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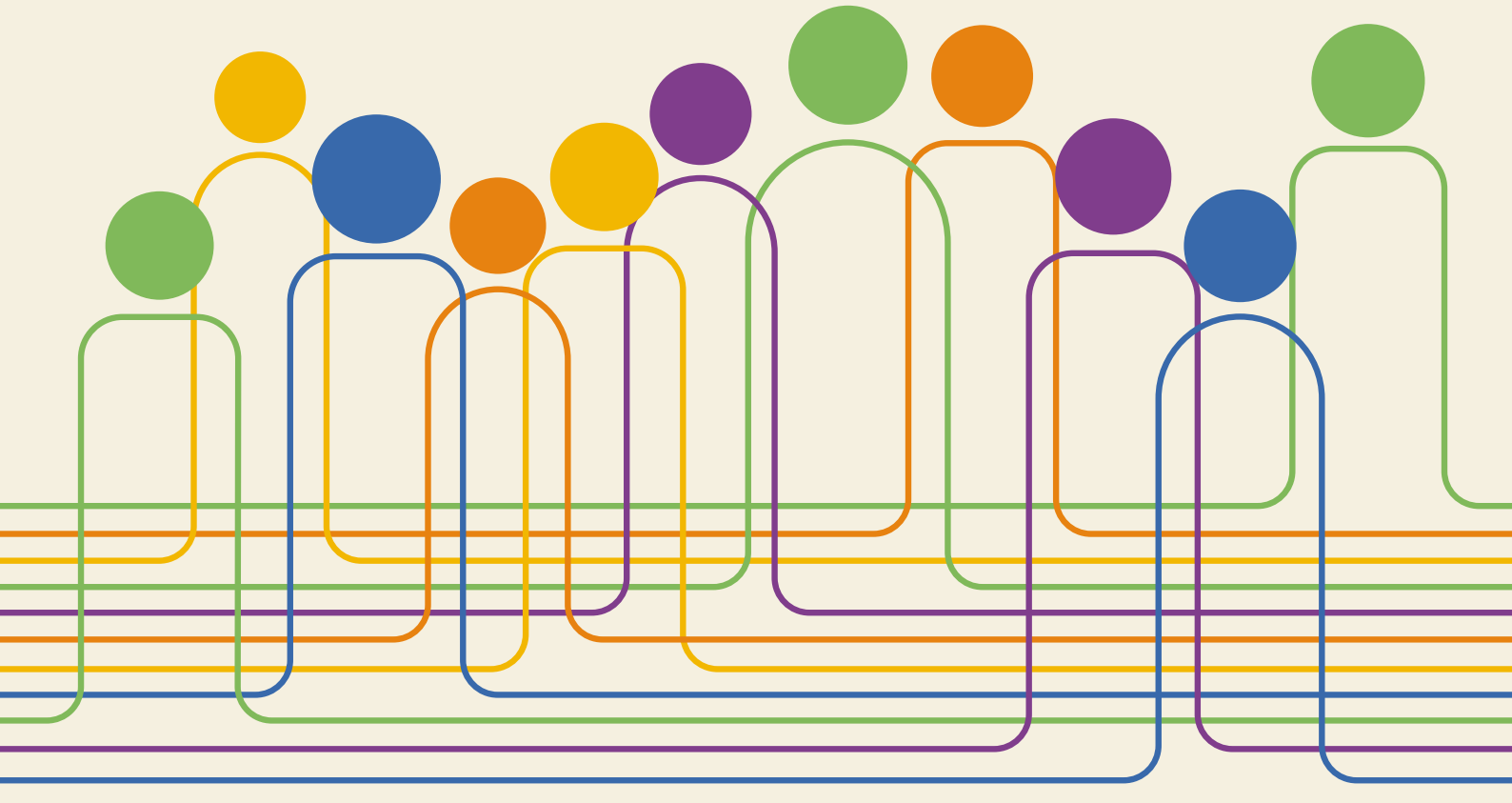
Forecasting the size and demographics of the UK Armed Forces community

Catherine Galley and Linda Slapakova



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ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

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Preface

This report presents findings from research estimating the current and projected size and demographics of different subgroups within the Armed Forces community in England, Wales and Scotland. This research, commissioned by the Royal British Legion (RBL), is part of a wider research programme from RAND Europe that is focused on forecasting the size, demographic characteristics and support needs of the Armed Forces community. We would like to thank the RBL for funding this work and to our quality assurance reviewers, Dr Mary Keeling and Dr Andrew Gibson, for their insightful feedback on this report.

RAND Europe is a not-for-profit research institution that helps improve policy and decision making through objective research and analysis. RAND researches multiple policy areas, including military personnel, ex-service personnel and military families.

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Abbreviations

AFC	Armed Forces community
AFCAS	Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey
APS	Annual Population Survey
FAMCAS	Families Continuous Attitude Survey
FOI	Freedom of Information
FTRS	Full-Time Reserve Service
JPA	Joint Personnel Administration
LTR	Long-term relationship
MOD	Ministry of Defence
ONS	Office for National Statistics
RBL	Royal British Legion
RESCAS	Reserves Continuous Attitude Survey
SP	Service personnel
UK	United Kingdom

Foreword

In 2021/22, the national Census in Great Britain asked a question to identify veterans for the first time, following the successful 'Count Them In' campaign by the Royal British Legion (RBL). The data available as a result increased our understanding of the demographics and needs of veterans and their households in a way never previously possible.

In 2024, RBL commissioned RAND Europe to develop the UK Armed Forces sector's first detailed forecasts of the size and demographic profile of the Armed Forces Community (AFC) – including regular and reserve serving personnel, veterans, their families, and the bereaved – out to 2045. These forecasts use data from Census and Ministry of Defence sources to produce new insights about likely change over coming decades, which are essential to understand for planning of future support.

This work informed RBL's 10-year Strategy and provides evidence to ensure that wider policy, services, and support for the AFC remain fit for purpose in the context of an uncertain world, and rapidly changing demographics and needs.

This report sets out the most complete profile of size and demographics of the Armed Forces community ever produced. It demonstrates strikingly how the demographics of our community are changing. Recent decades have seen a rapid decline in the population of veterans and their spouses and partners in the oldest age groups, as the number of veterans alive from the conscription era decreases. When Census 2021/22 was carried out, there were over 2m veterans in Great Britain. We estimate this number had dropped to 1.7 million by 2025, and by 2045, it will stand at around 1.1 million.

This report also shows that as of 2025, around half of veterans were likely to be under the age of 65. The only age group of veterans where the population is likely to increase in coming decades, are those aged 16-29. The Armed Forces community's age profile looks unlike it has at any point in recent decades. It is already predominantly made up of people of working age.

The Armed Forces community is also becoming increasingly diverse. This report demonstrates that if trends continue, the number and proportion of female, Non-UK, and ethnic minority Regular personnel is likely to increase across all three Services. A growing proportion of veterans will also be female, and/or ethnic minorities. Like in wider society, we also expect to see shifts in family structures and relationships, such as growing numbers of people in our community living in long-term relationships rather than marriages, or non-nuclear families. This analysis seeks to quantify parts of the community who have not previously been 'counted', such as separated partners and children of serving personnel and veterans.

The shift towards a more intergenerational community with growing proportions of people of working age and from minority groups, will result in changing interests and needs. Issues like childcare, employment, and mental health throughout life, are likely to be as important as health and care needs in later life. The way people want to access services, how they identify, and how they want to connect

with others, is likely to look different than for previous generations. It is essential that those supporting the community recognise, represent, and respond to these changes.

The insights from this report are being used by RBL to informing planning for change in service design and delivery, and wider activities like influencing government policy, and engagement with the community. It is our hope and intention that the findings from this research will also be of use across the Armed Forces sector and in wider planning for public policy and services, ensuring the needs of the whole Armed Forces community are understood and met effectively in coming years.

Ann Griffiths
Head of Policy and Research, Royal British Legion

1. Introduction

The UK Armed Forces community (AFC) represents a sizeable and diverse population of people who are connected to the UK Armed Forces either through their own service or the service of a family member.[1] The size and demographic characteristics of this community have significantly evolved due to changing defence requirements and demographic and social trends. For example, an increasing emphasis on diversity and inclusion within the Armed Forces has meant that the AFC is increasingly diverse and heterogeneous with respect to both gender and ethnicity.

Looking out to 2045, it is expected that the size and demographics of the AFC will continue evolving. As Second World War and National Service generations age and die, the AFC will become increasingly smaller, younger and more diverse. Broader societal changes, such as increases in rates of cohabitation and non-nuclear family structures, are also seen

1 The Armed Forces community as defined in the Armed Forces Covenant comprises Regular and Reserve Armed Forces personnel, veterans, families of Regular personnel, Reservists and veterans, and the bereaved.

as significant drivers of change within the community. Together, the shifting size and demographics of the AFC may significantly change requirements for service provision and how the AFC can be best supported when in need. For example, a decreasing number of older veterans may reduce the need for mobility and age-related support, while an increase in younger veterans may lead to greater demand for employment and childcare support.

There is currently limited understanding of how the impact of these anticipated trends will materialise in relation to the overall size of the AFC and its different demographic groups. To support the development of future strategies and plans for service provision, service providers across the Armed Forces charities sector require a more exact assessment of the current and likely future size and demographic make-up of the AFC.

The Royal British Legion (RBL) commissioned RAND Europe to estimate the size and demographic profile of the AFC and forecast how its composition is likely to change to 2045. This report is the first in a series of short reports summarising key findings from a broader research programme developing projections of various communities within the AFC.

Chapter 2 describes the methodology used to develop the forecasts. Results are reported in **Chapter 3** (Regular AFC), **Chapter 4** (Reserve AFC) and **Chapter 5** (veteran community). The findings presented throughout are summarised in **Chapter 6** (Conclusion) and additional detail on the methodology and more detailed forecasting results are presented in the Annexes.

2. Methodology

In this report, we provide forecasts of how the AFC is likely to change out to 2045, if historical trends continue. These projections use RAND Europe's two-stage population projections methodology, originally developed for the RAF Benevolent Fund and Greenwich Hospital as part of our 'Meeting the Needs' project.[2] Accordingly, the data, methods and limitations described here are similar to those covered in previous reports but reflect improvements such as the inclusion of Army service personnel (SP) and veterans, the use of 2025 data, and the integration of ethnicity and nationality into the forecasts. This chapter provides an overview of the methodology, with a more detailed description available in Annex A.

The population projections methodology was employed in two steps:

1. Forecasting how many SP will join and leave the Armed Forces each year, and how many veterans will die each year.
2. Adding each year's forecasts to the estimated number of people in each group for the year before.

For this analysis, we conducted calculations for each subgroup within the following categories:

- Service branch (Army, Royal Navy & Royal Marines, Royal Air Force)
- Gender (male and female)

2 Slapakova et al. (forthcoming); Slapakova et al. (2026).

- Rank (officers and other ranks)
- Age group (e.g. 16–29, 30–34, etc.)
- Ethnicity and nationality (e.g. white UK, white non-UK, ethnic minority UK, ethnic minority non-UK)
- Service category (Regulars, Volunteer Reserves, veterans)

In most cases, we present aggregated results throughout the report to identify patterns within our results and improve the readability of the findings. Annex B provides overview tables of all the forecasts discussed throughout the report.

For this research, we relied primarily on publicly available data published by the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the National Records of Scotland. However, in partnership with the RBL, we requested and obtained some additional non-public data to increase the granularity for this project. Table 2.1 provides an overview of all data sources used.

Table 2.1: Data sources for size/demographic analysis and modelling

Data	Source
Number of SP (Regular and Volunteer Reserve), including annual joiners and leavers (2013–2025) (1 April numbers)	Biannual Diversity Statistics[3], freedom of information (FOI) request of Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) data from MOD
Number of SP by gender, rank, age, ethnicity and nationality (2013–2025)	
Number of trained and total SP by service and service category (2013–2025)	Quarterly Personnel Statistics[4]
Number of entrants to the Volunteer Reserves with previous service (2023–2024)	
Count of personnel by entitlement status and age; count of personnel by entitlement status, service, rank and gender; count of personnel by entitlement status, ethnicity and nationality	Freedom of Information (FOI) request of JPA data from MOD
Count of personnel by entitlement status, age and whether children declared	
Count of children by entitlement status and age	
Percentage of personnel by relationship status (2013–2025)	Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS),[5] Reserves Continuous Attitude Survey (RESCAS)[6]
Percentage of personnel with children, including number of children (2013–2025)	
Number of veterans (2014–2017, 2021 (England and Wales), 2022 (Scotland))	England and Wales Census[7], Scotland Census[8], Annual Population Survey (APS)[9]

3 Ministry of Defence (2025a).
4 Ministry of Defence (2024).
5 Ministry of Defence. (2025c).
6 Ministry of Defence (2025b).
7 Office for National Statistics (2023).
8 Scottish Government (2024).
9 Ministry of Defence (2017).

Data	Source
Number of veterans by gender, age, ethnicity and marital status (2014–2017, 2021 in England and Wales)	England and Wales Census, APS, Scotland Census
Service and rank of veterans (2022)	Veterans' Survey[10]
Number of partners and children/stepchildren living with an Armed Forces veteran (2021)	England and Wales Census Commissioned Tables Team
Target for the number of trained strength personnel	UK defence personnel statistics[11]
Mortality rate	Deaths registered in England and Wales[12]

Step 1: Forecasting inflows and outflows

For the first step, we projected historical trends in the number of SP joining the Armed Forces (inflow) and the rate of SP leaving the military and veterans dying (outflow rates) for each group.[13] For these forecasts we use inflow numbers, as the number of individuals joining the Armed Forces is less likely to depend on the total number of individuals already in each category, and we use outflow rates as the number of people leaving is likely related to the number of people in each category.

As there is limited historical data (13 years), and we are forecasting 20 years into the future, in some cases our modelling exaggerated historical trends. To address this, we applied bounds to the inflow numbers and outflow rates to remain within 90 per cent of historical values. This assumes that there will be some self-correction if trends continue (i.e. the Armed Forces will use policy levers and incentives to increase recruitment or retention in some groups and reduce recruitment or retention in other groups if inflow and retention do not align with defence requirements).

Step 2: Stocks-and-flows modelling

In the second step, we applied a comprehensive 'stocks-and-flows' model to estimate the number of individuals in each category for each year to 2045.[14] This model integrated projected inflow and outflow rates from Step 1 with data on the current number of individuals in each group. The stocks-and-flows approach simulates how demographic and service group compositions change over time, including transitions between categories, such as from serving personnel to veteran status.

Figure 2.1 demonstrates how individuals move within the model. For each year, we calculated the number of people moving between each stage (Regulars, Volunteer Reserves and veterans) and then estimated the number of people entering each group.

10 Knipe & Hill (2023a).

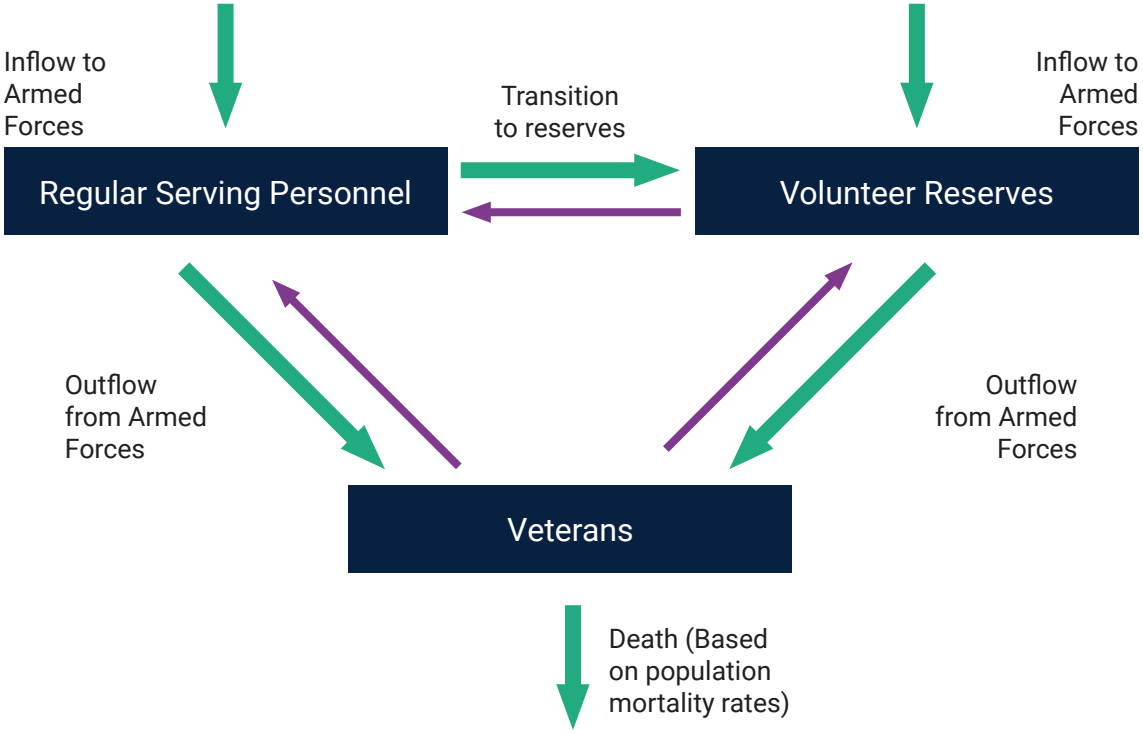
11 As reported in Kirk-Wade (2025)

12 Office for National Statistics (2024).

13 These groups refer to the subgroups above. In this example, a group may be 'Female Army other ranks Regular personnel aged 16–29'.

14 In this 'stocks-and-flows' model, the 'stocks' represent the number of Regular SP, Volunteer Reservists and veterans (the boxes in Figure 1) and the 'flows' represent the movement of individuals between groups (the arrows in Figure 2.1). The purple arrows represent rare pathways (e.g. moving from being a veteran to a Regular SP) that we did not have sufficient information to include in the model.

