



Ministry  
of Defence

# UK Regular Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey Results 2023



● Annual

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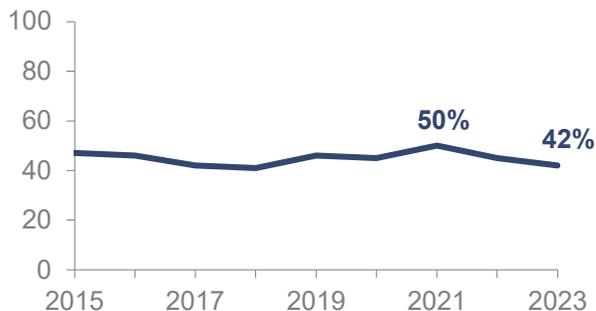
United Kingdom

This statistical release provides results from the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) 2023, along with results from previous years.

Statistics from AFCAS are used by both internal Ministry of Defence (MOD) teams and external bodies to inform the development of policy and measure the impact of decisions affecting personnel, including major programmes such as the Armed Forces Covenant.

## Satisfaction with Service life in general has fallen for the second year in a row

In 2021, the level of satisfaction with Service life rose to 50%. This is reflective of several improvements reported in AFCAS 2021.



Since then, satisfaction with Service life in general has fallen eight percentage points to 42%, back in line with the level reported in 2018.

## Attitudes towards financial-related aspects of Service life continue to decline

Satisfaction with the rate of basic pay has fallen considerably in the last two years, returning to its lowest recorded level, at 31%.

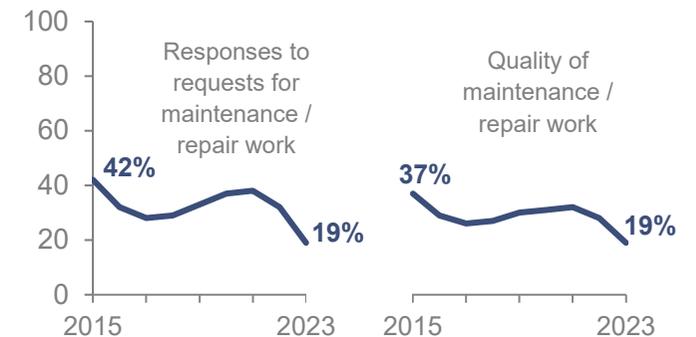
The same proportion of personnel agree that the pay and benefits they receive are fair for the work they do, down from 46% in 2021. 51% disagree.

Furthermore, satisfaction with allowances has fallen 19 percentage points since 2021, to 39%, back in line with 2012 levels.

These decreases may have been influenced, at least in part, by cost of living pressures and rise in inflation.

## Satisfaction with some aspects of SFA has fallen considerably since 2022

Satisfaction with responses to, and quality of maintenance/repair work of Service Family Accommodation (SFA) has fallen markedly since last year.



Satisfaction with the overall standard of SFA has also fallen from 52% last year, to 46%.

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**Background Quality Report:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-index>

Would you like to be added to our **contact list** so that we can inform you about updates to these statistics and consult you if we are thinking of making changes? You can subscribe to updates by emailing [Analysis-Publications@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Analysis-Publications@mod.gov.uk)

## Contents

Section	Page
1 - Morale, Commitment and Engagement	1
2 - Work and Line Management	3
3 - Leadership and Managing Change	4
4 - Working with Others	6
5 - Allowances, Pay and Pension	7
6 - Deployment	9
7 - Training, Development and Career	10
8 - Future Plans	12
9 - Work/Life Balance	14
10 - Fairness at Work	16
11 - Health, Fitness and Welfare	17
12 - Accommodation and Catering	19
13 - Family Life and Being Part of Society	21
14 - Taking Action	22
Methodology	23
Glossary	26
Further Information	28

## About these statistics

The 2023 Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) was distributed to a sample of 29,968 trained UK Regular Armed Forces personnel between September 2022 and February 2023 using both online and paper questionnaires. Participants were chosen using (disproportionate) stratified simple random sampling, designed to ensure sufficient responses from each Service and from each rank group within each Service, whilst minimising respondent burden.

### Response Rate

Overall, 9,176 responses were received, representing a response rate of 31%. This is a slight decrease on the response rate last year (33%).

### Reference Tables

The Reference Tables, Background Quality Report (BQR) and AFCAS 2023 questionnaires are published as separate documents and can be found on the [AFCAS webpage](#). The BQR has full details of the survey methodology, analysis, and data quality considerations.

*Note: Throughout the report, where statistical significance tests are applied, they are carried out at the 99% confidence level. This is at a fairly stringent level and means that there should be less than a 1% (1 in 100) chance that differences observed in AFCAS results are not representative of the Armed Forces as a whole. This reduces the likelihood of wrongly concluding that there has been an actual change based on the survey results, which only cover a sample of the Regular Armed Forces.*

### Changes since 2020 and COVID-19

AFCAS 2021 was in field during a period of two national lockdowns, imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. AFCAS 2022 was in field September 2021 - February 2022 and, whilst COVID-19 continued to feature heavily in daily life, national restrictions were being eased over this period. Several areas of improvement were reported in 2021, following favourable increases since 2020 with many of the changes driven by Army and RAF personnel. Improvements were noted in areas such as engagement, job satisfaction, pay, change and future plans. However, last year, many of the increases reported in these areas reverted back to 2020 levels. These changes may have been reflective of personnel re-evaluating their employment situation following the lifting of restrictions, as attitudes towards some areas of Service life shift back to pre-COVID levels. In 2023, attitudes in some of these areas continue to decline.

### Data Quality Note

The RAF AFCAS went online only in 2023. To better understand the impact of this methodological change, 2022 data were used to compare previously published RAF tables against corresponding online only results. A small number of tables now include a footnote to indicate the potential impact on results of this change in methodology.

### A National Statistics Publication

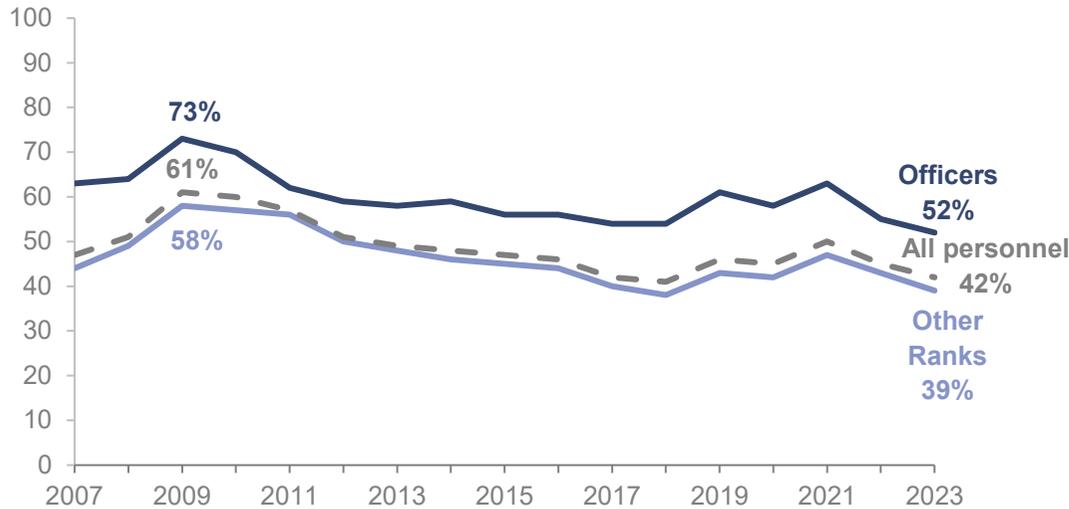
The United Kingdom Statistics Authority designated these statistics as National Statistics on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2013, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Further details about the development of this report since its confirmation as National Statistics, e.g. changes to the report format, can be found in the Background Quality Report.

# Section 1 - Morale, Commitment and Engagement

Section 1 covers how personnel perceive their self, Unit and Service morale, and satisfaction with topics including aspects of their job, commitment and engagement.

## Satisfaction with Service life in general has fallen for the second year in a row, returning to the level reported in 2018

% satisfied with Service life in general



In 2021, satisfaction with Service life in general rose to 50%. Last year, satisfaction fell across the Services, with overall satisfaction returning to pre-COVID levels reported in 2020.

The decrease shown since 2022 has largely been driven by RAF personnel, as their satisfaction with Service life falls to its lowest level since this question was first asked in 2007. Changes in attitudes amongst RAF personnel this year are discussed further in Section 3.

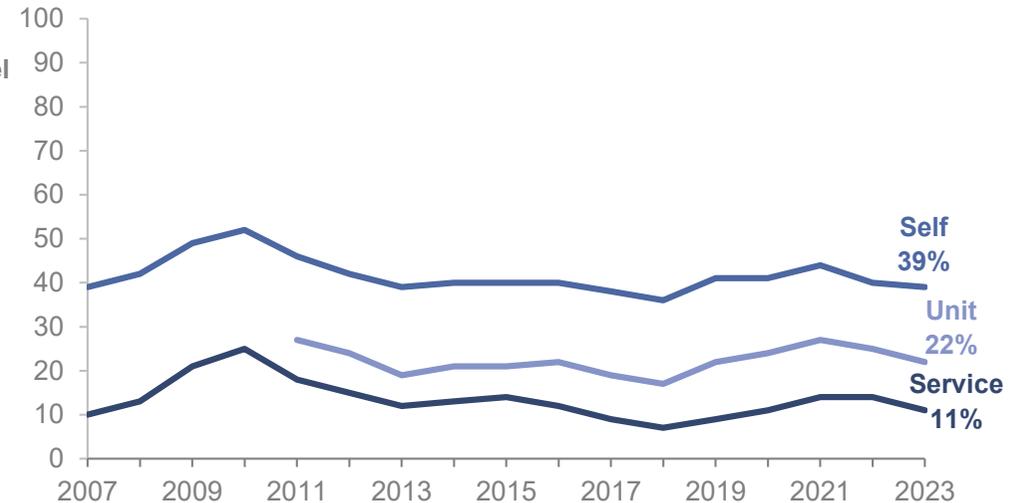
Levels of satisfaction across the other Services remain unchanged since last year. Army personnel are the most likely to be satisfied with Service life (45%), with RAF satisfaction (37%) falling in line with Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel (36% and 37%, respectively).

Officers consistently rate their satisfaction with Service life higher than Other Ranks.

Personnel are asked how they would rate the level of morale of their self, their Unit, and their Service as a whole based on a five-point scale from 'Very high' to 'Very low'.

## The proportion of personnel rating their Service morale as high has fallen slightly this year, but remains above the low level reported in 2018

% reporting high...morale



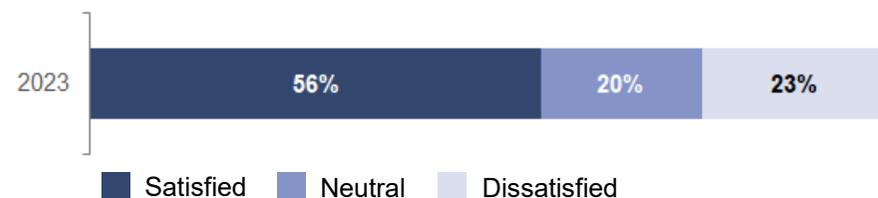
High Service morale has fallen three percentage points this year to 11%, a return to the level reported in 2020. This decrease is particularly evident for RAF personnel.

Personnel are more positive about their own morale, with nearly four in ten (39%) reporting high self morale, unchanged since last year. Over a fifth (22%) of personnel report high Unit morale.

Whilst these proportions are considerably higher than high Service morale, AFCAS consistently shows year-on-year that Service morale is rated lower than Unit or self morale.

## More than half (56%) of personnel are satisfied with their job in general, unchanged since last year

% satisfied/dissatisfied with my job in general



Following a decrease last year, the current level of job satisfaction is consistent with many of the levels previously reported prior to 2021.

## Around a third (34%) of personnel feel valued by their Service, falling for the second year in a row

The proportion of personnel feeling valued reached its peak in 2021, at 41%, but has since fallen seven percentage points. The decrease this year is particularly evident for RAF personnel, with overall results now back in line with those reported in 2019.

## Half of personnel do not believe that their family benefits from being a Service family, up three percentage points since 2022

Yet, the majority (80%) of personnel still agree that their family is supportive of their career in the Services.

## The proportions of personnel that feel proud (74%), and feel a strong personal attachment to their Service (57%) remain unchanged in 2023, following decreases last year

Other aspects of engagement, such as feeling their Service inspires personnel to be the best at their job (43%), and motivates them to achieve the Services' objectives (38%) have declined for the second year in a row, returning to levels of agreement previously reported in 2019.

Although the decreases reported since 2022 are particularly evident amongst RAF personnel, levels of agreement for the other Services still remain below 2021 levels.

## Engagement Index

The Engagement Index is calculated using the same method as that used in the [Civil Service People Survey](#), using the following questions: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following? (a) I am proud to be in the [Service]; (b) I would recommend joining the [Service] to others; (c) I feel a strong personal attachment to the [Service]; (d) The [Service] inspires me to do the best in my job; (e) The [Service] motivates me to help it achieve its objectives.

## The Engagement Index for Service personnel is 60%, down four percentage points since its peak level in 2021

The overall engagement score has fallen for the second year in a row, back in line with the level reported in 2019. This year's decrease is largely due to a drop in engagement amongst RAF personnel.

