



This annual publication presents figures on the number of **Cadets** and **Adult Volunteers** in the Cadet Forces sponsored by the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

Statistics are provided for the Community Cadets (the **Sea Cadet Corps** and **Volunteer Cadet Corps**, **Army Cadet Force** and **Air Training Corps**) and the **Combined Cadet Force**. More detailed statistics and historic time series can be found in the [Excel Tables](#).

This publication is part of a series of MOD Sponsored Cadet Forces Statistics annual bulletins. Previous statistics on cadets can be found in earlier publications.

### Key Points and Trends

▼ 74 040	<b>Number of Cadets (Community Cadets)</b> At 1 April 2021 <i>Decrease of 11 260 (-13%) since 1 April 2020</i>
▲ 46 070	<b>Number of Cadets (Combined Cadet Force)</b> At 1 April 2021 <i>Increase of 1 050 (+2%) since 1 April 2020</i>
▼ 24 200	<b>Number of Adult Volunteers (Community Cadets)</b> At 1 April 2021 <i>Decrease of 1 380 (-5%) since 1 April 2020</i>
▼ 3 270	<b>Number of Adult Volunteers (Combined Cadet Force)</b> At 1 April 2021 <i>Decrease of 70 (-2%) since 1 April 2020</i>
▼ 33%	<b>Proportion of female Cadets (Community Cadets)</b> At 1 April 2021 <i>Decrease from 34% since 1 April 2020</i>
◀▶ 36%	<b>Proportion of female Cadets (Combined Cadet Force)</b> At 1 April 2021 <i>Remained at 36% since 1 April 2020</i>

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**Background quality report:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tri-service-personnel-bulletin-background-quality-reports>

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-Tri-Service@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Analysis-Tri-Service@mod.gov.uk)

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Supplementary tables containing further statistics can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mod-sponsored-cadet-forces-statistics-2021>

The Background Quality Report is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tri-service-personnel-bulletin-background-quality-reports>

## Introduction

This annual publication presents figures on the number of **Cadets** and **Adult Volunteers** in the Cadet Forces sponsored by the Ministry of Defence (MOD). It includes age and gender breakdowns of the Cadets, and gender breakdowns of the Adult Volunteers.

The MOD sponsors and supports five Cadet Forces (voluntary youth organisations). They comprise of the Community Cadets (**Sea Cadet Corps, Volunteer Cadet Corps, Army Cadet Force and Air Training Corps**) and the school-based **Combined Cadet Force**, whose contingents contain one or more sections from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army or Royal Air Force.

The Cadet Forces provide young people with interesting and challenging activities as part of a stimulating syllabus that develops valuable life skills. In addition, the Cadet Forces encourage young people to take an interest in Defence and the Armed Forces and, for those considering careers in the Services, shows them the various opportunities that exist.

The Cadet Forces are not part of the Armed Forces, and members of the Cadet Forces do not have any liability for military service or compulsory training in the Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve). The Cadet Forces are not conduits for entry into the Armed Forces – this position is clearly stated in the UK's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused severe disruption to the Cadet Forces. In-line with government direction, normal cadet activity has been limited and Adult Volunteers have worked hard to deliver training virtually during periods of lockdown. When a relaxation of restrictions has been possible, the Cadet Forces have been making cautious but progressive returns to face-to-face cadet activity. The impact of COVID-19 lockdowns on cadet and Adult Volunteer numbers has varied across Cadet Forces but they all have struggled to maintain normal levels of recruitment, this is reflected in the figures presented in this publication. The true impact of COVID-19 will not be known until later in the year once normal cadet activity has been re-established, and this will be reflected the next publication.

The next edition of this publication is provisionally scheduled to be released on GOV.UK at 9.30am on 26 May 2022. A calendar of upcoming MOD statistical releases can be found on **GOV.UK**.

### A National Statistics publication

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This publication has since undergone a change in presentation following a public consultation, though the underlying methodology of producing the data remains unchanged. The MOD continues to seek feedback from users to ensure this publication is meeting user needs.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

# Background and Context

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## Key Policies

### The Defence Command Paper

The Defence Command Paper<sup>1</sup> states that the cadets are a key part of the MOD's youth agenda and help young people from across the UK to broaden their horizons and unlock their potential. The paper also states that the Department will sustain the five MOD-sponsored Cadet Forces across the UK that currently provide opportunities for 130,000 cadets.