Figure 2.1: 'Stocks-and-flows' diagram



Step 3: Forecasting partners of SP and veterans

To estimate the number of partners of SP and veterans, we used regression analysis to project the number of SP and veterans in each marital category and then used these to calculate the percentage in each relationship status for each group. We then multiplied these percentages by our forecast of the number of SP and veterans out to 2045 to estimate the number of people in each category out to 2045. This allowed us to include changes to marital status in forecasts without changing the overall forecasts for the number of SP and veterans.

For SP, we used two sources for relationship status: JPA and AFCAS/RESCAS. With RBL, we jointly requested data from the JPA administrative database on the number of personnel by relationship status, service and demographic characteristics from 2013 to 2024. As JPA only contains entitlement status, which does not necessarily correspond to an individual's relationship status, we have 'interpreted' these as follows throughout the report:

- Civil partnership & married or registered civil partnership: 'married to a civilian'
- Married or in a registered civil partnership to a service person: 'married to an SP'
- Married or in a registered civil partnership to a civil servant or individual within recognised welfare: 'married to a civilian'
- Prime carer and provider for child: 'single parent'
- Separated providing support as result of court order: 'separated'

- Separated providing voluntary support: 'separated'
- All other members of Armed Forces: 'single'
- No value: not included in our analysis.[15]

These interpretations of the JPA entitlement status are designed to make the language throughout the report more accessible and easier to follow. However, this means there may be some over-simplifications (although we try to add explanations throughout the analysis). In particular, 'single' counts likely contain a substantial number of SP in a long-term relationship (LTR), as couples in LTRs or co-habiting couples have different entitlements to married couples.

As JPA contains limited information on SP's relationship status, we also used AFCAS relationship status data. AFCAS, while a widely used official statistic, has a relatively low response rate and assumes missing responses are random, which may not hold if non-response is correlated with specific factors. Furthermore, AFCAS results are reported only by service and rank, limiting our ability to capture patterns by age and gender. While AFCAS data has limitations, it supports wider estimation of partner numbers, not merely spouses. RESCAS shares similar strengths and limitations for estimating partners in the Reserves community.

For veterans, we used repeated-cross-sectional data from the ONS to estimate the number of veterans with a partner.[16] While the census does contain information on the number of veterans living with a partner, this single data point does not capture trends in marriage and cohabitation over time, and previous data from the APS only contains data on spouses, not cohabiting partners. While this approach allows for trends such as increasing cohabitation, it does not capture differences between military and civilian communities, such as the slightly higher prevalence of divorce among veterans.

Forecasting former partners

We also estimated and forecasted the number of former partners (e.g. individuals separated or divorced from an SP or veteran).

For SP, we forecasted the percentage of individuals reporting their relationship status as separated or divorced in AFCAS/RESCAS, or as 'separated and providing support', 'separated and providing voluntary support', or as 'primary carer or provider for a child' in JPA. This provides an estimate for the number of former partners, but it may overestimate in cases where: a) both individuals in a relationship were serving personnel; or b) an individual has had relationships with multiple serving personnel. Conversely, this method may undercount cases where an SP has entered a new relationship, thus their former partner is not counted as they are no longer registered as separated or divorced.

For veterans, we used two data sources: 1) projecting the number of veterans reporting separation or divorce in APS and census data, using this to estimate the percentage of veterans separated and divorced and applying this to our forecasts of the number of veterans; and 2) using estimates of the number of veterans 'previously married' and either living alone or cohabiting. As the second category includes widowed individuals, we subtracted our estimates for veterans bereaved of a partner from these calculations,[17] thus providing an estimate of

15 This is fewer than 100 Regular SP and 250 Volunteer Reservists per year.

16 Sharfman & Cobb (2024).

17 For further information on these estimates, see Galley & Slapakova (2026).

those whose relationship has broken down. While this covers more cases than simply counting divorced and separated veterans, it may (similarly to SP) undercount cases where the veteran has remarried, as well as partners in a serious relationship with a veteran but who never married (but may be entitled to support due to shared custody of a child).

Step 4: Forecasting children

To forecast the number of children of SP, we used data from JPA and AFCAS/RESCAS. We first forecast the number of parents and non-parents to forecast the proportion of SP who are parents in each year. We then forecast the average number of children per parent for each year. We multiplied our forecasts for the total number of SP by the proportion who are parents by the average number of children per parent to forecast the total number of children in each year out to 2045.

As there have been some numerically small but proportionately large changes in the number of SP aged over 60, the percentage of those with a partner and the average number of children for each SP, we excluded these SP aged over 60 from our analysis to avoid the results on the total number of children within the Serving community being skewed by a small number of cases.

For veterans, we requested data from the ONS Commissioned Census Table team on the number of children of veterans in the 2021 census. We used this to calculate the average number of children per veteran and multiplied this by the forecast number of veterans. For this research, we estimated the number of children aged 18 and under and the number of children aged 19–24, as they can also be entitled to both RBL, wider charity, and statutory support under some circumstances. This analysis does not take into account potential changes in the number of children per veteran in each status, as there is no repeated-cross-sectional data we can use for this estimate.

Limitations

This study is subject to several methodological limitations (see Annex A for a detailed list):

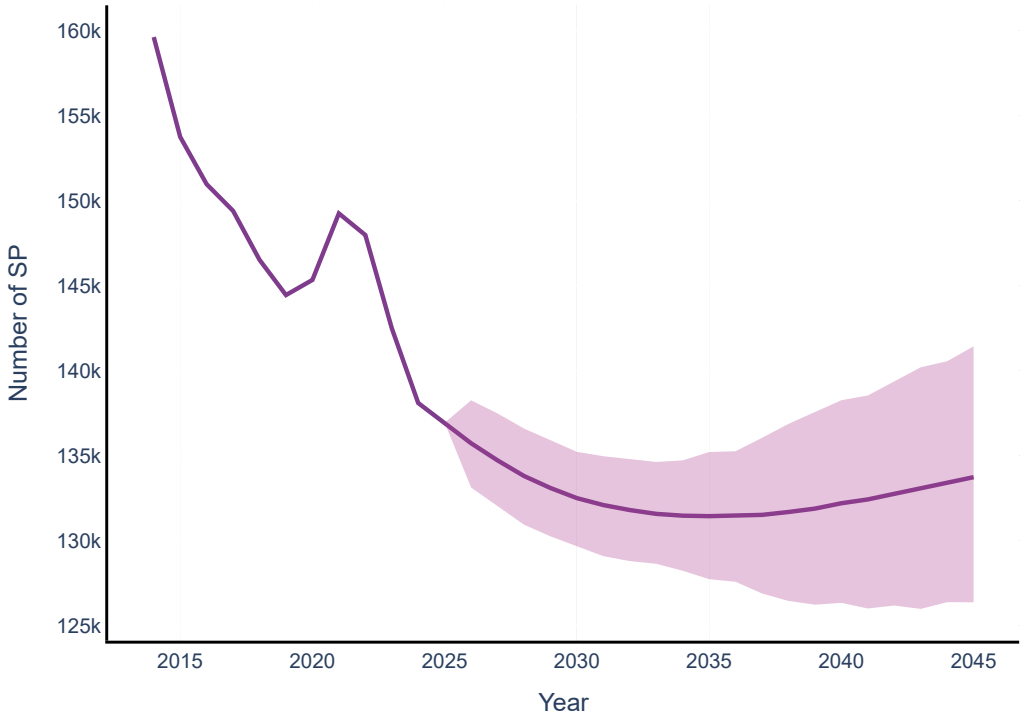
- **Data coverage:** Certain cohorts (particularly Reservists serving on Full-Time Reserve Service (FTRS) contracts and veterans living in Northern Ireland) could not be included due to insufficient data. As there is very limited data on the veteran community, we assume that the distribution of former SP across services has remained consistent with the 2022 Veterans' Survey and that there are no differences between former SP from different services in their distribution by age, gender, marital status, number of children or location.
- **Changing definitions:** This research relies on definitions of each population within the AFC as of September 2025. Any future changes to definitions of personnel (Regulars and Reserves), veterans or partners are not accounted for in the forecasts. Veterans are defined as individuals receiving at least one day's pay for service in the UK Armed Forces.
- **Double counting:** These forecasts include potential double counting where an individual may feature in multiple groups (e.g. a former partner of a serving person who is now married to a veteran; a child aged 19–24 of a veteran who is also a serving person). We have accounted for some double counting where individuals are in dual-serving couples (where both are serving or both are veterans), but there is likely more double counting within this analysis.
- **Survey biases:** The analysis relies on administrative and survey data from various sources – AFCAS, RESCAS, Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS), Veterans' Survey, APS – that may be incomplete or unrepresentative. For

- example, FAMCAS includes only spouses and civil partners of Regular personnel, omitting other long-term partners and all partners of Volunteer Reserve personnel. AFCAS and RESCAS data may introduce bias if non-response is systematically related to particular characteristics.
- **Unpredictable future:** All forecasts are subject to statistical uncertainty. While we attempt to represent this uncertainty through 95 per cent credible intervals in tables and graphs, actual future values may fall outside these bounds due to unforeseen changes in policy, recruitment or wider social trends. While the forecasts rely on historical trends, it is likely that Armed Forces policy would adapt if personnel numbers deviated substantially from operational requirements.

3. Regular Armed Forces community

The number of UK Armed Forces personnel has been declining since the Second World War, and this trend has continued in recent years, with the total number of Regular personnel decreasing from 160,000 in 2014 to 137,000 in 2025. This decrease in the total size of the Armed Forces follows from changes to military doctrine that included moving away from large, conventional forces, defence budget cuts, challenges in recruitment and retention, and focus on technological advancements over mass. As Figure 3.1 shows, statistical modelling based on historical trends suggests that the number of Regular UK Armed Forces personnel is likely to remain between 130,000 and 135,000 out to 2045, although there is substantial uncertainty around these forecasts. This uncertainty reflects the changing UK strategic context and evolving defence policy, priorities and planning, which are not captured in the forecasts. The 2025 Strategic Defence Review called for the reversal of the long-term decline in the size of the Regular force, proposing an uplift in the number of Regular personnel when funding allows. As such, while our population forecasting suggests the number of Regular personnel to remain around 135,000, changes to Armed Forces policy may result in increases in this number, in contrast to historical trends.

Figure 3.1: Forecast of the number of Regular personnel



The demographic characteristics of the Regular UK Armed Forces community are changing: the number of female personnel is likely to increase, as is the number of ethnic minority non-UK personnel (see Figures 3.2 and 3.3). Our population forecasts show that, if historical trends continue, there is likely to be an increase in the number of female personnel across all three services. This follows recent and ongoing efforts across defence to improve the representation of women in the Armed Forces.[18] Following historical trends, the forecast for all three services suggests that the number of non-UK personnel from an ethnic minority background may also increase. The recruitment of non-UK personnel has varied historically, with policies and practice (including deliberate recruitment caps) often changing depending on workforce requirements and domestic recruitment trends.[19] In contrast, the forecasts show that the overall number of UK personnel with an ethnic minority background is likely to decrease slightly. However, this is driven by decreases in the number of Army UK personnel with an ethnic minority background, while the number of UK personnel with an ethnic minority background in both the RAF and Royal Navy & Royal Marines is likely to increase slightly.

18 Ministry of Defence (2018).

19 Slapakova et al. (2023).

Figure 3.2: Forecast of the number of Regular personnel, by gender

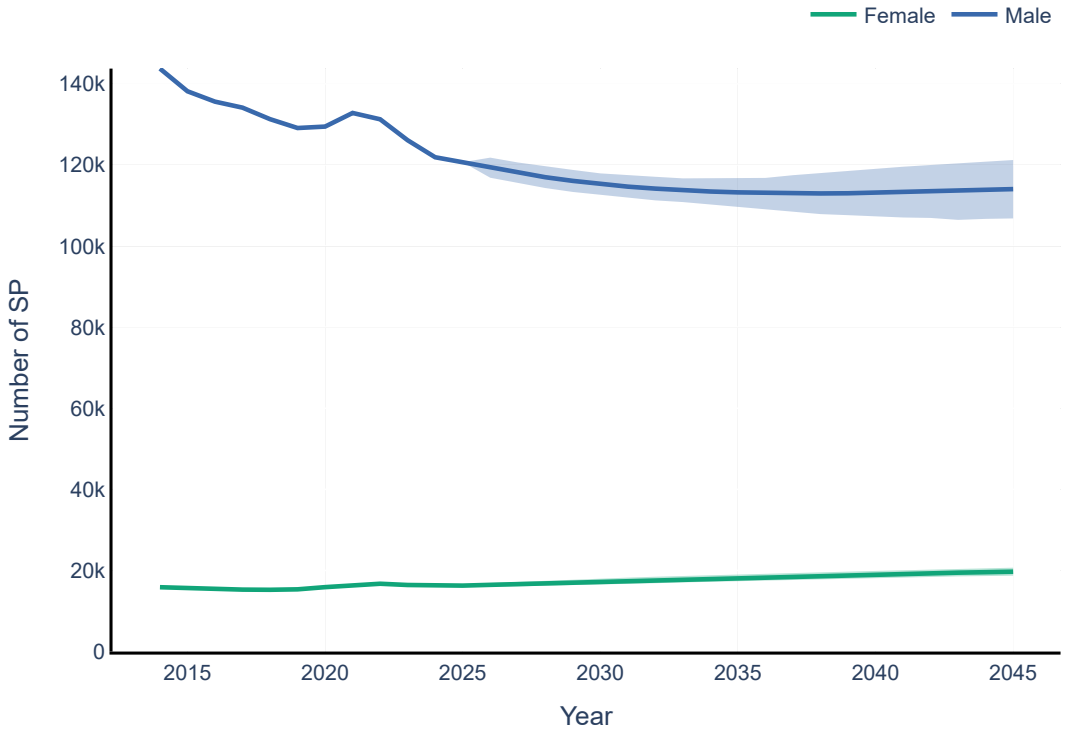
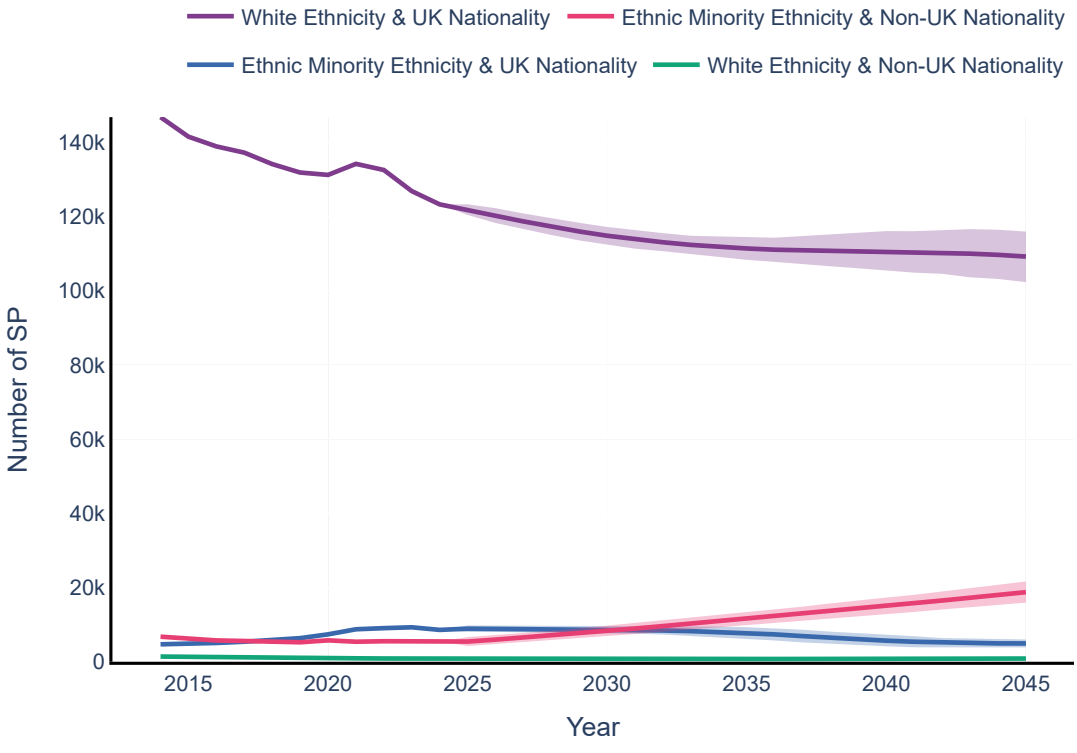
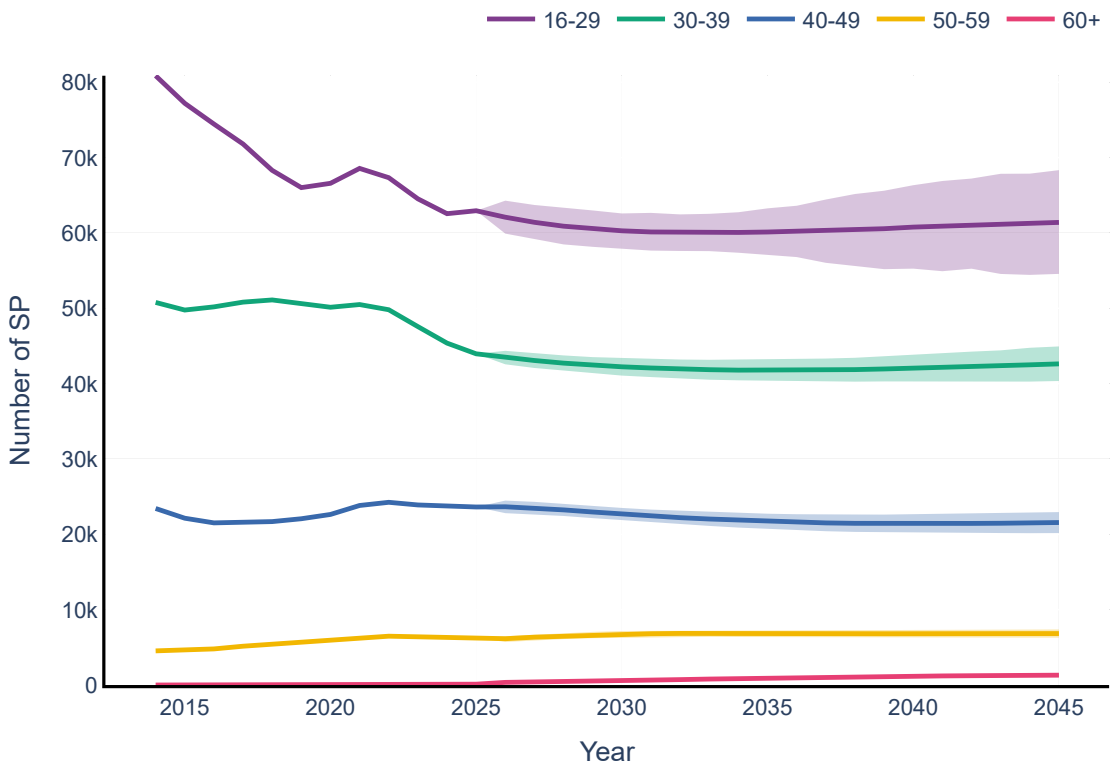


Figure 3.3: Forecast of the number of Regular personnel, by ethnicity and nationality



Our forecasts suggest that the age profile of the Regular UK Armed Forces is not likely to change substantially, as shown in Figure 3.4. However, the forecasts do suggest small decreases in the number of personnel aged between 35 and 49 years, as an increasing number of personnel within this age group view their Armed Forces service as one part of their career, and thus are likely to transition to civilian employment before turning 35–49 years old and serving a 'full career'.[20] In addition, the number of personnel aged over 60 may increase, following small historical increases in the number of personnel within this age group (from 0 SP prior to 2019 to 110 SP in 2025). Figure 3.4 shows that the number of Regular personnel aged 16–29 years has decreased substantially from 81,000 SP in 2014 to 63,000 SP in 2025, which reflects the declining inflow in this age group since 2015. While the forecast shows that this number is likely to stabilise (with substantial uncertainty reflecting the historical drawdown in SP), this number could increase if the Armed Forces enhance recruitment efforts to meet higher personnel targets.

