Annual Update of Regular Force Attrition; DGMPRA, May 2020.

employment and task opportunities, etc. Additional analysis is currently being conducted through Project Horizon – a CMP-driven initiative to identify factors predictive of functional retention and early attrition.

Other data highlights areas for further investigation for targeted retention efforts. The CAF aims to have a 25.1%, 3.5%, and 11% representation of women, Indigenous Peoples, and visible minority groups, respectively, by 2026. Overall, representation of these designated groups remains lower than desired, with current numbers arriving at 16.3%, 2.8%, and 9.6%, for women, Indigenous Peoples, and visible minorities in the Reg Force and P Res together. While not a designated group, representation of PWD within the CAF (Reg Force and P Res together) is 1.1%.³⁰ There is no rate of attrition for LGBTQ2+ members.

While a part of the focus to increase representation of designated groups will rest within recruitment, retention opportunities must also be considered. Data indicates that, historically, of those within designated groups being recruited, about half of that number is releasing in the same timeframe (See Figs 2-3). While it is true that as recruitment increases, so too will attrition – not all who are recruited wish to remain in the CAF – it still serves the CAF to investigate the retention factors specific to these demographic groups. If the CAF is to truly be the diverse community it aims to be, it must investigate these releases to determine how best to address the concerns of its members of all personal identity factors.

Unplanned attrition can have devastating impacts on key capabilities. The CAF is composed of a large number of highly specialized members who often operate in very

Figure 2: Officers Recruits vs. Releases by Designated Group.³¹

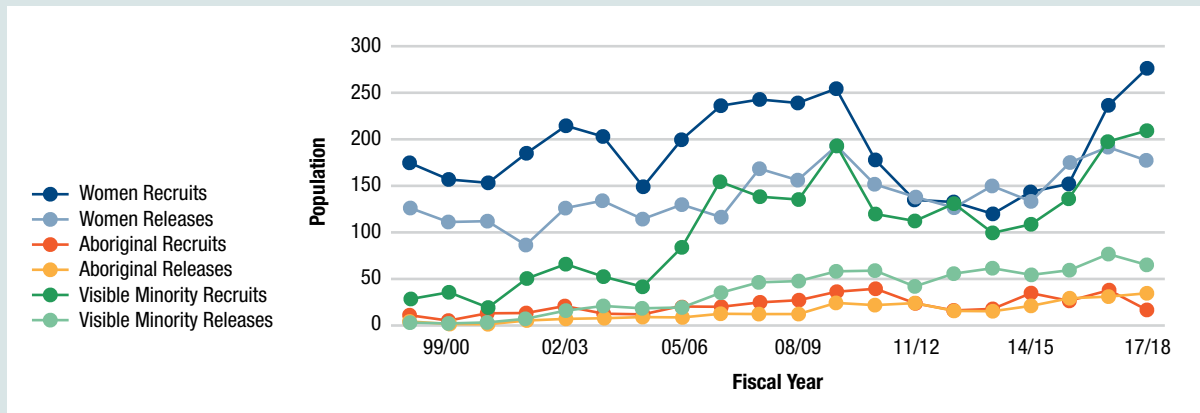
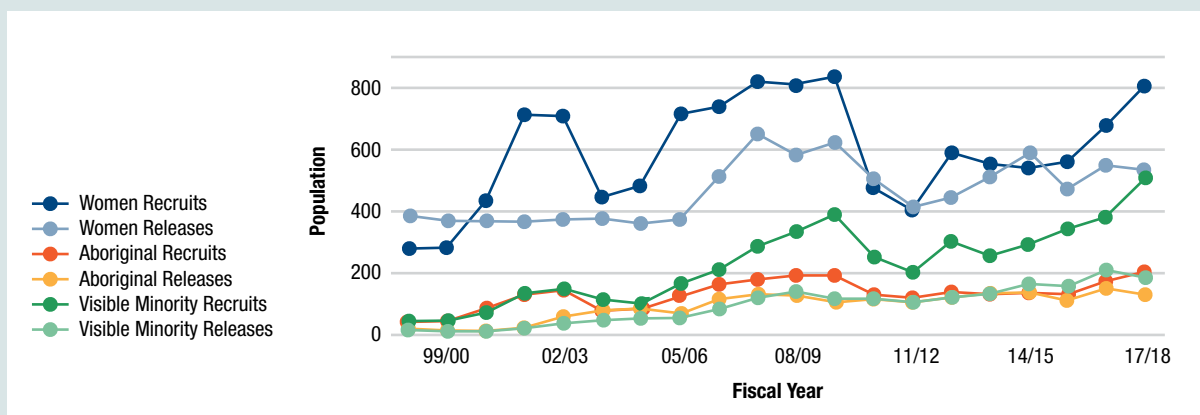


