



Reserve Duty in Israel 2026

A Status Report

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Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel

Jerusalem, July 2026



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Introduction

Army reserve duty (*miluim*) has been an integral part of Israel's social fabric since the founding of the State. Since the outbreak of the October 7 War, the scale of reserve duty has grown to unprecedented levels, both in the number of days served and in the intensity of service. In the new reality that has emerged, it appears that reserve duty is unlikely to return to its prewar format. This raises important questions about the long-term sustainability of expanded reserve duty during reservists' most productive years. As researchers, we cannot quantify the feelings and concerns of reservists and their families. However, we can examine the measurable effects of prolonged reserve duty in key areas of life, such as higher education, employment, and professional development, and try to anticipate where the continuation of the current trend may lead Israeli society.

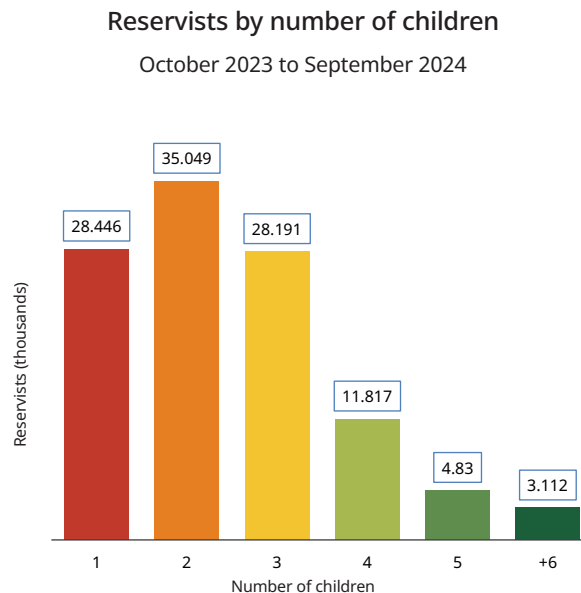
Based on data from a variety of sources, we present information on the characteristics of reservists and on the expected impact of reserve duty on their economic well-being and higher education. It should be emphasized that, due to data limitations, this review does not cover all aspects of this issue. Nevertheless, it provides sufficient information to enrich the public discussion and help policy makers identify areas in which the reservist population may find itself at a relative disadvantage in the coming years.

To make the content accessible to readers, each section is presented as a short, self-contained, and focused unit. The technical section, which describes trends at the local level in 1,025 localities compared with national trends primarily through a series of tables, appears as [online appendices](#) on the Taub Center website.

Most reservists who are parents have fewer than four children

Background: The October 7 War led to a large-scale mobilization of reservists and prolonged service by hundreds of thousands of them, about 110,000 of whom are parents. In general, prolonged service places a heavy burden on reservists and their families, especially those who are parents, and particularly parents of young children.

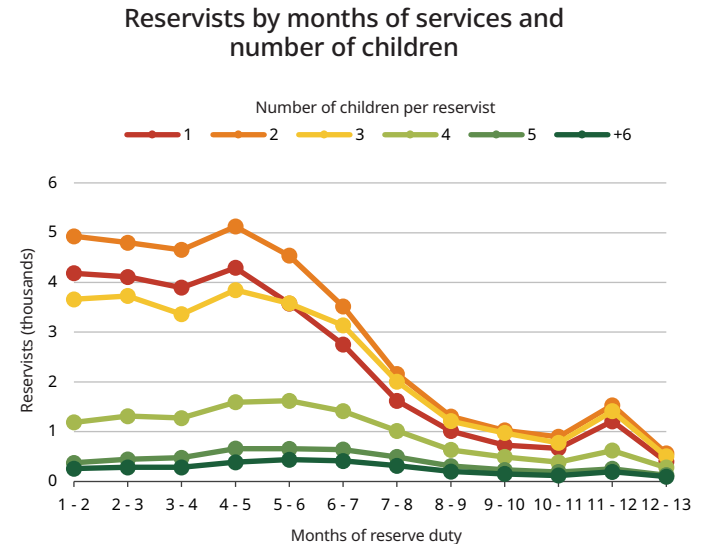
In the graph: The graph presents the distribution of reservists with at least one child, by number of children, from October 2023 to September 2024. Among reservists who are parents, most (about 90,000 out of about 110,000) have three children or fewer, and the most common number of children is two.