### Cadet Force Strategy

The Cadet Force Strategy was initiated in March 2015 and updated in June 2018, to look out to 2025. It is a tri-service strategy which encompasses the strategic intent for the MOD-sponsored Cadet Forces and ensures a coherent direction of travel and unity of effort. The Cadet Force Strategy Vision is for 'a challenging and stimulating contemporary cadet experience that develops and inspires young people within a safe environment'. The strategy recognises that the critical success factor for the Cadet Forces is the continuing commitment of sufficient, capable and motivated Adult Volunteers to deliver the cadet experience.

### Cadet Expansion Programme

The Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP) was launched in June 2012 by the then Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, with an initial aim of establishing 100 new cadet units in English state-funded secondary schools by September 2015. Following successful delivery of this target the Government committed £50m from LIBOR fines to cover set up costs, uniforms, equipment and training to grow the total number of cadet units in schools across the UK to 500 by March 2020. This target was reached in November 2019, 6 months early.<sup>2</sup> The number of schools across the UK with cadet units has almost doubled since the start of the program, now with more units in state schools than in independent schools.

At the Conservative Party Conference in September 2018 the then Secretary of State (SofS) for Defence announced a further Government ambition to increase the number of cadets in school units from c.43,000 to 60,000 (by 2024).

### Safeguarding

Safeguarding young people is a key priority and we have robust procedures in place to protect cadets. This includes mandatory security and background checks for all adults who work with children, rigorous disclosure procedures and regular safeguarding training. The MOD's approach to Safeguarding is set out in its Cadet Forces Safeguarding Framework 2019.

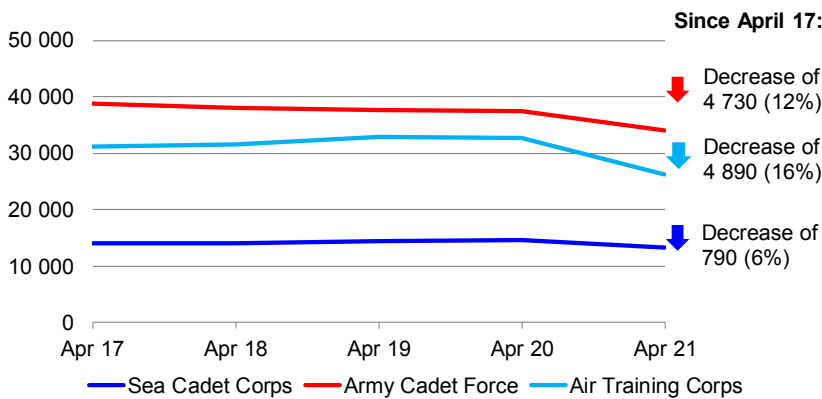
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-in-a-competitive-age>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cadet-expansion-programme-reaches-500-unit-target>

# Community Cadets

As at 1 April 2021, there were 74,040 cadets in the Community Cadets, made up of 13,220 Sea Cadets, 440 Volunteer Cadet Corps, 34,080 Army Cadets and 26,300 Air Cadets. The number of cadets remained relatively stable between 1 April 2017 and 1 April 2020 before a decrease between 1 April 2020 and 1 April 2021 (see Figure 1), with the impact of COVID-19 and periods of lockdown reflected in the figures. Since 1 April 2020, the number of Army Cadets has decreased by 3,320 (9%), the number of Air Cadets has decreased by 6,460 (20%) and the number of Sea Cadets has also decreased by 1,450 (10%). Most young people join cadets between the ages 9 and 13, the number of total cadets in the community cadets has fallen across these age groups since 1 April 2020 (see Table 2 in [Excel Tables](#)). Volunteer Cadet Corps numbers are not shown in Figure 1 due to their relatively small size.