Figure 3: NCM Recruits vs. Releases by Designated Group.³²



³⁰ DHRD CAF EE Database, May 2021.

³¹ Annual Report on Regular Force Personnel (DRWA, 2019).

³² Annual Report on Regular Force Personnel (DRWA, 2019).

small communities of practice. Spikes in attrition, combined with the challenge of recruiting or significant training requirements can create critical vulnerabilities in a short period of time. This impact is seen in occupations such as Signal Operator (Sig Op), Signal Technician (Sig Tech), Line Technician (Line Tech), and Information Systems Technician (IS Tech, formerly Army Communication and Info Systems Specialist or ACISS) and some of the RCN occupations such as Naval Electronic Sensor Operator (NES OP), Naval Combat Information Operator (NCI OP), and Naval Communicator (NAV COMM) which are well below average strength of other occupations and which suffer significantly higher attrition than many other occupations.

In the past, some targeted retention efforts have been applied to occupations demonstrating particular difficulty in retaining members (e.g., pilots). Recent data demonstrates that a number of occupations continue to be stressed in terms of not meeting minimum staffing levels of 90%, some of which do have attrition rates lower than the CAF average overall. These include occupations such as Signals Officers, Medical Technicians, and, of course, ACISS. Because of these lower staffing levels, even a small increase in attrition can have considerable impact. A table of occupations historically lower than 90% minimum staffing is on the following page.

An essential task going forward is the intersectional analysis of attrition data. What has been presented are some overarching demographic analyses and do not represent the only views to be taken on the data available. The CAF is fortunate to have a plethora of data to assess and includes other diversity aspects – marital status, age, gender identity, first official language, rank, etc. which should be taken into account. Considering different slices of occupations and demographics at different levels will uncover the areas where retention efforts will result in the most impactful and efficient results. For example, there is difficulty recruiting a number of logistical occupations and they have some of the highest attrition rates amongst Senior Non-Commissioned Officers. This particular occupation grouping is 42% women. As we already know, there is a distinct increase in attrition in women in senior roles at the 20-year mark across the CAF – a point to take note of as there are already fewer women in senior positions across the CAF. This demographic lens taken at the occupation level highlights the impact of demographic attrition that appears minimal in the context of the overall CAF numbers. Further analysis may indicate that a specific retention activity for women in the CAF, or perhaps for those within the occupation group, is needed in order to address those particular concerns.

Attrition in the CAF – Why?

Once areas experiencing unhealthy attrition are identified, it is critical to understand *why* CAF members are leaving while still able to serve. At an initial glance of attrition data, there are two clear broad reasons for attrition: those which are voluntary and those which are medical. Of medical releases, women are more likely to be medically released than men (-2.6% vs. -1.8%, respectively). Further, medical attrition for women has been higher on an annual basis (Serré & Straver, 2018).

At this broad level, further investigation is warranted to identify why there is this gender difference in medical leave and how best to address it – for example, there is evidence that while mental health releases between men and women are similar, depression is higher for women and there is a difference between men and women in musculoskeletal issues, with 32% of women reporting a repetitive strain issue, vs. 28% of men. Qualitative evidence indicates issues with ill-fitting uniforms and equipment for women, as well as a general lack of awareness and sensitivity regarding reproductive health, maternity, and the impact of training and exercises on the female body. Other areas of interest may aid our members who identify as PWD – while some may be clear cases wherein they are unable to continue service, further analysis may identify areas in which PWD can benefit from additional or different supports and still productively serve in the CAF. Further investigation in this area can uncover changes needed to better support our members.

