

Statistical bulletin

UK armed forces veterans, England and Wales: 2024 and 2025

Data on UK armed forces veterans in England and Wales, from Census 2021 and the Service Leavers Database. These are official statistics in development.

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Notice

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Please note that these statistics are official statistics in development. When this release was first published, it incorrectly displayed the Accredited Official Statistics badge; this was because of an inputting error. The badge has now been removed. We apologise for any confusion caused.

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1 . Main points

- In 2025, there were 1,481,000 veterans aged 16 years and over in England and Wales; 1,388,200 veterans were living in England and 92,800 were living in Wales.
- The local authorities with the highest percentage of veterans in their population were Gosport (11.4%), North Kesteven (9.9%) and Fareham (8.4%), areas with a strong military presence.
- In England, 13.7% of veterans were female and 86.3% were male; in Wales, 13.9% of veterans were female and 86.1% were male.
- Veterans aged 85 years and over accounted for 21.5% of the total veteran population in England and 17.8% in Wales; many of those veterans had been enlisted under the Peacetime National Service that ended in 1963.
- In England and Wales, 1,101,600 veterans (74.4% of the veteran population) served as regular personnel, 303,500 (20.5%) as reserve, and 76,000 (5.1%) as both.

Because of coverage limitations relating to administrative sources, these statistics are likely to underestimate the total number of veterans.

2 . Veterans in England and Wales

This bulletin presents statistics on veterans in England and Wales as of mid-year 2025 (30 June 2025), derived from a combination of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS's) population data and veterans data from the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

The datasets published alongside this bulletin include statistics for both 2024 and 2025. However, we use the more recent 2025 statistics in this publication. Throughout the bulletin, all numbers other than percentages have been rounded to the nearest hundred.

In 2025, there were 1,388,200 people aged 16 years and over in England and 92,800 in Wales who had previously served in the UK armed forces. This is a total of 1,481,000 people across England and Wales.

Table 1: Statistics on people aged 16 years and over who were veterans of the UK armed forces in 2025.

Veteran status	England	Wales	England and Wales
UK armed forces veterans	1,388,200	92,800	1,481,000

Source: The Ministry of Defence and the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. Because of rounding, numbers may not sum exactly.

These veteran statistics cannot be directly compared with the Census 2021 veteran statistics because:

- a large proportion of veterans were elderly on Census Day 2021, meaning that many veterans are likely to have died since then
- census records for which veteran status was imputed are not considered veterans in this analysis
- not all census records are linked to the Statistical Population Dataset (SPD)

3 . Veterans by local authority

In England, the local authorities with the highest percentage of veterans in their population were Gosport (11.4%), North Kesteven (9.9%) and Fareham (8.4%), reflecting a strong military presence there. The local authority with the smallest percentage of veterans in England was Newham (0.4%).

In Wales, the local authorities with the highest percentage of veterans in their population were Isle of Anglesey (5.1%), Conwy (5.0%) and Pembrokeshire (5.0%). The local authority with the smallest percentage of veterans in Wales was Cardiff (2.2%).

Figure 1: The local authorities with the highest proportions of veterans were in areas with a strong military presence

Percentage of the population aged 16 years and over who had previously served in the UK armed forces, 2025, local authorities in England and Wales

Notes

1. Because of rounding, numbers may not sum exactly.
2. The percentages were calculated prior to rounding.

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4 . Veterans by age and sex

In England, 190,300 veterans were female (13.7% of veterans) and 1,197,900 were male (86.3%). In Wales, 12,900 veterans were female (13.9% of veterans) and 79,900 were male (86.1%).

Figure 2: Percentage of total veteran population by age and sex, England and Wales, 2025

Notes

1. Because of rounding, numbers may not sum exactly.
2. The percentages were calculated prior to rounding.
3. In the data accompanying this figure, a '*' denotes that the data cannot be provided for reasons of confidentiality.