**Figure 1: Number of Cadets in the Community Cadets**



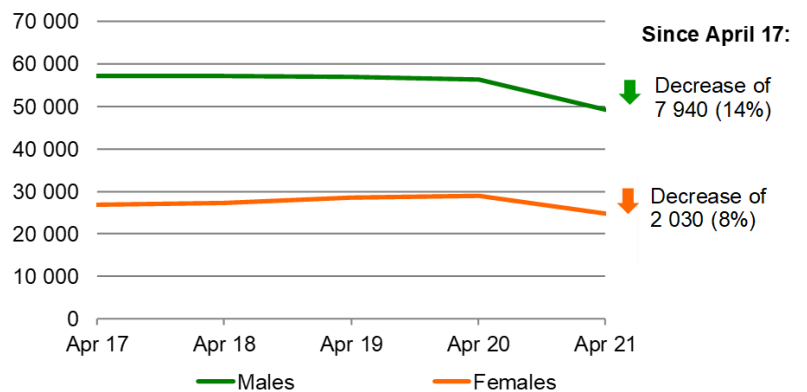
**Community Cadet Forces** include the Sea Cadet Corps (SCC), Volunteer Cadet Corps (VCC), Army Cadet Force (ACF) and Air Training Corps (ATC). (See [glossary](#)).

**Adult Volunteers** include uniformed and non-uniformed volunteers. (See [glossary](#)).

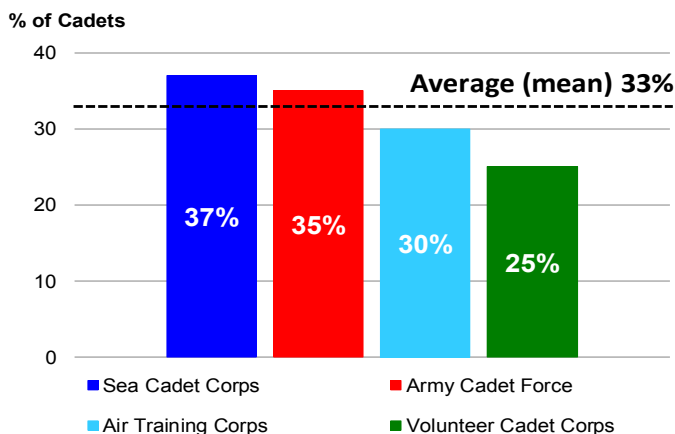
## Gender

Female representation in the Community Cadet Forces has increased, rising to 33% at 1 April 2021 compared with 32% at 1 April 2017. However, while the number of female cadets increased up until 1 April 2020 (see Figure 2), the rise in the proportion of female cadets can be partly attributed to the decrease in the number of male cadets over the same period. As at 1 April 2021, there has been a fall in the number of cadets compared to 1 April 2020 for male (13%) and female (15%) cadets.

**Figure 2: Number of Cadets in the Community Cadets by Gender**



**Figure 3: Proportion of Female Cadets in the Community Cadets as at 1 April 21**



The Sea Cadet Corps had the highest proportion of female cadets at 1 April 2021 (37%) compared with the Army Cadet Force (35%) the Air Training Corps (30%) and the Volunteer Cadet Corps (25%) shown in Figure 3. Following slight increases to the number of female cadets in the last few years, the SCC, ACF and ATC reached their highest number of female cadets at 1 April 2020 before the decrease in total Community cadets as at 1 April 2021.

# Community Cadets

## Age

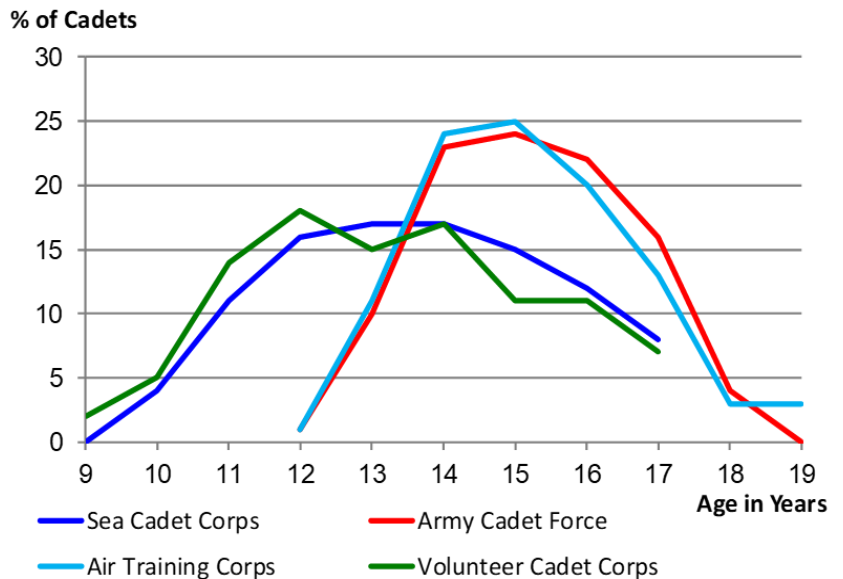
Each of the Cadet Forces has different age restrictions<sup>1</sup> and as a result different age distributions are observed.