Up to six months of reserve duty, the distribution of parents' months of service was fairly even across groups by number of children

In the graph: The graph presents the population shown on the previous page, by number of months served between October 2023 and September 2024. We do not have data on people who served for less than one month during this period.

Across all groups, the number of reservists serving up to six months is relatively stable; for each service length from one to six months, the number of reservists with children ranges from 14,000 to 16,000. Beyond six months, their number declines in all groups, with an unusual spike around 12 months of service.



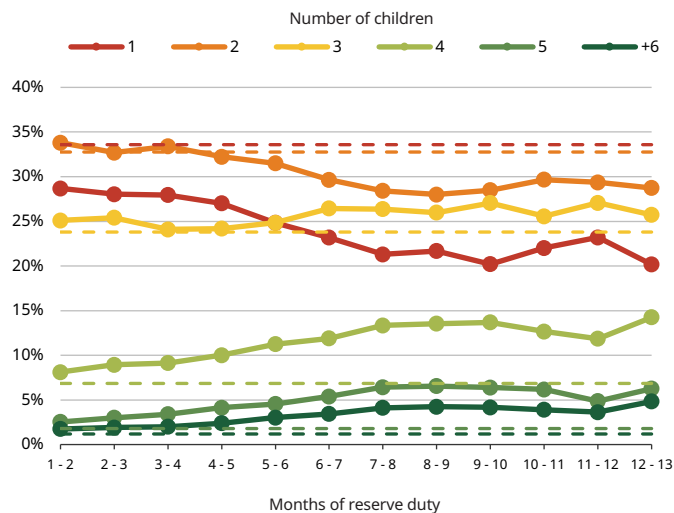
Reservists with large families are overrepresented

In the graph: The graph shows the distribution of the number of children among reservists, by length of service, compared with the distribution of households with the same number of children among the general population with children in Israel (excluding Haredim and Arabs). For example, about 34% of people in the general population with children have one child, but among reservists who served between one and two months, only about 28% are parents of one child, and this share declines as length of service increases.

Interestingly, as the number of months of reserve duty rises, so does the share of reservists with three or more children, whose representation is substantially higher than their share in the population.

Beyond the graph: The over-representation of large families among those serving for long periods may point to differences in service patterns across groups, with populations that tend to have more children (such as the National-religious population) also tending to serve more days of reserve duty.

Share of reservists by number of children and months of service and as a share of the population



Note: Dashed line represents the population share.

Source: Ori Oberman, Michael Debowy, and Sarit Silverman, Taub Center | Data: CBS; IDF, Freedom of Information Act

The average payment per day of reserve duty fell during 2024

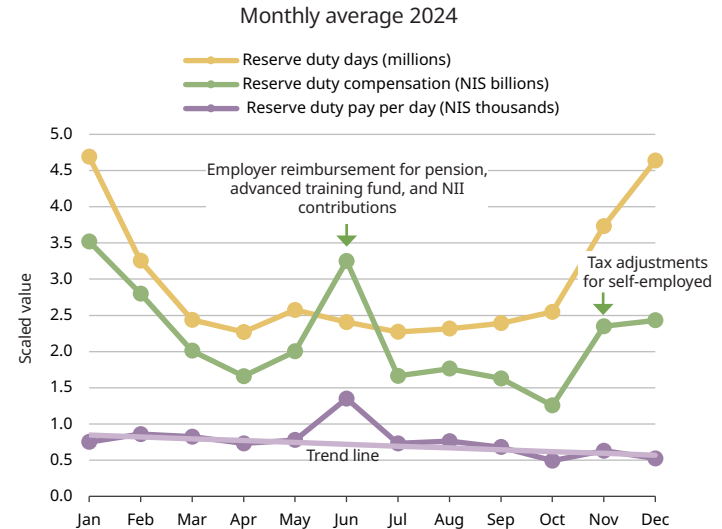
Background: Since the outbreak of the October 7 War, reserve duty has expanded significantly, leading to an increase in National Insurance Institute payments to reservists.

In the graph: The yellow line shows the total number of reserve-duty days (in millions) each month, the green line represents total reserve duty benefits paid by the National Insurance Institute (in NIS billions), and the purple line shows the ratio between them — the average payment per day of reserve duty (in NIS thousands). In June and November, unusual spikes in benefits were recorded due to reimbursements to employers (June) and back payments to self-employed workers (November).

The first and fourth quarters of the year saw peaks in the scope of mobilization, but total benefits in the fourth quarter were considerably lower than in the first quarter. The trend line for payment per day of reserve duty (excluding the June outlier) indicates a continuous decline of about 30% over the course of the year.