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Many veterans are aged 90 and over in both England (0.6% females, 8.6% males) and Wales (0.4% females, 7.0% males). An important contributor to this is that many of the male veterans would have been recruited for Peacetime National Service, which operated between 1949 and 1963. Over a fifth (21.3%) of the veteran population were aged 85 years and over, 21.5% in England and 17.8% in Wales.

5 . Veterans by service type

Most veterans, specifically 1,101,600 (74.4% of veterans), had served as regular personnel, 303,500 (20.5%) as reserve, and 76,000 (5.1%) as both.

Table 2: Veterans by service type: totals and breakdown by sex

	England				Wales			
	Female	Male	Female and Male	percentage of (Female and Male)	Female	Male	Female and Male	percentage of (Female and Male)
Regular	114,200	918,500	1,032,600	74.4	8,000	60,900	68,900	74.2
Reserve	72,200	212,600	284,800	20.5	4,600	14,100	18,700	20.2
Both	3,900	66,900	70,800	5.1	300	4,900	5,200	5.6

Source: The Ministry of Defence and the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. Because of rounding, numbers may not sum exactly.
2. The percentages were calculated prior to rounding.

In England, the proportion of veterans who had served as regular personnel was highest in the three local authorities that also had the highest percentage of veterans as a proportion of the population; Gosport (88.3%), North Kesteven (86.6%), and Fareham (85.0%).

In Wales, the proportion of veterans who had served as regular personnel was highest in Isle of Anglesey (79.7%), Bridgend (79.0%) and Pembrokeshire (78.7%).

A larger proportion of veteran women than men had served only as reserve personnel in both England and Wales; with 37.9% of female veterans in England and 35.6% in Wales, compared with 17.8% of male veterans in England and 17.7% in Wales. However, there was a noticeable dependence of these proportions on age, for both nations.

In England, the proportion of male veterans who had served as regular personnel only was between 68% and 88% for all ages, from 21 years and over. For female veterans, the proportion of those aged between 21 and 60 years old who had served as regular personnel only ranged between 27% and 54%; for those aged 65 and over, it ranged between 65% and 84%.

Similarly in Wales, the proportion of male veterans who had served as regular personnel only was between 72% and 100% for all ages of 21 years and over. For female veterans, however, the proportion of those in the ages between 21 and 60 years old who had served as regular personnel only ranged between 23% and 66%. However, for female veterans aged 65 years and over, the proportion ranged between 67% and 100%.

6 . Veterans by source

For England, 97,300 veterans (7.0%) were exclusively in the Service Leavers Database (SLD), 1,058,100 (76.2%) were exclusively in Census 2021, and 232,800 (16.8%) were in both. Most of England's older veteran population were recorded in the census, while the SLD contained more of the younger veteran population (see Figure 3).

For Wales, 7,400 veterans (8.0%) were exclusively in the SLD, 68,700 (74.0%) were exclusively in the census, and 16,800 (18.0%) were in both. Like England, most of the older veterans were recorded in the census. However, the SLD contributed to a higher proportion of veterans aged between 21 and 41 years in Wales than in England.

Using both the SLD and Census 2021 data is essential for producing statistics about the veteran population. Some people would have become veterans since Census Day, so we only have information on them from the SLD. The SLD data would include all veterans aged under 20 years from mid-year 2025, as they will all have been aged under 16 years on Census Day, 21 March 2021. Older veterans likely left service before Census Day and are more likely to be recorded by Census 2021.

Figure 3: Percentage of veterans contained in Census 2021, Service Leavers Database, and both, for each age, for England and Wales

Notes

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- 3. In the data accompanying this figure, a '*' denotes that the data cannot be provided for reasons of confidentiality.

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Table 3: Veterans in Census 2021, Service Leavers Database (SLD) or both, for England and Wales, split by sex

	England		Wales	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Census	157,900 (83.0%)	900,300 (75.2%)	10,500 (81.3%)	58,100 (72.8%)
SLD	10,200 (5.3%)	87,100 (7.3%)	800 (5.9%)	6,600 (8.3%)
Both	22,200 (11.7%)	210,500 (17.6%)	1,700 (12.9%)	15,100 (19.0%)

Source: The Ministry of Defence and the Office for National Statistics

Notes

- 1. Because of rounding, numbers may not sum exactly.
- 2. The percentages were calculated prior to rounding.