Officers continue to be more engaged than Other Ranks in 2023 (67% and 59% respectively).

## Royal Marines and Army personnel have higher Engagement scores than the other Services

Engagement Index



The Engagement Index for Royal Marines remains high, despite their personnel being the least satisfied with aspects of their work including: their job in general (47%), the challenge in their job (48%) and the sense of achievement they get from their work (41%).

## Civilian personnel comparison

In the latest [Civil Service People Survey](#) (2022), MOD Civilians had an Engagement Index of 65%, in line with the 2021 results, but below the level reported in 2020 (67%).

## Section 2 - Work and Line Management

Section 2 focuses on the work of Service personnel, their equipment, line management and teamwork.

### Overall, levels of agreement with various aspects of work have fallen this year, returning to levels previously reported

These changes are largely driven by Army personnel, as attitudes towards work across the other Services remain relatively stable.

For example, the proportion of Army personnel that agree they are given sufficient authority to make decisions is 60% this year, back in line with 2020 results, down from 64% in 2022.

### Attitudes towards several aspects of line management remain similar to 2022 levels

For example, the proportions of personnel who agree that their immediate superior sets a positive example, and tells them what is going on at work are unchanged since last year at 71% and 67%, respectively.

However, levels of agreement with other aspects of line management have fallen back in line with 2020 results. Similar to the above, these changes are largely being driven by Army personnel.

### Army personnel are less likely to agree with several aspects of line management compared to the other Services

% agree that their immediate superior is supportive over work/life balance issues



Army personnel are also less likely to agree that their immediate superior supports them in their job (74%) than the other Services (between 78% and 80%).

### Overall, attitudes towards team members remain high but below peak levels reported in 2021

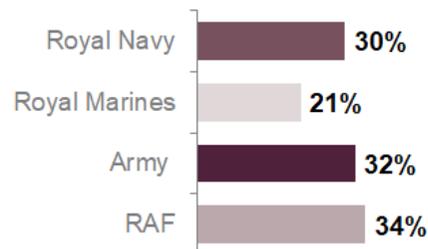
For example, eight in ten personnel (80%) agree that they have confidence in themselves as a team, down four percentage points since 2021. Whilst less than eight in ten (78%) agree that people in their team can be relied upon when things get difficult, down three percentage points since 2021.

### Around a third of personnel are satisfied with the standard and availability of major equipment, unchanged this year following decreases in 2022

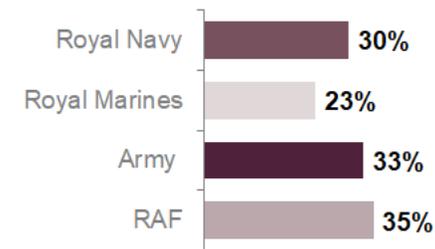
The picture is similar for personal equipment. Satisfaction with the standard and availability of personal equipment remains in line with last year's results at 53% and 45%, respectively.

### Royal Marines are the least satisfied with the standard and availability of both major and personal equipment

% satisfied with the standard of major equipment



% satisfied with the availability of major equipment



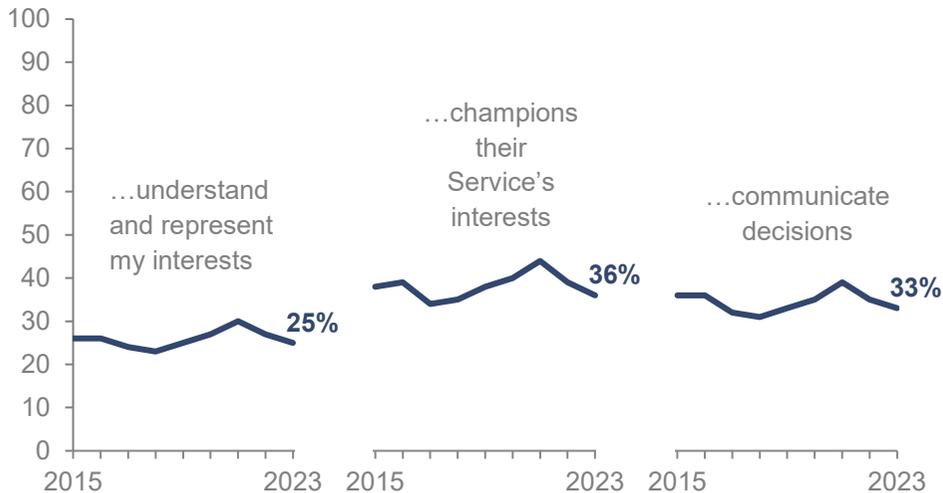
Whilst there is no difference in satisfaction with aspects of major equipment between Officers and Other Ranks, Officers are more satisfied with both the availability and standard of personal equipment than Other Ranks.

## Section 3 - Leadership and Managing Change

Section 3 focuses on the views of personnel about their senior leaders, and about how change is managed.

### Attitudes towards senior leaders remain below peak levels reported in 2021

% agree that their senior leaders...



Attitudes towards senior leaders improved in 2021 but declined the following year, back in line with 2020 levels. This year, levels of agreement with some aspects of senior leadership have fallen for a second year in a row. For example, the proportion of personnel who agree senior leaders are keen to listen to Service people's feedback has returned to 2019 levels, at 36%, down from 44% in 2021. The decreases reported since last year are largely driven by RAF personnel.

### Royal Marines are the most likely to agree that they have confidence in the leadership of their Service

Over four in ten (43%) Royal Marines have confidence in the leadership of their Service. This is followed by Army (37%), Royal Navy (28%) and then RAF personnel (18%).

Recent changes in attitudes amongst RAF personnel, including those reported here, are explored further on the next page.

### Perceptions about how well change is managed at both team, and Unit/Establishment level, are unchanged since last year

Overall, around six in ten (61%) personnel agree that change is managed well in their team, whilst four in ten agree that change is managed well in their Unit/Establishment.

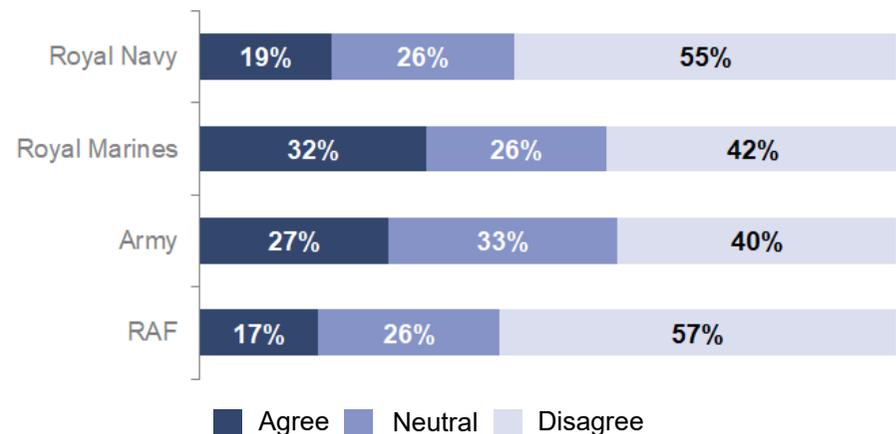
Whilst Officers are more satisfied than Other Ranks with how well change is managed in their team and their Unit, Other Ranks are more satisfied with how well change is managed in their Service.

### Just under a quarter (24%) of personnel agree that change is managed well in their Service, down three percentage points since last year, returning to 2019 levels

This decrease is largely driven by RAF personnel and subsequently brings their results in line with Royal Navy personnel.

### Royal Navy and RAF personnel are the least positive about how well change is managed in their Service

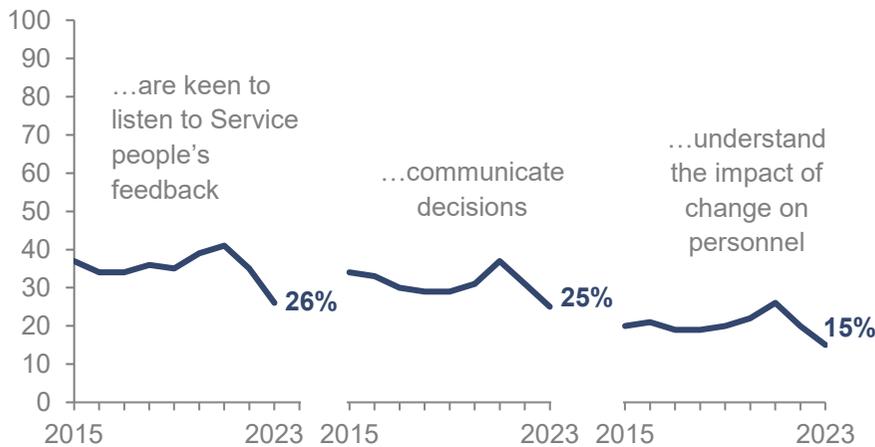
% agree/disagree that change is managed well in their Service



In 2023, several areas of AFCAS report marked decreases in attitudes amongst RAF personnel, with some results falling to their lowest levels since these questions were first asked. Areas affected include senior leadership, how change is managed in the Service, taking action and satisfaction with Service life. These decreases are in contrast with the other Services, as their results in these areas remain relatively unchanged since last year. This page explores these findings.

### Attitudes towards RAF senior leaders have fallen for the second year in a row, to their lowest ever levels

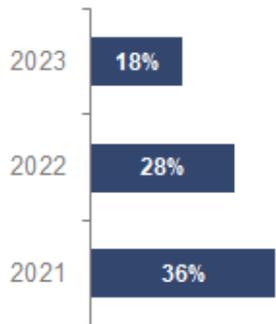
% agree that RAF senior leaders...



Whilst attitudes towards RAF senior leaders rose in 2021, they have fallen markedly in the last two years to their lowest reported levels. As a result of these decreases, RAF personnel are now the least positive about their senior leaders compared to the other Services.

### Confidence in the leadership of the RAF has halved in the last two years, to its lowest level since this question was first asked in 2015

% agree that they have confidence in the leadership of the RAF



RAF personnel are now less likely to agree that they have confidence in their leadership, compared to the other Services.

In addition, the proportion of RAF personnel who agree that their leaders are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace has fallen 15 percentage points to 57% since 2022. These results are discussed further in Section 14: Taking Action).

### Less than a fifth (17%) of RAF personnel agree that change is managed well in their Service, back in line with 2018 results

This is 14 percentage points lower than the peak reported in 2021. Over the same period, attitudes towards how well change is managed in their immediate working team have remained stable (63% in 2023).

The decreases reported on this page are in contrast with RAF personnel's attitudes towards job satisfaction, work, line management and workload, for example, which remain relatively stable this year.

The impact of these declining attitudes may be somewhat reflected in other areas of Service life:

### RAF satisfaction with Service life in general has fallen nine percentage points since last year to 37%, its lowest level since this question was first asked in 2007

Whilst high self morale remains unchanged this year, the proportion of RAF personnel rating their Service morale as high has fallen to just 7%, back in line with the level reported in 2019.

RAF personnel feel less proud (71%), less engaged (57%) and less valued (26%) this year. Average wellbeing scores for life satisfaction and happiness amongst RAF personnel have also fallen this year, whilst fewer RAF personnel rated their anxiety as 'very low'.

Analysis of free-text comments from RAF personnel provides some insight that may help explain the attitudinal changes reported here. For example, several references are made to senior leaders, recent media coverage of the RAF and its impact on public perception and morale, and large-scale strategic changes within Air Transformation programmes.

The RAF AFCAS went online only in 2023. Analysis suggests that this methodology change has had a minimal impact on results. Further information is available in the [AFCAS 2023 Background Quality Report](#).

## Section 4 - Working with Others

Section 4 focuses on working relationships with Reserves, MOD civil servants and contractors. The [Defence Reform Review of 2011](#) called for the closer integration of Regulars, Reserves, civil servants and contractors to ensure that Defence is supported by a sustainable, effective force.

### The levels of working contact with the Reserves, MOD civil servants and contractors remain unchanged this year following decreases in 2022

Less working contact may be due, in part, to how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way personnel integrate at work. Working practices such as higher incidences of remote working amongst both Service and Civilian staff than in previous years may well have impacted the level of contact with those outside their immediate working team.

### Less than half (47%) of personnel have had working contact with Reserves in the last two years

Overall levels of working contact with the Reserves had been fairly stable since this question was first asked in 2015. However, in 2022 the proportion of personnel who have worked with the Reserves fell and remains at this low level this year.

RAF personnel remain the most likely to have worked with the Reserves (56%), whilst the Royal Marines are least likely to have had working contact (33%).

### Over half (56%) of personnel have had working contact with MOD civil servants in the last two years

RAF personnel are also the most likely to have worked with MOD civil servants (70%), whilst the Royal Marines are the least likely to have had working contact (46%).

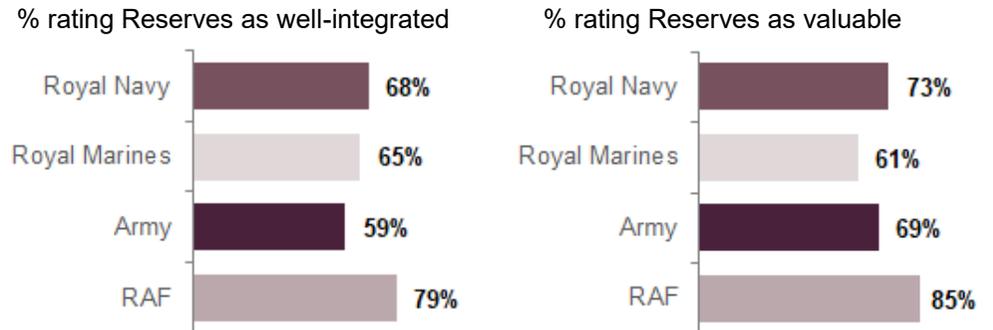
### Just over half (52%) of personnel have had working contact with MOD contractors in the last two years

<sup>1</sup> Based on those who have had working contact with Reserves (47% in 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Based on those who have had working contact with MOD civil servants (56% in 2023).

