



Experimental Statistics

Ex-service personnel in the prison population, England and Wales

Prison population: 30 June 2018

Since January 2015, as part of the Basic Custody Screening (BCS) interview, individuals entering custody have been asked whether they had previously served in the armed services¹, and these responses have been recorded.

These data have been matched to the prison population data to produce an estimate of the number (and percentage) of ex-service personnel in the England & Wales prison population.

Matched sample details

Of the prison population as at 30 June 2018:

- **25%** were first received prior to 01 January 2015 (and so would not have been asked the ex-service personnel BCS question when they entered custody)
- Of the remaining 75% who were received on, or after, 01 January 2015 we have a matched YES / NO response for **82%** (the “**match rate**”).

When the above two points are taken together, we have a matched YES / NO response for 50,983 (**62%**) of the total prison population as at 30 June 2018 (the “**coverage**”).

Estimate of ex-service personnel in the prison population

**An estimated 4.0% were
ex-service personnel**

Of the 50,983 (62%) “coverage” in the prison population as at 30 June 2018, 2,032 (4.0%) had indicated they were ex-service personnel.

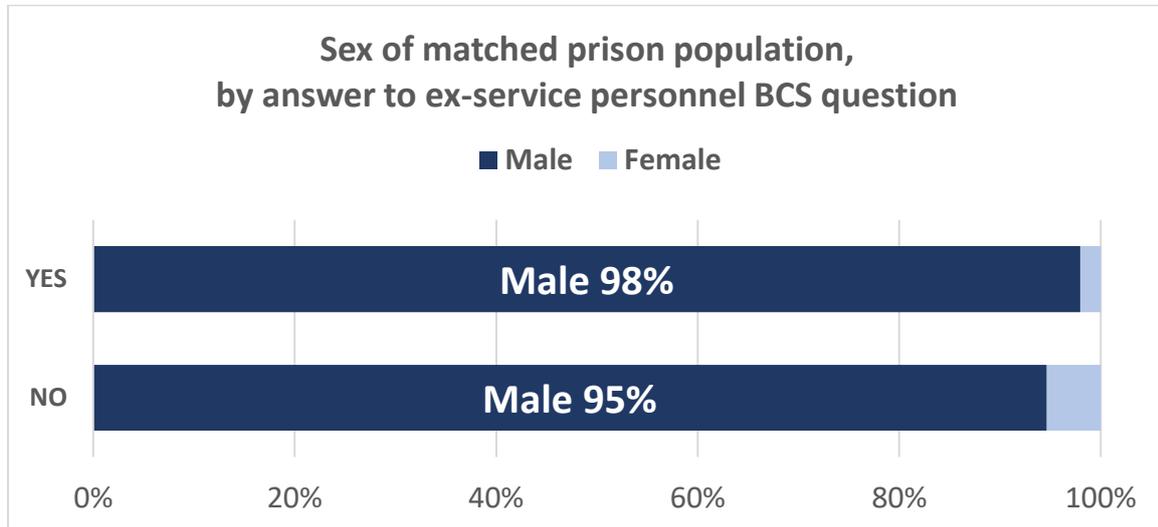
¹ “**Have [you] been a member of the armed services?**” – the wording of the question captures those who reported serving in any armed service organisation around the world, not just those serving in the UK Armed Forces. It also captures those who had served as either a regular or reserve member. As such the estimates presented here are expected to be higher than previous estimation exercises that have just focused on those having served in the UK regular Armed Forces.

Demographics

Sex

There is a higher proportion of males (98%) in the ex-service personnel cohort, than the non ex-service personnel prison population (95%).