Analysis into the voluntary attrition is conducted by Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis (DGMPRA) via two key surveys, the Retention Survey and the Exit Survey. The Retention Survey, provided to a sample of Reg Force members, is conducted every 2-3 years and evaluates member perceptions of work and organizational factors that are related to retention. To augment the results of these surveys and to address concerns by specific occupations, locations, or units, focused studies using mixed methods of focus groups and shorter surveys are also conducted. The Exit Survey is offered to members who are releasing, voluntarily and when they decline an offer for a new Terms of Service, to evaluate the reasons why members voluntarily leave the CAF.³³ The data and analyses from these studies contain a wealth of information and have the potential to provide more useful insights. However, they need to be strengthened to ensure that we are collecting enough information regularly to identify specific issues of concern for all members, as well as be able to effectively conduct intersectional analysis, as appropriate.

³³ The Exit Survey has been offline since 2018. It is being relaunched in 2021 as a strengthened version of measures to increase response rates.

Table 3: Sample of stressed occupations consistently under minimum staffing levels for Reg Force

Attrition Rate vs. Staffing Level of Stressed Occupations

Non-Commissioned Members			Officers		
Occupation	Attrition Rate ^A	Staffing Level ^B	Occupation	Attrition Rate	Staffing Level
Marine Technician	7.6%	85.6%	Medical and Medical Specialist*	8.3%	71.8%
Meteorological Technician	6.7%	83%	Dental	5.9%	86.3%
Search and Rescue Technician	8.6%	86.1%	Personnel Selection	6.7%	84.8%
Airborne Electronic Sensor Operator	6.1%	76.9%	Signals	7.1%	83.5%
Medical Technician	6.8%	87.8%	Naval Engineer	13.4%	84.3%
Sonar Operator	8.1%	86.8%			
Intelligence Operator	5.7%	80.9%			
Supply Technician	7.3%	88.8%			
Army Communication & Info Systems Specialist*	7.5%	45.3%			
Naval Communicator	6.5%	80.4%			
Resource Management Support Clerk, HR Advisor, Financial Services Advisor	6.8%	85%			
Communications Research	6.5%	78.7 %			
Non-Destructive Testing Technician	11.4%	82.7%			

A Based on a 5-year average from FY 2014-2015 to 2019-20

B Trained Effective Strength (TES) / Preferred Staffing Level (PSL) December 2020.

* The Medical occupation was recently split into two new occupations: Medical and Medical Specialist. Positions and personnel are currently divided across all three occupations, so the results presented above refer to the three taken together. Similarly, ACISS recently split into four new occupations as mentioned previously; the results presented above for ACISS include the results for all five of these occupations.

DGMPRA has been surveying CAF members about retention and attrition issues for decades and the reasons for dissatisfaction have largely remained the same.³⁴ In the most recent analysis of CAF Exit Survey data, voluntarily releasing members' most common reasons for leaving were job dissatisfaction, geographical instability, lack of career progression, undesirable postings, and dissatisfaction with senior leadership as indicated in Figure 4 (Bremner, Beadman, &

Budgell, 2017).³⁵ Those members surveyed in the 2019 CAF Retention Survey (see Figure 5) were asked if they planned to leave in the next three years, and if so, why they were thinking about leaving the CAF. Similar to the Exit Survey, the top responses included job dissatisfaction, impact on spouse/partner, occupation dissatisfaction, lack of geographic stability, and a lack of meaningful, satisfying, challenging work (Yeung, Musolino, & Eren, 2020).