<sup>3</sup> Based on those who have had working contact with MOD contractors (52% in 2023).

### RAF personnel are the most likely to rate the Reserves as well-integrated, and to rate their contribution as valuable



These results are relatively unchanged in recent years, but have increased considerably since 2015. Overall, the proportion of personnel who report that the Reserves are well-integrated<sup>1</sup> has increased from 52% in 2015 to 65% this year. The proportion who rate the contribution of the Reserves as valuable has increased from 62% to 73% over the same period.

However, these improvements are not reported for Royal Marines over the same period, as their results remain in line with 2015 levels.

### Working experiences with MOD civil servants remain highly positive this year

Around eight in ten (79%) of those who have had working contact with MOD civil servants<sup>2</sup> rate their contribution as valuable, whilst nearly seven in ten (69%) feel MOD civil servants are well-integrated.

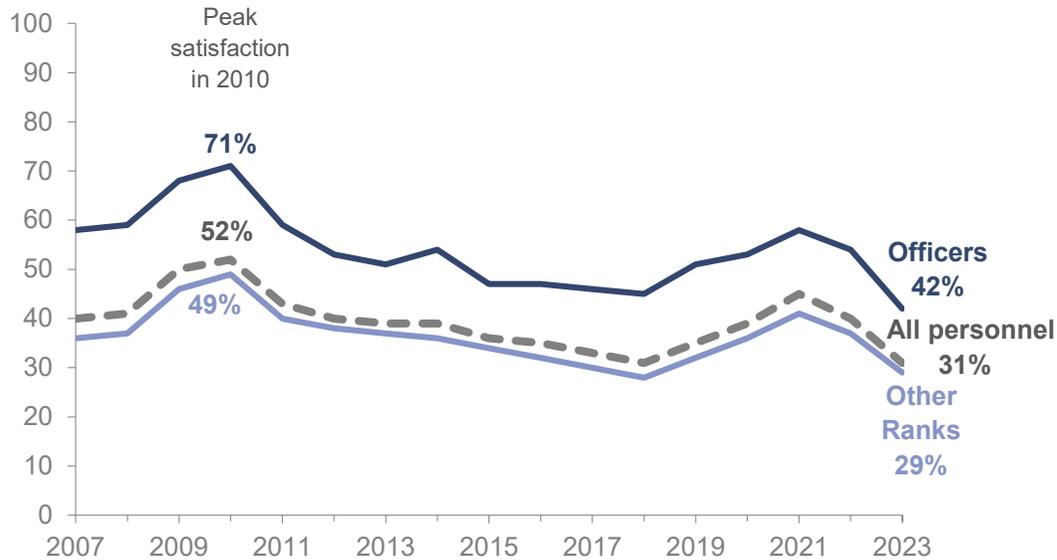
Of those who have had working contact with MOD contractors<sup>3</sup>, 68% rate their contribution as valuable, whilst over half (55%) rate MOD contractors as well-integrated. Both levels have remained relatively unchanged since 2020, and remain in line with the 2015 results when these questions were first asked.

## Section 5 - Allowances, Pay and Pension

Section 5 covers the attitudes of Service personnel towards their pay, pension and allowances, as well as satisfaction with access to the Joint Personnel Administration System (JPA).

### Satisfaction with the rate of basic pay has returned to its lowest recorded level this year, at just over three in ten (31%)

% satisfied with basic rate of pay



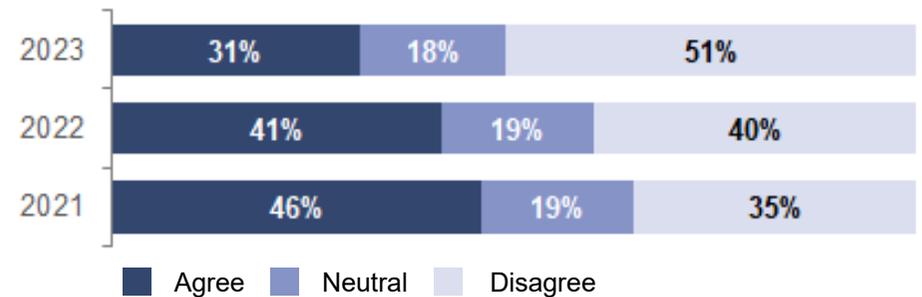
Between 2018 and 2021 satisfaction with pay had been following a steady, increasing trend. However, in the last two years, the level of overall satisfaction has decreased 13 percentage points, remaining well below peak satisfaction reported in 2010.

A similar picture is reflected elsewhere in this section as attitudes towards many pay-related items continue to decline, with decreases often reported across all Services, and for both Officers and Other Ranks.

Factors such as the cost of living and rise in inflation may have impacted these results. In addition, the Armed Forces' Pay Review Body (AFPRB) recommended a pay award for all personnel, up to 1-star rank, in 2022/23. This followed a public sector 'pay pause' for which the AFPRB recommended only those earning under £24,000 receive a pay rise in 2021/22. These announcements may also have influenced the views of personnel regarding their pay and benefits. Details on Armed Forces pay and allowances are available in the [AFPRB's 51<sup>st</sup> report](#).

### Just over three in ten (31%) personnel agree that the pay and benefits they receive are fair for the work they do, falling for the second year in a row; just over half disagree

% agree/disagree the pay and benefits they receive are fair



The level of agreement is back in line with 2018, the lowest proportion reported since this question was first asked in 2015. These decreases are reflected across the Services and for both Officers and Other Ranks.

Officers are more likely to agree (39%) compared to Other Ranks (30%). Royal Marines are the least likely to agree (20%) compared to the other Services.

### Less than three in ten (27%) personnel agree that the X-Factor payment is enough compensation for Service lifestyle; more than half (55%) disagree

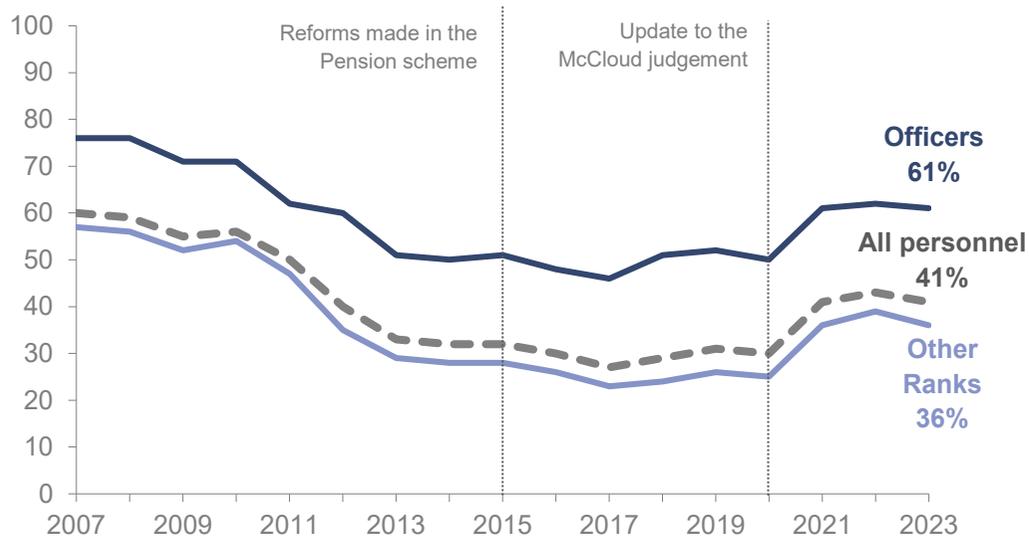
Levels of agreement have fallen for the last two years, from a high of 38% in 2021, and are now back in line with the low levels reported in 2018. As above, the decreases in recent years are reflected across the Services.

Officers are more likely to agree that X-Factor is enough compensation (37%) than Other Ranks (25%). Royal Marines are the least likely to agree (17%) compared to the other Services.

**X-Factor** Additional payment to Armed Forces personnel to compensate for differences in lifestyle, working conditions and expectations compared to civilian equivalents.

**Overall satisfaction with pension benefits has fallen slightly this year to 41%, returning to the level reported in 2021**

% satisfied with their pension benefits



This decrease in satisfaction is particularly evident for Royal Marine Officers.

Satisfaction levels amongst Royal Navy, Army and RAF personnel are fairly similar, with Royal Marines personnel the least satisfied with their pension benefits, at 27%.

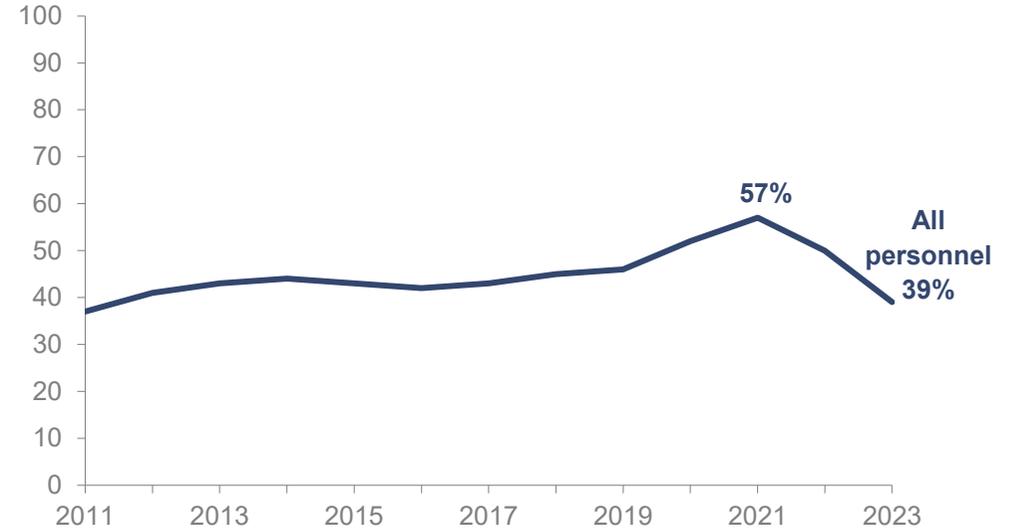
In December 2018 the Court of Appeal's McCloud judgement ruled that the transitional protection policy, part of the 2015 reforms to public service pension schemes, including the [Armed Forces Pension Scheme](#), was discriminatory. An update to the judgement was published in July 2020. This included a public consultation seeking views on proposals to address the discrimination. An [outcome to the consultation](#) has since been published, with legislation being introduced to remedy this discrimination.

**The majority (80%) of personnel are satisfied with their ability to access JPA**

Royal Marines remain the least satisfied with their ability to access JPA (71%) compared to the other Services.

**Satisfaction with allowances has fallen steeply in the last two years, down 19 percentage points since 2021**

% satisfied with their allowances

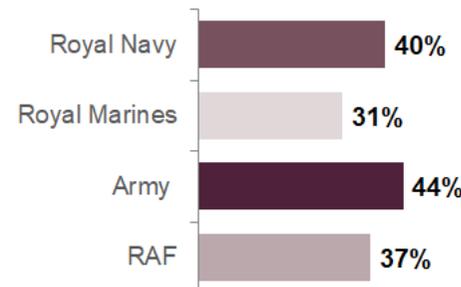


This decreasing trend is reflected across all Services, and for both Officers and Other Ranks. Recent results may be due, in part, to issues with allowances, such as dissatisfaction with eligibility rules and a new methodology for Local Overseas Allowances, as well as cost of living pressures.

Satisfaction with information about pay and allowances has also fallen for the second year in a row to around four in ten (41%). This is down from 45% last year, back in line with the level reported in 2020.

**Royal Marines remain the least satisfied with information about pay and allowances compared to the other Services**

% satisfied with information about pay and allowances



## Section 6 - Deployment

Section 6 covers satisfaction with various aspects of operational deployments. The section focuses only on those who have been deployed at any time since 1 January 2020.

