



Division for Research on Employment

The Center for Advancement of Special Populations (Makam) - Integration into Military Service and Civilian Life of all Makam Recruits from 1993-2010

Noam Fischman ■ Abraham Wolde-Tsadick ■ Denise Naon

The study was initiated and funded by the Jewish Federation of Cleveland and conducted by the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute in collaboration with the Israel Defense Forces and the Israel National Insurance Institute

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Abstract

Background

The Center for Advancement of Special Populations (Makam) was a unique program helping young men and women from disadvantaged backgrounds enlist in the IDF and complete their military service meaningfully and productively. Makam recruits generally came from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and a significant percentage belonged to minority groups, mainly new immigrants. They had low levels of education, were characterized as at risk because of "adjustment difficulties," and a considerable portion had a criminal record. Makam offered these soldiers a special program of basic training and mentoring to support them through their military service and after discharge into the working world and civilian life.

Goals

The goal of the study was to describe the background characteristics of Makam soldiers enlisting in 1993- 2010 and evaluate their integration into military service and subsequently into civilian life.

Method

The study integrated data supplied by the IDF on the background and military service of Makam soldiers with data from the National Insurance Institute (NII). This combination created a unique opportunity to follow Makam soldiers during their military service and for up to 15 years afterwards.

To examine the extent of the program's contribution to participants, we compared the results for Makam soldiers with those of two comparison groups.

1. Some 20,000 Jews, aged 25-37, sampled randomly from NII data
2. Some 30,000 people with similar scores on IDF screening measures, who did not serve in the IDF.

Main Findings

Although Makam soldiers presented more characteristics of risk, most of them completed their military service and integrated successfully into civilian life. Considerable improvement was also found over time on most of the measures examined by the study.

The employment rates of discharged Makam soldiers were higher than those of the general Jewish population but somewhat more dependent on income support benefits, and their family stability was lower. Their most meaningful disadvantage was their level of income from work. As expected, a meaningful advantage was found in their favor vs. the group that did not serve in the army.

Summary

In the Makam program, no experiments were conducted that allow for a precise evaluation of impact. Nonetheless, there is evidence of its contribution to the participants' higher employment rate and, perhaps also, to their diminished dependency on income benefits, and greater family stability.

Executive Summary

1. Background

The Center for Advancement of Special Populations (Makam) was a unique program helping young men and women from disadvantaged backgrounds enlist in the IDF and complete their military service meaningfully and productively. Makam recruits generally came from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and a significant percentage belonged to minority groups, mainly new immigrants. Their level of education was low, they were characterized as at risk because of "adjustment difficulties," and a considerable portion had a criminal record.

The main goals of the program as described in a 1981 government resolution were to "advance, as much as possible, all individuals from disadvantaged populations and to integrate them, as much as possible, into important occupations in the IDF and in civilian life" (Makam, 2012).

The Makam program sought to accomplish the above-mentioned goals by:

- Creating a specific basic-training track for Makam recruits
- Assisting Makam recruits to successfully complete their basic training and to integrate into the units to which they are later assigned
- Providing guidance to commanders on how to help Makam soldiers integrate into their units after the completion of basic training
- Staffing mentors for Makam recruits to guide them throughout their military service
- Assisting Makam recruits without high school completion to earn a high-school equivalency and/or matriculation certificate
- Offering civilian vocational training to selected recruits

This report describes the background characteristics of Makam recruits and summarizes selected outcomes related to their military service and their integration into civilian life as adults.

2. Methodology

The study integrates information on the background of Makam recruits and their IDF service with the longitudinal data of the National Insurance Institute (NII – Israel's social security administration). This combination created a unique opportunity to follow Makam soldiers during their military service and for up to 15 years afterwards. The study followed Makam soldiers who had enlisted in 1993-2010. The NII added data for 1995-2012.

The study had two main focuses:

1. Evaluation of the integration of Makam soldiers into military service
2. Evaluation of the integration of discharged Makam soldiers into civilian life

We assessed their integration into military service by analyzing IDF data: their completion of service, acquisition of an occupation for civilian life, disciplinary measures, and reserve duty after discharge.

We assessed their integration into civilian life by analyzing NII data,¹ focusing on three areas: employment, dependence on NII income and disability benefits, and establishing a family and family stability. We first examined the status of Makam discharges for each of these measures to assess whether the majority had integrated successfully into civilian life. Then we compared the results with those of two groups:

1. The general Israeli-Jewish population, aged 25-37: random sampling of some 10,000 men and 10,000 women from the general population of Jewish 25-37-year-olds, drawn from NII files
2. Some 10,000 men and 20,000 women with similar scores on IDF screening tests who had not served in the IDF.

Makam recruits were uniquely selected as program candidates after careful screening relying on a battery of measures. In consultation with the IDF, the second group of men who did not serve was selected mainly on the basis of scores from an IDF screening measure assessing the level of risk for adjustment difficulties (KAHAS²-Adjustment Group). We made sure that this group was similar on the other IDF screening measures (DAPAR-Preliminary Psychotechnic Grade; TZAHAR-Initial Education Score; and KABA-Quality Group). The KAHAS was not used for women in the screening process; we relied on the other IDF screening measures (DAPAR, TZAHAR, and KABA) to create this group.