Figure 3.4: Forecast of the number of Regular personnel, by age



20 Ministry of Defence (2023).

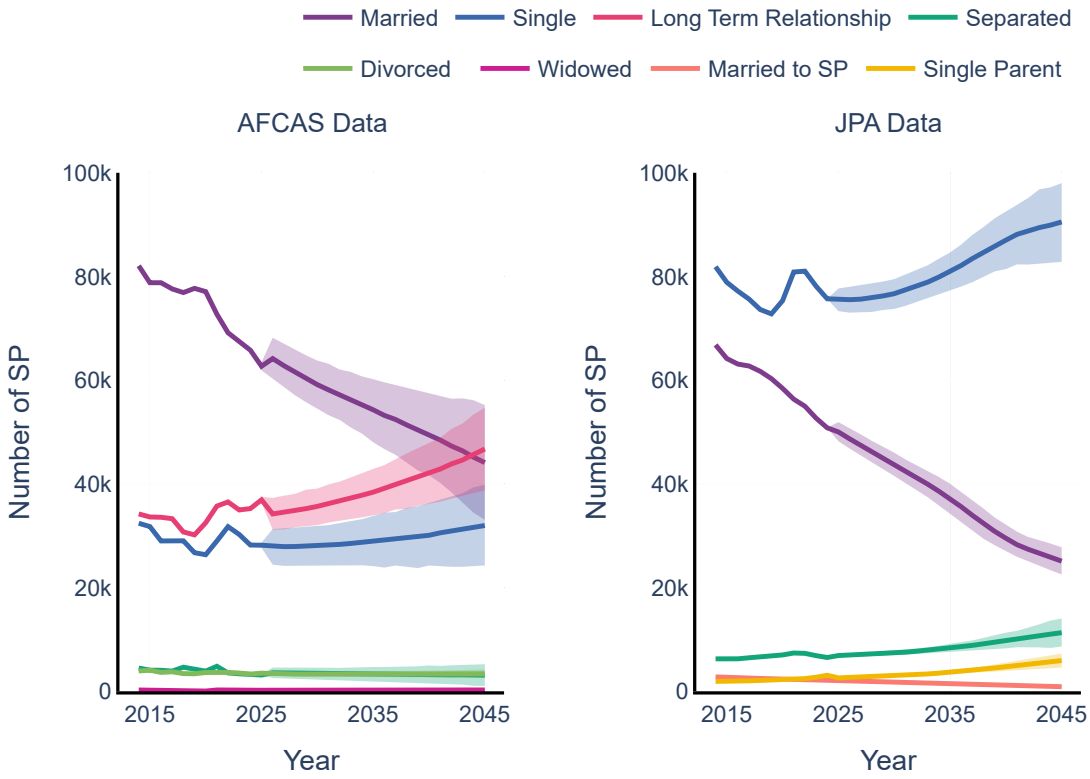
There were approximately 86,000 partners of Regular personnel and 8,000 former partners of Regular personnel in 2025, although estimates vary substantially depending on data source. Data from AFCAS captures a larger number of relationship types, but this data is not necessarily representative of the entire Armed Forces population. AFCAS data suggests that approximately 63,000 personnel are married, 37,000 are in a long-term relationship,[21] 28,000 are single, and 7,000 are separated or divorced. However, approximately 13,000 SP are in a relationship with another SP, suggesting that there are only 86,000 civilian partners of Regular SP.

Alternatively, administrative data from the JPA captures personnel's entitlement status, showing that just over 50,000 personnel report being married to a civilian, 2,000 report being married to another SP, almost 7,000 report being separated, and 3,000 report being the 'prime carer and provider for child' (likely also separated, but with primary caring responsibilities). The substantially higher estimate of single personnel using the JPA data likely reflects that this data does not capture most forms of long-term relationships, as these individuals are not entitled to married allowances.

While the number of partners in the AFC depends heavily on the number of personnel, our forecasting (see Figure 3.5) suggests that the number of married personnel, and thus spouses and civil partners, is likely to decrease out to 2045, while the number of personnel who are separated or prime carers and providers for a child is likely to increase. Data from AFCAS suggests that the decrease in married personnel will be offset by an increase in those in long-term relationships, suggesting that the overall number of partners is not likely to change substantially. Our forecasts estimate that by 2045, there will be between 25,000 and 38,000 civilian spouses of Regular SP and approximately 40,000 civilian (LTR) partners of SP. There will also likely be approximately 13,000 SP in a relationship with another SP. The forecasts suggest that there will also be between 6,000 and 18,000 former partners of Regular SP. However, these forecasts do not account for potential double counting, where a partner may be counted twice if they are both a 'former partner' of one SP and a current partner of a different SP.

21 As noted previously, this is not explicitly defined in AFCAS but likely denotes relationships over 12 months.

Figure 3.5: Forecast of the marital status of Regular personnel



We estimate that there were between 85,000 and 115,000 children[22] of Regular SP in 2025, with substantial uncertainty on how this could change out to 2045. As with partners of Regular SP, estimates vary substantially between JPA and AFCAS data. JPA data suggests that there are approximately 87,000 children of SP, mostly of married SP. JPA data suggests that there are approximately 59,000 children of SP married to a civilian, 1,700 children of SP married to another SP, 10,000 children of SP separated from their partner and providing support, 4,000 children of SP who are the primary carer and provider for a child ('single parent'), and 12,500 children of SP who are 'single'.[23] AFCAS provides an alternative estimate of 113,000 children of Regular SP, but these estimates do not account for changes in relationship status and age profiles since 2013 (and future changes to these profiles). Nevertheless, this higher estimate may reflect some children who are not counted in JPA data.

Examining JPA data shows that there has been a substantial shift in the age of SP parents since 2013, with those aged under 30 decreasing from 11,200 to 4,600 and those aged between 35 and 44 increasing. This likely reflects both changes in the composition of

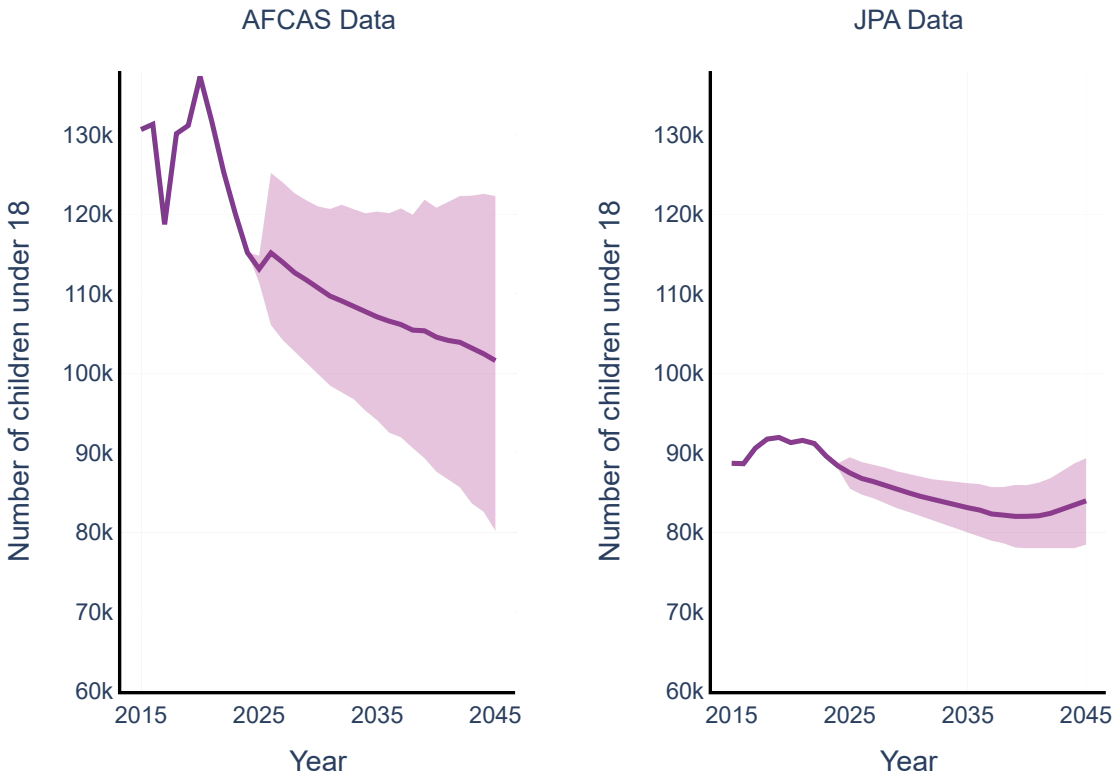
22 This estimate is based on data from AFCAS that asks respondents how many children they support financially. This includes children over 18 years old

23 This entitlement status is 'all other members of Armed Forces' and does not necessarily mean that these individuals are single and not in a relationship.

the Armed Forces (reduced numbers of SP aged between 16 and 29) as well as wider demographic shifts of individuals having children later in life.

Figure 3.6 shows how the number of children of Regulars may change out to 2045 if historical trends continue. Both estimates show that the number of children is not likely to change substantially but may decrease slightly, potentially reflecting the decreasing number of younger SP with children over the last ten years. Our forecasts suggest that there will likely be between 80,000 and 120,000 children of Regulars in 2045, if historical trends continue.

Figure 3.6: Forecast of the number of children of Regular personnel



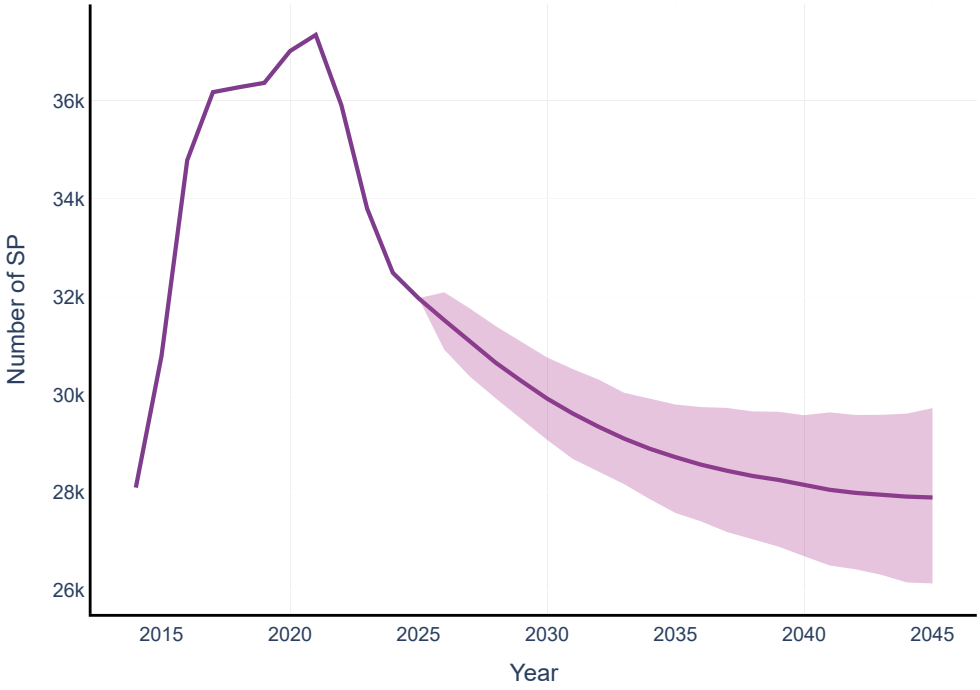
4. Reserve Armed Forces community

The number of Volunteer Reservists has fluctuated substantially since the introduction of the Future Reserves 2020 Programme in 2013, increasing from 25,000 in 2014 to 37,000 in 2021, then subsequently declining to fewer than 32,000. Figure 4.1 shows the forecast if this trend continues, illustrating the potential substantial decline in the size of the Volunteer Reserve force out to 2045 and reflecting the decline in the recruitment of younger, male and 'other ranks' personnel into the Reserves since 2021. This forecast differs substantially from the stated UK Armed Forces targets, including the Strategic Defence Review ambition to increase the size of the Active Reserve[24] by 20 per cent in the 2030s. The recent announcement by Chief of Defence People on the formal introduction of ZigZag Careers[25] and the expectation that the Armed Forces Bill 2026 will remove the distinction between Regulars and Reservists could impact the size of the Reserve Force (or equivalent part-time personnel) in the future.

24 The Active Reserve includes part-time Volunteer Reserves (included in this report) and former serving personnel serving on full time Reserve contracts and sponsored Reserves (not included in this report).

25 ZigZag Careers refers to the intention for Armed Forces personnel to be able to move more easily between the Regular force, the Reserve forces and non-military career options.

Figure 4.1: Forecast of the number of Volunteer Reservists



The demographic characteristics of the Volunteer Reserves community are likely to change. If historical trends continue, it is likely that there will be increases in the proportion of female Reservists (from 16 per cent to approximately 20 per cent), of Reservists aged over 60 and of ethnic minority UK Reservists. Figures 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 show the forecasts for these three categories. Figure 4.3 in particular shows the wide uncertainty in the number of Reservists aged 16–29, which reflects the substantial variation in the historical data for this age group. However, as noted above, these forecasts all reflect the substantial decline in recruitment from young, male, white UK and other ranks personnel since 2021, which could be reversed if the recruitment aims of the Strategic Defence Review's recommendation to increase the Active Reserve are met.

