

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES  
TOWARD GOVERNMENT QUARTERS:  
A DRAFT REPORT FROM THE 1983 NPS EMPLOYEE SURVEY<sup>1</sup>

Submitted

to

Task Force on National Park Service Housing Policy  
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Submitted

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary highlights findings from the draft report on employee attitudes toward government quarters prepared for the Task Force on National Park Service Housing Policy.

The document contains nine sections: (1) an introduction and background to the National Park Service Employee Survey, (2) a descriptive profile of the NPS government quarters residents based on selected social and demographic characteristics, (3) an analysis of satisfaction with living in government quarters housing by those who currently live in them, (4) an analysis of differences in satisfaction with living in government quarters between employees who now live in government quarters and employees who used to live in government quarters; and (5) an analysis of the extent to which employees perceive government quarters to be an incentive or barrier to mobility, (6) an analysis of employee preferences for living in government quarters, (7) a preliminary and brief analysis of employee attitudes toward relocation, (8) a brief examination of the association between selected job-related attitudes and government quarters occupancy, and (9) a discussion of employee attitudes toward changes in government quarters policy.

### National Park Service Employee Survey

The National Park Service Employee Survey was administered by mail to a random sample of 4607 permanent employees of the Park Service in mid-October 1983. Seventy-seven percent of those receiving the survey responded. The response rates differed by pay grade, occupational classification, region, supervisory status and personnel schedule. While these differences should be noted in interpreting data, the large sample size results in a relatively small impact when generalizing to the entire NPS work force.

### Government Quarters Resident Profile

Twenty-three percent of the survey respondents lived in government quarters at the time of the survey; 52 percent had never lived and 25 percent previously lived in government quarters.

Several statistical tests were performed to identify social and demographic variables that might uniquely identify government

quarters residents. These variables included: region of residence, type of park in which respondent is employed, marital status, presence, number and age of children, employment status of spouse, age, tenure with NPS, pay grade, occupational and personnel schedule classification, and supervisor status.

Forty-six percent of surveyed government quarters residents live in the Rocky Mountain and Western Regions; 58 percent live in these two regions plus the Southwest Region. Fifty-five percent of government quarters residents are in national parks, 18 percent in national historic areas, 14 percent in national monuments, and 12 percent in national recreation areas. Sixty percent are classified as park rangers or technicians, and 46 percent fall in the 30-39 age category. Forty-seven percent are in the GS 6-9 categories. Employees in government quarters are less likely to have spouses working outside the home, especially full time; twenty-five percent of spouses living in government quarters work full time outside the home compared to 43 percent of the spouses of employees not living in government quarters. Government quarters residents also are slightly more likely to have children, and less likely to have children over 14 living in the home.

#### Satisfaction and Evaluation of Factors Associated with Living in Government Quarters by Current Occupants

Two-thirds of NPS employees who live in government quarters are generally satisfied with living there. A majority agree such housing is a good buy, the quality is good, that living there is part of their compensation for their job, the space they have is adequate, and living there is convenient to them and for members of their family. The lowest level of satisfaction relates to maintenance, where 45 percent agree that quarters are well maintained and repaired, and 47 percent disagree (see Table 1).

Compared to employees in the trade and labor occupations and all other occupations in the NPS, park rangers and technicians are less satisfied with all aspects of government quarters except space adequacy. Employees over 50 and single employees are generally more satisfied with government quarters.

Family characteristics are relevant to general satisfaction and perceptions that government quarters are a good buy, part of job compensation, and space adequacy. The presence of children lowers agreement about adequacy of space, especially when children are present under 14 years of age. Fewer persons with children view government quarters as part of their compensation. Interestingly, employees with unemployed spouses are less likely to view government quarters as part of their compensation and less likely to be satisfied with space adequacy. Single employees are more apt to feel that government quarters are a good buy and that space is adequate.

Table 1. Current Occupant Satisfaction with Living in Government Quarters

Questionnaire Item	Percent				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q-61 For the money, government quarters are (were) a good buy	9.3	46.3	12.3	23.1	9.0
Q-62 Government quarters are (were) well maintained and repaired	5.2	40.0	8.3	34.3	12.2
Q-63 The quality of government quarters is (was) good	3.1	51.4	12.2	26.5	6.8
Q-64 I view(ed) the availability of government quarters as an important part of the compensation for my job	20.5	45.2	6.1	21.3	6.9
Q-65 In general, I am (was) satisfied with living in government quarters	8.6	57.1	10.5	17.5	6.3
Q-66 The space I have (had) in government quarters is (was) adequate	11.0	60.7	3.4	17.9	7.0
Q-67 Living in government quarters is (was) inconvenient to me or members of my family	8.0	20.5	5.9	51.5	14.1

The key findings regarding residents' satisfaction with living in government quarters are:

- (1) the generally positive levels of satisfaction except for quality of maintenance where respondents are about equally divided in their opinion;
- (2) The somewhat overall lower level of satisfaction by employees in the park ranger and park technician classification compared to employees in the trades and labor and crafts occupations;

- (3) the somewhat lower degree of satisfaction of employees aged 30 to 49 compared to both older and younger employees;
- (4) the somewhat lower level of satisfaction for employees who are married, who have young children, and more than one child; and
- (5) the generally absent relationship of differences by region and type of area, except for the association between type of area and perceptions that quarters were well maintained and that quality is good. Sixty-five percent of residents in national historic sites feel their quality is good compared to 56 percent in the national parks and 44 percent in the national recreation areas.