The percentage of veterans exclusively in Census 2021 is higher for female than male veterans in both England and Wales (Table 3).

7 . Data on UK armed forces veterans, England and Wales statistics

[UK armed forces veterans statistics, England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 13 October 2026

Statistics on veterans by local authority, age, sex and service type, in England and Wales.

8 . Glossary

Population base

The 2024 and 2025 Statistical Population Dataset version 6.0 (SPD V6.0) for England and Wales, filtered for those aged 16 years and over.

Statistical Population Dataset

A dataset that includes the usually resident population, on a reference date (30 June 2025) for a given year in England and Wales. It is constructed from administrative sources that are linked together, and the combined evidence is used to derive who is usually resident, and their characteristics of age, sex and geographic location.

UK armed forces veterans

People who have previously served in the UK armed forces. This includes those who have served for at least one day in the UK armed forces, either as regular, reserves, or merchant mariners, who have seen duty on legally defined military operations. Further information is provided in the [Government Analysis Function's Harmonised standard for previous UK armed forces service guidance](#) (currently under development).

Usually resident population

The standard definition outlined in the [United Nations' Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses \(PDF, 3.76MB\)](#). It includes only people who reside in a country for 12 months or more, making them usually resident in that country. Visitors and short-term migrants are excluded.

9 . Data sources and quality

Data sources

We have used records of individuals aged 16 years and over from the Service Leavers Database (SLD) provided by the Ministry of Defence (MOD), and from Census 2021. The SLD gives information on individuals who left the UK armed forces from 1975 onwards. The census provides accredited official statistics of veterans as of Census Day, 21 March 2021.

Using the two sources together results in improved coverage of the veteran population compared with using either source individually. Census 2021 records veterans who were residing in England and Wales on Census Day. This includes older veterans who are not in the SLD (for example, those who undertook Peacetime National Service, which ended in 1963). However, the SLD is the only source of information for veterans who left the armed forces after Census Day 2021.

The SLD (from which the NHS number is used) and Census 2021 are linked to the Statistical Population Dataset (SPD). The latter is a dataset that includes the usually resident population on a reference date for a given year (30 June 2025 in this bulletin) in England and Wales. For more information on the sources, linkage methods and quality checks, see our [UK armed forces veterans, England and Wales quality and methods guide](#).

Service Leavers Database

This database provides information for service personnel who have left the UK armed forces, sourced from legacy personnel systems and the current system, Joint Personnel Administration. The SLD provides service personnel data from 1 January 1975 to 30 June 2025.

Census 2021

During Census 2021, a new question was added to the census that asked those aged 16 years and over, as of Census Day (21 March 2021): "Have you previously served in the UK Armed Forces?". The response options available were "Yes, previously served in Regular Armed Forces", "Yes, previously served in Reserve Armed Forces" and "No".

More quality and methodology information

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [UK armed forces veterans, England and Wales quality and methods guide](#).

10 . Related links

[UK armed forces veterans, England and Wales quality and methods guide](#)

Quality and methods guide | Released 13 October 2026

What the UK armed forces veteran statistics cover, how we produce them, and their quality and comparability. Includes definitions and latest, past, and upcoming changes.

[Producing UK armed forces veteran statistics for England and Wales. research update: 2023](#)

Article | Released 28 August 2025

Research on producing statistics for those who have served in the UK armed forces in England and Wales, using the Service Leavers Database and Census 2021.

[Feasibility research on producing UK armed forces veteran statistics for England and Wales: 2021](#)

Article | Released 20 June 2023

Feasibility research on producing statistics on the population who have previously served in the UK armed forces in England and Wales using the Service Leavers Database and Census 2021.

[UK armed forces veterans, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 10 November 2022

UK armed forces veterans' population who have either previously served in the regular forces, reserve forces or both, Census 2021 data.

11 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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