Figure 4.2: Forecast of number of Volunteer Reservist, by gender

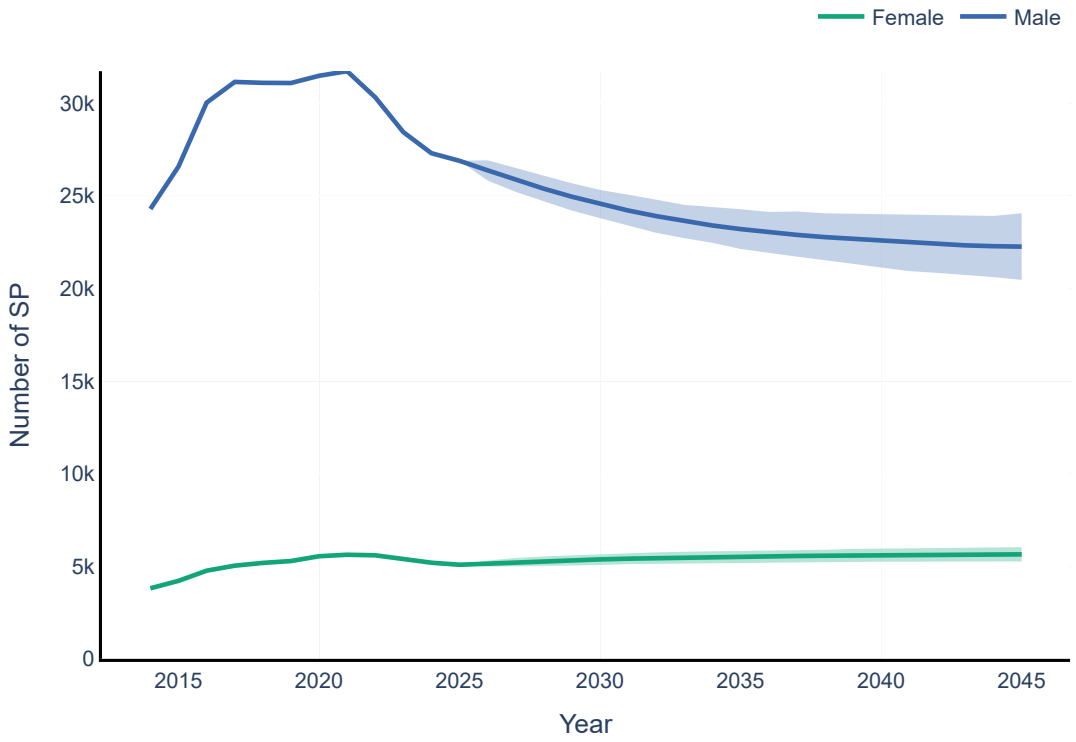


Figure 4.3: Forecast of number of Volunteer Reservists, by age

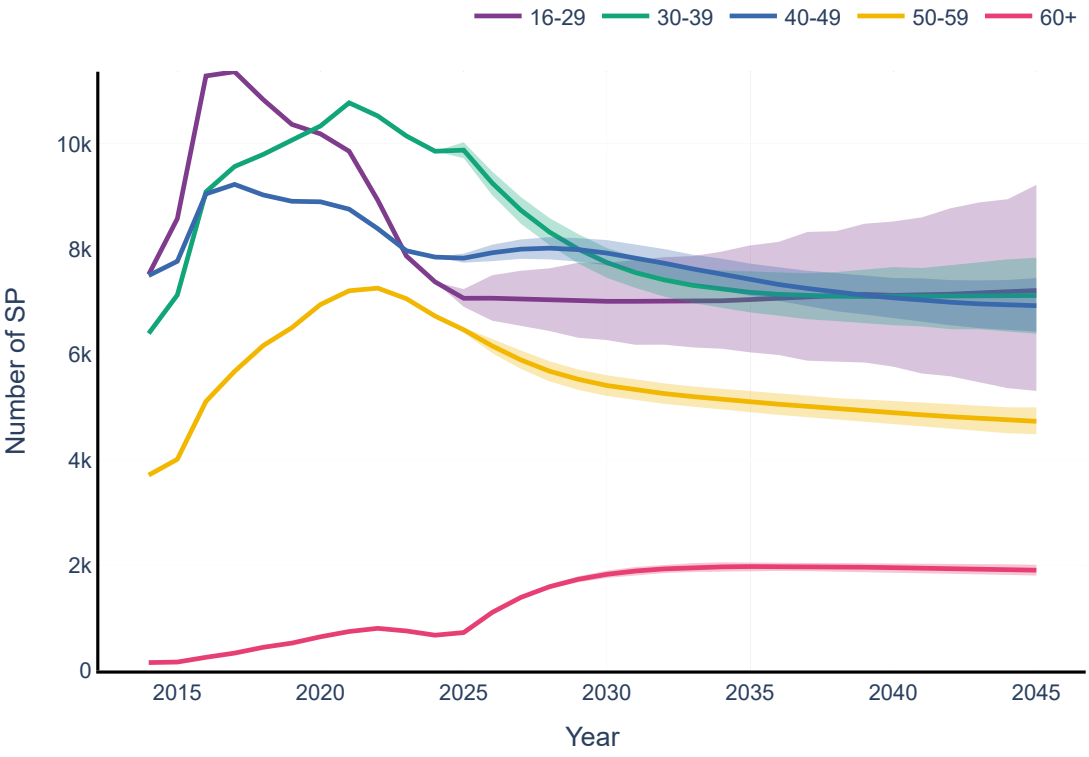
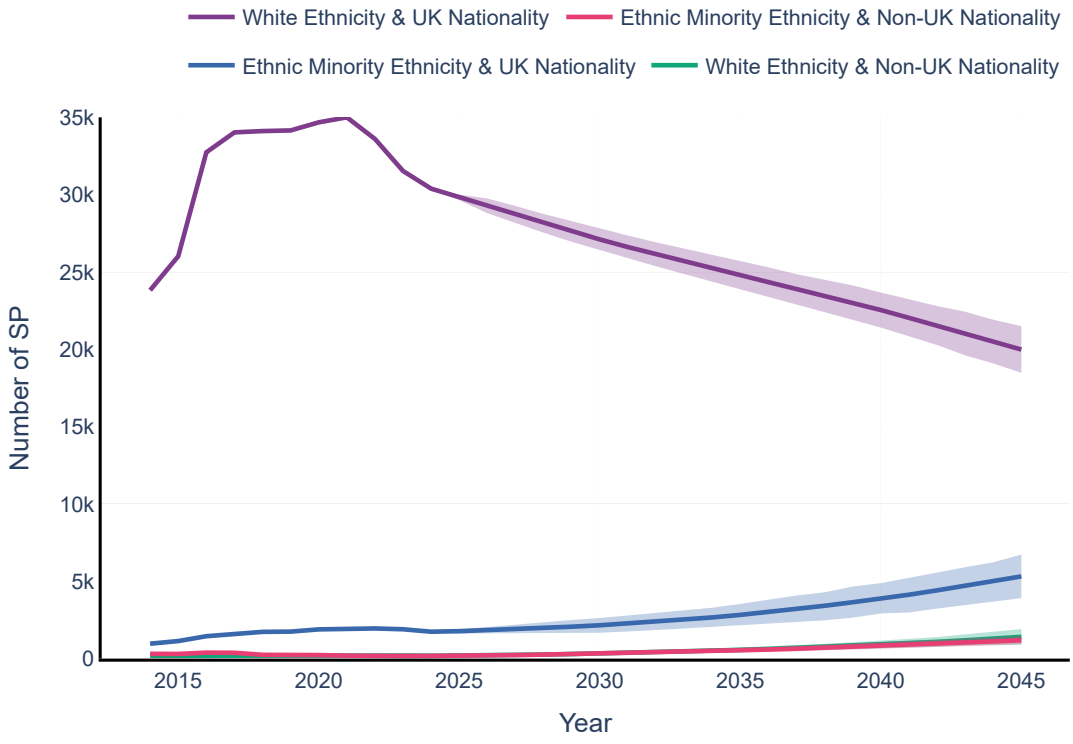


Figure 4.4: Forecast of number of Volunteer Reservists, by ethnicity and nationality

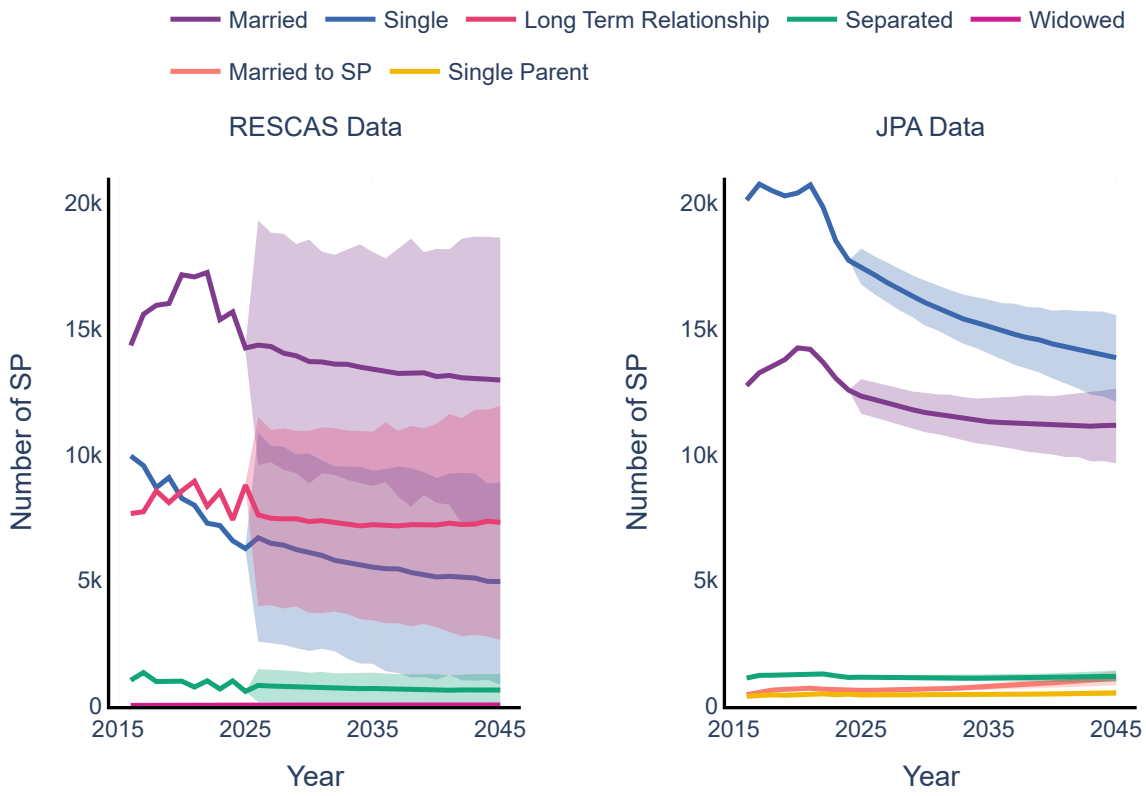


There were approximately 23,000 partners of Volunteer Reservists and 2,000 former partners of Volunteer Reservists in 2025, although estimates vary substantially depending on data. Data from RESCAS, which captures long-term relationships but is less likely to be representative, suggests that approximately 14,200 Reservists are married, 8,800 are in a long-term relationship, 6,300 are single and 2,400 are separated or divorced. However, administrative data from JPA shows that 12,300 Reservists are married to a civilian, 600 are married to another SP, 1,200 are separated and 500 are the 'prime carer and provider for child'.[26]

The future number of partners of Reservists depends heavily on the number of Reservists, which as Figure 4.1 above shows, is highly uncertain. Our forecasts suggest that the number of single personnel is likely to decrease, while the number of personnel who are married or in long-term relationships is likely to remain relatively consistent (Figure 4.5). This suggests that there will be approximately 11,000–13,000 spouses and civil partners in 2045 and approximately 7,000 partners in a long-term relationship with a Reservist (approximately 19,000 total partners). There will also likely be approximately 1,000–2,000 former partners of Reservists. However, if the Armed Forces does increase the size of the Active Reserve in line with the Strategic Defence Review, the number of partners could increase. As with the Regular SP estimates, these estimates for the number of partners of Reservists also include probable double counting due to dual-serving couples and instances where individuals are both a former and current partner of different Reservists.

26 In some cases, individuals do not update their status on JPA to correspond with life events, which may explain the lower proportion of individuals who report being married in JPA data compared with RESCAS. This is particularly likely if individuals who have joined the Reserves after leaving the Regulars do not update their status, as there are fewer entitlements available to Reservists. It is possible that RESCAS may also misrepresent the true proportion of individuals in relationships if individuals in relationships are more likely to complete the survey than individuals not in relationships, particularly given the association between relationship status, age and rank.

Figure 4.5: Forecast of the number of Volunteer Reservists, by relationship status/JPA entitlement

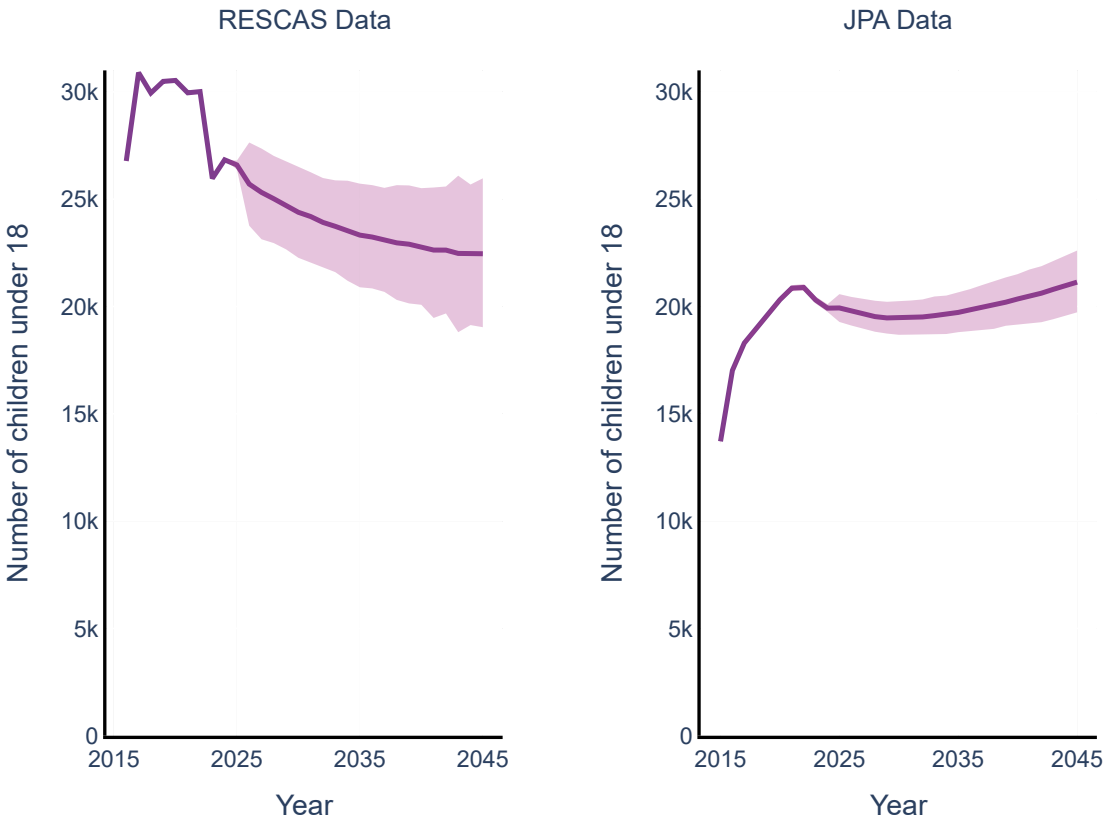


Our estimates indicate that there were between 20,000 and 27,000 children[27] of Reservists in 2025. While there is some uncertainty on how the number of children of Reservists will change out to 2045, our forecasts suggest that the number of children is likely to remain between 19,000 and 26,000, although this is sensitive to the number of Reservists (Figure 4.6). Since 2013, the percentage of Reservists with children has been increasing, from 24 per cent in 2013 to 34 per cent in 2024.[28] Numbers have particularly increased among Reservists aged over 40, reflecting the changing age composition of the Volunteer Reserves.

27 This estimate is based on data from RESCAS that asks respondents how many children they support financially. This includes children over 18 years old.

28 This percentage was calculated using data from JPA on the number of Reservists that declared children. Data from RESCAS suggests that the percentage of Reservists with children increased from 42 per cent to 44 per cent. It is thus possible that this increasing percentage reflects an increasing number of Reservists declaring children, rather than a true increase in the percentage of Reservists with children.

Figure 4.6: Forecast of the number of children of Volunteer Reserves



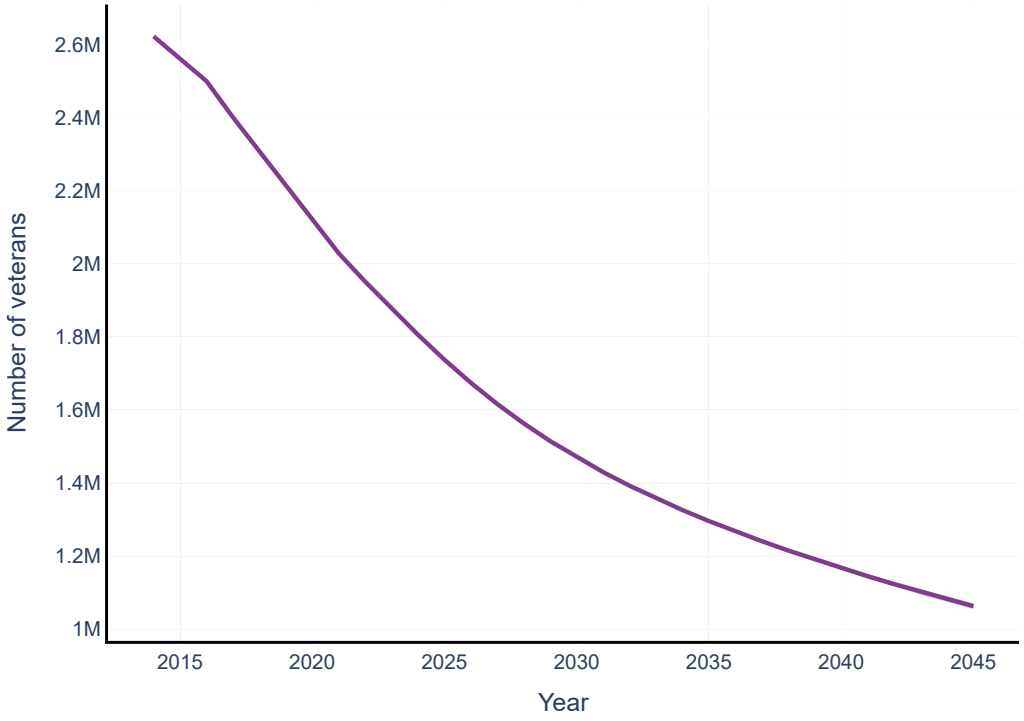
5. Veteran community

The number of veterans in Great Britain has declined significantly since 2014 and is expected to continue decreasing in the coming years. As shown in Figure 5.1, the veteran population has fallen from approximately 2.63 million in 2014 to 1.73 million in 2025 and is projected to decline to 1.06 million by 2045.[29] This trend is largely driven by the high mortality rate among veterans who served during the Second World War and National Service era, the youngest of whom are now over 80 years old. Ongoing changes within the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces, such as the adoption of a 'Whole Force' approach and the introduction of more flexible 'zig-zag careers', may also influence the future size and composition of the veteran community. In particular, an increase in recruitment from the Regulars to the Reserves would decrease the number of individuals becoming veterans or could change their support needs depending on their commitment type. Additionally, the potential recall of the Strategic Reserve[30] to rapidly scale up military capability could affect support provision for this group, even if it would not significantly affect the overall size of the veteran population.

29 The relatively small credible intervals on all the graphs in the section reflect the strength of historical trends and the relatively small uncertainty relative to the forecasts.

30 The Strategic Reserve is comprised of former Regulars who could be recalled into the Regular forces for expertise and surge capacity during a national crisis or war.

