

Background Quality Report: *Armed Forces Redundancy Programme Statistics*

Introduction	<p><i>This section provides the context for the quality report.</i></p> <p>Overview</p> <p>Defence Statistics publishes a large range of Armed Forces personnel statistics, mainly to inform policy and decision making within the Department. The statistics are also used to measure performance against MOD, Government and Parliament targets and to inform general debate in government, parliament and the wider public.</p> <p>This background quality report covers the Official Statistics specifically covering the Armed Forces Redundancy Programme (AFRP). To date there have been four rounds or ‘tranches’ of redundancies in the Armed Forces, and there have been three reports providing statistics on the number of people applying for and selected for redundancy, plus detailed information on the maximum numbers that could have been selected for each rank and trade (known as ‘fields’).</p> <p>Methodology and Production</p> <p>The statistics are counts of applicants and selections under the AFRP, providing breakdowns by Service, sex, ethnicity, age, length of service, rank, trade, nationality and field.</p> <p>The cohorts of personnel applying for and selected for redundancy in each Tranche were sourced from the single Service teams responsible for managing the process. These were linked by Service number (unique identifier) to data sourced from the Department’s Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system, which is used for the administration and payment of personnel. The statistics represent those who applied and those who were selected at a particular point in time, normally around the time that individuals were notified that they had been selected. Due to last-minute administrative changes, they do not exactly match the numbers who were notified for tranche 2 and the initial announcement for tranche 3. They do not necessarily match the numbers of personnel eventually leaving the Services under the AFRP, due to appeals, movements of personnel into different roles not affected by AFRP and outflow for other reasons in the intervening time.</p> <p>Extracts are taken from JPA each month and stored on a separate database to form a time series. The extracts are taken six calendar days after the end of the month and the situation as at the first of the month is calculated. This ensures most late-reporting is captured.</p> <p>The data goes through a series of automatic validation checks and edits to ensure the basic quality of the data and a series of derived fields are calculated. A flows file is then created by comparing the current month’s data to the previous month’s data by low-level groupings and recording any changes in strengths.</p> <p>The data is then made available to Defence Statistics’ single Service manpower branches. They undertake a wide range of validation checks and implement specialist editing rules using their expert knowledge and experience as well as data obtained from other sources within the Department.</p> <p>Once the data is confirmed as being accurate the database is queried to produce the range of tables published. These tables undergo several</p>
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	<p>layers of scrutiny to ensure the outputs are accurate and consistent. The results are generally rounded to the nearest 10 to reflect the degree of confidence we have in the numbers and to ensure small numbers do not disclose information on individuals. The tables which break down applicants and selections by field are rounded to the nearest 5. Many fields relate to a specific rank, trade and length of time served and therefore may have a maxima of fewer than 10 personnel. Rounding to 5 avoids the suppression of much of this detail. Data are not cross-tabulated further, in order to prevent disclosure issues.</p> <p>Contact details The Head of Defence Statistics Tri Service is responsible for these statistics. His contact details are:</p> <p>Defence Statistics (Tri-Service) Tel: 020 7807 8896 Ministry of Defence Fax: 020 7218 0969 Floor 3 Zone K Main Building, Whitehall London SW1A 2HB</p> <p>Web site: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence/about/statistics E-mail: defstrat-stat-tri-enquiries@mod.uk</p> <p>We welcome feedback on this Background Quality Report or any of the statistics mentioned.</p>
<p>Relevance</p>	<p><i>This section is about the degree to which the statistical product meets user needs in both coverage and content.</i></p> <p>The principal customers for the tri-Service publications are within the Head Office & Corporate Services (Personnel and Training) area of the Ministry of Defence. They are used to inform and measure Service personnel strategy in areas such as pay & allowances, resettlement, and equality & diversity. They are also used to answer parliamentary questions and Freedom of Information requests.</p> <p>The statistics have been developed in close consultation with the customers and to ensure they meet all the requirements of both internal and external customers. It covers all personnel either applying or initially selected for redundancy and there are no known exclusions. Details on those actually leaving the Services under AFRP can be found in the Defence Statistics Quarterly and Monthly Personnel Reports.</p>
<p>Accuracy and Reliability</p>	<p><i>This section is about the differences between the estimates and the unknown true values.</i></p> <p>All personnel in the Regular Armed Forces must be recorded on JPA in order for them to receive their pay. Therefore the overall strength figures are fairly accurate. However, more detailed breakdowns relying on the information recorded for each individual can be less accurate due to variable quality for the different fields.</p> <p>The variation in quality is partly due to key information required for managing individuals being recorded and updated centrally, whereas other information is left to the individual to complete through a self-service tool. There is also a reasonable amount of late reporting which can adversely impact the statistics, particularly for exits and changes of individual's status from untrained to trained. Obtaining the extract on the sixth</p>