Beyond the graph: The decline in the average payment per day of reserve duty may point to a change in the composition of reservists over the course of the year, and specifically to a decline in the number of high-income reservists.

Reserve-duty days, compensation and pay per day



Source: Ori Oberman, Michael Debowy, and Sarit Silverman, Taub Center | Data: IDF, Freedom of Information Act; NII

Examining the relationship between the scale of national mobilization and the scale of mobilization in different localities

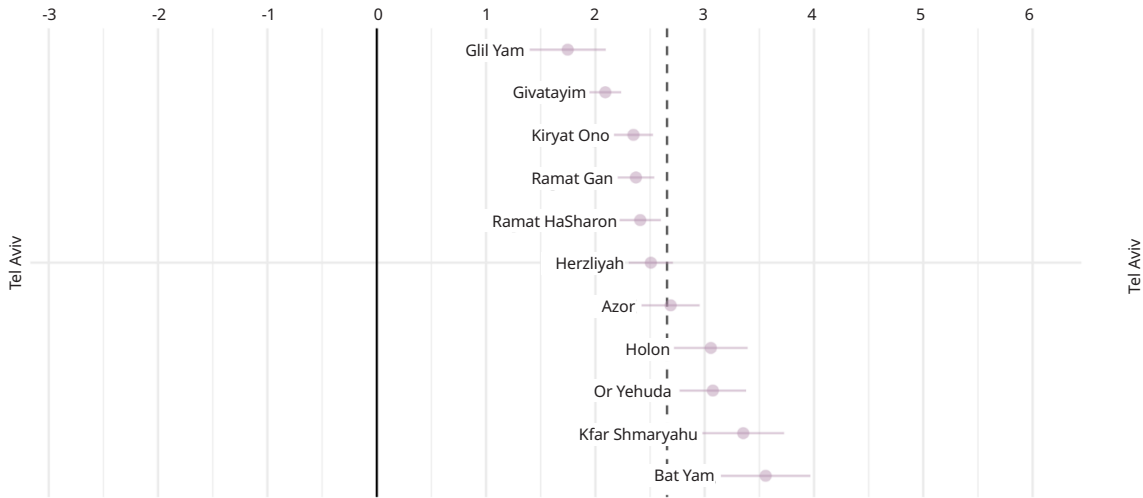
Background: As we saw on the previous page, the scale of mobilization of reservists varied greatly over the course of 2024, as it did throughout the war. The scale of mobilization changes according to the needs of the campaign — maneuvers in Gaza and in the north increase the demand for personnel. However, in certain localities, mobilization patterns may be affected not only by national factors but also by local ones, such as recruitment to local emergency squads and community defense missions. To examine the extent to which changes in a particular locality stem from national needs rather than local ones, we used a regression to test how the monthly number of reserve-duty days in a given locality, relative to the size of the relevant population in that locality (ages 20–45), is affected by the relative scale of mobilization nationwide. If the coefficient estimated for the locality is greater than 1 — that is, if the change in the mobilization rate in the locality is greater than the change in the national mobilization rate — this indicates

high sensitivity to the overall war situation. A positive coefficient smaller than 1 indicates low sensitivity to general mobilization, while a coefficient of zero or below indicates an independent mobilization pattern. The analysis does not include estimates for Arab and Haredi localities or for localities in which the relevant population recorded fewer than one reserve duty day in any month. The regression results are presented in Appendix A.

In the graph: The graph shows the relationship between the national mobilization rate and the mobilization rate in localities in the Tel Aviv District. The localities are arranged in the graph by the strength of the relationship. The point for each locality represents the coefficient estimated for that locality, and the horizontal line on either side of the point represents the standard error of this coefficient over the 12 months. The vertical dashed line indicates the district average. As shown, the Tel Aviv District had high positive sensitivity (above 1), indicating a strong response to changes in the overall war situation.