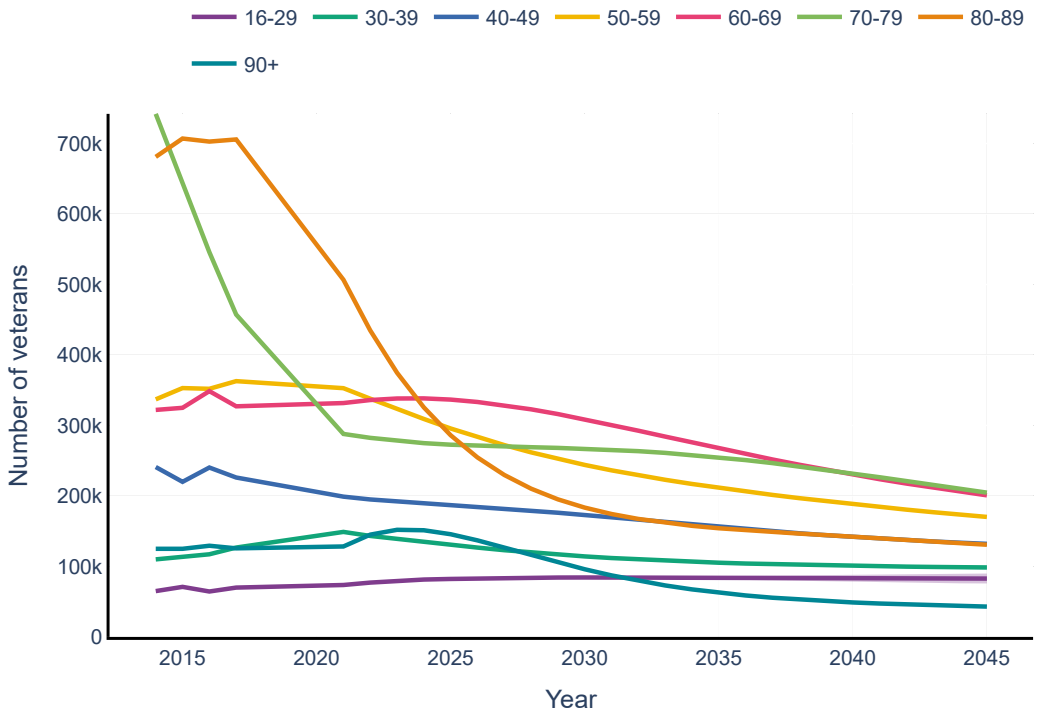
Figure 5.1: Forecast of the number of veterans



The decline in the number of veterans is most pronounced among older age groups, particularly those aged 80 to 89 years. However, the sharp decline observed since 2014 is not anticipated to continue at the same rate beyond 2030 (see Figure 5.2).[31] In contrast, the number of veterans under the age of 30 is projected to increase slightly by 2045. Out to 2045, **the balance of working age and retirement age veterans is likely to shift, from approximately 50 per cent of veterans being of working age in 2025 to approximately 55 per cent in 2045**. This likely reflects evolving patterns of military service, with more individuals joining the Armed Forces as an initial career step rather than as a lifelong vocation. Consequently, there may be a growing cohort of younger, working-age veterans who require different types of support, such as assistance with employment or childcare.

31 This is due to the fact that, in absolute terms, fewer veterans will die each year after most National Service veterans have passed away.

Figure 5.2: Forecast of the number of veterans, by age



The proportion of women in the veteran population is expected to rise by 2045 (from approximately 14 per cent to approximately 16 per cent of all veterans) (Figure 5.3).[32] This reflects the increasing gender diversity of the serving community, as well as a higher number of women among younger veterans (primarily working-age veterans). Similarly, our forecasts suggest that **the number of veterans from an ethnic minority background and with UK nationality is likely to increase,** from approximately 33,000 in 2025 to approximately 60,000 by 2045 (from approximately 2 per cent to 6 per cent of all veterans) (see Figure 5.4). Given the overall decrease in the size of the veteran community out to 2045, ethnic minority veterans could thus become a more substantial minority. Our forecasts also suggest a decrease in the number of non-UK veterans (of all ethnicities) (see Figure 5.4), but that their relative decrease may be smaller compared to veterans with white ethnicity and UK nationality, thus increasing the proportion of non-UK veterans within the veteran community. Together, these trends demonstrate the growing demographic diversity of the veteran population and the need for support providers to ensure that services are inclusive for all.

32 Sharp et al. (2025).

Figure 5.3: Forecast of the number of veterans, by gender

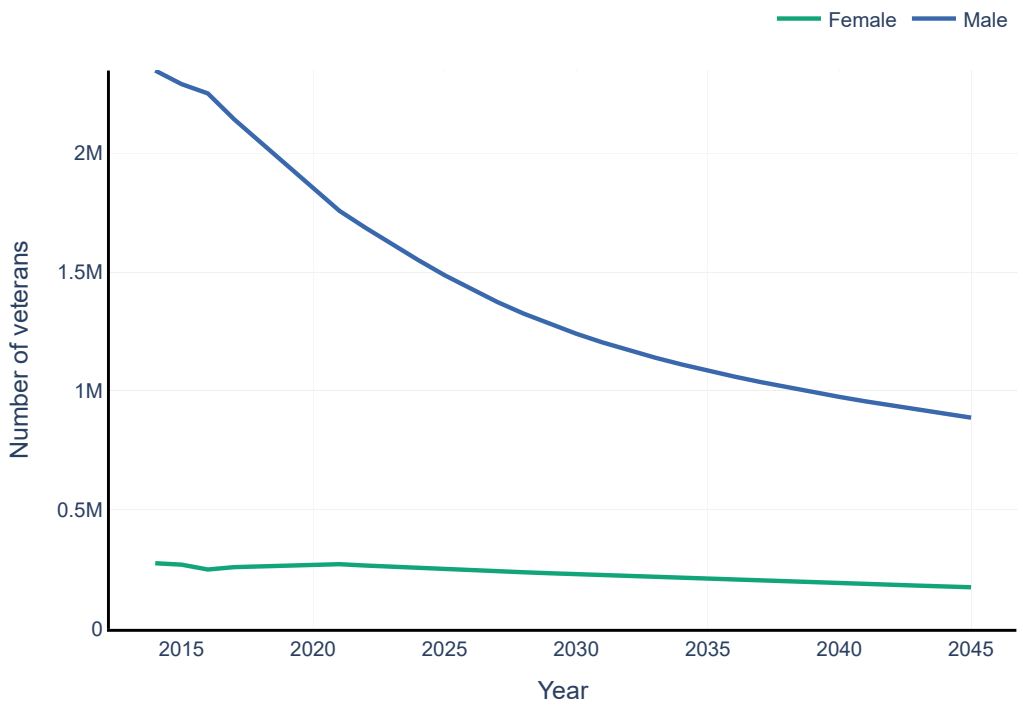


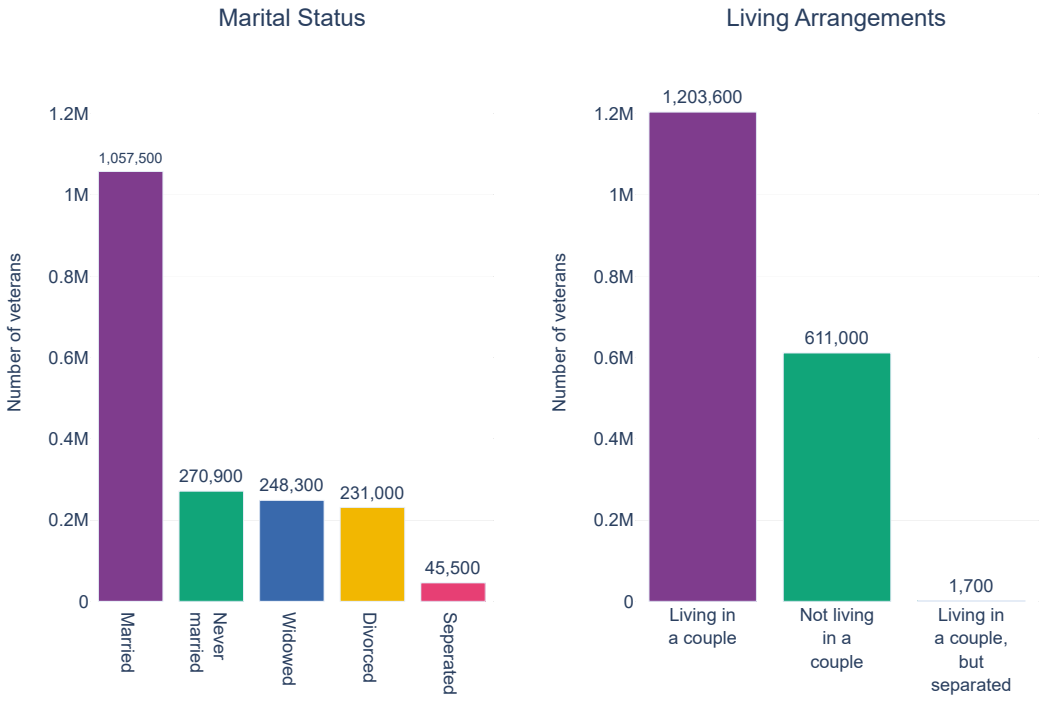
Figure 5.4: Forecast of the number of veterans, by ethnicity and nationality

There are approximately 1.1 million partners of veterans in Great Britian, but this is likely to decline out to 2045 given the projected decrease in the number of veterans. Data from the England and Wales Census 2021 shows that 57 per cent of veterans were married or in a civil partnership, 13 per cent were divorced, 2 per cent were separated, 13 per cent were widowed and 15 per cent were unmarried (but may have been in long-term relationships).[33] The distribution of relationship status is similar to civilians of the same age, gender and geographic profile, but veterans were slightly more likely to be divorced and slightly less likely to have never been married.[34]

Similar to marital status, data from the England and Wales Census 2021 shows that the relationship living arrangements of veterans are approximate to those of civilians of the same age and gender composition: 65 per cent of both veterans and age- and gender-adjusted civilians were living in an opposite-sex couple, 1 per cent were living in a same-sex couple and 34 per cent were not living in a couple.[35] The England and Wales Census found that there were over 1.2 million spouses and partners living with a veteran in England and Wales in 2021, including those who were also veterans themselves.[36] Figure 5.5 shows the marital status and number of veterans by whether they were living in a couple in England and Wales on census day.[37]

Approximately, 9 per cent of spouses or partners of veterans were also veterans. The census found that 89 per cent of partners living with a veteran were female.

Figure 5.5: Marital status and living arrangements of veterans living in England and Wales (2021)



33 Office for National Statistics (2023). However, our forecasting is not able to account for the gender of partners or for veteran's sexual orientation. Knipe & Hill (2023b).

34 Office for National Statistics (2023).

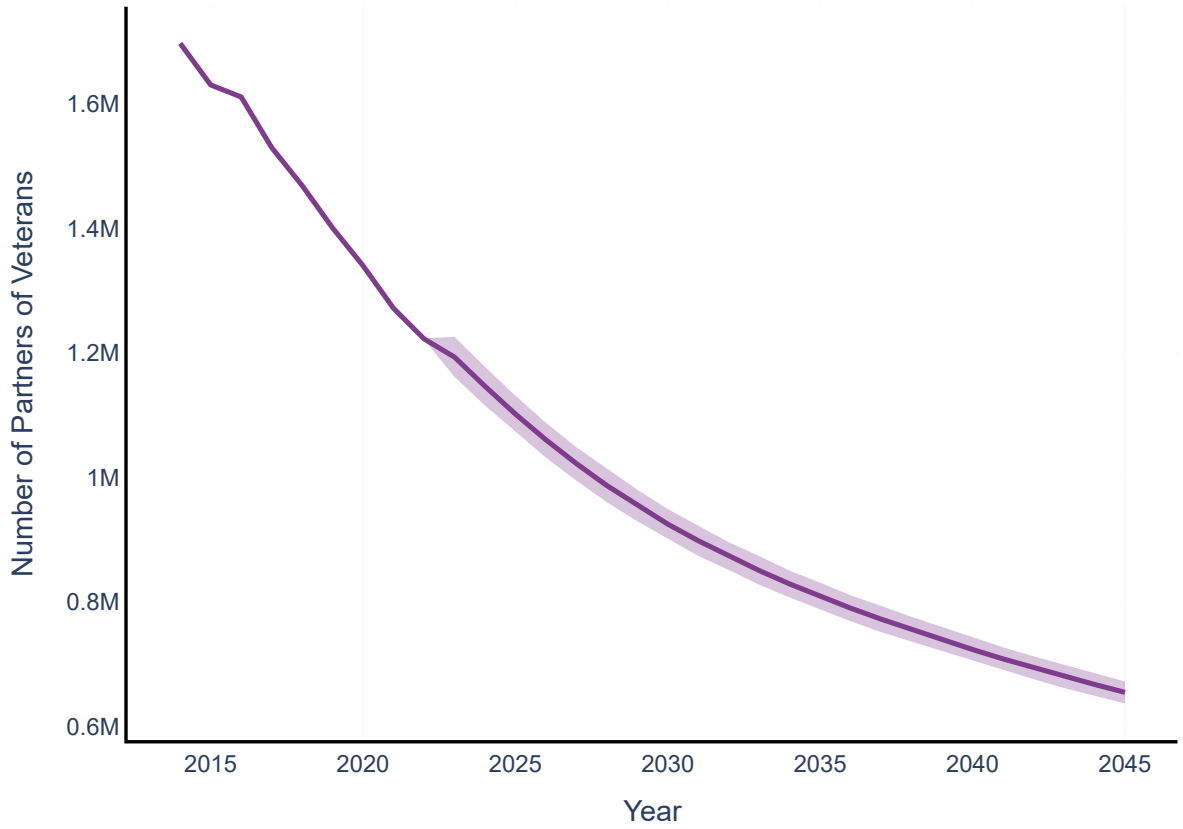
35 Knipe & Hill (2023b).

36 Knipe & Hill (2023a).

37 The discrepancy in totals between the two graphs represents slightly different populations: marital status data includes all usual residents, whereas living arrangements data includes all usual residents living in households.

As Figure 5.6 shows, **the number of partners living with a veteran in Great Britain will decrease to between 640,000 and 670,000 by 2045,** reflecting the substantial decrease in the number of veterans.[38] Out to 2045, there are also likely to be some changes to cohabitation and marriage rates: in particular, there is likely to be a small increase in the number of individuals who are single and never married, a small increase in cohabitation in working-age individuals, and a small increase in marriage rates among retirement-age females.

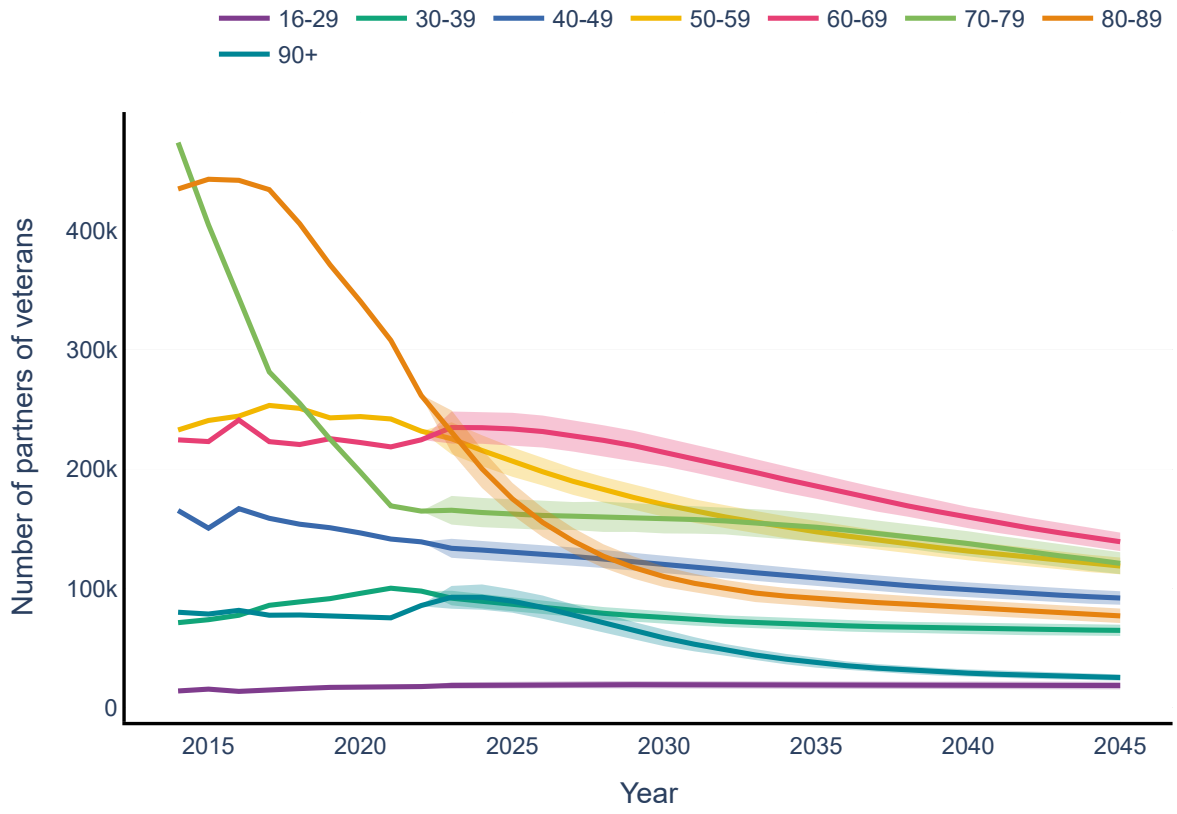
Figure 5.6: Forecast of the number of partners of veterans



38 These estimates account for approximately 9 per cent of partners of veterans also being partners of veterans, but assume this percentage remains constant. This forecast reflects estimates of the number of veterans in a relationship, and thus bereaved partners of veterans are not included. Estimates on the number of bereaved partners of veterans are presented in Galley and Slapakova (2026).

Figure 5.7 captures the number of partners of veterans by the age of the veteran, which shows that the number of partners will decrease most substantially for veterans in their 80s. The results suggest that the number of partners of veterans over 90 years may actually increase in the short term but decrease over the long term.[39] Nevertheless, it is likely that the largest age group of partners is those of veterans aged 60–69, and this will remain the largest age group out 2045.

Figure 5.7: Forecast of the number of partners of veterans, by age of veteran



39 This reflects that an increasing number of National Service veterans are turning 90, and thus the estimate for the number of partners in their 90s is increasing slightly. However, as these veterans pass away, the number of partners of veterans in their 90s is likely to decline over the long term.