#### Differences in Satisfaction and Evaluation of Living in Government Quarters Between Employees Who Used to Live and Employees Who Presently Live in Government Quarters

Assuming that employees who used to live in government quarters have accurate recollections and that selective out-migration of those who are dissatisfied with government quarters does not bias conclusions, the analysis of differences in attitudes between employees who used to live in government quarters compared to current occupants indicates a downward trend in the level of satisfaction associated with living in government quarters. The largest differences in perception involve feelings that government quarters are a good buy and that they are well maintained and repaired. Seventy-two percent of employees who used to live in government quarters felt that they were a good buy compared to 55 percent of current quarters residents. Sixty-four percent of employees who used to live in government quarters feel they were well maintained and repaired compared to 45 percent of the current occupants.

Fewer employees who now live in government quarters feel their quality is good and are generally less satisfied with living there. There are no differences in perceptions between employees who used to live in government quarters and current occupants on the basis of inconvenience or space adequacy. More current occupants feel living in government quarters is part of the compensation for their job. The later finding suggests more current employees may be using nonfinancial factors in defining compensation for living in government quarters.

#### Government Housing as an Incentive or Barrier to Mobility

The primary findings regarding the perception of government quarters as a barrier and incentive to mobility can be summarized as follows:

1. The survey data indicate government quarters are not widely perceived as a barrier to mobility by NPS employees. Fifty-seven percent of the survey respondents disagree with the statement that they would not accept a transfer

if required to live in government housing; 26 percent are undecided and 16 percent agree. Disagreement was highest among those who live in government quarters (84 percent) and lowest among those who have never lived in government quarters (47 percent).

2. Availability of government housing is not widely perceived as a necessary incentive for mobility. Eight percent of the survey respondents indicate they would not transfer if government quarters were unavailable. Those who live in government housing are most likely to say they would not move unless they could live in government quarters (14 percent) as compared to about six percent of those who used to and those who never have lived in government quarters.

Although the percent of employees who indicate that the availability of government quarters is a prerequisite to their relocation is small, it is possible that the availability of government quarters helps to create a population of employees who are more willing to move because of fewer problems associated with disposing and purchasing homes.

3. Experience in government quarters is associated with different perceptions of quarters as both a barrier or an incentive to relocation. Although representing a small percentage (20), employees who have never lived in government housing are four times as likely as those who do live there to refuse a transfer if they are required to live in government quarters. Current residents of government quarters are more than twice as likely as nonresidents to indicate that they would not transfer unless they could live in government quarters.
4. Among NPS employees who indicate they would not transfer if government quarters were required, 64 percent of those who have never lived in government quarters indicate they do not like the opportunity to move several times in their careers compared with 30 percent of those who used to live in government quarters and 24 percent who now live in government quarters. The data indicate that for the never live group required occupancy may not represent as important a barrier to mobility as unwillingness to move generally.

#### Preferences of Employees Regarding Living in Government Quarters

From a system-wide perspective, it is first noted that employees who used to live in government housing are more likely to prefer not to live in government quarters than employees who have never lived or currently live in government quarters. Employees in the Denver Service Center are more likely to prefer



not to live in government quarters, followed by all employees in the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, Rocky Mountain, and Western Regions. Excluding central offices, except for a slightly lower percentage among those stationed at historical sites, there is little difference between types of sites and employee preferences not to live in government quarters. Married employees are somewhat more likely to prefer not to live in government quarters as are employees with children. Park rangers and technicians are more likely to prefer not to live in government quarters. Pay grade has the strongest association with preferences for not living in government quarters among the social and demographic variables. Fifty-nine percent of GS/GM employees grade 13 and over prefer not to live in government housing -- the highest proportion for any group identified in the analysis.

Compared to employees in other regions, employees in the Southwest Region are moderately more likely to be unopposed to living in government quarters (50 percent) followed by the Mid-Atlantic and Western Regions (38 percent). Employees in national monuments are more likely to be unopposed to living in government quarters. GS employees in the low grades are more likely to be unopposed to living in government quarters; WG employees in the high grades are more likely to be unopposed. Employees whose ages are between 20 to 29 and over 60 are more likely to be unopposed to living in government quarters. Sixty-eight percent of GS classified current occupants in grades one to five are not opposed to living in government quarters.

General satisfaction and satisfaction with some aspects of government quarters living are more strongly associated with preference to live in government quarters than the social and demographic variables. For current occupants, general satisfaction shows the strongest (but nonetheless moderate) relationship with preference to live in government quarters, followed by perception that living in government quarters is inconvenient and feelings that government quarters availability is part of job compensation. For employees who once lived in government quarters, the pattern of association between satisfaction with aspects of living in government quarters and preferences for living in government quarters is similar except the strength of association is somewhat weaker.

#### Employee Attitudes Toward Relocation and Mobility Patterns

Park Service employees in general are very open to the possibility of relocation. Only 13 percent of NPS employees say they would not consider a move under any circumstances; 72 percent indicate they would relocate if there were the right incentives or they are open to the possibility of relocation. Government quarters residents are extremely open to the possibility of relocation with 93 percent saying they would move under the right incentives or are open to the possibility of moving. Ninety-five percent of those in government housing under 40 years of age would

relocate with the right incentives; 40 percent are open to the possibility of a move.

#### Government Quarters Occupancy and Selected Job-Related Attitudes

There are slight differences in job-related attitudes between the housing experience groups with those who now live in government quarters having higher job involvement and organization commitment and less job satisfaction. Because these differences are minimal, they appear practically unimportant.

#### Attitudes Toward Government Quarters Policy Change

Overall, a clear majority (70 percent) of employees feel that government quarters policy should be changed. Eighty percent of those now living in government quarters feel the policy should be changed. The area of change mentioned most frequently by both former and current quarters residents is rent reduction and the use of comparable market value as a basis for establishing rental rates.

For current occupants of government quarters the second most frequently mentioned suggestion for policy change is to provide better maintenance. The third and fourth most frequently mentioned areas have to do with compensation for required occupancy and the isolation involved in living in government quarters.