### Satisfaction with post-operational support has fallen this year

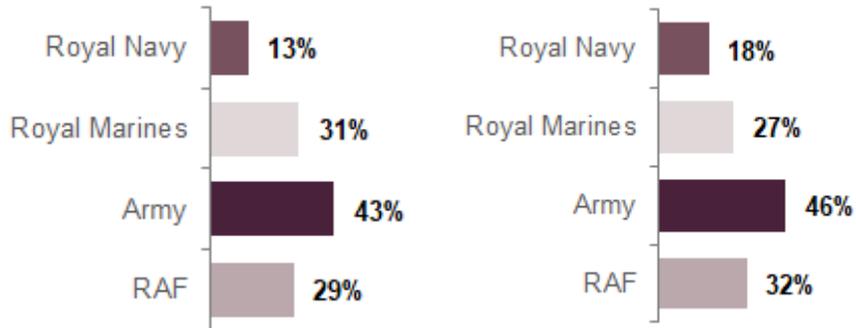
**38%** are satisfied with decompression and post operational tour support  
 ↓ Down five percentage points from 2022

**35%** are satisfied with Post Operational Stress Management  
 ↓ Down four percentage points from 2022

### Royal Navy personnel continue to be the least satisfied with some aspects of post-deployment support in 2023; Army personnel are the most satisfied

% satisfied with Post Operational Stress Management

% satisfied with decompression and post operational tour support



### Levels of satisfaction with Service-provided welfare support when returning from deployment have also fallen this year

**41%** are satisfied with the welfare support they received  
 ↓ Down four percentage points from 2022

**34%** are satisfied with the welfare support their families received  
 ↓ Down five percentage points from 2022

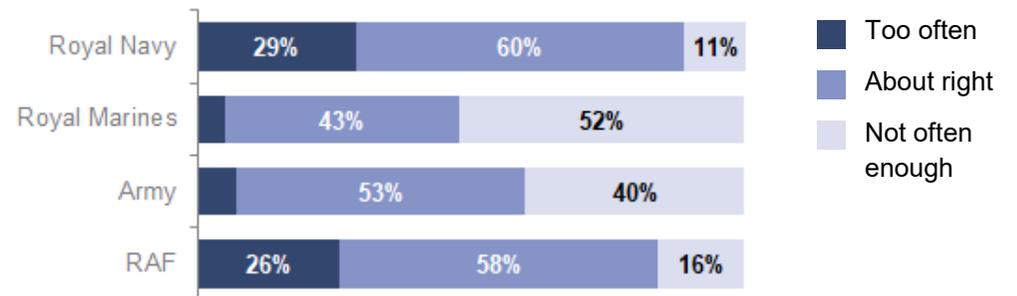
### Satisfaction with both non-operational and operational allowances has fallen to the lowest reported levels since these questions were first asked in 2015

Levels of satisfaction have fallen considerably since 2022, to 49% for non-operational and 41% for operational allowances, down eight and seven percentage points respectively.

These changes are reflective of the recent decline in satisfaction with allowances overall, as reported in Section 5.

### Royal Marines and Army personnel are the most likely to report that the frequency of their deployments is not often enough

Views on deployment frequency



Conversely, Royal Navy (29%) and RAF personnel (26%) are considerably more likely to report that they deploy too often than Royal Marines (5%) and Army personnel (7%).

### Over three-quarters (77%) of personnel report that their deployment length is about right, unchanged since 2020

Royal Navy personnel continue to be the most likely to report that their deployments are too long (27%).

In general, Royal Navy personnel are deployed for longer periods of time than personnel from the other Services.

## Section 7 - Training, Development and Career

Section 7 looks at satisfaction with various aspects of career, training and development, including questions about the promotion system, career management and opportunities for development.

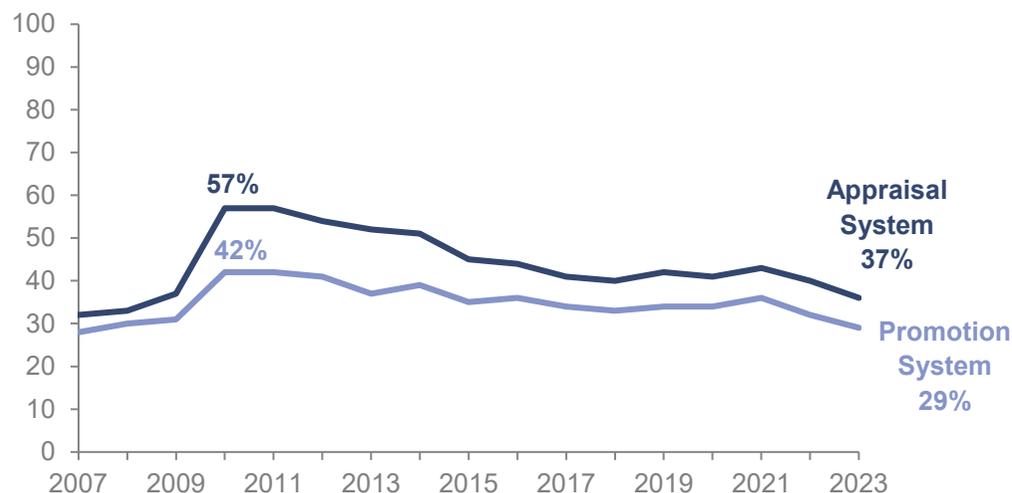
### Just under four in ten (39%) personnel are satisfied with the way their career is being managed, unchanged since last year

This is below the level of peak satisfaction reported in 2021, at 44%.

Overall satisfaction with career management providers also remains unchanged this year, at 33%. However, this is six percentage points lower than the peak level reported in 2021.

### Satisfaction with the fairness of the promotion and appraisal systems has fallen for the second year in a row, returning to some of their lowest reported levels

% satisfied with the fairness of the...

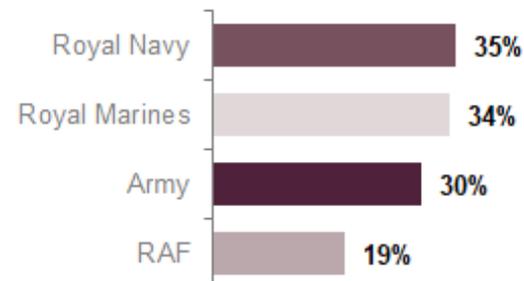


Levels of satisfaction had been relatively stable between 2015 and 2021 but recent decreases mean satisfaction remains well below peak satisfaction reported in 2010.

The decreases in satisfaction described above are particularly evident amongst Army personnel, where 2023 satisfaction levels are lower than many of those previously recorded.

### RAF personnel continue to be less satisfied with the fairness of the promotion system, compared to the other Services

% satisfied with the fairness of the promotion system



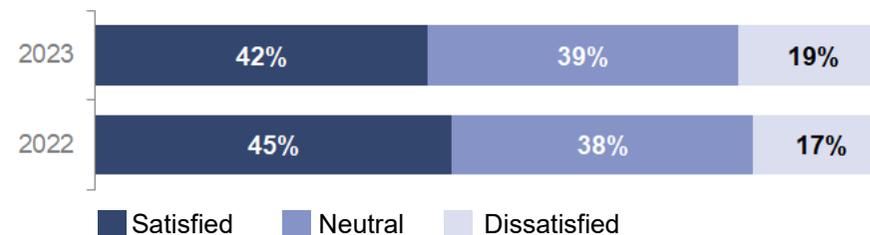
Similarly, RAF personnel are the least satisfied with the fairness of the appraisal system (28%), compared to the other Services (between 38% and 44%).

### Satisfaction with opportunities for promotion fell in 2022; although unchanged this year, satisfaction remains below all levels recorded since 2009, at 36%

Officers' satisfaction has fallen for the second year in a row, down 12 percentage points since 2021. This decrease is particularly evident for Army Officers. Satisfaction amongst Other Ranks has fallen six percentage points over the same period, to 36%.

### Overall, fewer personnel are satisfied with their opportunities for further service compared to all previous years

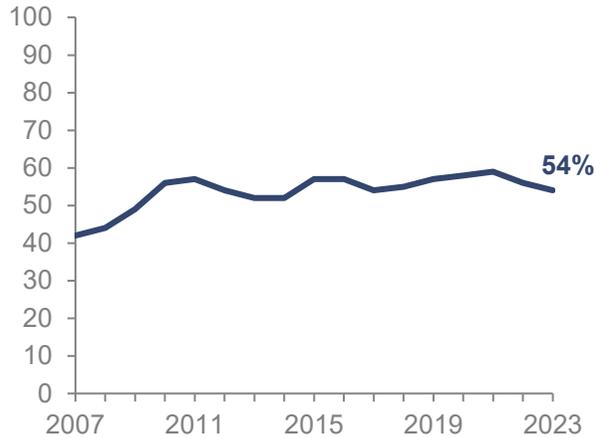
% satisfied/dissatisfied with opportunities for further service



This change is particularly evident amongst RAF personnel as their satisfaction levels have reverted back to those reported in 2012.

**Satisfaction with the opportunities for personal development has fallen since 2021, to 54%**

% satisfied with the opportunities for personal development

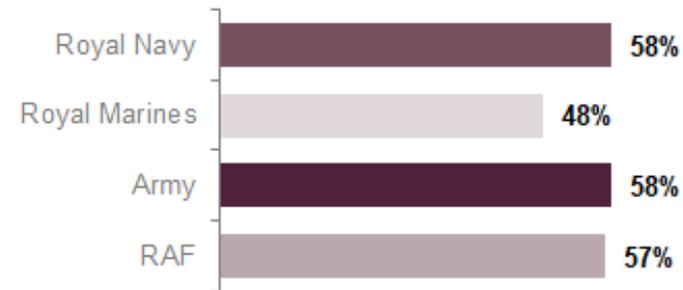


This is a return to the level of satisfaction reported in 2018. Following a decrease last year, satisfaction with opportunities for professional development remains unchanged, at 57%.

**Royal Marines personnel continue to be the least satisfied with various aspects of training and development, compared to the other Services**

**Royal Marines are the least satisfied with opportunities for professional development**

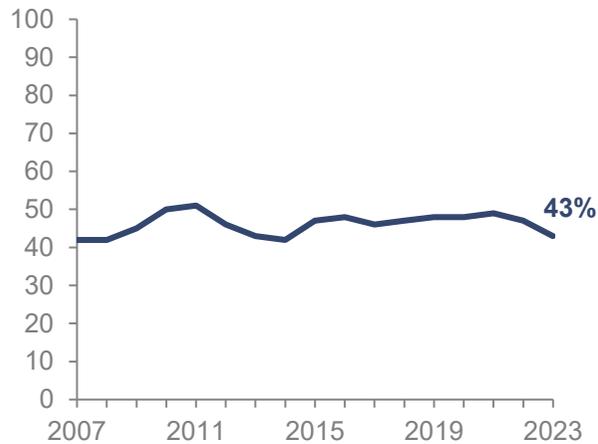
% satisfied with the opportunities for professional development



Royal Marines are also the least satisfied with their opportunities for personal development (46%) compared to the other Services (between 52% and 54%).

**Satisfaction with opportunities to gain civilian accreditation has fallen for the second year in a row to its lowest level since 2014**

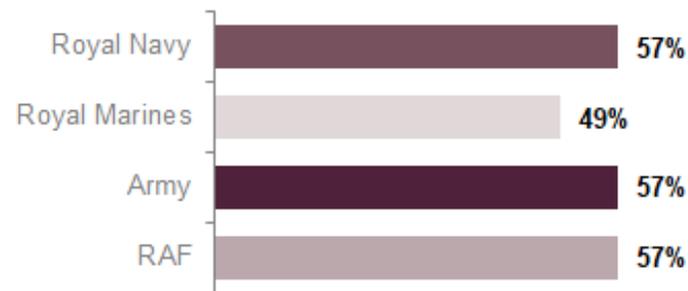
% satisfied with the opportunities to gain civilian accreditation



This decrease in satisfaction is particularly evident for Army Officers. There is also a simultaneous rise in dissatisfaction, particularly amongst Royal Marines and RAF personnel.

**Fewer Royal Marines are satisfied with the extent to which they are doing the job they were trained for, than the other Services**

% satisfied with the extent to which they are doing the job they trained for

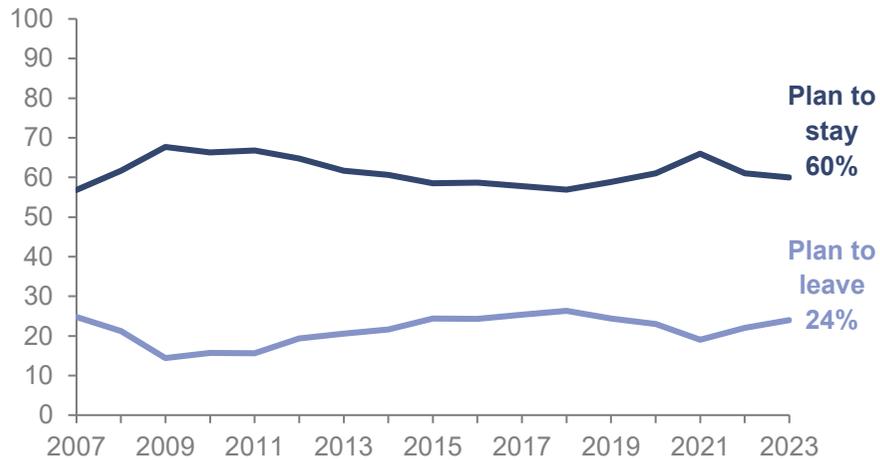


## Section 8 - Future Plans

Section 8 focuses on personnel's plans to leave the Services, whether they would join the Volunteer Reserves, and what influences their intention to stay or leave.

**The proportion of personnel planning to leave the Services has increased for the second year in a row, returning to the level reported in 2020**

% plan to stay/leave



Nearly a quarter (24%) of personnel plan to leave the Services, which includes 7% intending to leave as soon as they can and 4% who have already put in their notice to leave.