Statistical adjustments were made to ensure that the Makam group and the second group who did not serve were similar. We created a series of profiles (or subgroups) for Makam men and women based on their enlistment year and IDF screening scores. We then looked at the percentage of Makam participants in each profile, and created weights for the group who did not serve, based on these percentages. At enlistment, the Makam group and the second group were found to be very similar on the available measures, especially after the statistical adjustments for some initial differences. Nevertheless, the samples who did not serve may have differed from Makam soldiers in unexpected characteristics related to the decision not to serve at all.

For both men and women, the second group could represent what might have happened to Makam soldiers had they not served in the army. But the comparison may be biased in favor of the latter for non-service could be an indicator that the group who did not serve had many more characteristics of risk than the Makam soldiers.³

One main focus of the report is an attempt to examine the program's contribution to the integration of

¹ This follow-up related to a period of 1-15 years from the year of discharge for every soldier and up to 2015, according to an individual soldier's year of discharge.

² Only men with a KAHAS score of 40-50 (adjustment difficulties) were included in this examination. This score represents the great majority (85%) of Makam soldiers. Men without a KAHAS score were omitted.

³ Our examination included also a third comparison group, of men exempted from the IDF due to scores because of their KAHAS scores. The KAHAS scores were higher than those of Makam soldiers, indicating that the adjustment difficulties were more severe than what is permitted in the military, even in Makam.

Makam discharges⁴ into civilian life. In comparison with the general Jewish population, we expected to find lower results for Makam due to their background. Thus, no or few differences indicated successful integration. In comparison with the group that did not serve in the military, we expected to find higher results among Makam soldiers. Thus, if their results would have been similar to those of the non-recruits, this would indicate either no program impact or even a negative one.

3. Main Findings

3.1 Background Characteristics

About 20% of the Makam soldiers were immigrants and nearly 15% received financial assistance from the IDF, suggesting financial difficulties at home. Of the men, 58%, and of the women, 14%, had not completed high school by the time they were recruited to Makam. It is thus not surprising that they achieved very low scores on the IDF screening measures in the recruitment process. Furthermore, the men in Makam went through additional screening processes that assessed "adjustment difficulties" – a primary criterion for inclusion in the program.

3.2 Integration into Military Service

The majority of the men and women in Makam completed their service requirements. In fact, many elected to serve longer than required by the program. Still, 33% of the men and 13% of the women did not complete the service requirements. Not surprisingly, among the men, the primary reason for early discharge was "adjustment difficulties." Among the women, it was health reasons.

3.3 Makam's Contribution to Integration into Civilian Life

We focused on three areas: employment, dependence on income and disability benefits, establishing a family and family stability.

We expected the results for Makam recruits to be in the middle, between the other two groups: not as good as those for their age group in the general Jewish population, and better than those for young people who had not served in the army (the second group).

Men

- **Employment:** The employment rate of discharged Makam soldiers was somewhat higher than that of the general Jewish population. While income from work was lower, average wages were above the minimum and increased with age. Moreover, their employment rate and income level were higher than those for the group that had not served in the army.
- **Income and disability benefits:** While there was more dependence on income benefits among Makam participants than the general Jewish population, it was not a chronic situation. Only a small percentage received income benefits in 2012. Discharged Makam participants were less dependent on income benefits than the group that had not served.

Rates of recipients of a disability benefit were similar to those of the general Jewish population.

⁴ Both soldiers who dropped out of the program and who completed it successfully.

- Establishing a family and family stability: The family situation of Makam discharges was similar to that of the general Jewish population. However, their divorce rate was higher.

A higher percentage of the Makam men got married and had children than did the group that had not served. Both groups showed a similar divorce rate, indicating greater family stability among the discharged Makam men.

Women

- Employment: The employment rate of the discharged Makam women was similar to that of the general population of Jewish women. Income from work was lower, and average wages were close to minimum without really increasing over time. Discharged Makam women had a higher employment rate and income level than the group that had not served in the IDF, advantages that were smaller than among the men.
- Income and disability benefits: The receipt of income benefits was more prevalent among discharged Makam women than the general population of Jewish women. However, as with the men, this did not seem to be a chronic situation; in 2012, only a small percentage of the women in Makam received income benefits. Discharged Makam women were less dependent on welfare than the group that had not served.

Disability rates were similar to those of the general population of Jewish women.

- Establishing a family and family stability: As a whole, the family situation of discharged Makam women was less stable than that of the general Jewish population, and more stable than that of the group that had not served.

These findings indicate that despite their characteristics of risk, the majority of Makam recruits completed their IDF service and successfully integrated into normative adult life. We also saw significant improvement over time on most of the measures examined in our study. The employment rate of Makam discharges was higher than that of the general Jewish population but they were somewhat more dependent on income benefits, and their family stability was lower. Their most meaningful disadvantage was their income from work. As expected, a meaningful advantage was found in their favor relative to the group that had not served in the army.

In conclusion, in the Makam program no experiment was conducted that could allow for a precise evaluation of impact. Nonetheless, there is evidence of its contribution to the participants' higher employment rate and, perhaps also, to their diminished dependency on income benefits and to greater family stability.

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