The relationship between the national and local mobilization rate

Tel Aviv District, 2024



Source: Ori Oberman, Michael Debowy, and Sarit Silverman, Taub Center | Data: IDF, Freedom of Information Act; Population and Immigration Authority

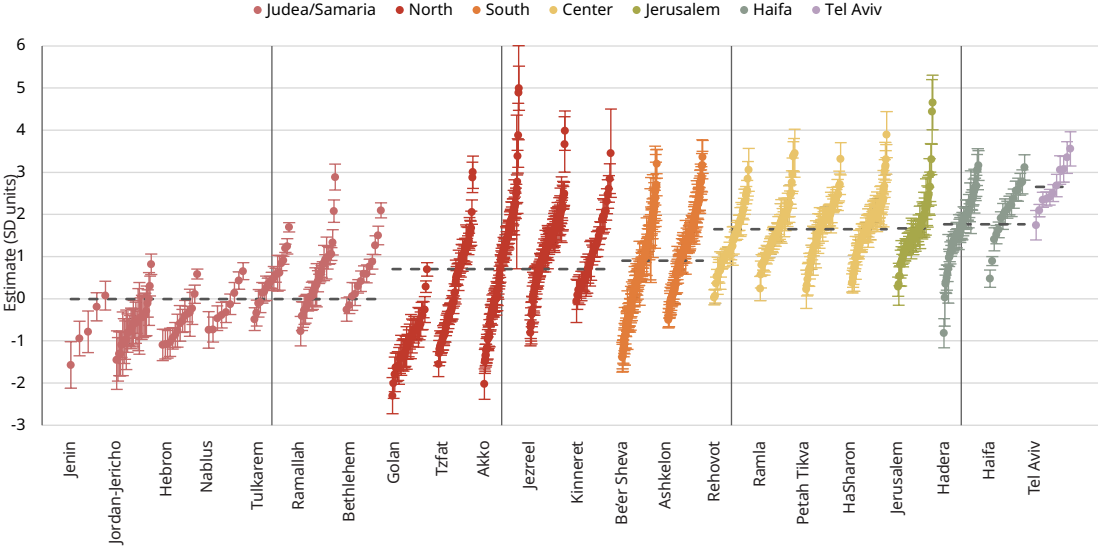
Localities in the north and in Judea and Samaria are characterized by independent mobilization patterns

In the graph: Continuing from the graph presented on the previous page, this graph shows the distribution of sensitivity coefficients across all localities, by district and subdistrict. The horizontal dashed line in each district indicates the district average. In the Judea and Samaria area, the average is close to zero — a value indicating that, on average, the mobilization rate in these localities is not affected by changes in the scale of national mobilization. In the Jenin and Jordan Valley subdistricts, the coefficient is even negative, meaning that reservists in these localities serve independently of the overall war situation. Negative sensitivity was also measured in northern border localities — in the Golan, Safed, and Akko subdistricts.

By contrast, in the Tel Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem, and Central Districts, sensitivity was higher than 1, indicating a strong response to changes in the national picture. In the Southern District, the coefficient was positive and close to 1.

Beyond the graph: The independent mobilization patterns in frontier localities, both in Judea and Samaria and in the Golan, may reflect a more complex reality, requiring recruitment to local emergency squads and participation in community defense missions.

Estimated reserve-duty days per 100 residents
By locality and district, 2024



The expected wage loss increases as service lengthens

Background: Many studies show that prolonged absence from the workplace (or from the labor market) may lead to a long-term decline in workers' wages, and that the extent of the decline increases in direct proportion to the length of the absence. The main explanations relate to reduced accumulation of professional experience and fewer opportunities for promotion. Repeated rounds of reserve duty have created an unprecedented wave of workers with hundreds of days of absence from their workplaces, which may harm their wages over time. The graph presents an estimate of the wage loss based on findings from the economic literature and on the data on reserve-duty days available to us (for further details, see Appendix B). Note that, given the unique circumstances of the absences during this war, the effect may differ from that documented in the literature. We therefore chose to present the most conservative estimate from the relevant studies.

In the graph: The long-term wage loss for a reservist was calculated according to the cumulative number of reserve-duty days served. According to the conservative estimate, the average reservist, who served 233 days since the beginning of the war, is expected to experience a long-term wage loss of at least about 4.7%. If we focus