Figure 4: 2013-2017 CAF Exit Survey (voluntarily releasing members)

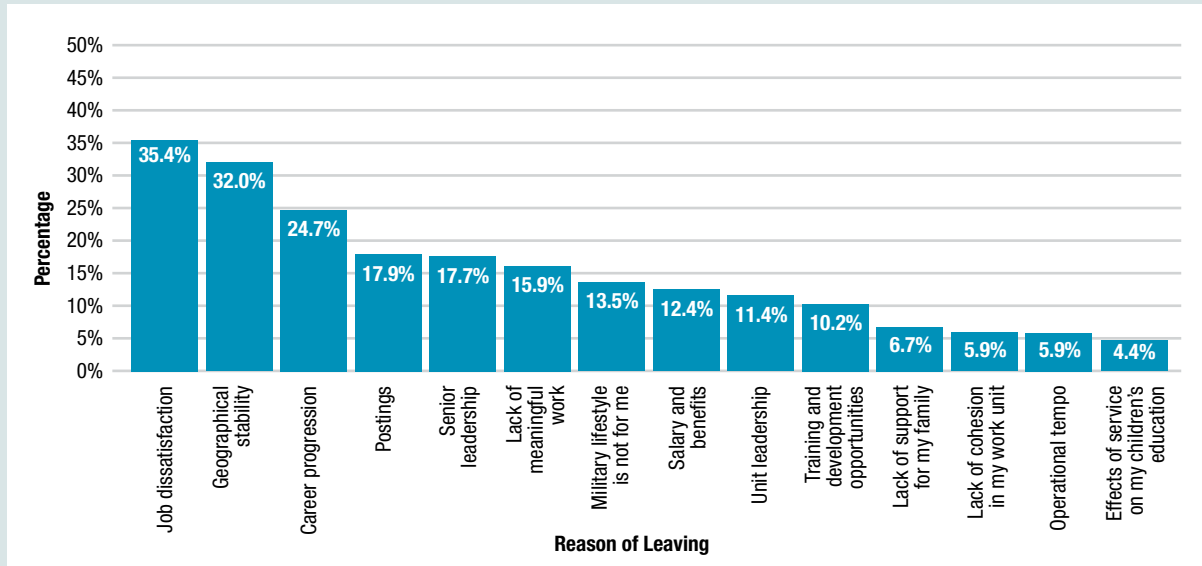
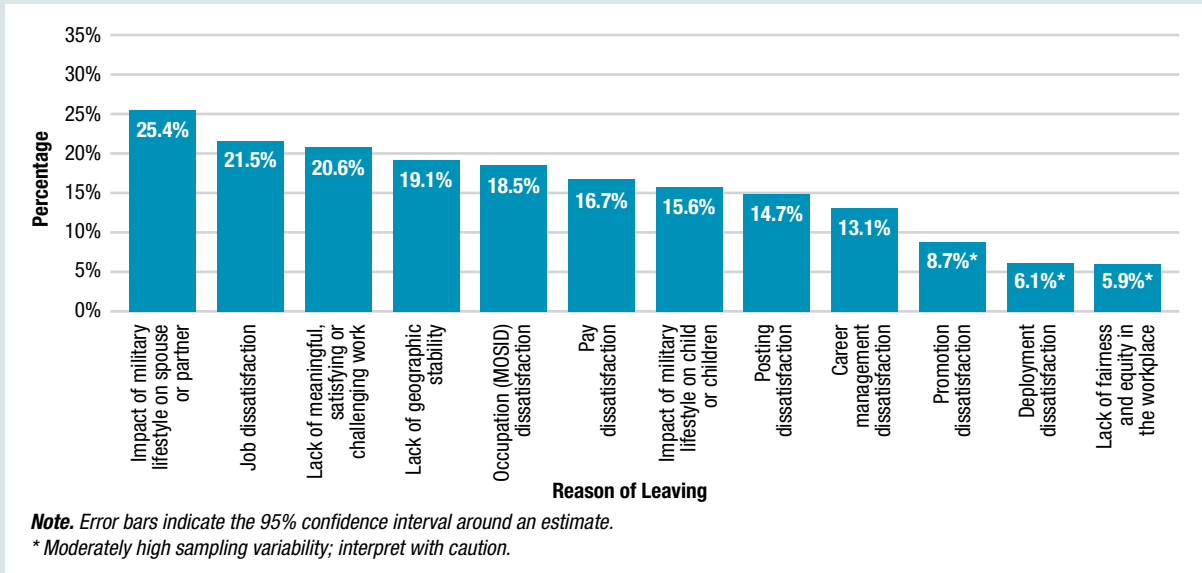