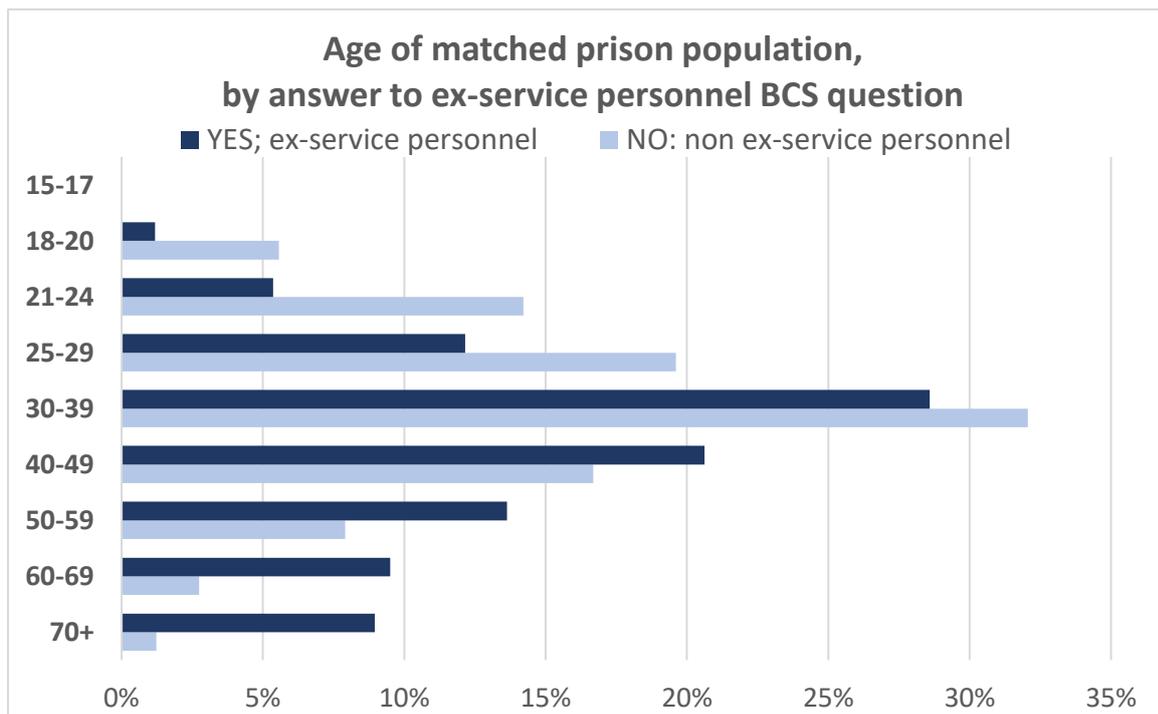
Figure 1: Matched prison population, by ex-service personnel status and sex



Age

Those in the ex-service personnel cohort (mean age 44 years) are on average nine years older than those in the non ex-service personnel prison population group (mean age 35 years). The chart below shows the age distribution for both groups.

Figure 2: Matched prison population, by ex-service personnel status and age group



National Service

The observed age difference is likely due in part to National Service. Those born before 01 October 1939 would have been in the eligible cohort for National Service in the UK (this equates to those aged 78 or over as at 30 June 2018).

- 5% of the ex-service personnel prison population group as at 30 June 2018 were born before 01 October 1939.
- This compares to just 0.2% of the non ex-service personnel group.

Nationality

The wording of the question asked (see *Footnote 1; Page 1*) does not allow us to produce an estimate to just include those who reported that they had served in the UK Armed Forces, however we are able to use self-declared prisoner nationality as a potential proxy for this.

Figure 3: Matched ex-service personnel in the prison population, by nationality group

Total matched ex-service personnel in prison population	2,032
<i>Of which:</i>	
Nationality Group	
British National	1,832
Foreign National	192
Nationality Not Recorded	8

A clear limitation to this approach is that those of foreign nationalities can serve in the UK Armed Forces, and those of British nationality may serve in a non-UK armed organisation.

Just considering British Nationals, 1,832 out of the 50,983 total matched prison population as at 30 June 2018 were British national ex-service personnel, which represents **3.6%** of the matched prison population.

This estimate very closely matches the estimate of **3.5%** from the joint Ministry of Defence & Ministry of Justice study, conducted in 2010², which included those who had served in the UK regular Armed Forces.

Feedback

As this is a new Experimental Statistics product, we are seeking feedback on the content and presentation of this release. This feedback will help to inform what we look to include and how we present future releases.

Please send any feedback to:

statistics.enquiries@justice.gov.uk

² 'Ex-armed forces prisoners in England and Wales: 15 September 2010'; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ex-armed-forces-prisoners-in-england-and-wales-statistics-2010>

Experimental Statistics

Experimental statistics are a subset of newly developed or innovative official statistics that are undergoing evaluation.³

In light of the recent and on-going public and policy interest around vulnerable offenders (including ex-service personnel) in prison, the decision has been taken to publish these statistics to meet this evidence gap. As this release is the first release of this data, it should be considered to be Experimental Statistics.

The data presented here, and in the accompanying tables, provide an estimate of the percentage of the prison population who have served in the armed services, as well as demographic information about both population groups (those who reported serving in the armed services, and those who declared that they had not served).

These experimental statistics complement the existing Offender Management Statistics Quarterly publications⁴, which have been designed as National Statistics. These quarterly publications include (amongst other things) demographic information about the prison population (including by sex, age and nationality group, as presented in this Experimental Statistics release).

The expectation is that this release will be published on an annual basis, with the next release of these data scheduled for October 2019.

Contact

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³ 'Government Statistical Service Guidance on Experimental Statistics';
<https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/guidance-on-experimental-statistics/>

⁴ 'Offender management statistics quarterly'
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>