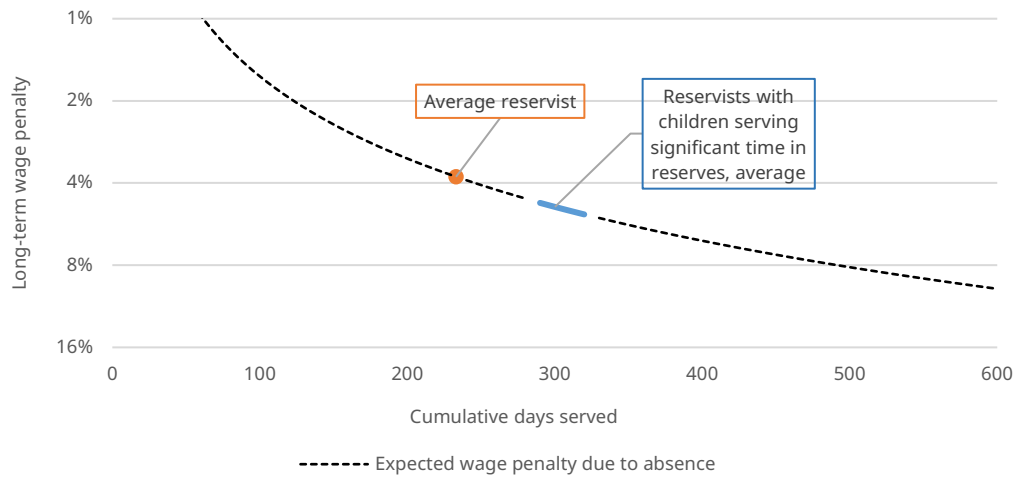
on fathers of children who served for a substantial period (290–320 days) — a population of more than 100,000 people — the expected wage loss is at least 5.8%–6.4%.

Beyond the graph: As noted, these figures were calculated on the basis of conservative estimates from the literature. If we had relied on the average of the estimates in the studies we examined, the long-term wage effect in both groups would have been much higher, at around 19%–21% (see Appendix B).

The levels of risk of long-term wage and employment losses vary according to the cumulative number of reserve-duty days. Many thousands of reservists were absent from their workplaces for a cumulative period of a year or more — an enormous loss in terms of the accumulation of professional experience and promotion opportunities, which may reduce long-term wages by 7% or more.

It is important to note that, beyond the reservists themselves, the issue of long-term harm to their wages and employment may have far-reaching implications at the national level as well. The prolonged absence of such a large group from the labor market, together with disruptions to their educational attainment, may harm the economy's central engine of growth — human capital.

Expected wage penalty by number of cumulative reserve days served



The employment losses of reservists' spouses are expected to persist

Background: The employment of reservists' spouses was already harmed during the war, but the damage is expected to continue in the long term as well. According to the CBS survey of reservists' families, 30% of salaried female spouses experienced a decline in wages, 3% were dismissed from their jobs, and 73% of self-employed female spouses reported harm to their business due to their spouse's reserve duty (CBS, 2025). In addition, the reported non-employment rate for this population is much higher than its reported non-employment rate before the war.

In the graph: The non-employment rate among non-Haredi Jewish women of working age whose spouses did not serve in reserve duty did not change from the start of the war through mid-2025. By contrast, the non-employment rate among spouses of reservists rose by 40% during this period.

Beyond the graph: Damage to employment and wages, even if temporary, tends to have repercussions later in one's career. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the spouses of reservists will experience career setbacks in the long term as well. As a result, reservists' households will suffer a double blow to their livelihood over time. In addition, many of these households include individuals suffering from war-related mental health injuries, which may further worsen their employment prospects.*

* For studies indicating a negative long-term effect of war-related mental health injuries on employment and wages, see Loughran and Heaton, 2013; Savoca and Rosenheck, 2000; Smith et al., 2005.

Unemployment rate among spouses of reservists

April-May 2025 relative to September 2023



Note: The light blue columns show the unemployment rate among non-Haredi Jewish women ages 25–64 in the overall labor force.

Source: Ori Oberman, Michael Debowy, and Sarit Silverman, Taub Center | Data: Central Bureau of Statistics:

A decline in higher education or merely a delay?

Background: According to data from the Council for Higher Education, about 70,000 students served in reserve duty during the 2024/25 academic year. Despite accommodations and financial assistance, prolonged absences increase the risk of dropping out of studies or delaying enrollment among potential students.

CBS data on the share of undergraduate students in institutions of higher education by age group and population group show that, among Jews and Others, most students are concentrated in the 22–29 age range, but the peak varies by gender: among women, the peak is at ages 22–24 (about 28%), while among men it is at ages 25–29 (about 15%). By contrast, in the Arab sector, participation in academic studies peaks at younger ages for both sexes — 18–24 — highlighting the difference in the academic starting point across sectors.