There are a significant number of individuals who were previously married to a veteran (former partners). The 2021 England and Wales Census showed that 13 per cent of veterans in England and Wales were divorced (231,000) and 2 per cent were separated (45,000). This suggests that **there was a minimum of 276,000 former partners of veterans living in England and Wales,** but the true number is likely higher as this does not include former partners where the veteran remarried or died after their marriage broke down. While our forecasts suggest that the number of divorced and separated veterans is likely to decrease out to 2045 as the number of veterans decreases (see Figure 5.8), the percentages of veterans who are divorced and separated are likely to remain similar to 2021, at approximately 12 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively.

As this estimate of former partners uses APS data and does not account for changes in the age profile of the veteran community, we also produced an alternative estimate of the number of former partners of veterans using civilian estimates of the number of individuals who have previously been married and either living not in a couple or in a cohabiting relationship in each age group and applied this to the veterans. This method better captures trends for each age group and suggests that there are approximately 330,000 former partners of veterans, compared to approximately 230,000 divorced or separated veterans. Figure 5.8 shows the estimates for the number of former partners in the veteran community, using both data sources. As Figure 5.9 shows, our forecasts suggest that the highest numbers of veterans who have been previously married will be in their 70s and 80s. This likely represents both the relatively large numbers of veterans in these age groups (compared to veterans aged under 30 for example), but also relatively higher rates of relationship breakdown in slightly older individuals.

Figure 5.8: Forecast if the number of divorced/separated and previously married veterans

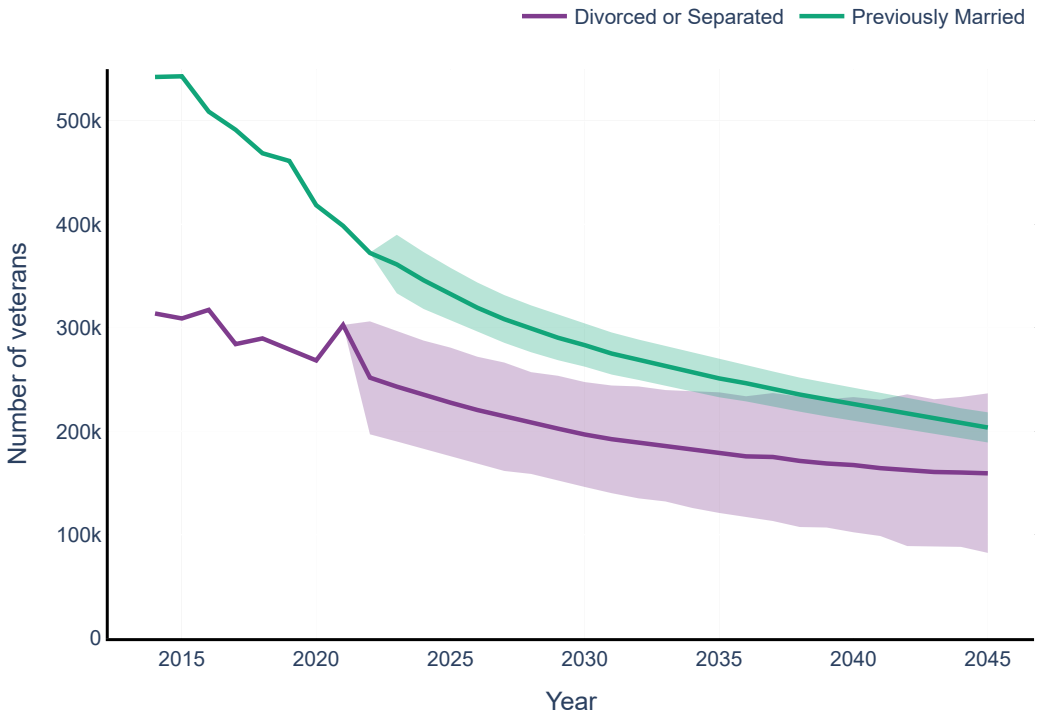
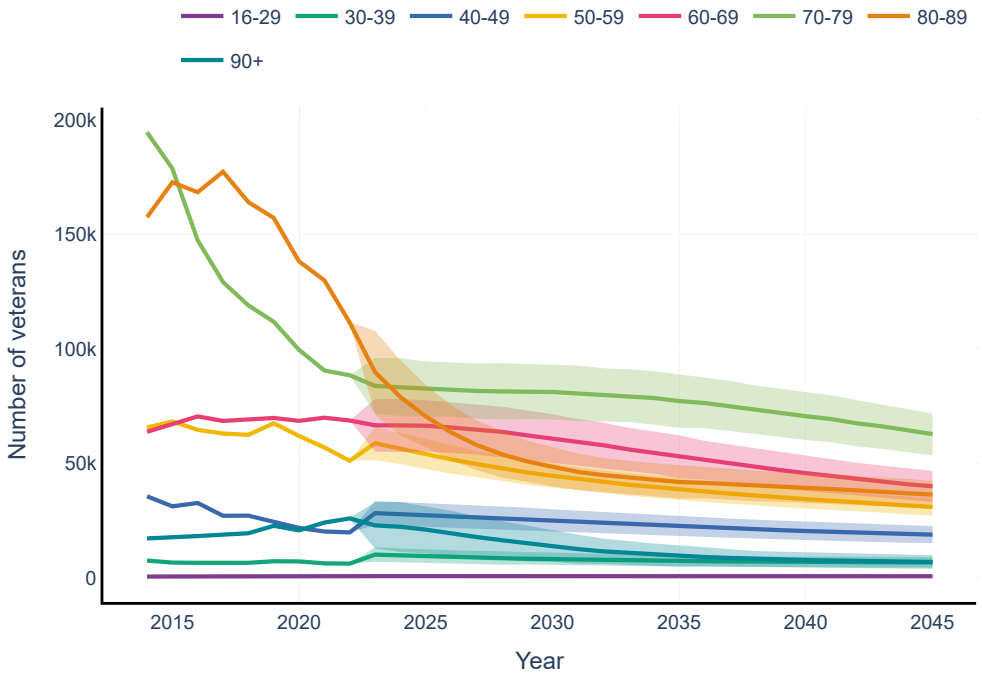


Figure 5.9: Forecast of the number of veterans who have been previously married, by age



Our forecasts suggest that there were approximately 430,000 children aged 18 and under and 107,000 children aged 19–24 living with a veteran in Great Britain in 2025. The England and Wales Census found that there were 723,545 children (of all ages) living with a veteran in England and Wales, of which 4 per cent were living with two veteran parents. Of these, approximately 497,000 were children aged 18 and under and 115,000 were children aged 19–24. As Figure 5.10 shows, the number of children aged 18 and under within the veteran community is likely to decrease to approximately 265,000 out to 2045, and the number of children aged 19–24 is likely to decrease to approximately 64,000, reflecting the decreasing size of the veteran community. This is an approximately 40 per cent decrease in the number of children within the veteran community, which reflects the forecasted 40 per cent decrease in the number of working-age veterans between 2025 and 2040. Nevertheless, as Figure 5.11 shows, the number of children of veterans aged 16–29 is likely to increase (as the number of veterans in this age group increases).

While most children in the veteran community live with a veteran parent who is living in a couple, approximately 38,000 children aged 18 and under were living with a veteran single parent in 2025. This is forecast to decline to approximately 29,000 children by 2045. Additionally, we know that some children of veterans may not be counted by the census as part of the veteran community as they were living with their civilian parent on census day (i.e. children of divorced or separated veterans who live with their civilian parent). Given that children of divorced or separated parents often live with their female parent (when the parents were a heterosexual couple), and that the majority of veterans are male, it is likely that there are a substantial number of children of male divorced or separated veterans who were not counted within the census as children of veterans.

Figure 5.10: Forecast of the number of children of veterans

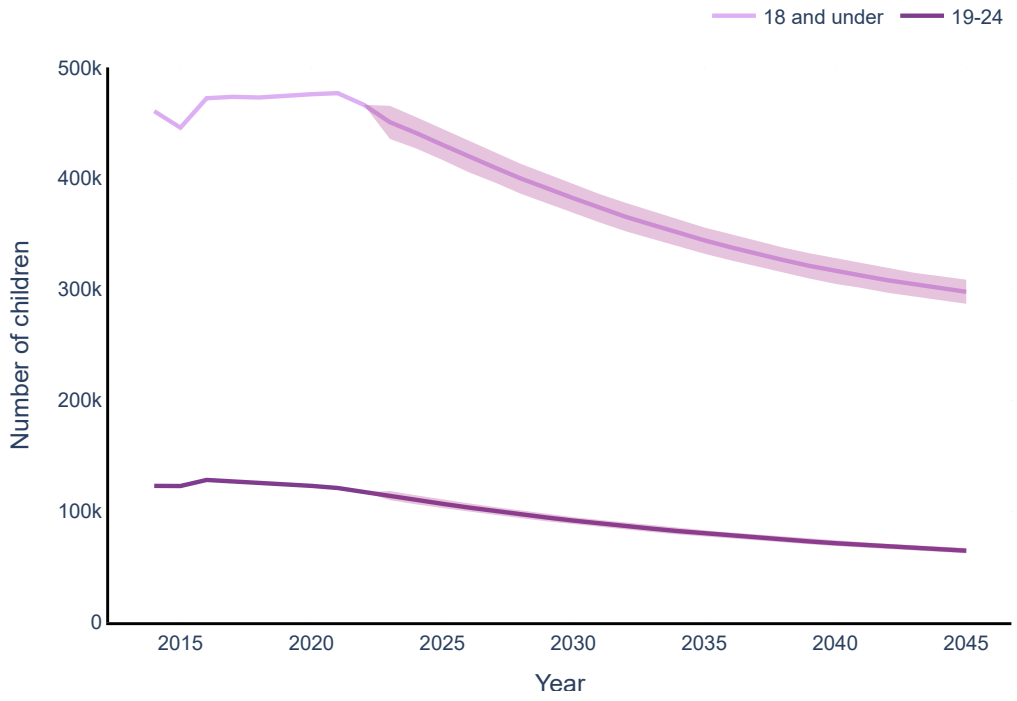
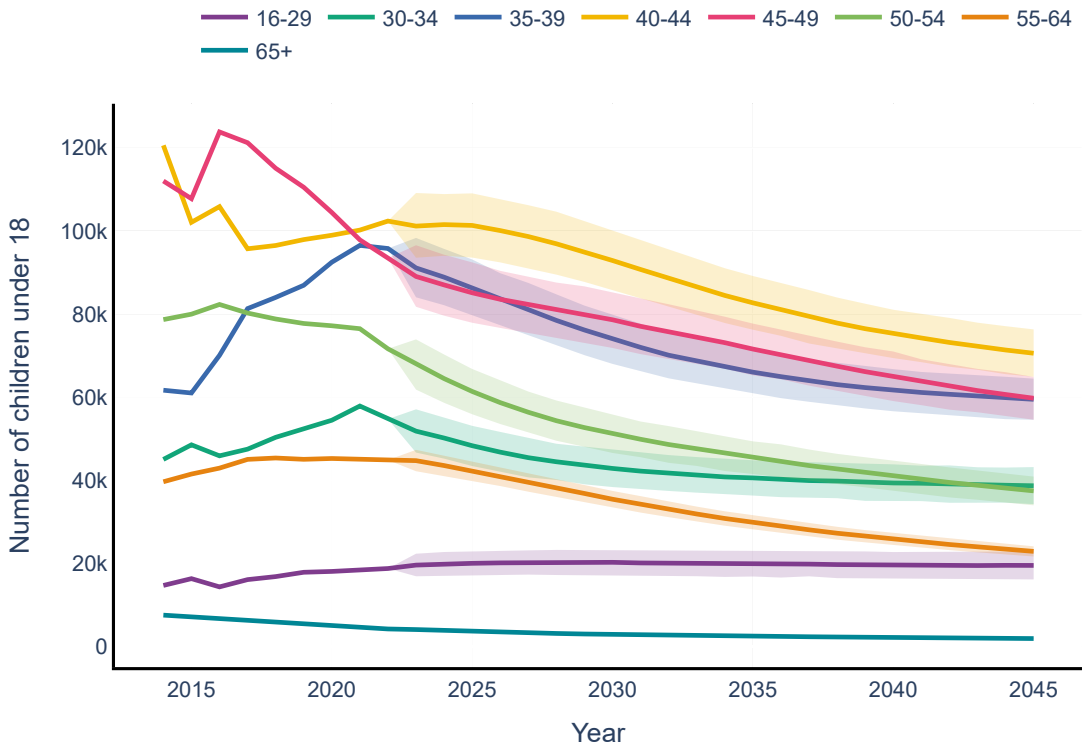


Figure 5.11: Forecast of the number of children of veterans, by age of veteran



6. Conclusion

6.1. Size and demographics of the Regular Armed Forces community

The size of the Regular AFC is unlikely to change substantially out to 2045, as summarised in Table 6.1 below. The number of partners, former partners and children may decrease slightly; however, these changes are highly dependent on the number of service personnel, which is strongly driven by policy and targets set for the recruitment and overall trained strength of the Armed Forces. Service providers therefore need to be mindful of the significant uncertainty in the defence environment and how recruitment in the Armed Forces context might evolve.

While the number of potential beneficiaries within the Regular AFC may not change substantially, if historical trends continue, the community is likely to be more demographically diverse. The number and proportion of female personnel is likely to increase across all three services, as is the number and proportion of ethnic minority personnel. In this context, service providers will need to ensure that services are acceptable, accessible and inclusive for various demographic groups of beneficiaries.

There has been a substantial shift in the age of parents in the Armed Forces since 2013: the number of parents aged under 30 has decreased substantially, while the number

of parents aged between 35 and 44 has increased. This trend may affect the overall number of children in the AFC if military careers become shortened and fewer service personnel therefore have children while still in service. This has implications for service provision and how demand for childcare-related support may evolve during and after a service person's military career.

Table 6.1: Overview of the size of the Regular Armed Forces community

Category	Current estimate (2025)	Future trend	2045 estimate
Regular Armed Forces personnel	137,000	Not likely to change substantially, but may increase through policy-set targets	130,000–135,000
Partners of Regular personnel (excluding dual-serving)	86,000	Likely to decrease, but dependent on number of personnel	25,000–38,000 spouses and civil partners, 40,000 long-term partners
Former partners of Regular personnel	8,000	Likely to decrease, but dependent on number of personnel	6,000–18,000
Children of Regular personnel	85,000–115,000	Not likely to change substantially but may decrease slightly	84,000–123,000

Table 6.2: Overview of key demographic characteristics of the Regular Serving Armed Forces community

Demographic	Current characteristics (2025)	Future trend
Gender	Female: 16,300 (12%) Male: 120,700 (88%)	Increase in number of female SP and proportion of female SP in overall force
Ethnicity and nationality	White UK: 118,700 (87%) Ethnic minority UK: 9,400 (7%) White non-UK: 800 (1%) Ethnic minority non-UK: 7,200 (5%)	Potential increase in number and proportion of ethnic minority UK personnel Decline in number and proportion of white ethnicity UK personnel Slight increase in number and proportion of ethnic minority and white non-UK SP
Age	16–29: 63,000 (46%) 30–39: 44,000 (32%) 40–49: 23,600 (17%) 50–59: 6,300 (5%) 60+: 100 (< 1%)	Unlikely to change significantly, increase in number of SP aged 60+
Relationship status	Married: 50,000 (37%, JPA) to 62,700 (46%, AFCAS) Single: 28,200 (21%, AFCAS) to 75,500 (55%, JPA) LTR: 36,900 (27%, AFCAS)	Decrease in married personnel, potentially offset by an increase in personnel in long-term relationships

6.2. Size and demographics of the Reserve Armed Forces community

The number of Volunteer Reservists has fluctuated substantially in recent years, currently totalling 32,000 Reservists (Table 6.3). How the number of Volunteer Reservists, their partners and children will evolve out to 2045 is highly uncertain, both due to historical fluctuations and the nature of the defence policy environment. Although policy shows ambitions for the Reserve forces to grow in size, the extent to which these ambitions can be achieved depends on a complex set of factors that influence attraction and retention in the Reserves. Service providers will need to be mindful of this uncertainty, while preparing for potential increases in demand for services from Reservists and their families.

Similarly to the Regular forces, it is likely that the Reserve forces will be demographically more diverse, particularly with regard to gender and ethnicity. Changes in the age profile of the Reservists are challenging to estimate due to uncertainty, but the proportion of Reservists aged over 60 could increase if historical trends continue. This may potentially influence the nature of support needed among the Reserves community.

Table 6.3: Overview of the size of the Reserve Armed Forces community

Category	Current estimate (2025)	Future trend	2045 estimate
Reservists[40]	32,000	Highly uncertain: substantial decline if historical trends continue, but increases may follow policy	26,000–30,000
Partners of Reservists	23,000	May decline, but uncertain and dependent on the number of Reservists	11,000–13,000 spouses and civil partners, 7,000 long-term partners
Former partners of Reservists	2,000	May decline, but uncertain and dependent on the number of Reservists	1,000–2,000
Children of Reservists	20,000–27,000	Slight decrease, but uncertain	19,000–26,000

40 This only includes Volunteer Reservists, and thus excludes Reservists on full time reserve contracts (FTRS), sponsored Reserves or the Regular Reserve (ex-service personnel with re-call duty).