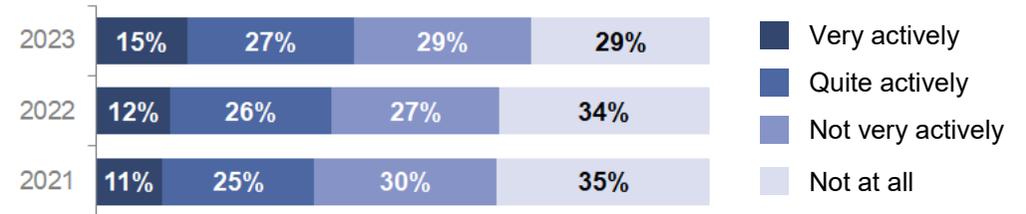
Six in ten personnel plan to stay in the Services in 2023. This overall proportion is consistent with last year, but remains below the peak level reported in 2021 (66%).

In addition to those planning to stay or leave, a further 16% do not know what their plans are for the future. This is unchanged since 2011.

The pattern of results in recent years may be somewhat reflective of personnel re-evaluating their employment situation following the impact of the pandemic, as attitudes towards leaving the Services and active job searching (discussed opposite) shift back to pre-COVID levels.

**More personnel have actively<sup>1</sup> searched for a job outside the Services in the last 12 months, for the second year in a row**

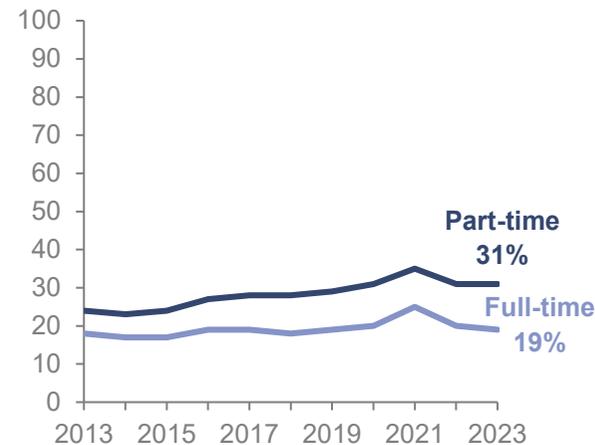
% actively/not actively searched for a job outside the Services in the last year



This year's results are now back in line with 2020 levels.

**The proportions of personnel who would consider joining the Volunteer Reserves full-time or part-time remain stable this year, below the peak levels reported in 2021**

% yes to joining the Volunteer Reserves full-time or part-time



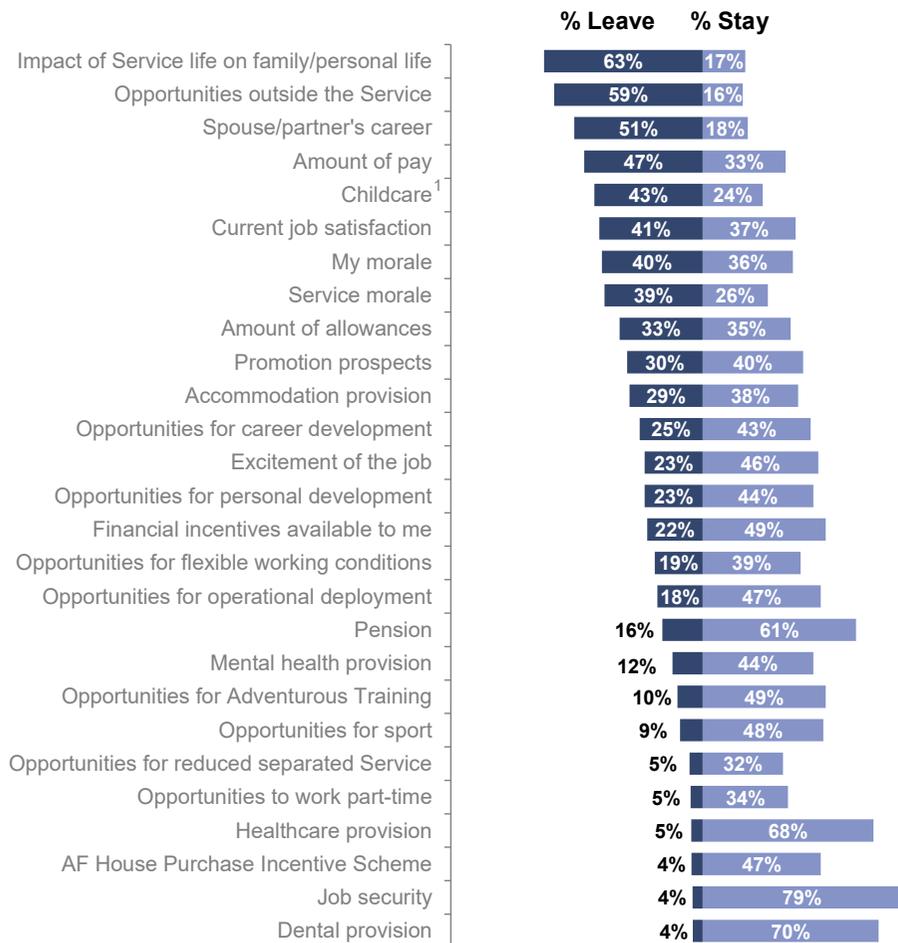
Just under a fifth (19%) would consider joining the Volunteer Reserves full-time, down from a quarter in 2021.

Three in ten (31%) would consider joining on a part-time basis, down from 35% in 2021.

Under the Future Force 2020 programme, the MOD introduced financial incentives for Regular personnel to join the Reserve Forces on completion of their Regular Service.

<sup>1</sup> Actively refers to very or quite actively.

## Impact of Service life on family and personal life remains the top factor influencing intentions to leave



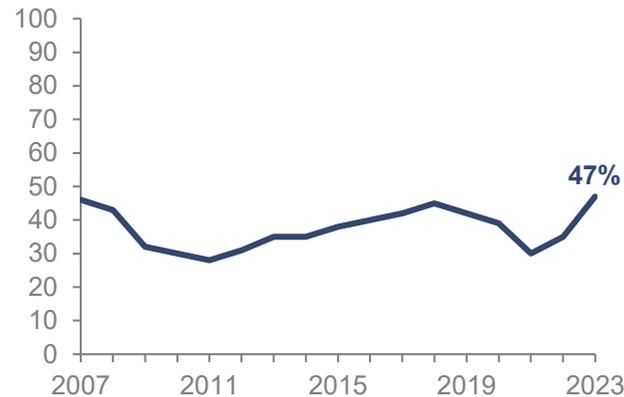
The proportion of personnel citing opportunities outside the Service as a factor influencing intentions to leave has increased to its highest ever level, up from 52% last year, to 59%. This increase is reflected across all of the Services.

## Job security remains the top factor influencing intentions to stay, unchanged this year at 79%

<sup>1</sup>Based on those who have children they support financially (47% in 2023).

## The proportion of personnel citing pay as a factor impacting their intentions to leave has risen considerably in the last two years, to its highest level since 2018

% citing amount of pay as a factor impacting intentions to leave the Service



Up 17 percentage points since 2021, amount of pay is a top five factor influencing intentions to leave for the first time since 2019.

A similar increase is reported for amount of allowances as a factor influencing intentions to leave, up 13 percentage points since 2021, to 33%.

These increases are somewhat reflective of the falls in overall satisfaction with pay and allowances this year (see Section 5) and, may be due, in part, to the rise in inflation and current cost of living pressures.

## More personnel are citing childcare as a factor impacting on their intention to stay in the Services compared to last year<sup>1</sup>

Nearly a quarter (24%) of personnel who have children they financially support indicate that childcare impacts their intentions to stay in the Services, up from a fifth (19%) in 2022. This may be due, in part, to the introduction of the Wraparound Childcare Scheme last year.

The [Wraparound Childcare Scheme](#) (WAC) was launched by MOD in Autumn 2022, providing funding for wraparound childcare during term time for eligible Service children aged 4 to 11 years old.

## Of those who have put their notice in to leave (4%), the most cited reason for leaving is the impact on family and personal life

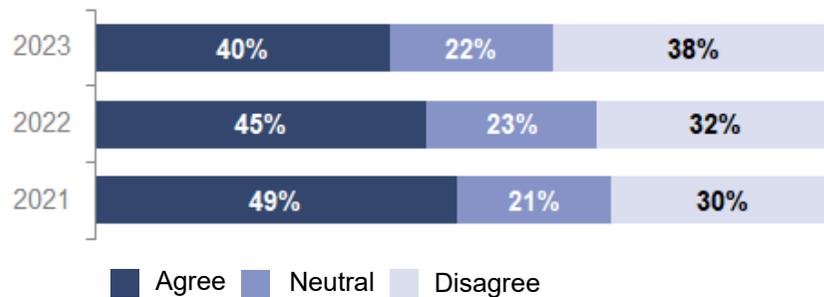
Opportunities outside the Service, current job satisfaction, self morale and amount of pay make up the five most cited reasons for leaving.

## Section 9 - Work/Life Balance

Section 9 looks at the work/life balance of personnel, their satisfaction with their workload, whether or not they are satisfied with the amount of leave allowance they have, and the reasons for not being able to take leave.

### The proportion of personnel able to maintain a balance between their personal and working life has fallen for the second year in a row, to four in ten

% agree/disagree able to maintain a balance between their personal and working life



Following a decrease of nine percentage points in the last two years, the level of agreement is now back in line with 2018, the lowest level since this question was first asked in 2015.

This decrease is particularly evident amongst Royal Marine and Army Other Ranks.

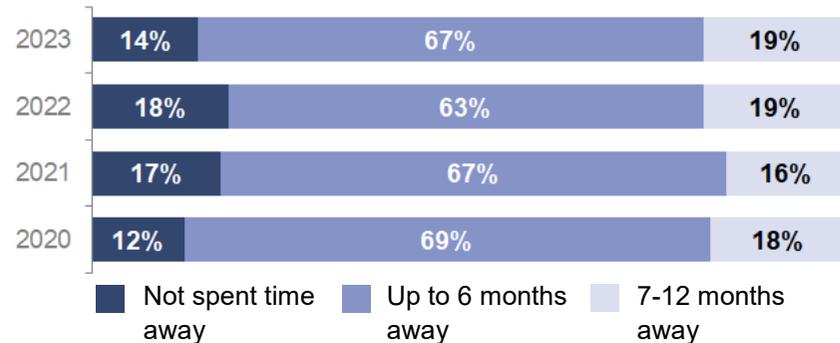
### Satisfaction with the opportunity to work flexibly is starting to show signs of decline in 2023

Although levels of satisfaction remain higher than in 2019 when this question was first asked, they are now below the peak levels reported over the last couple of years. Officers' satisfaction has fallen five percentage points since last year to 56%, whilst satisfaction amongst Other Ranks has fallen three percentage points since 2021, to 34%.

Changes to working practices due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as an increase in personnel working from home, may have had an impact on attitudes to working flexibly and work/life balance in recent years.

### More personnel spent time away from their family this year compared to the last two years, back in line with levels reported in 2020

% time spent away from family in the last year for Service reasons

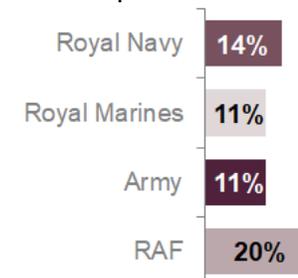


In 2021, there was a considerable increase in personnel not spending time away from their family, as well as fewer personnel spending between seven and 12 months away. These changes may have been due, in part, to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Around one in seven (14%) personnel did not spend time away from their family in the last year, back in line with the level reported in 2020.

### RAF personnel are most likely to have not spent time away from their family compared to the other Services

% not spent time away from family in the last year for Service reasons



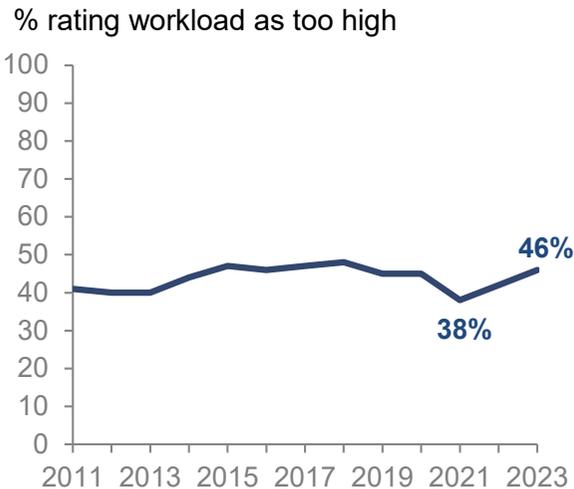
In contrast, Royal Navy personnel are more likely to have spent seven to 12 months away from their family (28%), compared to the other Services (between 13-20%).

**More than a third (36%) of personnel are now dissatisfied with the amount of time spent away from family and friends**

The level of dissatisfaction has risen two years in a row, from 29% in 2021, returning to the level reported prior to the pandemic in 2020. A similar pattern is reported for dissatisfaction with the ability to plan their own life in the long term, now 41%, back in line with 2019 levels.

These results may be, in part, a reflection of the changes to time spent away reported in recent years as discussed on the previous page, and the impact this may have on personal circumstances.

**The proportion of personnel rating their workload as too high has increased for the second year in a row**



Between 2014 and 2020, the proportion of personnel rating their workload as too high remained fairly stable. This then fell in 2021 which may have been due, in part, to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2021, this figure has increased steadily, and is now in line with the peak level reported in 2018.

The increase reported over the last two years is reflected across the Services, except for Royal Navy personnel.