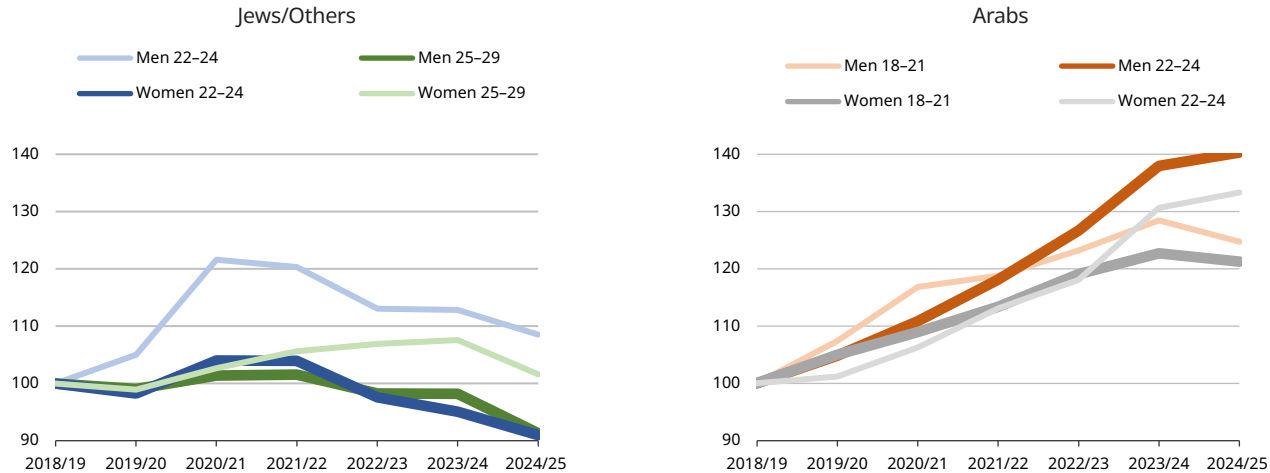
In the graph: In the Arab sector, participation rates rose steadily throughout the period examined (2018/19–2024/25). By contrast, among Jews and Others, participation rates rose

during the COVID-19 period (2020/21) and declined moderately thereafter, followed by a sharp drop in 2024/25. Among young women (ages 22–24) and older men (ages 25–29), the rates even fell below the 2018/19 baseline. This is the lowest point recorded during the entire period examined.

Beyond the graph: The trend shown reflects a broad decline in academic participation among Jews and Others, the population that carries a large share of the reserve duty burden, which can include both dropping out of studies and a reduced enrollment among new students. This decline is concentrated at the peak ages of academic study for each gender, the most critical period for shaping one's academic and professional trajectory. Prolonged reserve duty at this stage of life may therefore have negative implications for the future of these young adults. Despite the extensive support packages, the data are consistent with the assessment that prolonged and cumulative absences during one's twenties undermine the ability to maintain educational continuity over time. At the national level, this trend may cause deep disruptions to Israel's future human capital and delay the entry of skilled workers into the labor market.

Share of BA students by sector, gender, and selected age groups

2018/19 academic year = 100



Source: Ori Oberman, Michael Debowy, and Sarit Silverman, Taub Center | Data: CBS, Table 2.34.1 for 2018/19–2024/25 — First-Year Students in Higher Education Institutions Among 18–39-Year-Olds, by Population Group, Socioeconomic Cluster of Locality of Residence at Age 18, District of Residence, Sex, Age, and Type of Institution

Children whose parent served in reserve duty experienced more severe emotional and behavioral regression — especially in low-income families

Background: The effect of a parent's absence on the well-being of young children is shaped to a large extent by the resources available to the family. High-income families can pay for alternative help, professional emotional support, and activities that strengthen the child's routine while the parent is absent — capacities that low-income families do not necessarily have. Accordingly, we can expect differences in the effect of prolonged reserve duty on young children according to the family's income level.