Figure 5: 2019 CAF Retention Survey (currently serving members)



³⁴ Over time, the surveys have evolved and response options are not exactly the same. Comparison demonstrated broad similarities over time.

³⁵ Responses were not weighted to the voluntarily releasing population due to sample size; results are based on the sample of respondents who chose to fill out the survey during that time.

The research identifies numerous reasons why CAF members decide to leave voluntarily, but there are some reasons that stand out consistently over time for a large proportion of those who had been considering leaving or who had actually left:

- job dissatisfaction;
- impact of military lifestyle on spouses/children;
- career/occupation dissatisfaction, lack of career progression; and
- dissatisfaction with senior leadership.

The analysis on the Retention Survey incorporates descriptive analysis of retention information by gender, Year of Service, rank, and age groups, amongst other factors, providing information where member reports were least and most favourable within each group. Interestingly, the survey analysis on gender indicates that women tend to have higher levels of satisfaction with some training, the effects of posting on family, pay and benefits, and organizational leadership (Yeung, Musolino, & Eren, 2020). However, the qualitative analysis, which analyzes open-ended responses to the question “list and discuss the aspects a member is most dissatisfied with,” reflects additional insight. Here, the seven most common dissatisfiers

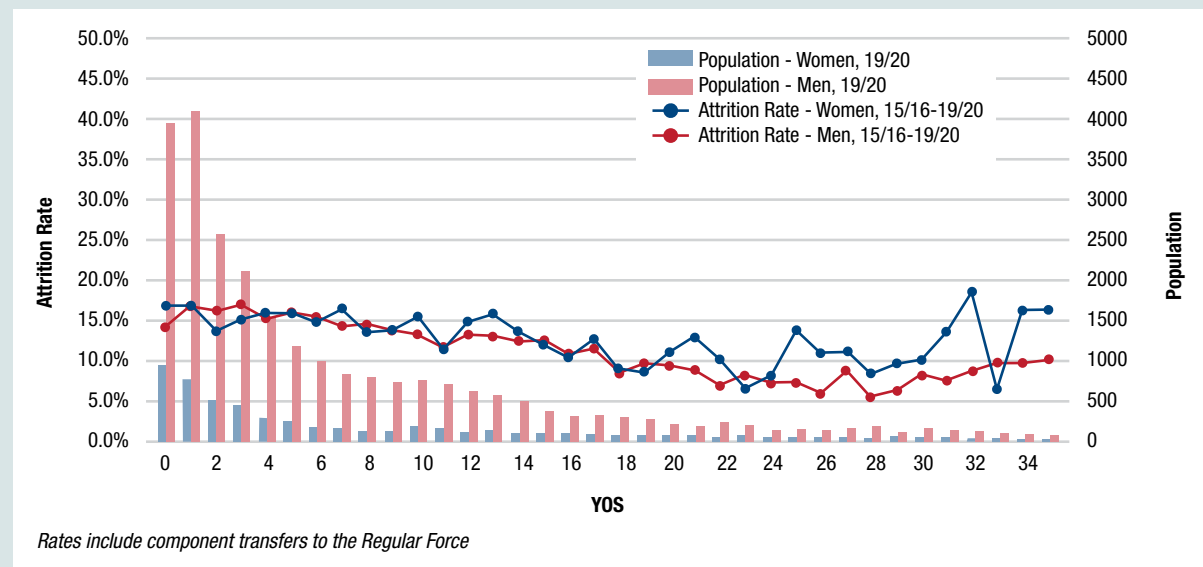
(thematically) include advancement/promotion/PER, training and development, leadership, postings, workload and demands, organizational inefficiency, and lack of transparency/fairness related to occupation. Additional analysis indicates that, with the exception of leadership and postings, some³⁶ women cited each of the dissatisfiers more often than men (Cheng, Myers, Musolino, Yeung, & Eren, 2020).