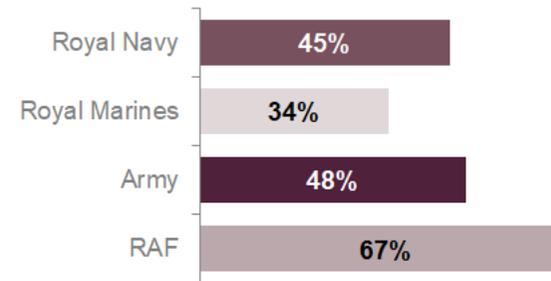
**Workload continues to be the main reason for personnel not using all their leave (47%)<sup>1</sup>**

Whilst this figure has remained stable since 2018, this year sees an increase in personnel citing courses/training (now 29%), understaffing (29%) and operational tour (23%) as reasons why they did not take all of their annual leave allowance.

<sup>1</sup>Based on those who did not use all of their annual leave allowance (65% in 2023).

**RAF personnel remain the most satisfied with the opportunity to take leave when they want to; Royal Marines are the least satisfied**

% satisfied with the opportunity to take leave when personnel want to

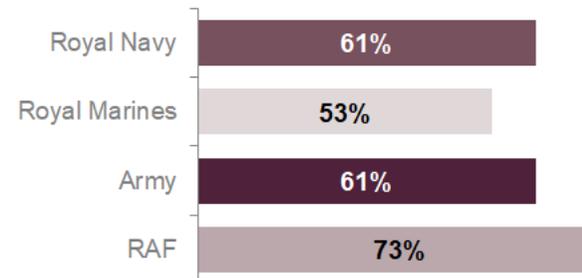


Overall, satisfaction with the opportunity to take leave when personnel want to remains at its highest level (51%), unchanged since 2019.

Officers are more satisfied with their opportunities to take leave when they want to (60%) compared to Other Ranks (49%).

**RAF personnel are also the most satisfied with the amount of leave they were able to take in the last 12 months; Royal Marines are the least satisfied**

% satisfied with the amount of leave taken in the last 12 months



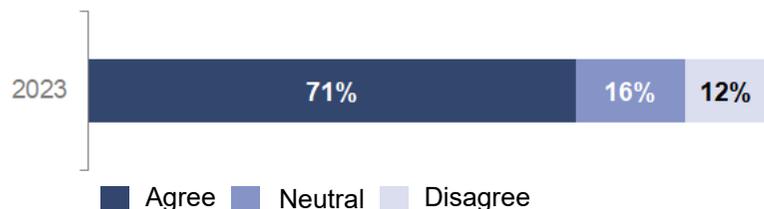
Overall, satisfaction with the amount of leave personnel were able to take in the last 12 months remains unchanged this year at 63%, down three percentage points from 2020.

## Section 10 - Fairness at Work

Section 10 covers the views of personnel on fair treatment in their Service, whether they feel they have been subjected to bullying, discrimination or harassment, and their awareness of the Service Complaints Ombudsman and Service Complaints Process.

### Just over seven in ten (71%) personnel agree that they are treated fairly at work in 2023

% agree/disagree they are treated fairly at work

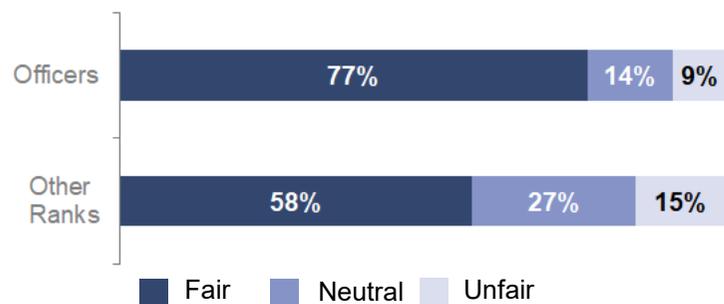


This remains unchanged since last year, below the peak level of agreement reported in 2021 (76%).

Officers are more likely to agree that they are treated fairly at work than Other Ranks. This difference is particularly evident between Army Officers (85%) and Army Other Ranks (66%).

### Officers are considerably more likely to feel that the discipline system is fair in comparison to Other Ranks

Views on the fairness of the discipline system



Whilst Other Ranks' views remain unchanged since 2018, the proportion of Officers who feel that the discipline system is fair fell more recently in 2022, down from 83% in 2021.

### Around one in eight (13%) personnel report that they have been subject to bullying, discrimination or harassment in a Service environment in the last 12 months

Separately, 12% of all female personnel report being subject to sexual harassment in a Service environment in the last 12 months, compared to less than 1% of male personnel. These levels are unchanged since the question was first asked in 2021.

### Of those who have experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination in the last 12 months, around one in eight made a formal written complaint about their experience

This proportion has almost doubled since last year, back in line with the level previously reported in 2021. However, still the majority (87%) of personnel who have been subject to bullying, discrimination or harassment do not make a complaint.

The main reasons why personnel do not make a formal written complaint continue to be: not believing anything would be done if a complaint was made (60%) and believing that it might adversely affect their career (55%).

### Over three-quarters (77%) of personnel have heard of the Service Complaints Ombudsman, up four percentage points since last year

This improvement is particularly evident amongst Royal Marine Other Ranks, with 19% now reporting that they have never heard of it compared to 29% in 2022.

Awareness of the Service Complaints Process amongst personnel remains unchanged this year, at 97%. This is still considerably higher than awareness of the Service Complaints Ombudsman.

## Section 11 - Health, Fitness and Welfare

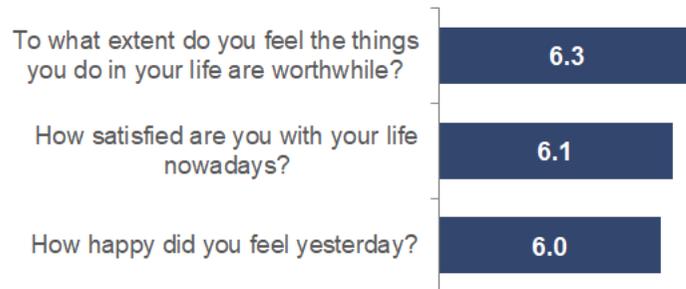
Section 11 covers satisfaction with various aspects of health, fitness, well-being and the provision of welfare services. This includes medical treatment, fitness facilities and welfare support for personnel and their families.

### Measuring well-being

The Office for National Statistics collects data on well-being for the UK population in their Annual Population Survey. Average scores are released in their [Personal Well-being in the UK report](#). Well-being is measured on a scale of 0-10 with a score of 0 being 'not at all' and 10 being 'completely'.

### Average well-being scores for happiness, life satisfaction and feeling things done in life are worthwhile remain stable this year, following decreases in 2021

Average well-being scores (out of ten)



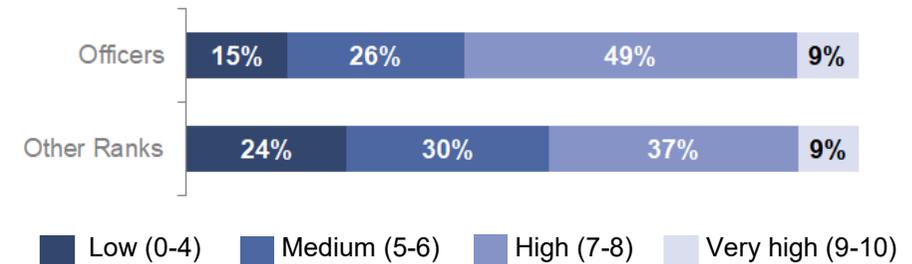
The average anxiety score has risen slightly since last year from 3.4 to 3.6. This increase has largely been driven by RAF personnel.

### National comparison

[National well-being results](#) are not directly comparable to those of Service personnel due to differences in demographics i.e. the majority of Service personnel are male. Furthermore, national figures include a larger proportion of over 60s who generally score their well-being higher than younger people. However, the latest UK well-being results by sex may still provide some context. The proportion of UK males scoring aspects of their well-being as 'very high' (a score of 9-10) ranges between 23-30%. These are considerably higher than corresponding results for male Service personnel (9-15%).

### Officers tend to rate their well-being higher than Other Ranks

Views on how satisfied personnel are with their life nowadays



Officers have higher average scores for their life satisfaction, happiness and how worthwhile the things they do in life are than Other Ranks.

There is little difference between Officers and Other Ranks in terms of their average anxiety scores.

### Satisfaction with Service sport, exercise and fitness facilities remains unchanged this year at 70%, following a drop in satisfaction in 2021

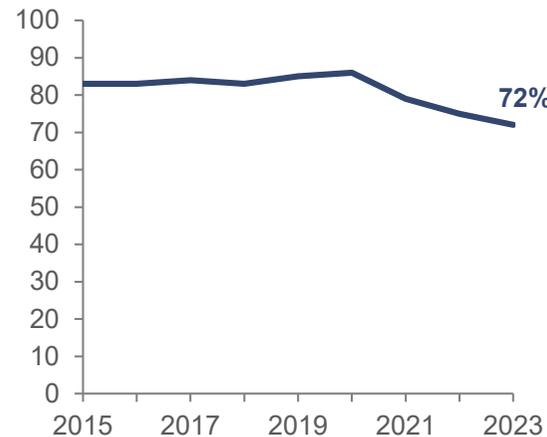
Satisfaction with opportunities to undertake fitness activities (65%), sport (55%), Adventurous Training (43%), and Force Development Activities (34%) also remain unchanged this year following decreases in satisfaction in 2021.

The decreases in satisfaction reported in 2021 and the lack of recovery since, may be due, in part, to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Service facilities.

RAF personnel are the most satisfied with their opportunities to take part in Force Development Activities.

**Following several years of little change, satisfaction with access to dental care has fallen for the third year in a row, down 14 percentage points since 2020**

% satisfied with access to dental care when they needed it



A similar picture is reported for satisfaction with dental treatment, however this remains unchanged since last year at 81%, eight percentage points lower than in 2020.

**Levels of satisfaction with access to medical care, and the medical treatment itself are unchanged this year, following decreases in 2021 and 2022**

Although stable since last year, satisfaction with access to medical care and medical treatment has fallen 11 and eight percentage points respectively since 2020 (both now 72%), remaining at the lowest levels reported.

Prior to the changes discussed above, levels of satisfaction with medical and dental care had been relatively stable. The lack of recovery in recent years, may be due, in part, to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on medical and dental facilities.

**Officers are more satisfied with both medical and dental treatment than Other Ranks**

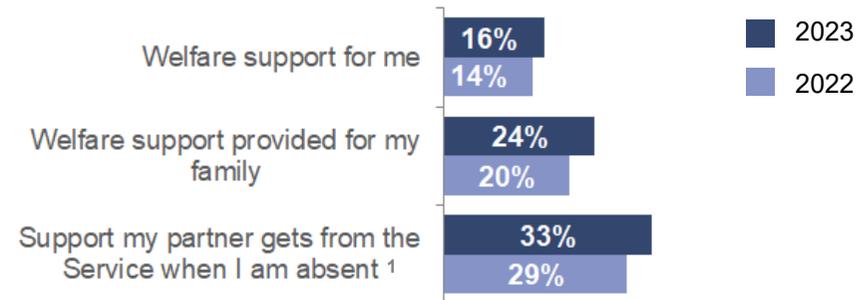
For example, just over eight in ten (81%) Officers are satisfied with their medical treatment, compared to seven in ten (70%) Other Ranks.

Officers are also more satisfied with being able to access both medical and dental care when required than Other Ranks.

<sup>1</sup> Based on those who are married or in a long term relationship (72% in 2023).

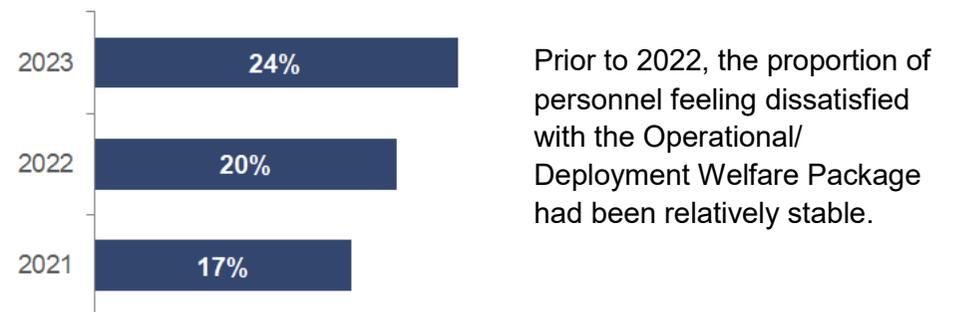
**More personnel are dissatisfied with the welfare support provided by the Services for themselves and their family compared to last year**

% dissatisfied with...



**More personnel continue to be dissatisfied with the Operational/Deployment Welfare Package, at just under a quarter (24%) in 2023**

% dissatisfied with The Operational/Deployment Welfare Package



Prior to 2022, the proportion of personnel feeling dissatisfied with the Operational/Deployment Welfare Package had been relatively stable.

It is worth noting that, whilst levels of satisfaction with aspects of welfare support are similar to last year, they remain at their lowest reported levels having fallen in 2022.

**Army personnel are more satisfied with several aspects of Service-provided welfare support than the other Services**

This includes welfare support for themselves (56%), and their families (44%), as well as the Operational/Deployment Welfare Package (38%).

## Section 12 - Accommodation and Catering

Section 12 covers satisfaction with various aspects of accommodation and catering, including questions about home ownership, where personnel live during the week, the Forces Help to Buy Scheme, and the standard of catering facilities.