Table 6.4: Overview of key demographic characteristics of the Reserve Armed Forces community

Demographic	Current characteristics (2025)	Future trend
Gender	Female: 5,400 (16%) Male: 26,900 (84%)	Increase in proportion of female Reservists
Ethnicity	White UK: 29,800 (93%) Ethnic minority UK: 1,800 (6%) White non-UK: 200 (1%) Ethnic minority non-UK: 200 (1%)	Increase in number and proportion of ethnic minority Reservists
Age	16–29: 7,100 (22%) 30–39: 10,000 (31%) 40–49: 7,800 (24%) 50–59: 6,500 (20%) 60+: 700 (2%)	Decrease in number of Reservists aged 30–39 and increase in number and proportion of Reservists aged 60+
Relationship status	Married: 12,300 (38%, JPA) to 14,200 (44%, AFCAS) Single (JPA): 6,300 (20%, RESCAS) to 17,500 (55%, JPA) LTR (AFCAS): 8,800 (28%)	Decrease in the number of single Reservists

6.3. Size and demographics of the veteran community

Unlike the serving Armed Forces community, the veteran community has changed significantly in its overall size in recent years and will continue to do so out to 2045. Due to the ageing and death of the Second World War and National Service veteran populations, the number of veterans in Great Britain has declined significantly since 2014 and is expected to continue decreasing in the coming years. This trend is most pronounced among older age groups, particularly those aged 80–89, although the sharp decline in the number of older veterans observed since 2014 is not anticipated to continue at the same rate beyond 2030.

These trends will impact support provision in multiple respects, including by requiring service providers to make services accessible and appropriate for a multi-generational population, and rebalancing resources to meet the needs of veterans in different age groups and at different life stages.

Mirroring trends in the serving population, the gender and ethnic diversity of veterans is likely to increase, although the number of non-UK veterans (of all ethnicities) is likely to decrease in the future. Ensuring inclusivity and accessibility of services should therefore be a focus not only for service providers working with serving personnel, but also veterans and their families.

Table 6.5: Overview of the size of the veteran community

Category	Current estimate[41] (2025)	Future trend	2045 estimate
Veterans	1.74 million	Decline	1.06 million
Partners of veterans	1.1 million	Decline	638,000–673,000
Former partners of veterans	332,000	Decline	190,000–218,000
Children of veterans	430,000 children (18 and under), 107,000 children (19–24)	Decline	287,000–309,000 (18 and under) 62,000–67,000 (19–24)

Table 6.6: Overview of key demographic characteristics of the veteran community

Demographic	Current characteristics (2025)	Future trend
Gender	Female: 251,000 (14%) Male: 1,486,000 (86%)	Increasing proportion of women in the veteran population
Ethnicity and nationality	White UK: 1,594,000 (91%) Ethnic minority UK: 33,000 (2%) White non-UK: 68,000 (4%) Ethnic minority non-UK: 42,000 (2%)	Increasing number and proportion of veterans from an ethnic minority background and with UK nationality Decrease in the number of non-UK veterans (of all ethnicities)
Age	16–64: 865,000 (50%) 65+: 872,000 (50%)	Decline in the number and proportion of older veterans, particularly those aged 80–89 Increase in the number and proportion of working-age veterans
Relationship status	Living in a couple: 1,102,000 (64%) Previously married (excluding widowed): 332,000 (19%) Divorced/separated: 228,000 (13%)	Number of divorced and separated veterans is likely to decrease, but the proportion of divorced and separated veterans is likely to remain similar

41 These estimates are for Great Britain only and therefore exclude Northern Ireland.

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Annex A. **Detailed forecasting methodology**

This annex provides a technical description of the forecasting methodology. This section repeats information in Chapter 2, providing additional technical details on the forecasting methodology for each step.

The population projections approach consists of two main steps: 1) forecasting inflows to the AFC and outflows from the AFC using hierarchical Bayesian regression; and 2) applying a stocks-and-flows model to estimate the evolving composition of the AFC by key demographic and service characteristics. Throughout the research, we used Monte Carlo sampling when multiplying or summarising forecasts to preserve the credible intervals.

Step 1: Forecasting inflows and outflows

We projected historical trends in inflow and outflow rates[42] (from the Armed Forces for SP, outflow rates are mortality rates for veterans) for each demographic group using hierarchical Bayesian regression models.[43] This approach allowed us to extrapolate from historical data and explicitly quantify uncertainty, recognising that future trends may diverge from the past. We used inflow numbers, as it is likely that the number of people joining the Armed Forces is likely independent of the total number of personnel in each category, and outflow rates, as the number of people leaving in each category is likely related to the total number of people in that category. Outflow rates were then converted back to numbers of SP and veterans in step two.

For each group, we fitted thousands of regression lines to the historical data, calculating the mean and 95% credible intervals across all samples. This process captured both observed variability and model uncertainty.

Analysis was conducted at the cohort level, categorising the Armed Forces community by:

- Service (Army, Royal Navy & Royal Marines, Royal Air Force)
- Gender (male and female)
- Rank (officers and other ranks)
- Age group (16–29, 30–34, etc.)
- Ethnicity and nationality (e.g. white UK, white non-UK, ethnic minority UK, ethnic minority non-UK)
- Service category (Regulars, Volunteer Reserves, veterans)

We mitigated limited sample sizes by employing a hierarchical structure, borrowing strength across rank and gender categories. This approach assumes that all personnel are influenced, to some degree, by common factors such as economic conditions, operational tempo, deployment patterns and external events, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the model allows for distinct trends within individual groups, such as a greater likelihood of female personnel leaving

42 For SP, inflow refers to individuals joining the Armed Forces and outflow refers to individuals leaving the Armed Forces. For veterans, 'inflow' refers to SP leaving the Armed Forces in the preceding year (and is thus equal to SP outflow), while 'outflow rate' refers to the mortality rate of veterans (given their age and gender).

43 Bayesian Hierarchical Regression is a statistical method that allows researchers to analyse complex data by accounting for variation at multiple levels (such as individuals within groups), while also incorporating prior knowledge or assumptions into the analysis. This approach helps produce more accurate and reliable estimates, particularly when working with small or unevenly distributed datasets. For more information, see Sosa & Aristizabal (2021) or McElreath (2019).

service during periods of high operational tempo, or junior other ranks personnel responding to labour market conditions.

In contrast, we did not allow data sharing between age groups, as behavioural patterns are likely to vary substantially across cohorts. Given limited historical data (13 years) and a long forecast horizon (20 years), specific trends risked being exaggerated or implausible. To address this, we applied bounds to inflow and outflow rates, ensuring they remained within 90 per cent of historical values, thereby assuming some self-correction in trends and reducing the risk of extreme values.

We did not use time-series models, as there were no discernible patterns within the data. For most cohorts, inflow and outflow rates were not autoregressive: rates in one year did not correlate with those in preceding years.

Step 2: Stocks-and-flows modelling

In the second step, we applied a comprehensive stocks-and-flows model to estimate the number of individuals in each category for each year to 2045.[44] This model integrates projected inflow and outflow rates from Step 1 with data on the current number of individuals in each group. The stocks-and-flows approach simulates how demographic and service group compositions change over time, including transitions between categories, such as from serving personnel to veteran status.

For this research, we calculated the percentage of individuals for each inflow and outflow by ethnicity and nationality, adjusting forecasts by service, age, gender and rank to reflect changing patterns in the Armed Forces community. To incorporate uncertainty, we sampled from the Step 1 results and ran thousands of simulations, continuing until model results converged with a total change in the number of SP and veterans of less than 0.5 per cent when rerun with additional samples (1,500 iterations in total).

Step 3: Forecasting partners

To estimate the number of partners, we forecasted partnership rates for SP and veterans, multiplying these by projected population figures. We used Bayesian regression to forecast the number of individuals in each marital or relationship category and sampled from these estimates to calculate the percentage in each relationship status for each group.

For SP, we used two sources for relationship status: JPA and AFCAS/RESCAS. With RBL, we jointly requested data from the JPA administrative database on the number of personnel by relationship status, service and demographic characteristics from 2013 to 2024. As these were provided separately for service, rank, gender, age, ethnicity and nationality, we first combined these to estimate the number of personnel in each marital status within each demographic subgroup.[45] We then projected these counts out to 2045 using Bayesian regression with 16,000 samples per group and used this to estimate the percentage of personnel in each marital status for each demographic subgroup. We then multiplied these percentages by our forecasts for the number of personnel in each demographic subgroup (from step two) to estimate the total number of individuals in each subgroup (i.e. demographic group and marital status group). The number of civilian partners is equal to the number of married SP. This method allowed us to include changes in marital status since 2013 without changing the overall forecasts for the number of SP out to 2045.

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44 For more information on stocks-and-flows models, see Aronson & Angelakis (2025).

45 These estimates assume independence and proportionality across all the dimensions (e.g. the percentage of individuals in each marital status by age is the same for all services). We decided this was a reasonable assumption given a lack of any other data suggesting otherwise and that it is unlikely that there are significant differences between similar groups within a category (e.g. there is no evidence that Army Other Ranks personnel aged 18-29 would have a substantially different marital profile to Navy Other Ranks personnel aged 18-29).

As JPA contains limited information on SP relationship status, we also used AFCAS relationship status data. AFCAS, while a widely used official statistic, has a relatively low response rate and assumes missing responses are random, which may not hold if non-response is correlated with specific factors. Furthermore, AFCAS results are reported only by service and rank, limiting our ability to capture patterns by age and gender. We used a similar method as for the JPA data, with the number of partners equal to the number of SP married or in an LTR. We also forecasted the number of AFCAS respondents whose partner was also serving[46] to estimate the number of individuals in a dual-serving couple, and thus forecast civilian partners. While AFCAS data has limitations, it supports the wider estimation of partner numbers, not merely spouses. RESCAS shares similar strengths and limitations for estimating partners in the Reserves community.

For veterans, we used repeated-cross-sectional data from the ONS to estimate the number of veterans with a partner.[47] While the census contains information on the number of veterans living with a partner, this single data point does not capture trends in marriage and cohabitation over time, and previous data from the APS only contains data on spouses, not cohabiting partners. To forecast the number of veterans living in a couple, we first used hierarchical Bayesian regression to forecast the number of individuals in each relationship status by age and gender within the civilian data and used this to calculate the percentage of individuals by relationships status for each subgroup. We then multiplied our estimates for the number of veterans in each subgroup and estimated partners by counting veterans with a partner. While this approach allows for trends such as increasing cohabitation, it does not capture differences between military and civilian communities, such as the slightly higher prevalence of divorce among veterans.

Forecasting former partners

We also estimated and forecasted the number of former partners (e.g. individuals separated or divorced from an SP or veteran).

For SP, we forecasted the percentage of individuals reporting their relationship status as separated or divorced in AFCAS/RESCAS, or as 'separated and providing support', 'separated and providing voluntary support', or as 'primary carer or provider for a child' in JPA. This provides an estimate for the number of former partners, but it may overestimate in cases where: a) both individuals in a relationship were serving personnel; or b) an individual has had relationships with multiple serving personnel. Conversely, this method may undercount cases where an SP has entered a new relationship, thus their former partner is not counted as they are no longer registered as separated or divorced.

For veterans, we used two data sources: 1) projecting the number of veterans reporting separation or divorce in APS and census data, using this to estimate the percentage of veterans who will be separated and divorced and applying this to our veterans forecasts; and 2) using estimates on the number of veterans who have been 'previously married' and are either living alone or cohabiting. As the second category includes widowed individuals, we subtracted our estimates for veterans bereaved of a partner from these calculations, thus providing an estimate of those whose relationship has broken down.[48] While this covers more cases than simply counting divorced and separated veterans, it

46 This uses data from the AFCAS question about the respondents' partners' employment, where the response was in the 'Armed Forces'.

47 Sharfman & Cobb (2024).

48 For more information on how we estimated the number of veterans bereaved of a partner, see Galley & Slapakova (2026).

may (similarly to SP) undercount cases where the veteran has remarried, as well as partners who were in a serious relationship with a veteran but never married (but may be entitled to support due to shared custody of a child).

Step 4: Forecasting children

To forecast the number of children of SP, we used both data from JPA and AFCAS/RESCAS to generate estimates.

For the JPA data, we first forecast the number and proportion of Armed Forces personnel who are parents. As the number of parents within each age group has changed dramatically since 2013 (e.g. the number of parents of SP aged under 30 has decreased from 11,200 in 2013 to 4,600 in 2024), we used a binomial-logit model to project the proportion of parents by each entitlement status out to 2045, rather than forecasting raw counts and using these to estimate the percentage of parents. This method allowed us to reflect the changing proportion of parents in each entitlement status and age, without the substantial changes in number impacting the results.

We then used estimates on the total number of children by the SP's age and entitlement status to estimate the average number of children per parent in each age category and marital status out to 2045. We then multiplied our forecasts for the number of personnel in each entitlement status and age group by the projected proportion of parents and the projected number of children per parent to forecast the total number of children of SP. As there have been some numerically small but proportionately large changes in the number of SP aged over 60, and the percentage of these with a partner and the average number of children for each SP, we excluded these from our analysis to avoid the results being skewed by a small number of cases.

For the estimates using AFCAS and RESCAS data, we forecast the number of parents and the average number of children per parent using Bayesian regression, calculated the percentage of SP who are parents, and then multiplied this percentage by the forecast of the number of SP and the average number of children per SP.

As data on the number of children of veterans is more limited, we adapted the methodology used for the serving community. For this research, we first requested data with RBL from the ONS Commissioned Census Table team on the number of children of veterans by the age of the child, the age of the veteran and the living arrangements of the veteran. As this data counts the number of 'veteran-child' relationships, it contains some double counting, where both parents of a child are veterans. To adjust for this, we estimated the number of children of dual-veteran couples by dividing the number of children of veterans[49] by the number of veteran-child relationships and used this adjustment factor to adjust the number of children by each veteran age. As this data only contains children of veterans living in England and Wales, we divided this by the number of veterans living in England and Wales to estimate the average number of children per veteran for each age group, gender and cohabitation status (living in a couple and not living in a couple).

To forecast the number of children of veterans, we multiplied the number of veterans by the average number of children per veteran for each gender, age and cohabitation status. For this research, we estimated the number of children aged 18 and under, and the number of children aged 19–24 (who are also entitled to RBL support). This analysis does not take account of potential changes in the number of children per veteran in each status, as there is no repeated-cross-sectional data we can use for this estimate.

49 Knipe & Hill (2023c).

Limitations

Data coverage and definitions

- For this research, 'Volunteer Reserves' uses data from the Biannual Diversity Statistics ('Future Reserves 2020'), which primarily includes part-time Volunteer Reserves and some RAF Reserve personnel on Full-Time Reserve Service (FTRS) and 'Additional Duties Commitment' contracts, where these individuals are attached to Royal Auxiliary Air Force squadrons.
- Serving Regular Reserves and Sponsored Reserves, and most Reservists on FTRS contracts, are not included in the model due to insufficient publicly available demographic data (as these individuals do not have the same reporting requirements as those recruited through the Future Reserves 2020 programme). As such, some ex-Regulars who serve on Reserve contracts are prematurely moved to veterans when they leave the Regular force.
- Within this research, veterans are defined as individuals who have left the Armed Forces and had received at least one day's pay for service in the UK Armed Forces. Data on the total number of veterans is drawn from the APS, England and Wales Census, and Scotland Census. Demographic characteristics are estimated using APS and England and Wales Census data. Due to data constraints, we could only include veterans living in England, Scotland and Wales when data was collected (2014–2021), although all service leavers since 2021 are included in the analysis, regardless of location. Most veterans living in Northern Ireland or overseas are not included due to a lack of reliable data.
- We assume that definitions used in this research (e.g. Volunteer Reserves, veterans) will not change over the projection periods. Any future changes in policy, eligibility criteria or definitions may impact the validity of the forecasts.

Data gaps and assumptions

- Data for inflows and outflows to the Volunteer Reserves is not available by age and gender combined; therefore, we assumed that the gender distribution in inflows and outflows is uniform across age groups.
- The model accounts for personnel transitioning from Regular service to the Volunteer Reserves after leaving service, but this data is only available at the service level. As a result, we use the average rate from the 2023 and 2024 data (as there is substantial historical variation) and assume the same percentage of ex-Regulars join the Volunteer Reserves across ranks, genders and ages 30–64, with no Regulars joining under age 30.
- In cases where more individuals leave in a year than are recorded in the total on 1 April (typically due to category transfers), we exclude this data to resolve mathematical inconsistencies.
- Where historical data is missing, the model assumes homogeneity across groups (e.g. identical rates for all services, ages and genders). This may mask genuine differences between groups, resulting in over- or under-estimation for particular subgroups.
- Estimates of the size and demographics of the former serving community are constrained by limited historical data, available only for selected years (2014–2017, 2021) and only at the tri-service level. The analysis assumes that the distribution of former SP across services has remained consistent with the 2022 Veterans' Survey and that there are no differences between former SP of different services in their

distribution by age, gender, marital status, number of children or location.

- Outflow data for the veteran population is based on ONS age- and gender-adjusted mortality rates for England and Wales; it is assumed that there is no difference in mortality between the civilian and veteran populations, in line with available evidence.
- Very little data is available on partners of SP and former SP, particularly regarding gender and sexual orientation.

Representativeness and data limitations

- The analysis relies on administrative and survey data from various sources (AFCAS, RESCAS, Veterans' Survey, JPA) that may be incomplete or unrepresentative. For example, FAMCAS includes only spouses and civil partners of Regular personnel, omitting other long-term partners and all partners of Volunteer Reserve personnel. AFCAS and RESCAS data may introduce bias if non-response is systematically related to particular characteristics (e.g. marital status, gender).
- The number of partners and former partners is estimated using available administrative status and survey responses. Limitations and potential misclassification in JPA entitlement status and AFCAS/RESCAS definitions (such as 'separated' or 'prime carer or provider for child') may introduce conceptual overlap and over- or under-estimation.

Statistical uncertainty and model structure

- While the future is always uncertain, our forecasts have substantial uncertainty as we are forecasting substantially more years into the future than the number of years for which we have historical data. We provide 95 per cent credible intervals on all forecasts to represent this uncertainty, but actual future values may fall outside these bonds due if there are changes in policy, recruitment or wider social trends. While our forecasts rely on historical trends, it is likely that Armed Forces policy would adapt if personnel numbers deviated substantially from operational requirements. To reflect this (to an extent) and to avoid exaggerated historical trends producing implausible results, we bound the projections of the inflow numbers and outflow rates to remain within 90 per cent of historical limits.
- We cannot account for future social, economic or geopolitical changes (for example, changes in marriage rates, partner definitions, or military requirements) that could impact the size and demographics of the AFC.