The Reserve Force³⁷

The P Res experiences an attrition rate almost double that of the Reg Force – an estimated 15% vs. 7-8%. Of course, this attrition is driven by different factors than those of the Reg Force – for example, a considerable number of army reservists are students who may leave the reserves for full-time work, or even to transfer to the Reg Force.

Within the P Res, increases in attrition are found particularly after the initial year of service, similar to Reg Force. However, unlike the Reg Force, we do not see the overall increase in attrition at the 20 to 25 years of service.³⁸ Rather, we see that attrition rates slightly increase after 20 years of service for women,³⁹ and 27 years of service for men. (See Figure 6)

Figure 6: P Res attrition rates and population distribution: women vs. men (all release reasons).⁴⁰



³⁶ About half the female participants in the Retention Survey responded to this item. As part of qualitative analysis, not all would have mentioned each of these items, or one respondent may have mentioned more than one item.

³⁷ Available information is presented for Primary Reserve, COATS, and Rangers. As information was not available for Supplementary Reserves, this was not included.

³⁸ Years of service is based on the time accrued while in the P Res, and therefore does not equate to the Reg Force years of service.

³⁹ At higher YOS, the attrition rate for women is based on sparse population and release data and thus varies somewhat erratically.

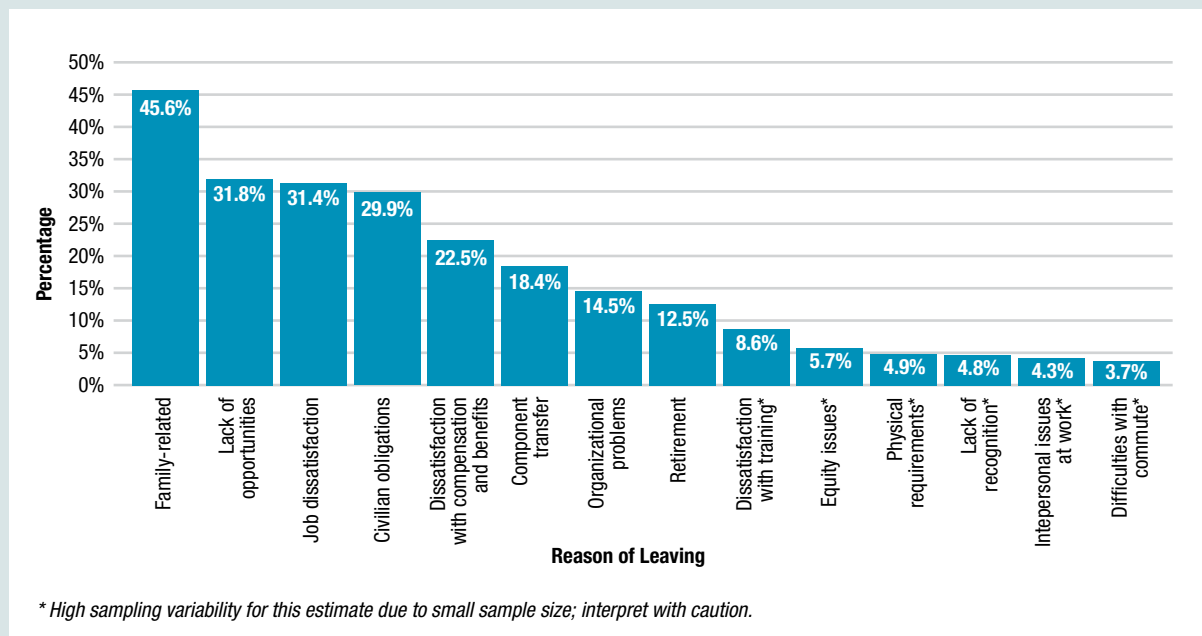
⁴⁰ Annual Update of Primary Reserve Force Attrition (Henderson, 2020).