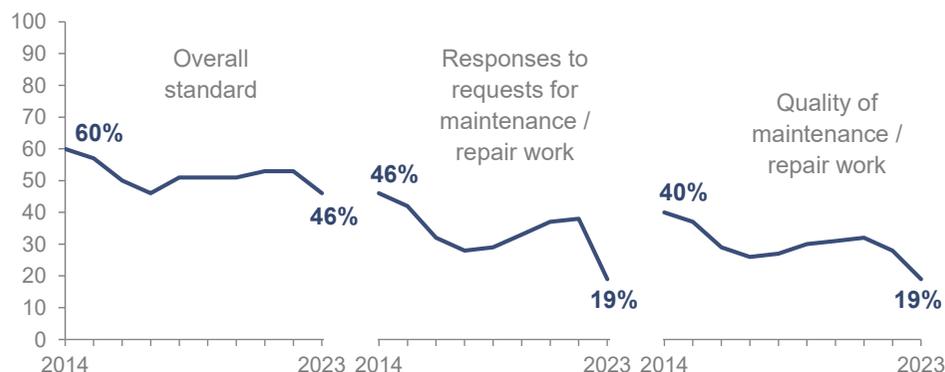
### Over three-quarters (77%) of all personnel live in Service accommodation<sup>1</sup> during the working week, whilst just under a fifth (19%) live in their own home

These results differ by Service with Army personnel more likely to live in Service Family Accommodation (SFA) and less likely to live in their own property during the working week compared to the other Services. Royal Marines are more likely to live in Single Living Accommodation (SLA).

Officers are more likely to live in SFA (33%) or their own property (30%) compared to Other Ranks (29% and 16%, respectively) and less likely to live in SLA (Officers: 31%; Other Ranks: 48%).<sup>2</sup>

### Satisfaction with some aspects of SFA has fallen markedly since last year, remaining well below levels reported in 2014

% satisfied with aspects of SFA



In particular, satisfaction with the responses to, and quality of maintenance/repair work of SFA has fallen 13 and eight percentage points respectively since 2022. Analysis of free-text comments echoes these results as some personnel raise concerns about accommodation. References are made to experiences of maintenance/repair work of SFA, as well as attitudes towards contractors (see box opposite for more information).

<sup>1</sup> Service accommodation refers to SFA, SLA, Substitute SFA, Substitute SLA, on board ship/submarine.

<sup>2</sup> For these figures SLA includes Substitute SLA and SFA includes Substitute SFA.

### Whilst levels of satisfaction with aspects of SLA are unchanged since last year, they remain at their lowest reported levels

For example, levels of satisfaction with responses to, and quality of maintenance/repair work for SLA are 27% and 29%, respectively.

Satisfaction with most aspects of Service accommodation fell markedly in 2016 due, in part, to underperformance by the National Housing Prime contractor and changes to the SFA charging method in April 2016.

A new contract was awarded to three suppliers in April 2022 to provide services to SFA homes in the UK on behalf of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO). Pinnacle Group provide National Accommodation Management Services whilst Amey and Vivo provide Regional Accommodation Management Services. DIO also reported a [backlog for repairs and maintenance](#) in December 2022. As the 2023 survey was in field between September 2022 and February 2023, these factors may have had some impact on this year's results.

### Overall, just under half (48%) of personnel own their own home, unchanged since last year

This is three percentage points lower than the peak home ownership level reported in 2021.

Officers are considerably more likely to own their own home (75%) than Other Ranks (42%).

Since 2015, (the year after the introduction of the Forces Help to Buy Scheme) home ownership amongst Other Ranks has risen from 39% to 42%, largely driven by Army and Royal Marine Other Ranks. There has been no change for Officers over the same period.

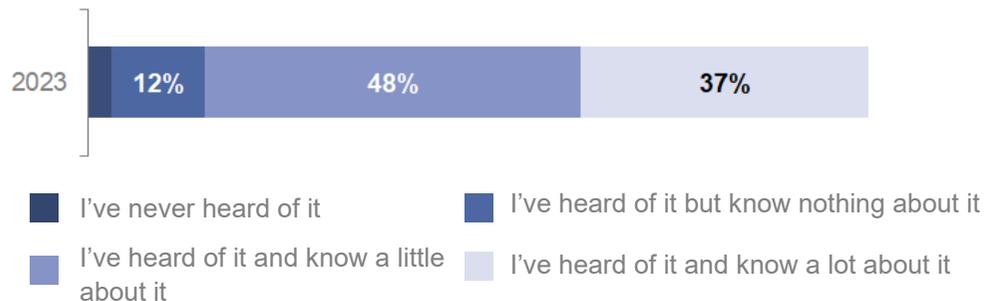
Home ownership remains much lower amongst Army personnel (40%) compared to the other Services (between 58% and 60%).



**Forces Help to Buy** In April 2014, the MOD introduced the Forces Help to Buy (FHTB) scheme, under the New Employment Model programme. The scheme offers advances of salary to Service personnel for the purpose of buying a home. More information can be found in MOD's [FHTB Quarterly Statistics publication](#).

## Awareness of Forces Help to Buy (FHTB) remains high, with the majority (85%) of personnel knowing at least a little about it

Awareness of the FHTB Scheme



Nearly one in ten (9%) personnel have used FHTB in the last year. This proportion is similar between Officers and Other Ranks, and the Services.

More than a third (36%) of all personnel are considering using FHTB for a future home purchase. However, this proportion is considerably higher amongst non-homeowners at 61% compared to 7% of personnel who already own their own home.

## The most common reason why personnel purchase their own home continues to be stability for themselves and their family, at 79%<sup>1</sup>



The proportion of personnel reporting that 'poor standards of SLA or SFA' as a reason why they bought their own home has increased this year to its highest ever level, from a quarter to nearly three in ten (29%). This may be reflective of recent changes in levels of satisfaction with Service accommodation discussed earlier.

<sup>1</sup> Based on those personnel who own their own home (48% in 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Based on those personnel who do not own their own home (52% in 2023).

## More personnel report that affordability is a reason why they do not own their own home compared to last year, up to 67%<sup>2</sup>

This is back in line with 2020 levels, with the increase particularly evident for Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel.

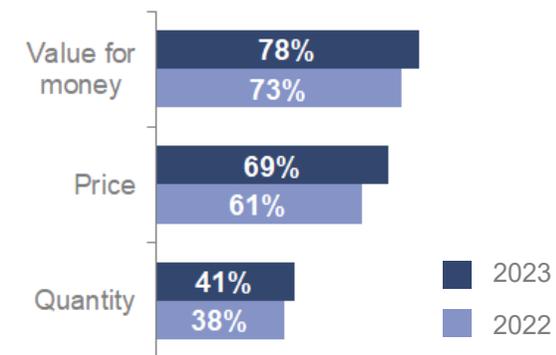
Affordability remains the most common reason why personnel do not own their home, across all Services and for both Officers and Other Ranks.

## Over half (53%) of personnel are dissatisfied with the allowances for living in their own home, up 12 percentage points since last year

Levels of dissatisfaction are now at their highest level since this question was first asked in 2010. This is reflected across all the Services.

## More personnel are considering value for money, price and quantity when deciding where to eat at their Unit compared to previous years

% selected



Greater consideration of these monetary-related factors may be due, in part, to the rise in inflation and current cost of living crisis. These increases are also reflective of the drop in satisfaction with pay reported this year (see Section 5).

For the first time in 2023, personnel were asked to indicate whether nutritional value (59%), access e.g. opening hours (57%) or dietary requirements (19%) are factors affecting their decision on where to eat. Quality remains the most cited factor at 87%.

Satisfaction with the standard of service from catering contractors at units remains at its lowest reported level this year, at 25%.

## Section 13 - Family Life and Being Part of Society

Section 13 covers questions relating to personal lives, such as marital status and concerns with debt levels. This section also captures information on voting registration, awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and the perceptions of Service life when compared to wider society.

### Family life of Service personnel

**48%** are married. **25%** are in a long-term relationship.

**47%** have children they support financially.

**37%** of those who require childcare are satisfied with accessibility to childcare facilities; 33% are dissatisfied.

### More than half (54%) of personnel<sup>1</sup> report that their spouse/partner is in full-time employment<sup>2</sup> this year

This is unchanged since last year, remaining at the highest level since this question was first asked in 2007. Less than a fifth (18%) report that their spouse/partner is in part-time employment.

### The majority (85%) of personnel are registered to vote, remaining unchanged since 2017

Whilst Officers are more likely to be registered to vote than Other Ranks, the gap has narrowed slightly this year.

### Around one in eight (12%) personnel currently have concerns about personal debt levels, up from 7% last year, returning to the level reported in 2020

This increase in concerns about personal debt levels, is somewhat echoed by the decreases in satisfaction with pay and allowances this year (see Section 5). These changes may be due, in part, to the rise in inflation and current cost of living crisis.

<sup>1</sup> Based on those who are married/in a civil partnership or in a long term relationship (72% in 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Full-time includes self-employment but does not include those in the Armed Forces (12% in 2023).

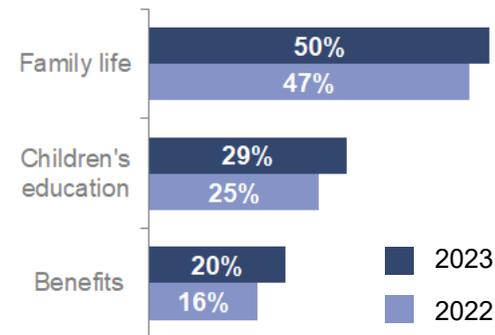
**Armed Forces Covenant** The [Armed Forces Covenant](#) is a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly.

### Awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant remains stable this year, with over half (54%) of personnel knowing at least a little about it

However, just over a quarter (26%) of personnel have never heard of it. Officers are considerably more likely to have at least heard of the Armed Forces Covenant (97%) compared to Other Ranks (69%).

### More personnel are feeling disadvantaged about some aspects of Service life compared to the general public this year, returning to levels previously reported

% feeling disadvantaged about...



The proportions feeling disadvantaged about family life and benefits are back in line with levels reported in 2020; for children's education, this is back in line with 2019 results.

In addition, almost one in six (17%) personnel now feel disadvantaged about their family's access to NHS care compared to the general public. Up from 14% in 2022, this is at its highest level since this question was first asked in 2016. This may be due, in part, to the ongoing impact of COVID on NHS care in the last few years.

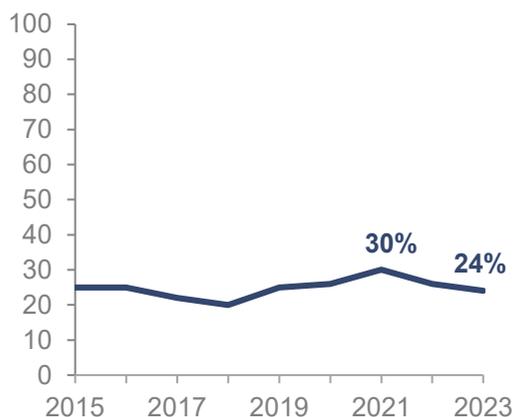
MOD's [Families Continuous Attitude Survey](#) has further insights into access to healthcare services for Service families.

## Section 14 - Taking Action

Section 14 covers beliefs on whether action has been taken on the results of AFCAS, and whether Service leaders are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace.

### Perceptions about Service leaders taking action on the results of AFCAS have fallen for the second year in a row, remaining below the peak reported in 2021

% agree that leaders will take action on the results of AFCAS



The level of agreement that leaders will take action on the results of AFCAS is now 24%, seven percentage points lower than in 2021.

Overall, nearly half (48%) of personnel disagree that leaders will take action on the results.

### Perceptions that effective action has been taken on the AFCAS results have also fallen for a second year in a row

The level of agreement that effective action has been taken in the Services as a result of AFCAS has fallen six percentage points since 2021, from 26% to 20% this year.

Similar to the above, 47% of personnel disagree that effective action has been taken on the results of AFCAS.

The decreases since last year are largely driven by RAF personnel, as results for the other Services remain consistent with 2022, but still below levels reported in 2021.

Army personnel are more likely to agree that action has been (25%) and will be taken (28%) on the results of AFCAS, than the other Services.

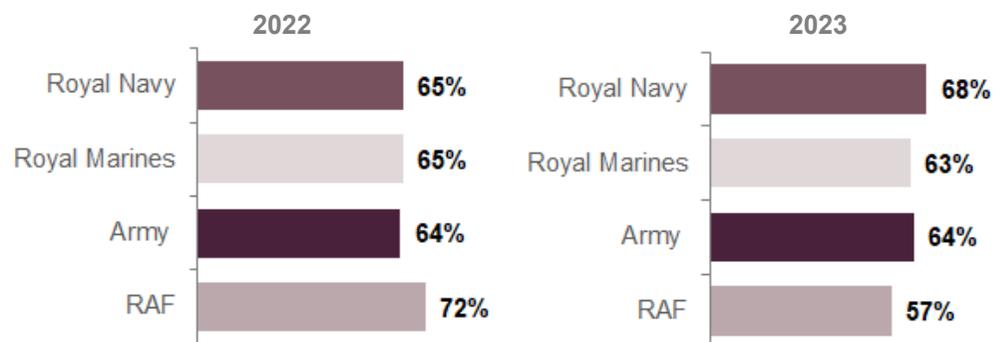
### The proportion of personnel that believe their Service leaders are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace has fallen slightly since last year, to 63%

This is three percentage points lower than in 2022 when this question was first asked. The decrease reported since last year is largely driven by RAF personnel, as agreement levels across the other Services remain in line with 2022.

