



Ministry
of Defence

Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB
United Kingdom

Ref: FOI2019/05168

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

29 May 2019

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 30 April 2019, requesting the following information:

“A breakdown for personnel joining each service of the Armed Forces (Army, Navy, RAF) by declared religion and undeclared religion for each of the last five years (including up to the most recent quarter point in 2019”

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and I can confirm the information you have requested is held. However, I have to advise you that we would not be able to answer your questions without exceeding the appropriate cost limit.

Section 12 of the FOI Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for central Government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the department holds the information, locating it, retrieving it and extracting it.

Under Section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note, that a list of personnel joining the MOD is held, but it does not contain data on declared religion. To extract the information requested, a match would need to be carried out between the new joiner's data and 60 months of strength data to determine the first declaration of a religion on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system. At a very conservative estimate, this would take 20 minutes per table (60 tables x 20 minutes = 1200 minutes) or 20 working hours. In addition, the data would need to be cross checked for accuracy and would take a comparable amount of time, resulting in a minimum 40 working hours. You may, therefore, wish to significantly reduce the timeframe of your request.

You may also be interested in the published Armed Forces Diversity statistics which contain information on declared religion of serving personnel.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-index>

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact us in the first instance at the address above. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main

Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

Defence People Secretariat FOI