Annex B. **Detailed forecasting results**

This section provides additional details on the size and demographic modelling results presented above. The tables below present the mean (average) estimate and the 95 per cent credible interval in brackets below. The 95 per cent credible interval provides the range within which, if historical trends continue (within the bounds applied from the historical data), there is a 95 per cent chance the value will fall within. As uncertainty increases over the time horizon, there is substantial uncertainty on the 2045 forecasts provided.

Table A.1: Forecast of Regular service personnel

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
All Regular personnel	136,900 (136,900–136,900)	132,500 (129,800–135,300)	131,400 (127,800–135,100)	132,200 (126,200–138,600)	133,700 (126,300–141,000)
Service					
Army	74,400 (72,300–76,400)	70,300 (67,700–72,900)	68,000 (64,400–71,600)	67,000 (61,500–72,800)	66,800 (59,700–74,100)
Royal Navy and Royal Marines	30,400 (30,300–30,600)	29,700 (28,800–30,600)	30,200 (29,200–31,100)	31,000 (30,000–32,000)	31,900 (30,800–33,000)
Royal Air Force	32,100 (31,900–32,400)	32,500 (31,600–33,400)	33,300 (32,200–34,400)	34,200 (32,900–35,400)	35,000 (33,700–36,300)
Gender					
Male	120,700 (118,600–122,800)	115,300 (112,500–118,000)	113,200 (109,400–117,100)	113,200 (107,200–119,100)	114,000 (106,600–121,300)
Female	16,300 (16,000–16,500)	17,200 (16,600–17,900)	18,200 (17,500–18,900)	19,000 (18,200–19,800)	19,700 (18,800–20,600)
Age group (years)					
16–29	63,000 (61,300–64,700)	60,300 (57,900–62,700)	60,100 (56,800–63,500)	60,800 (55,400–66,100)	61,400 (54,600–68,300)
30–34	22,500 (22,000–23,100)	22,200 (21,300–23,200)	22,100 (20,900–23,300)	22,300 (20,800–23,700)	22,600 (20,600–24,700)

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
35–39	21,400 (20,900–21,900)	20,000 (19,400–20,600)	19,700 (18,900–20,600)	19,800 (18,800–20,800)	20,000 (18,700–21,300)
40–44	15,300 (14,500–16,000)	13,700 (13,000–14,400)	13,200 (12,300–14,000)	13,100 (12,000–14,100)	13,200 (11,900–14,400)
45–49	8,400 (8,100–8,700)	9,000 (8,400–9,600)	8,600 (7,900–9,200)	8,400 (7,600–9,200)	8,400 (7,400–9,300)
50–54	4,700 (4,700–4,800)	4,900 (4,500–5,300)	4,800 (4,300–5,300)	4,700 (4,100–5,200)	4,600 (4,000–5,200)
55–59	1,500 (1,500–1,600)	1,800 (1,600–2,100)	2,100 (1,700–2,400)	2,100 (1,800–2,600)	2,200 (1,800–2,600)
60+	100 (100–100)	600 (500–700)	900 (800–1,100)	1,200 (900–1,400)	1,300 (1,000–1,600)
Ethnicity and nationality					
White ethnicity and UK nationality	118,700 (120,400–123,300)	114,800 (112,500–117,200)	111,400 (108,300–114,300)	110,700 (105,200–115,900)	109,200 (102,500–116,000)
Ethnic minority ethnicity and UK nationality	9,400 (8,100–9,800)	8,700 (7,700–9,600)	7,700 (6,100–9,400)	5,700 (4,200–7,200)	4,900 (3,900–6,000)
White ethnicity and non-UK nationality	800 (600–900)	700 (500–900)	700 (500–1,000)	800 (600–1,000)	900 (600–1,100)
Ethnic minority ethnicity and non-UK nationality	7,200 (4,200–6,700)	8,300 (6,900–9,700)	11,600 (9,900–13,400)	15,100 (12,800–17,400)	18,700 (15,800–21,700)

Table A.2: Forecast of number of partners of Regular service personnel

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Civilian spouses (JPA estimate)	50,000 (48,200–51,900)	43,800 (41,600–46,000)	37,200 (34,200–40,100)	29,500 (26,900–32,100)	25,100 (22,600–27,700)
SP married to other SP (JPA estimate)	2,000 (1,900–2,100)	1,700 (1,500–1,800)	1,400 (1,200–1,500)	1,000 (900–1,200)	900 (700–1,000)
Total partners (AFCAS estimate)[50]	99,600 (98,600–100,600)	94,800 (89,100–100,900)	92,700 (85,100–100,200)	91,600 (81,700–101,600)	90,800 (77,300–104,400)

50 This is the forecast of the total number of SP who are married or in an LTR, including SP in a relationship with another SP.

Spouses[51] (AFCAS estimate)	62,700 (61,900–63,500)	59,100 (54,500–63,800)	54,300 (48,200–60,400)	49,500 (41,300–57,600)	44,100 (33,500–54,900)
Long-term relationship partners[52] (AFCAS estimate)	36,900 (36,300–37,500)	35,700 (32,100–39,200)	38,400 (34,100–42,900)	42,000 (36,100–47,900)	46,700 (38,600–54,900)
Dual-serving partners (LTR)[53]	4,900 (4,800–4,900)	4,600 (3,800–5,400)	5,200 (4,200–6,300)	5,900 (4,500–7,300)	6,600 (4,700–8,200)
Dual-serving partners (married)[54]	8,300 (8,200–8,400)	7,700 (6,500–8,900)	7,500 (6,100–8,800)	7,000 (5,500–8,400)	6,300 (4,500–8,000)

Table A.3: Forecast of former partners of Regular SP

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Former spouses receiving support from an SP (JPA estimate)	6,900 (6,600–7,200)	7,400 (6,900–7,900)	8,300 (7,600–9,100)	9,800 (8,300–11,400)	11,300 (8,500–14,100)
Former spouses (AFCAS estimate)	6,600 (6,500–6,700)	6,700 (5,500–7,900)	6,600 (5,100–8,000)	6,600 (4,700–8,400)	6,500 (4,200–8,700)

Table A.4: Forecast of number of children[55] of Regular service personnel

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Children (JPA estimate)	87,400 (85,500–89,300)	84,900 (82,500–87,300)	83,100 (79,800–86,200)	82,000 (77,900–85,900)	83,900 (78,600–89,400)
Children (AFCAS estimate)	113,100 (111,400–114,800)	110,700 (100,200–121,200)	107,100 (93,700–120,000)	104,500 (88,100–121,400)	101,600 (80,900–123,000)

51 This is the forecast of the total number of married SP, including SP married to another SP.

52 This is the forecast of the total number of SP in an LTR, including SP in a relationship with another SP.

53 This is the forecast of the total number of SP in an LTR with another SP.

54 This is the forecast of the total number of SP who are married to another SP.

55 This is children financially supported by Regular personnel

Table A.5: Forecast of number of Volunteer Reserves

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
All Reserve personnel	32,000 (32,000–32,000)	29,900 (29,100–30,700)	28,700 (27,600–29,900)	28,100 (26,700–29,600)	27,900 (26,100–29,800)
Service					
Army	25,800 (25,500–26,000)	24,300 (23,500–25,100)	23,400 (22,300–24,500)	23,000 (21,500–24,500)	22,800 (20,700–24,900)
Royal Navy and Royal Marines	3,200 (3,200–3,300)	3,000 (2,800–3,100)	2,800 (2,500–3,000)	2,600 (2,400–2,900)	2,600 (2,300–2,900)
Royal Air Force	3,000 (3,000–3,000)	2,700 (2,500–2,900)	2,600 (2,400–2,800)	2,500 (2,300–2,800)	2,500 (2,300–2,800)
Gender					
Male	26,900 (26,600–27,100)	24,600 (23,700–25,400)	23,200 (22,000–24,300)	22,600 (21,100–24,000)	22,300 (20,100–24,400)
Female	5,100 (5,000–5,100)	5,400 (5,100–5,700)	5,500 (5,200–5,800)	5,600 (5,300–5,900)	5,600 (5,300–6,000)
Age group (years)					
16–29	7,100 (6,900–7,200)	7,000 (6,300–7,700)	7,000 (6,000–8,100)	7,100 (5,700–8,500)	7,200 (5,300–9,200)
30–34	5,200 (5,100–5,300)	3,900 (3,600–4,100)	3,700 (3,400–4,000)	3,700 (3,200–4,100)	3,700 (3,100–4,300)
35–39	4,700 (4,600–4,800)	3,900 (3,700–4,100)	3,500 (3,300–3,700)	3,400 (3,100–3,700)	3,400 (3,000–3,800)
40–44	4,100 (4,000–4,200)	4,200 (4,000–4,400)	3,900 (3,600–4,100)	3,700 (3,400–4,000)	3,600 (3,200–4,100)
45–49	3,700 (3,700–3,800)	3,700 (3,600–3,900)	3,600 (3,400–3,700)	3,400 (3,200–3,600)	3,300 (3,000–3,600)
50–54	3,800 (3,800–3,900)	3,300 (3,100–3,400)	3,100 (3,000–3,300)	3,000 (2,800–3,100)	2,900 (2,700–3,100)
55–59	2,600 (2,600–2,700)	2,100 (2,000–2,300)	2,000 (1,800–2,100)	1,900 (1,800–2,100)	1,900 (1,700–2,000)
60+	700 (700–700)	1,800 (1,800–1,900)	2,000 (1,900–2,100)	2,000 (1,900–2,000)	1,900 (1,800–2,000)

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Ethnicity and nationality					
White ethnicity and UK nationality	29,800 (29,700–30,000)	27,100 (26,400–27,800)	24,800 (23,900–25,700)	22,500 (21,400–23,700)	20,000 (18,500–21,600)
Ethnic minority ethnicity and UK nationality	1,800 (1,600–1,900)	2,200 (1,700–2,600)	2,800 (2,100–3,500)	3,900 (2,900–4,900)	5,300 (3,900–6,800)
White ethnicity and non-UK nationality	200 (200–200)	300 (200–400)	600 (400–700)	900 (700–1,100)	1,400 (900–1,900)
Ethnic minority ethnicity and non-UK nationality	200 (100–200)	300 (200–400)	500 (400–700)	800 (600–1,000)	1,200 (900–1,500)

Table A.6: Forecast of number of partners of Volunteer Reservists

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Civilian spouses (JPA estimate)	12,300 (11,600–13,000)	11,700 (10,900–12,400)	11,300 (10,300–12,200)	11,200 (10,000–12,400)	11,200 (9,700–12,600)
Reservists married to another SP (JPA Estimate)	600 (600–700)	700 (600–700)	800 (600–900)	900 (700–1,100)	1,100 (800–1,400)
Total partners (RESCAS estimate)	23,000 (22,900–23,100)	21,000 (14,900–26,800)	20,600 (14,500–26,400)	20,300 (13,700–26,800)	20,300 (12,800–27,400)
Spouses (RESCAS estimate	14,200 (14,100–14,300)	13,700 (8,900–18,600)	13,400 (8,700–17,900)	13,100 (7,900–18,100)	13,000 (7,500–18,700)
Long-term relationship partners (RECAS estimate)	8,800 (8,700–8,900)	7,300 (3,700–11,100)	7,200 (3,500–10,900)	7,200 (3,200–11,200)	7,300 (2,500–12,000)

Table A.7: Forecast of number former partners of Volunteer Reservists

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Former spouses receiving support from an SP (JPA estimate)	1,100 (1,100–1,200)	1,100 (1,000–1,200)	1,100 (1,000–1,200)	1,100 (1,000–1,300)	1,200 (900–1,400)
Former spouses (RESCAS estimate)	600 (600–600)	700 (100–1,300)	700 (100–1,300)	600 (100–1,300)	600 (0–1,300)

Table A.8: Forecast of number of children[56] of Volunteer Reservists

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Children (JPA estimate)	19,900 (19,300–20,600)	19,500 (18,700–20,200)	19,700 (18,800–20,700)	20,300 (19,200–21,500)	21,100 (19,700–22,600)
Children (RESCAS estimate)	26,600 (26,400–26,800)	24,400 (22,300–26,500)	23,300 (20,900–25,700)	22,800 (20,000–25,600)	22,500 (19,000–26,000)

Table A.9: Forecasts of number of veterans

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
All veterans	1,737,500 (1,734,800–1,740,300)	1,470,500 (1,467,600–1,473,400)	1,295,900 (1,292,500–1,299,200)	1,167,300 (1,161,500–1,173,200)	1,062,800 (1,055,100–1,070,700)
Service					
Army	1,017,600 (1,015,100–1,020,100)	865,200 (862,700–867,900)	765,800 (762,600–768,900)	692,200 (686,500–697,900)	631,900 (624,400–639,500)
Royal Navy and Royal Marines	1,300 (370,400–372,200)	314,500 (313,600–315,400)	278,400 (277,500–279,300)	252,800 (251,800–253,900)	232,900 (231,700–234,100)

56 This is children financially supported by reservists.

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Royal Air Force	348,700 (347,800–349,600)	290,700 (289,700–291,700)	251,700 (250,800–252,600)	222,300 (221,400–223,200)	198,000 (197,100–199,000)
Gender					
Male	1,486,400 (1,483,700–1,489,200)	1,240,700 (1,237,900–1,243,400)	1,085,300 (1,081,900–1,088,700)	975,100 (969,000–980,900)	887,900 (880,000–895,600)
Female	251,100 (250,900–251,300)	229,800 (229,500–230,100)	210,500 (210,100–211,000)	192,200 (191,700–192,800)	174,900 (174,200–175,600)
Age group (years)					
16–29	82,200 (82,000–82,500)	84,300 (83,000–85,700)	83,900 (81,400–86,300)	83,100 (78,100–88,300)	82,800 (75,800–89,500)
30–34	56,900 (56,400–57,300)	50,700 (49,900–51,600)	48,400 (47,300–49,600)	47,400 (45,800–48,900)	46,800 (44,600–49,000)
35–39	73,900 (73,700–74,200)	63,500 (62,900–64,000)	56,800 (56,100–57,600)	53,400 (52,400–54,400)	51,700 (50,300–53,100)
40–44	87,300 (86,900–87,600)	80,100 (79,400–80,800)	71,400 (70,600–72,300)	65,100 (63,900–66,300)	61,300 (59,900–62,800)
45–49	100,500 (100,400–100,700)	92,800 (92,300–93,300)	84,600 (83,900–85,300)	76,700 (75,800–77,600)	70,700 (69,600–71,800)
50–54	131,500 (131,400–131,600)	109,70 (109,300–110,100)	97,600 (97,100–98,100)	88,100 (87,500–88,700)	80,300 (79,500–81,000)
55–59	164,200 (164,100–164,300)	134,300 (133,900–134,600)	113,900 (113,500–114,300)	100,200 (99,700–100,700)	89,900 (89,400–90,500)
60–64	175,700 (175,700–175,800)	153,000 (152,800–153,200)	129,200 (129,000–129,500)	110,900 (110,600–111,200)	97,400 (97,100–97,800)

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
65–69	160,900 (160,900–161,000)	155,700 (155,600–155,800)	138,300 (138,200–138,500)	119,300 (119,200–119,500)	103,400 (103,100–103,600)
70–74	145,400 (145,200–145,600)	144,100 (143,900–144,300)	135,800 (135,600–136,000)	121,300 (121,100–121,500)	105,900 (105,600–106,100)
75–79	127,300 (127,000–127,500)	122,900 (122,600–123,200)	119,000 (118,600–119,300)	110,500 (110,200–110,900)	98,800 (98,500–99,100)
80–84	143,600 (142,800–144,400)	102,700 (102,200–103,200)	92,400 (91,900–92,800)	86,600 (86,200–87,000)	79,300 (78,900–79,700)
85–89	142,500 (141,200–143,800)	80,700 (79,900–81,500)	61,800 (61,200–62,300)	55,700 (55,200–56,200)	51,400 (51,000–51,900)
90+	145,700 (143,500–147,900)	96,000 (94,200–97,800)	62,700 (61,700–63,800)	48,900 (48,200–49,600)	43,000 (42,500–43,600)
Ethnicity and nationality					
White ethnicity & UK nationality	1,594,400 (1,591,700–1,597,000)	1,334,800 (1,332,100–1,337,500)	1,165,200 (1,162,300–1,168,000)	1,037,300 (1,032,700–1,041,700)	927,700 (922,000–933,600)
Ethnic minority ethnicity & UK nationality	33,200 (32,900–33,500)	37,200 (36,500–37,900)	42,100 (40,300–43,700)	50,100 (46,700–53,800)	63,000 (57,900–68,100)
White ethnicity & non-UK nationality	68,400 (68,300–68,500)	59,800 (59,600–60,000)	52,500 (52,200–52,800)	45,900 (45,500–46,400)	39,800 (39,300–40,400)

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Ethnic minority ethnicity & non-UK nationality	41,600 (41,300–41,900)	38,700 (38,300–39,200)	36,100 (35,500–36,700)	34,000 (33,100–34,800)	32,300 (31,200–33,400)

Table A.10: Forecast of number of partners of veterans

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Partners	1,101,800 (1,072,100–1,131,400)	925,100 (901,600–950,100)	809,400 (787,800–830,100)	724,000 (704,100–743,600)	655,300 (637,400–672,300)

Table A.11: Forecast of number of former partners of veterans

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Divorced or separated (census)	227,600 (175,400–279,200)	196,800 (145,900–246,900)	179,000 (120,000–237,500)	167,400 (101,900–233,600)	159,300 (82,300–237,700)
Previously married (ONS)	332,400 (306,600–357,500)	283,200 (262,400–303,900)	251,100 (232,400–269,500)	226,100 (210,200–242,200)	203,600 (188,800–218,100)

Table A.12: Forecast of number of children of veterans

Category	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
18 and under	430,300 (416,400–444,700)	382,100 (369,600–395,800)	344,200 (332,000–355,800)	316,700 (305,100–328,100)	297,800 (286,800–308,700)
19–24	106,700 (102,900–110,600)	91,600 (88,200–94,800)	80,100 (77,200–82,900)	71,200 (68,700–73,700)	64,400 (62,000–66,900)