Recently, the 2019 P Res Force Retention Survey was conducted.⁴¹ The Primary Reserve Survey is administered to a sample of P Res members and provides some demographic estimates that should be considered when developing retention actions for Reserve members. For example, it is estimated that 57.7% of Res members are working or attending school and that 8.5% are both working and attending school. This is, of course, in stark contrast with Reg Force, and interesting to note. While the CAF competes with other employers, in the Res Force many are already with another employer and may have other obligations and/or opportunities more readily available than a Reg Force member who is only beginning to consider leaving. Similar to the Reg Force Retention Survey, the P Res Retention Survey also identifies gender, Indigenous Peoples, and visible minorities within its demographics and reports on the areas of satisfaction or dissatisfaction by gender and Employment Equity Group (EEG). There were few differences between genders, or by EEG status. Those differences that were noted were positive, with women being more satisfied with the availability and quality of equipment and resources, and EEG members identify more strongly with the CAF and being more satisfied with compensation, benefits, and the assignment of deployment opportunities.

Overall, the reasons for intending to leave the P Res appear to have some similarities to those of the Reg Force. Family-related concerns were the most commonly cited reason for potentially leaving the P Res. The other top noted reasons included lack of opportunities, dissatisfaction with the job, civilian obligations, and dissatisfaction with pay and benefits (See Figure 7).

Limited information is available for the COATS, Rangers, and Supplementary Reserve. While the P Res conducts a retention survey, and aims to continue to do this more regularly, no such survey was found for the Rangers or Supplementary Reserve. Retention Survey findings were available for the COATS from the 2012 COATS Survey but differed from that administered to the Regular and P Res Forces, in that they were not asked to identify dissatisfiers with working with the CAF. The majority of COATS personnel planned to continue as a Cadet Instructors Cadre (CIC) officer for six or more years, and work with their training unit for 4 or more years. Personnel were asked to select the top three reasons that have had a significant influence on their intention to leave COATS. The top five reasons included: conflicts between family and personal life (29.4%), few opportunities in COATS (21.4%), conflicts with their civilian job (19.8%),

Figure 7: Reasons for Leaving the P Res



⁴¹ The P Res consists of predominantly part-time members (i.e., Class A service), which generally entails members having to work one evening per week and one weekend per month. Members may also be Class B service, that is, working full-time in a non-operational role such as training. Finally, members are Class C service if they deploy on operations at home or abroad. See complete definition in the QR&O, Chapter 9, section 3.

dissatisfaction with personal administration (14.9%), and personal conflict(s) with the unit member(s) or leadership (13%). While there is disaggregation by gender, no other disaggregation by underrepresented group was available. Further, there were few noted differences between male and female members, and in cases where there were differences, female COATS members had more positive perceptions than male members.

Outside of civilian obligations, there are broad similarities between the P Res and Reg Force in terms of reasons for leaving the CAF. Both components identified dissatisfaction with promotion, recognition, and training. However, the acknowledgement of these similarities must not overshadow that the retention activities employed in the Reg Force may not be appropriate for those in the Res Force – the details that underlie these broad categories of

dissatisfiers are important. For example, in terms of lack of opportunities, the Res Force survey notes that there is dissatisfaction with a lack of deployment opportunities, whereas lack of geographic stability was noted as a dissatisfier within the Reg Force. While broad changes must be considered to better incorporate the two components, the distinction between targeted retention efforts for each should acknowledge the demographic differences and the particular influencing factors of retention as they apply to each component. Further, it would benefit the CAF to gather, and analyze more regularly, additional data and insights on other elements of the Res Force to obtain a more comprehensive picture of retention issues. In doing so, we will be better able to address the retention issues within each component appropriately, so that the organization can truly present itself as One Force.

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