	<p>calendar day and then calculating the strength at the first of the month overcomes much of this late reporting.</p> <p>The monthly datasets are passed through a range of automatic and manual validation and editing routines in order to make the key fields as accurate as possible, often drawing upon alternative data sources. A range of detailed breakdowns are produced and these are compared with previous month's outputs and discrepancies are examined. The detailed tables are used by the single Services to manage their personnel and inform policy and strategy. Regular feedback ensures Defence Statistics staff are kept abreast of any changes or potential issues with the data and statistics, which is fed into the data validation and editing process.</p> <p>This publication covers several fields in JPA which do not undergo the detailed validation and correction processes. One such field is 'Length of Service', or the amount of time served since joining the Armed Forces. There are known problems with the entry date information extracted from JPA. If personnel have transferred from another Service, have served under an alternative assignment type (e.g. reserve forces), are re-entrants or have transferred from Other Ranks to Officers, their entry date may correspond to any of these events. The resulting LOS may reflect their current period of service, include previous service, or it may be the time that has elapsed since they first joined the Armed Forces, irrespective of any break in service. It will invariably include time spent on untrained strength. Length of service is complete years served.</p> <p>Another such field is 'Personal Status'. Personal status is a JPA field designed to capture entitlements to certain allowances and benefits based on marriage/civil partnership and liability for dependant children rather than the legal marital status of personnel. However it is the closest analogy to marital status extant in JPA, as this information is not captured directly. There are known problems with this field, including coverage (due to its non-mandatory nature) and reliability (it has been observed when tracking individuals across time, that this category can be quite volatile with more than 5 changes of category per year, which is more than could be expected if it is taken as relating to actual changes in status.)</p>															
<p>Timeliness and Punctuality</p>	<p><i>This section reports on the time gap between publication and the reference period (timeliness) and the gap between planned and actual publication dates (punctuality).</i></p> <p>The monthly extracts are taken on the sixth calendar day. The editing and production process usually takes around a month at the single Service level. The AFRP reports, due to the extra processing required to match cohorts to this data, have been published around two months after the notification of selections. The following table provides release dates for the four publications:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="512 1682 1372 1906"> <thead> <tr> <th>Publication</th> <th>Selection extract Date</th> <th>Publication Date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>AFRP Statistics Tranche 1</td> <td>September 2011</td> <td>10 November 2011</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AFRP Statistics Tranche 2</td> <td>June 2012</td> <td>24 August 2012</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AFRP Statistics Tranche 3</td> <td>18 June 2013</td> <td>29 August 2013</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AFRP Statistics Tranche 4</td> <td>12 June 2014</td> <td>31 July 2014</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Tranche 4 was the fourth and final tranche of the Armed Forces Redundancy Programme. There are no planned future tranches.</p>	Publication	Selection extract Date	Publication Date	AFRP Statistics Tranche 1	September 2011	10 November 2011	AFRP Statistics Tranche 2	June 2012	24 August 2012	AFRP Statistics Tranche 3	18 June 2013	29 August 2013	AFRP Statistics Tranche 4	12 June 2014	31 July 2014
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Accessibility and Clarity	<p><i>This section reports on the: ease with which users are able to access the data and the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information (accessibility); and the quality and sufficiency of the metadata, illustrations and accompanying advice (clarity).</i></p> <p>The reports are published on https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-redundancy-program-statistics-index and are available as pdfs.</p>
Coherence and Comparability	<p><i>This section examines: the degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but refer to the same topic, are similar (coherence); and the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain (comparability).</i></p> <p>The Defence Statistics statistics on UK Armed Forces are the definitive manning statistics in the MOD. There are no other publically available regular publications on the numbers of UK Armed Forces personnel involved in the AFRP with which to ensure coherence.</p> <p>The UK Armed Forces manning statistics are not always directly comparable with other countries statistics due to definitional differences of what constitutes an Armed Force. In some countries, particularly in Europe, part of the domestic police force is included in the Armed Forces. Similarly, there are not always direct equivalents to the RAF, Navy and Army in other countries.</p>
Trade-offs between Output Quality Components	<p><i>This section reports the extent to which different aspects of quality are balanced against each other.</i></p> <p>The main trade-off is between timeliness and quality. To ensure statistics are timely the editing and validation process is restricted to around two weeks and a significant amount of automatic editing is utilised. Spending more time investigating every suspect individual personnel record could marginally improve quality at a detailed trade/rank level but is unlikely to impact the aggregated statistics published.</p>
Assessment of User Needs and Perceptions	<p><i>The section reports the processes for finding out about users and uses, and their views on the statistical products.</i></p> <p>Defence Statistics frequently meet with customers within the Department to discuss data, results, interpretation and any changes to requirements. They also seek feedback from a wider range of internal and external customers.</p> <p>Users are also encouraged to provide feedback on Defence Statistics through the annual consultation meetings..</p> <p>Due to the high-profile nature of redundancy statistics, this publication serves the need of the Department to have consistent, reliable Official Statistics on which to base its press releases and other queries.</p> <p>We have made our own assessment of what these statistics could be used for using the categorisation in the UKSA paper <i>The Use Made of Statistics</i>. We believe the statistics could be used as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Informing the general public's choices: e. about the performance of government and public bodies