There is a higher representation of younger cadets in the Sea Cadet Corps, whose largest age group are 13 year olds (17%) and 14 year olds (17%) and Volunteer Cadet Corps whose largest age group are 12 year olds (18%).

There is a higher representation of older cadets in the Army Cadet Force and Air Training Corps, whose largest age groups are 15 year olds (24% and 25% of cadets respectively).

<sup>1</sup> See **glossary** for age restrictions.

**Figure 4: Age Distribution of Cadets in the Community Cadets as at 1 April 21**



## Adult Volunteers

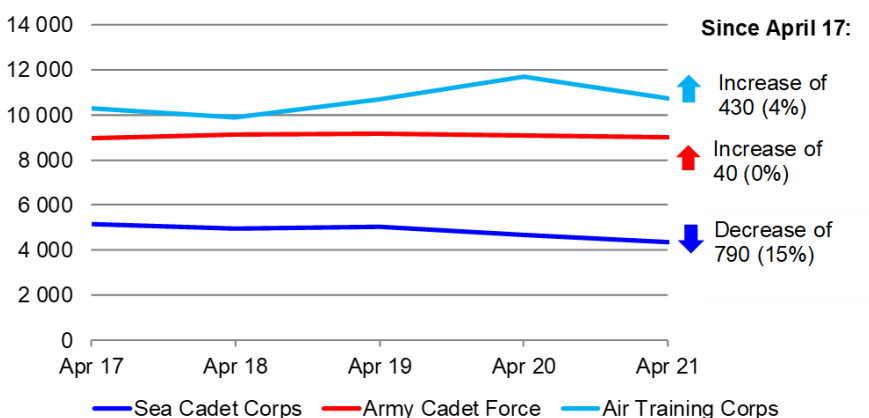
As at 1 April 2021, there were 24,200 Adult Volunteers in the Community Cadets, made up of 4,360 in the Sea Cadet Corps, 110 in the Volunteer Cadet Corps, 9,020 in the Army Cadet Force and 10,710 in the Air Training Corps. Figure 5 shows the changes in Adult Volunteer numbers across the Community Cadets since 1 April 2017. Volunteer Cadet Corps numbers are not shown in Figure 5 due to small numbers.

## Adult Volunteers Gender

The Sea Cadet Corps had the highest proportion of female Adult Volunteers at 1 April 2021 with 33%, followed by the Air Training Corps and the Army Cadet Force each with 30%.

While there is a greater proportion of males in both the Uniformed and Non-Uniformed Volunteers, the gender difference is greater in the Uniformed population (72% male) compared with Non-Uniformed Volunteers (65% male).

**Figure 5: Number of Adult Volunteers in the Community Cadets**



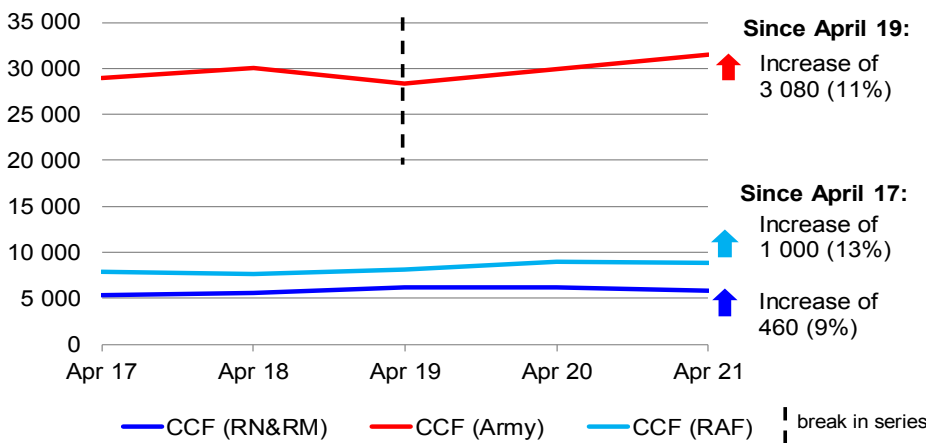
## Adult to Cadet Ratio

The overall ratio of cadets to each Adult Volunteer at 1 April 2021 was 3.1 with variations between Cadet Forces. Please note that this ratio may differ across individual cadet units.