In the graph: The graph shows the relationship between the extent of children's emotional and behavioral regression and family income level, among children whose parents served in reserve duty and among children whose parents did not serve. It appears that, among children from low-income families whose parents were mobilized for reserve duty, emotional regression was more pronounced than among children

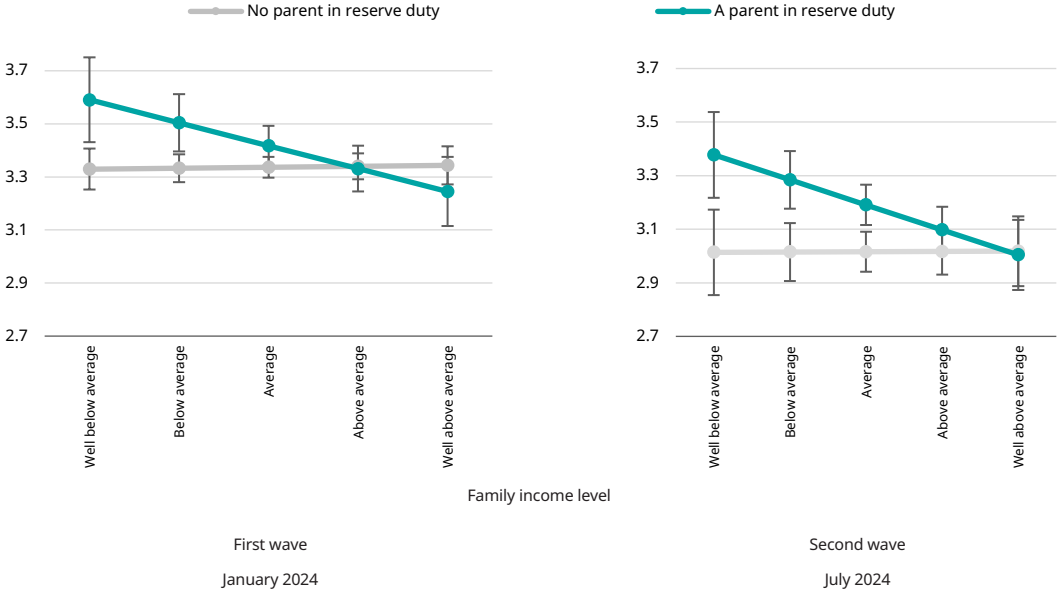
from similar families whose parents were not mobilized. As income rises, the gap between the children of those who were mobilized and the children of those who were not narrows, and among the highest-income families it almost disappears and even reverses.

Between January and July 2024, the level of emotional regression declined in all income groups — but this decline was more pronounced among children whose parents did not serve in reserve duty, so that the gap between the two groups widened.

Beyond the graph: The findings indicate that economic resources can sometimes have a protective effect: high-income families are able to moderate the negative effect of a parent's absence on the child's well-being, while low-income families are more exposed to this negative effect, including over time, and this may worsen children's emotional and behavioral state.

Average emotional and behavioral regression among young children,
by household economic status and reserve duty of a parent

January 2024 and July 2024



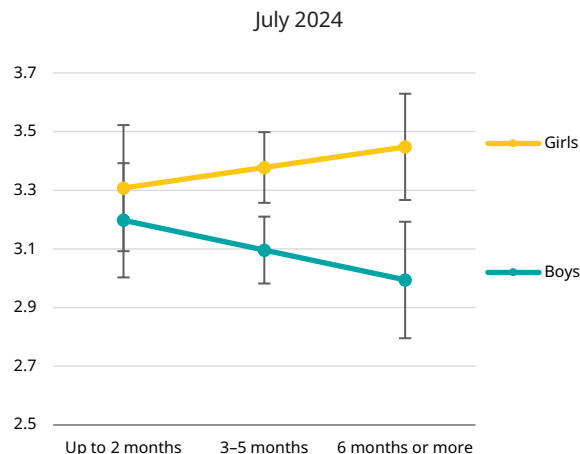
Girls experience greater emotional and behavioral regression than boys following a parent's prolonged absence due to reserve duty

Background: Studies in developmental psychology indicate that girls and boys may respond differently to stress and parental absence. The question of gender differences in children's responses to a parent's prolonged reserve duty has not yet been studied extensively, and is of interest both for research and for planning responses tailored to different populations.

In the graph: The graph presents the average emotional and behavioral regression of children by the length of the parent's reserve duty and by boys and girls. After controlling for the child's age, parents' education, family income, family status, and family size, the differences within gender groups — that is, girls compared with girls or boys compared with boys — were not statistically significant. However, a comparison between boys and girls shows that, among children whose parents served prolonged reserve duty, girls experienced, on average, greater emotional and behavioral difficulties than boys.

Beyond the graph: This finding may indicate heightened sensitivity among girls to a parent's prolonged absence due to reserve duty, and highlights the need for emotional support tailored to them in such situations.

Average emotional and behavioral regression among young children, by length of reserve service of one parent and gender of child



Source: Shay, 2025, page 38

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