Officers are more likely to agree that their Service leaders are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace (73%) than Other Ranks (61%).

### RAF personnel are now the least likely to agree their Service leaders are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace

% agree that their Service leaders are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace



The level of agreement amongst RAF personnel has fallen from 72% to 57% this year. As a result, RAF personnel are now the least likely to agree with this statement compared to the other Services, having been the most positive last year.

# Methodology

## 1. Target population

The target population for AFCAS 2023 was trained UK Regular Armed Forces personnel including Gurkhas, excluding Special Forces and those deployed or attending training courses at the time the survey sample was drawn from the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system.

## 2. The survey

AFCAS is distributed both electronically and in paper format. Data collection ran from September 2022 to February 2023, a relatively long period which allows time for receiving paper responses from personnel serving overseas.

The survey is confidential rather than anonymous. An individual's unique Service number is used both to control access to the survey and allow responses to be linked to demographic data held on the JPA system. Personally identifiable data are only available to a small group of professional researchers working on analysis and report production.

## 3. The sample and respondents

The total AFCAS 2023 sample consisted of 29,968 personnel. AFCAS questionnaires were issued to Service personnel selected under a (disproportionate) stratified simple random sampling process.

Samples were designed to provide sufficient responses to yield estimates with a margin of error of plus or minus 3% for the main comparison groups of Officer/Rank and Service. A census of all Royal Marines was employed due to the small size of the Service. Despite a relatively good response rate of 40%, margins of error around the estimates for Royal Marine Officers may be greater than 3%, due to the relatively small number of respondents in this group.

9,176 responses were used in the AFCAS 2023 analysis, giving an overall response rate of 31%. The table below contains detailed information on the number of questionnaires issued and received along with corresponding response rates.

90% of valid responses were received electronically and 10% were received on paper (2022: 86% online; 14% paper). For the first time this year, the RAF AFCAS was online only which may have had some impact on these proportions. Further information about this change in methodology is provided in the Background Quality Report.

**Table A1: Response rates by Service and Rank group**

		Sample size	Surveys returned	2023 response rate	2022 response rate
Royal Navy	Officers	1,609	779	48%	56%
	Ratings	7,619	1,525	20%	24%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9,228</b>	<b>2,304</b>	<b>25%</b>	29%
Royal Marines	Officers	574	231	40%	48%
	Marines	3,860	845	22%	29%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,434</b>	<b>1,076</b>	<b>24%</b>	32%
Army	Officers	1,747	923	53%	58%
	Soldiers	7,848	1,966	25%	25%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9,595</b>	<b>2,889</b>	<b>30%</b>	31%
Royal Air Force	Officers	1,623	922	57%	58%
	Ranks	5,088	1,985	39%	39%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6,711</b>	<b>2,907</b>	<b>43%</b>	44%
All Services	Officers	5,553	2,855	51%	56%
	Ranks	24,415	6,321	26%	28%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29,968</b>	<b>9,176</b>	<b>31%</b>	33%

Note that percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole % for ease of interpretation.

#### 4. Weighting methodology and non-response

Due to the sample design and the differences in prevalence of non-response between the Service and rank strata, the distribution of characteristics amongst the AFCAS respondents did not fully reflect the distribution in the whole Armed Forces population. Response rates tend to vary by rank; therefore, responses are weighted by rank in order to correct for the bias caused by over or under-representation.

The weights were calculated simply by:

Population size within weighting class (p)

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Number of responses within weighting class (r)

Weighting in this way assumes missing data are missing at random (MAR) only within weighting classes. This means we assume that within a single weighting class the views of non-respondents do not differ (on average) to the views of respondents.

Note: The weightings in Table A2 have been rounded for presentational purposes.

**Table A2: Weightings used for AFCAS 2023 analysis**

Weighting Class	Weighting Applied
RN_OF-7+	2.69
RN_OF-4 to 6	6.43
RN_OF-3	6.09
RN_OF-1 to 2	7.42
RN_OR-8 to 9	5.33
RN_OR-7	7.46
RN_OR-6	9.84
RN_OR-3 to 4	12.15
RN_OR-2	21.8

Weighting Class	Weighting Applied
RM_OF-4+	2.85
RM_OF-3	2.92
RM_OF-1 to 2	4.19
RM_OR-8 to 9	2.63
RM_OR-7	4.04
RM_OR-6	4.33
RM_OR-3 to 4	6.63
RM_OR-2	9.07

Weighting Class	Weighting Applied
Army_OF-7+	2.24
Army_OF-4 to 6	12.84
Army_OF-3	12.49
Army_OF-1 to 2	15.57
Army_OR-8 to 9	16.31
Army_OR-7	18.76
Army_OR-6	20.46
Army_OR-4	30.32
Army_OR-3	41.55
Army_OR-2	74.82

Weighting Class	Weighting Applied
RAF_OF-7+	1.95
RAF_OF-4 to 6	6.65
RAF_OF-3	7.07
RAF_OF-1 to 2	8.52
RAF_OR-7-9	6.89
RAF_OR-6	8.96
RAF_OR-3 to 4	12.1
RAF_OR-1 to 2	17.18

## 5. Analysis and statistical tests

Attitudinal questions in the questionnaires have generally been regrouped to assist in analysing results and to aid interpretation. For example, questions asked at a 5-point level (e.g. Strongly agree – Agree – Neither Agree nor Disagree – Disagree – Strongly Disagree) have been regrouped to a 3-point level (e.g. Agree – Neutral – Disagree).

Missing values, where respondents have not provided a response/valid response, have not been included in the analysis. In addition, some questions are filtered to exclude invalid responses. As a result the unweighted counts (or 'n') will vary from question to question and these are shown within the reference tables published alongside this report on the [AFCAS GOV.UK webpage](http://AFCAS.GOV.UK).

Unless otherwise specified, “Don’t know” and “Not applicable” responses are not included and percentages are based only on the numbers of respondents who chose the remaining item response options.

Where applicable, Z tests at a 1% alpha level were used to test whether observed estimates were significantly different to estimates from previous surveys. A statistically significant difference means that there is enough evidence that the change observed is unlikely to be due to chance variation (less than a 1% probability that the difference is the result of chance alone).

## 6. Format of the reference tables

These are published separately to the report on the [AFCAS GOV.UK webpage](http://AFCAS.GOV.UK)). Each reference table refers to a question asked in the survey and includes estimates of the proportion of the population by category.

Tables are arranged generally in the order in which they were asked in the questionnaires, which is not the same as the order of the sections in the Main Report.

An index is available within the reference tables. Each table is broken down by Service and also by Rank Group with the Total column referring to the Officers and Other Ranks results combined.

Questionnaire Section	Table Numbers
01 Your Pay	B1.1 - B1.9
02 Your Work	B2.1 - B2.17
03 Resources and Workload	B3.1 - B3.7
04 Your Career	B4.1 - B4.28
05 Your Line Management	B5.1 - B5.14
06 Senior Leadership	B6.1 - B6.6
07 Commitment	B7.1 - B7.14
08 Working with Others	B8.1 - B8.14
09 Change	B9.1 - B9.3
10 Your Deployment	B10.1 - B10.20
11 Training and Development	B11.1 - B11.6
12 Your Future Plans	B12.1 - B12.38
13 Fairness at Work	B13.1 - B13.45
14 Your Work/Life Balance	B14.1 - B14.13
15 Your Leave	B15.1 - B15.11
16 Your Health and Well-being	B16.1 - B16.8a
17 Fitness, Sport and Adventurous Training	B17.1 - B17.5
18 Welfare	B18.1 - B18.34
19 Your Accommodation	B19.1 - B19.49
20 Catering, Retail and Leisure	B20.1 - B20.20
21 Your Family Life	B21.1 - B21.12
22 Being Part of Society	B22.1 - B22.16
23 Your Background	B23.1 - B23.7
24 Taking Action	B24.1 - B24.3
25 Flexible Service	B25.1 - B25.5

## Glossary

Term	Definition
Armed Forces Covenant	The Armed Forces Covenant defines the principles for ensuring that Armed Forces personnel are not disadvantaged in their access to public and commercial services as a result of their service. It also sets out that in some cases special treatment may be appropriate, for example for those that have given the most, such as the injured and the bereaved
Armed Forces Pay Review Body	Provides independent advice to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence on the pay and charges for members of the Naval, Military and Air Forces of the Crown
Assisting Officer	Appointed to provide help and support to personnel either considering or having made a formal written complaint about discrimination, harassment or bullying
Bullying	May be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, and abuse of or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipients
Defence Board	The highest committee in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and is responsible for the full range of Defence business, other than the conduct of operations
Discrimination	Can occur when a person is treated less favourably because of race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, gender reassignment, age or disability. Discrimination can also occur where a policy or practice which applies to everyone unreasonably disadvantages a person on the basis of the characteristics mentioned above
Ethos	The nature, aims and objectives of a Service
Engagement	Period of employment usually under contractual terms
Flexible Service	Allows Regular members of the Armed Forces to request part time working and/or restricted separation from home base, for a limited length of time
Flexible Working	Agreed variation in starting and finishing working hours normally designed to meet work/home life balance
Force Development Activities	Refers to a wide range of activities designed to improve operational effectiveness

Term	Definition
Government Affordable Housing Scheme	Schemes providing financial assistance for those who are unable to afford to buy or rent a home; includes Forces Help to Buy (FHTB)
Harassment	Includes unwanted conduct which is related to the characteristics mentioned above (see Discrimination above) and is intended to or has the effect of violating another's dignity or creating a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment
JPA	Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) is the system used by the Armed Forces to deal with matters of pay, leave and other personal administrative tasks
Marines	Royal Marines personnel of NATO ranks OR1 to OR9
Missing at Random (MAR)	Statistical theory that states that those who did not respond to a question do not differ from those who did respond
Missing Value(s)	Refers to the situation where a respondent has not submitted an answer or a valid answer to a question
MOD	Ministry of Defence
Morale	A measure of commitment and willingness to the ethos of a Service
N/A	Not applicable
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
Non-operational allowances	These include Longer Separation Allowance (LSA), Get You Home (GYH) allowance, and residual unaccompanied rate of LOA (Local Overseas Allowance).
Non-response	Refers either to a person who although sampled and sent a questionnaire did not reply or to a respondent who did not reply to a question
Officer(s)	All regular trained officers of NATO ranks OF1 to OF10
Operational/Deployment Welfare Package	Measures taken to support the morale of Service personnel by making the fullest possible provision for their emotional and physical wellbeing whilst on operational deployment

Term	Definition
Other Rank(s)	Other Ranks are members of the Royal Marines, Army and Royal Air Force who are not Officers. The equivalent group in the Royal Navy is known as "Ratings"
RAF	Royal Air Force
Recruitment and Retention Payment (RRP) - formerly Specialist Pay	Discretionary payment received in addition to basic pay by specific groups within the Armed Forces to assist with specific recruitment or retention requirements
RM	Royal Marines
RN	Royal Navy
RNRMW	Royal Navy Royal Marines Welfare (Service)
Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR)	In the context of the Services, refers to a Review of what needed to be done to restructure and rescale the size of the Armed Forces to meet future Defence requirements of the UK's national security
Service Accommodation	Any type of accommodation that includes 'SFA', 'SSFA', 'SLA', 'SSSA' and 'Onboard a ship or submarine'
Service Complaints Ombudsman	Oversees the Service Complaints system and also acts as an alternative point of contact for Service Complaints including ensuring that Service Complaints are dealt with efficiently, effectively and fairly
Service(s)	Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army and RAF
SFA	Service Families Accommodation
SLA	Single Living Accommodation
Soldiers	Army personnel of NATO ranks OR1 to OR9
SSFA	Substitute Service Family Accommodation
SSSA	Substitute Service Single Accommodation (formerly SSLA)
Standard Error	A measure derived using weighting factors from the sample proportion and unweighted count in a sampling distribution and used as a benchmark in order to ascertain a range of values within which the true population proportion could lie
Statistically Significant	Refers to the result of a statistical test in which there is evidence of a change in proportions between years

Term	Definition
Statistical Tests	Refers to those tests which are carried out to see if any evidence exists for a change in response proportions from one year to another
Trained Strength	Trained Strength comprises military personnel who have completed Phase 1 and 2 training. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1 Training includes all new entry training to provide basic military skills</li> <li>• Phase 2 Training includes initial individual specialisation, sub-specialisation and technical training following Phase 1 training prior to joining the trained strength</li> </ul>
Unit	A sub-organisation of the Service in which personnel are employed
Unweighted Count	Refers to the actual number who provided a valid response to a question in the survey
Weighting (Factors)	Refers to factors that are applied to the respondent data set by Service and rank group in order to make respondent Service rank groups representative of their population equivalents
Weighting Class	Refers to those members of a specific rank group to whom a weighting factor is applied
X-Factor	Additional payment to Armed Forces personnel to compensate for differences in lifestyle, working conditions and expectations compared to civilian equivalents
Z-test	Statistical test based on a standardised distribution which allows comparison between years for populations of different sizes

## Further Information

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### Contact Us

Defence Statistics welcomes feedback on our statistical products. If you have any comments or questions about this publication or about our statistics in general, you can contact us as follows:

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