# Combined Cadet Force

As at 1 April 2021, there were 46,070 cadets in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), made up of 5,770 cadets in the RN and RM sections, 31,470 in the Army sections and 8,830 in the RAF sections. CCF (Army) improved their approach to accounting for cadet numbers at 1 April 2019, hence figures before and after 1 April 2019 are not directly comparable for CCF (Army). We have not revised figures before the 1 April 2019 count for CCF (Army) cadets but it is possible that it was an over-estimate of the true number. Since 1 April 2017 the total number of cadets in the RN and RM sections and the RAF sections has increased and since 1 April 2019 the total number of cadets in the Army sections has also increased (see figure 6). Since 1 April 2020, the number of cadets in the RN and RM sections has decreased by 360 (6%), the number of cadets in the Army sections has increased by 1,550 (5%) and the number of cadets in the RAF sections has decreased by 130 (1%).

**Figure 6: Number of Cadets in the Combined Cadet Force**

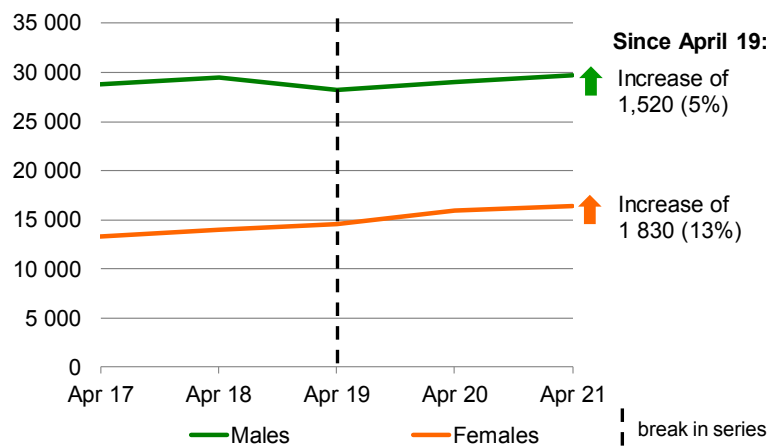


**Combined Cadet Force (CCF)** is a school-based youth organisation, comprising one or more sections from the RN and RM, Army and RAF. (See [glossary](#)).

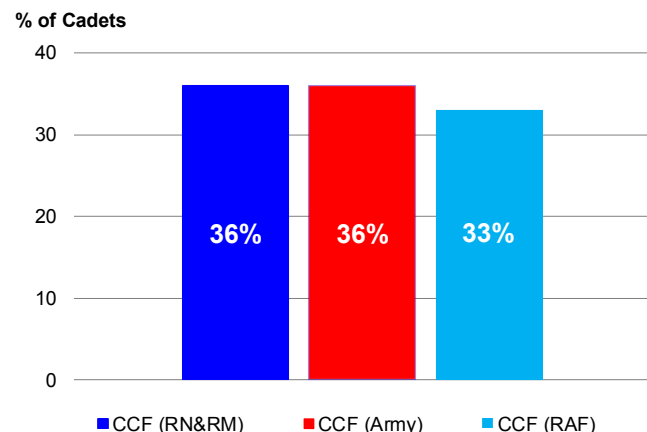
## Gender

Female representation in the CCF has increased slightly, rising to 36% at 1 April 2021 compared with 34% at 1 April 2019. While the overall number of female cadets has increased, the rise in the proportion of female cadets can be partly attributed to the number of male cadets only increasing slightly over the same period (see Figure 7). The proportion of female cadets is the highest it has been in the period since 1 April 2007.