	<p>ii. Government decision making about policies, and associated decisions about related programmes and projects: b. policy monitoring</p> <p>The underlying data also allow for:</p> <p>ii. Government decision making about policies, and associated decisions about related programmes and projects: a. policy making</p> <p>vii. Facilitating academic research.</p>
<p>Performance, Cost and Respondent Burden</p>	<p><i>This section is about the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the statistical output.</i></p> <p>Defence Statistics has four branches dedicated to producing information relating to manpower and providing analysis and advice. However, the majority of time is spent on adding value through analysing, forecasting and answering adhoc rather than producing the Official Statistics. Some of Defence Statistics' other branches (there are 15 in total) provide support to the manpower branches.</p> <p>There is very little respondent burden as nearly all the data is automatically obtained from administrative systems. However, this is supplemented with small amounts of data and input from other areas within the MOD.</p>
<p>Confidentiality, Transparency and Security</p>	<p><i>This section is about the procedures and policy used to ensure sound confidentiality, security and transparent practices.</i></p> <p>Security All staff involved in the production process have signed the Data Protection Act; all MoD, Civil Service and data protection regulations are adhered to. The data is stored, accessed and analysed using the MOD's restricted network and IT systems, and the access to raw data is password protected.</p> <p>Confidentiality All published outputs are counts of individuals in particular groupings. The outputs are rounded according to Defence Statistics rounding policy, which reflects the degree of accuracy of the outputs and prevents disclosure of information on individuals.</p> <p>Transparency The AFRP reports highlight any issues with or caveats to the data. This quality report provides further information on the method, production process and quality of the output.</p>

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