

## Demographics

There are an estimated 4.5m+ people in the UK Armed Forces community. **About 2m of these are veterans**

The veteran population has a much older age profile than the population as a whole. In England, Wales, & Scotland, almost a third of veterans are over 80. **Nearly half of all men aged over 80 are veterans**

In England and Wales, nearly half of all spouses/partners living with veterans are aged over 65

Nearly half of Other Ranks leaving the armed forces are aged under 30 when they leave

The veteran and serving population are **86%+ male**

**21.1% of veterans under 40** in England, Wales, & Scotland are female

There are **272k female veterans** in England, Wales & Scotland

Around **90%** of spouses/partners of serving personnel and veterans in England and Wales are female

Age

Ethnicity

There are **90k ethnic minority** veterans in England, Wales, & Scotland

More than **1 in 20 (7,520)** Regular serving personnel had a non-UK nationality and **15% of spouses/partners** of serving personnel report non-UK nationality.

More than **115k veterans (5.7%)** were born outside of the UK. Over **96%** of veterans and their spouses/ partners in England & Wales are white, as are **91%** of their children

Sexual orientation

**6,195 (0.3%) veterans** in England & Wales described their gender identity as different from sex registered at birth

Proportionally more female veterans identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual than male veterans – 11,225 (4.2%) of women, and 17,360 (1%) of men veterans

Gender

**28,585 (1.5%) veterans** in England and Wales, reported a sexual orientation of LGB/other

### Regulars & Reserves

Percentage of the population aged 16 years and over who had previously served in the UK Armed Forces. England, Wales, and regions of England (2021), and Scotland (2022)



Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021  
National Records for Scotland – Census 2022

## Beneficiary data

Of grant applicants and recipients  
**Age**

Over  $\frac{3}{4}$  were aged under 65.

**Gender**

Around  $\frac{1}{4}$  were female.

## Need

General health & disability

**594,354 (32%) veterans** were disabled in England & Wales compared to **30%** of the general population (adjusted). **43%** of veterans in Scotland were disabled

**Veterans appear to face increased risk of:**

- Musculo-skeletal difficulties, and hearing impairment
- Hazardous levels of alcohol use, and common mental disorders (anxiety & depression) (this also appears to be the case for spouses/partners of serving personnel and veterans)

**Among spouses or partners who lived with a veteran in England & Wales:**

**26.1%** were disabled

**8.1%** reported bad or very bad health

**11.4%** of children or stepchildren (of any age) who lived with a veteran were disabled. This includes nearly 50,000 children & young people aged under 25

Housing, employment & education

Just under half (47%) of serving personnel, 59% of serving families, and 73% of veterans (in England, Wales, & Scotland) own their own homes

26,500 veterans live in care homes in England & Wales. In Scotland, 2,399 veterans live in care homes, but whether they live there as residents, staff, or family is indeterminable

**Over 755k** working age veterans (in England, Wales & Scotland) are employed, and over 30k working age veterans are unemployed

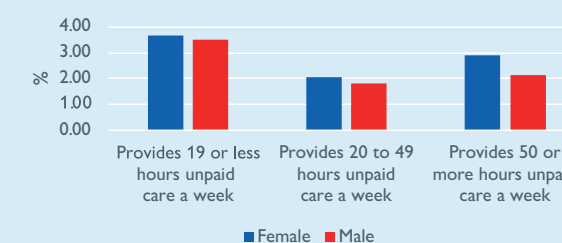
**Over 8 in 10 spouse/partners** of serving personnel work, but only just over half work full-time

Unpaid care & family

**11.6%** of veterans in England & Wales provide unpaid care, compared with 10.6% of non-veterans. Adjusted figures are not available for Scotland, where 14.1% of veterans provide unpaid care

Among spouses or partners **18.9%** provided unpaid care and **8%** of children/step-children (of any age) provided unpaid care

Children and step-children providing unpaid care by gender (England & Wales)



**MoD continuous attitude surveys show:**

- Impact on family life is the top reason for serving personnel leaving their job
- More than **1 in 5** are dissatisfied with family welfare support

Criminal justice

Of **66k** people in prisons in England & Wales, **4.9%** were veterans. This proportion was higher in Wales alone (6.3%), as Wales contains one of the UK's largest men's prisons.

### Domestic Violence & Abuse

More than **1 in 10** current & former serving personnel (in the KCMHR cohort study) - male and female - report perpetrating & experiencing intimate partner violence and abuse (IPVA), higher than in the wider population.

### Sexual Harassment

As reported in AFCAS 2024, 13% of all female serving personnel report being subject to sexual harassment in a Service environment; for male personnel, this figure is less than 1%

## Needs Analysis

RBL's 'needs analysis' is a project designed to help inform future strategy, policy, and service delivery, by drawing together for the first time the best picture possible from quantitative data of the profile and needs of the whole Armed Forces community – serving personnel, veterans, and families.

2025

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## Current and future needs / gaps

Data about needs in the UK AFC suggests there are gaps around:

- **Physical health and care:** oldest age and specific health conditions groups
- **Financial support & cost of living:** affecting the AFC at least as much as the wider population
- **Families,** children & young people's voice, bereaved
- **Social mobility** & long-term outcome tracking
- **Minority groups'** experiences
- **Criminal justice,** especially prevention
- **Homelessness**
- **Impact evaluation**

In general, families of veterans appear to be less well served than serving personnel and veterans themselves.

### Gaps in understanding

The Campaigns, Policy & Research team at RBL are working with colleagues and the sector to fill gaps in understanding and data, including:

**Research:** Hearing Impairment study with University of Chester, KCMHR LGBTQ+ PhD support and cohort study analysis, Evaluation of Recovery services & the Care Home Veteran Friendly Framework, seeking funding for priority projects.

**External data:** OVA Veterans' Survey analysis plans, ONS Census analysis, future Census & population estimates across UK, Cobseo data group & 'Ask the question': public services, national studies & surveys.