**Figure 7: Number of Cadets in the Combined Cadet Force by Gender**



**Figure 8: Proportion of Female Cadets in the Combined Cadet Force as at 1 April 21**



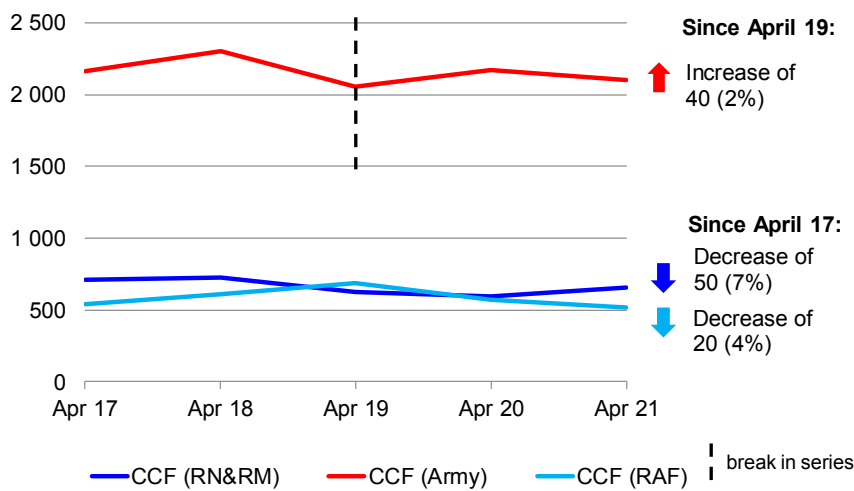
At 1 April 2021, the RN and RM as well as the Army had the highest proportion of female cadets (36%) compared with the RAF (33%). The proportion of female cadets has increased across the CCF for all three single Services since 1 April 2017.

# Combined Cadet Force

## Adult Volunteers

As at 1 April 2021, there were 3,270 Adult Volunteers in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), made up of 660 in the RN and RM sections, 2,100 in the Army sections and 520 in the RAF sections. Figure 9 shows the changes in Adult Volunteers across the CCF since 1 April 2017. CCF (Army) improved their approach to accounting for Adult Volunteers numbers at 1 April 2019, hence figures before and after 1 April 2019 are not directly comparable for CCF (Army). We have not revised figures before the 1 April 2019 count for CCF (Army) Adult Volunteers but it is possible that it was an over-estimate of the true number. Since 1 April 2020, the number of Adult Volunteers in the RN and RM sections has increased by 60 (10%), the number of Adult Volunteers in the Army sections has decreased by 70 (3%) and the number of Adult Volunteers in the RAF sections has decreased by 50 (9%).

**Figure 9: Number of Adult Volunteers in the Combined Cadet Force**



**Combined Cadet Force (CCF)** is a school-based youth organisation, comprising one or more sections from the RN and RM, Army and RAF.  
(See [glossary](#)).

## Adult Volunteers Gender

The Army and RAF sections had the highest proportion of female Adult Volunteers at 1 April 2021 (36%), compared with the RN and RM sections (34%). While there is a greater proportion of males in both the Uniformed and Non-Uniformed Volunteers, the gender difference is greater in the Uniformed Volunteers (65% male) compared with Non-Uniformed population (60% male).

## Adult to Cadet Ratio

The overall ratio of Combined Cadet Force Cadets to each Adult Volunteer at 1 Apr 2021 was 14.1 with variations between sections. Please note that this ratio may differ across individual cadet units.

## Further Information

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### Rounding

Figures in this publication have been rounded to the nearest 10, though numbers ending in a “5” have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent the systematic bias caused by always rounding numbers upwards. For example; a value of “25” would be rounded down to “20” and a value of “15” would be rounded up to “20”.

Totals and sub-totals are rounded separately and so may not equal the sums of their rounded parts.

Percentages are calculated from unrounded data and presented to zero decimal place.

### Revisions

There have been revisions in Table 2 to 1 April 2018 VCC due to a Formula error. This has not impacted the actual values of VCC but the percentages of the different age groups making up the total VCC.

### Data sources:

Data are derived from two management information systems which the individual Cadet Force Headquarters use to administer their Cadets and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers.

These systems undergo continuous improvements in data quality and coverage. These improvements are not considered material enough at this time to warrant a break in series.

### Data quality:

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the suspension of face-to-face cadet activity in 2020 and 2021, which severely disrupted engagement with Cadets and Adult Volunteers. Some administrative processes, including onboarding Cadets and Adult Volunteers are likely to have been delayed as a result.

### Symbols

	Discontinuity in time series
*	not applicable
..	not available
–	Zero
~	5 or fewer
p	Provisional
e	Estimate
r	Revised

*Italic* figures are used for percentages and other rates, except where otherwise indicated.

### Contact Us

Analysis (Tri-Service) 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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# Glossary

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**Air Training Corps (ATC)** aims to promote and encourage an interest in aviation and the Royal Air Force among young people from age 12 up to their 20th birthday, by providing training which may be useful both in the Services and in civilian life.

**Army Cadet Force (ACF)** through a broad range of challenging, educational and adventurous activities gives young people from age 12 up to their 20th birthday, the opportunity to develop leadership and team-working skills, builds their confidence and helps them develop physically, mentally and socially.

**Cadet Forces** The Ministry of Defence sponsors and supports five Cadet Forces (military-themed voluntary youth organisations). The Cadet Forces comprise the Sea Cadet Corps (SCC), the Volunteer Cadet Corps (VCC), Combined Cadet Force (CCF), Army Cadet Force (ACF) and Air Training Corps (ATC). The Cadet Forces are not part of the Armed Forces and have no operational role; nor are they conduits for entry into the Armed Forces.

**Adult Volunteers** The Cadet Forces could not exist without the support of adults who volunteer to help train cadets, run meetings, activities and events. No previous military experience is necessary and Adult Volunteers are not liable for military call up. This includes uniformed and non-uniformed volunteers. Like cadets, the Adult Volunteers can obtain vocational qualifications linked to community, social action and volunteering during their time with the cadets.

**Combined Cadet Force (CCF)** is a unique educational partnership which operates in schools across the UK. Through military-themed activities, cadets can develop skills such as leadership, self-reliance, resourcefulness, endurance and perseverance. CCF contingents contain one or more sections from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army or the Royal Air Force, and promote the aims and values of the Services they represent.

**Community Cadets** comprise the Sea Cadet Corps, the Volunteer Cadet Corps, the Army Cadet Force and the Air Training Corps.

**Ministry of Defence (MOD)** is the United Kingdom government department responsible for the development and implementation of government defence policy and the headquarters of the British Armed Forces. The principal objective of the MOD is to defend the United Kingdom and its interests. The MOD also manages day to day running of the Armed Forces, contingency planning and defence procurement.

**Royal Air Force Air Cadets (RAFAC)** includes CCF (RAF) and the Air Training Corps (ATC).

**Sea Cadet Corps (SCC)** (including Royal Marines Cadets) aims to give young people from age 12 up to their 18th birthday the best possible start in life through nautical adventure and fun. There is also a Junior Section for young people aged between 10<sup>1</sup> and 12 years. Sea Cadets is the largest national maritime voluntary youth charity, which is part-sponsored by and follows the customs and traditions of the Royal Navy.

**Volunteer Cadet Corps (VCC)** aims to provide opportunities for young people, from aged 9 up to their 18th birthday, to develop into dependable and useful members of society, employing the traditions of the Royal Navy (RN) and Royal Marines (RM), as the basis for their activities. VCC units (RN and RM) are based at Royal Naval service establishments and are organised and run by volunteers including serving members of the RN and RM. The VCC's status changed in 2017 to become the fifth MOD sponsored Cadet Force.

<sup>1</sup> A trial in the Sea Cadet Corps introducing a lower age limit of 9 years is currently underway in 24 units.

## Glossary

Cadet Force	Lower age limit	Upper age limit	Comments
Sea Cadet Corps	10 years  (10-12 years for Junior Sea Cadets)  (13 years for Royal Marines Cadets)	18th birthday	A lower age limit of 9 years is currently being trialled in 24 units.
Volunteer Cadet Corps	9 years	18th birthday	-
Combined Cadet Force	Year 8 <sup>1</sup> or later at the discretion of the Head, noting specific restrictions may apply for individual sections.	To the end of the summer holiday of their final year of school.	-
Army Cadet Force	12 years and in Year 8 <sup>1</sup>	20th birthday (for staff cadets)  18th birthday (otherwise)	The upper age limit was lowered from 18 years 9 months in September 2015.  Staff cadets, aged 18 – 20 years were introduced at the end of 2019.
Air Training Corps	12 years and in Year 8 <sup>1</sup>	20th birthday (for staff cadets)  18th birthday (otherwise)	The lower age limit was lowered from 13 years in September 2014.

<sup>1</sup> S2 in Scotland and Year 9 in Northern Ireland