

Background Quality Report

Royal Navy and Royal Marines Quarterly Pocket Brief

1. Introduction

Overview

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) publishes a wide range of Armed Forces personnel statistics. The main purpose of these statistics is; to inform policy and decision making within the Department, to measure the performance of the Ministry of Defence against Government and Parliament targets, and also to inform general debate in Government, Parliament and the wider public.

This Background Quality Report covers the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Quarterly Pocket Brief (QPB), published on the Ministry of Defence statistics website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/royal-navy-quarterly-pocket-brief-index>

The QPB is an Official Statistic which was first produced in July 2003 to show summary strengths and flows of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines (RN/RM). It was initially produced as a 'one off' special edition in 2003 and became a quarterly product from April 2005 to meet the needs of both RN/RM staff and the general public. There have been two user consultations in 2005 and 2008 where feedback resulted in the removal of civilian data from table 8.

Methodology and Production

The QPB shows summary strengths and flows of the RN/RM as at the first day of the quarter: 1st January, 1st April, 1st July and 1st October. Full Time Reserve Service Personnel (FTRS) are included in two of the tables. Mobilised reservists are included in one table.

A monthly extract, as at the first of each month, is taken from the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system on the sixth calendar day of each month. The lag helps to minimise the impact of individuals not immediately updating their JPA record. The data undergoes a series of automatic validation checks and edits to ensure its basic quality. The extract is then stored on a MySQL database as part of a time-series of extracts maintained by Defence Statistics (Navy). A further series of validation checks and corrections are made using expert knowledge and data obtained from other sources within the Department.

SQL code is used to create strength and flow pivot tables within Microsoft Excel for each member of the RN/RM for the situation date being published. The published tables are created by combining the data with liability information provided by personnel planners within Navy Command. All tables are checked and amended as necessary. The file is then secured in Adobe Acrobat Professional.

The QPB is an official statistic produced and published in line with the UK Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

The publication date is pre-announced on the release calendar on the MOD statistics website:

https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements?utf8=%E2%9C%93&keywords=&topics%5B%5D=&organisations%5B%5D=ministry-of-defence&from_date=&to_date=&commit=Refresh+results

A list of individuals who have pre-release access to the Situation Report is also published on the MOD statistics website:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/defence-statistics-pre-release-access-list>

Contact Details:

Defence Statistics (Navy) Head of Department is responsible for these statistics. Contact details are as follows:

Defence Statistics (Navy)
Room 223 West Battery, Whale Island

Tel: 02392 625956

Portsmouth, PO2 8DX

Email: DefStrat-Stat-Navy@mod.uk

Defence Statistics (Navy) welcome feedback on this Background Quality Report or any of the statistics mentioned.

2. Relevance

The QPB reports summary strengths and flows of the RN/RM. This meets the requirements of all known users of the product. Customers requiring greater detail are directed to other publications, for example the [RN/RM Monthly Personnel Situation Report](#).

3. Accuracy

Data sources

The main data source for compiling the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Monthly Personnel Situation Report output is the database of monthly extracts from the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system. These extracts cover all personnel in the Armed Forces; personnel must be present on the system in order to be paid and there is therefore a high degree of certainty over the accuracy of the overall strength figures.

Key information for managing individuals is recorded and updated centrally with other information being completed by the individual through a self-service tool. There is a reasonable amount of late reporting which can adversely impact the statistics. Therefore more detailed breakdowns can be less accurate than the high-level figures, particularly for flows such as exits from the Service and changes from the untrained to trained strengths. Obtaining the extract on the sixth calendar day of the months overcomes much of the impact of late reporting.

Defence Statistics (Navy) cleanse and correct around 300-400 records within each monthly extract to ensure the quality of key fields (such as service, branch, rank and exit category) is sufficient to be published as an official statistic.

Outputs

All figures published in the QPB are rounded to the nearest 10 with numbers ending in 5 rounded to the nearest 20 to prevent systematic bias. Rounded figures are less precise, but not less accurate. Less precision improves the clarity of the outputs and provides an appropriate indication of the underlying accuracy. Rounding in this way is

Defence Statistics (Navy)'s preferred method of disclosure control in published statistics as it preserves anonymity of data subjects.

4. Timeliness and Punctuality

The time lapse between the reference date of the QPB and the date of publication is approximately 6 weeks. It takes at least 12 days for the data to become available and for any necessary corrections to be made. It then takes up to one week for production, checking and amending of the report as necessary.

Data is not published until the publication of UK armed forces monthly personnel statistics at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-monthly-service-personnel-statistics-index>

All publication deadlines have been met since the implementation of JPA.

5. Accessibility and Clarity

QPB publications dating back to January 2010 are available as pdf documents from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/royal-navy-quarterly-pocket-brief-2010>

Older editions are available from the MOD Statistics Web archive.

The publication contains notes explaining the main categories and definitions used.

Graphics are used to present time series and distributions by lengths of service.

Detailed analysis and commentary is not provided.

6. Coherence and Compatibility

The QPB is always fully consistent in terms of the total numbers of serving regular personnel with the other RN/RM and Tri-service publications produced by Defence Statistics. Inconsistencies are identified and rectified before publication.

7. Assessment of User Needs and Perceptions.

Key users of the QPB include the Commodore of Naval Personnel Strategy (CNPS) and Naval training establishments, who use the publication to provide a current snapshot of the RN/RM. The report is also used to inform public and parliamentary debate.

8. Performance, Cost and Respondent Burden

Cost effectiveness has been improved by automating the production of the QPB and linking it to Microsoft Publisher. Hard copies are no longer produced. The document is published in electronic format only for customers to view and print as required.

The burden on data suppliers on producing the QPB is minimal. Extracts from JPA are required by Defence Statistics (Navy) irrespective of the production of the RN/RM Quarterly Pocket Brief. Additional data such as liability and information from training establishments are produced for management purposes, the extra burden of providing it to Defence Statistics (Navy) is minimal.

9. Confidentiality, Transparency and Security.

Security

All staff involved in the production process are bound by the Official Secrets Act and have undertaken training in relation to the Data Protection Act. All data is stored, accessed and analysed using the Ministry of Defence's restricted network and IT systems. The access of raw data via JPA and SQL databases is password protected.

Confidentiality

Some of the data collected and stored for the QPB contains service numbers and is restricted. All published outputs provide rounded totals of individuals shown by strengths and flows ensuring disclosure is not feasible. Defence Statistics' rounding policy

(https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561507/MOD_Statistics_-_Disclosure_Control_and_Rounding_Policy-amd.pdf) is used for all QPB outputs. The policy states that decisions on disclosure control should be made on a case-by-case basis. All totals in this report are rounded as described in section 3. This ensures consistency in statistical disclosure control. Access to unrounded data would only be provided with approval via a Data Access Agreement.

Transparency

The production process is considered to be transparent. This quality report informs users of the method, production and quality of the output. Any significant errors identified after publication would result in revisions in the next publication and explanations to the reasons behind the revisions.

10. References

Reference	Link to Website
Royal Navy and Royal Marines Monthly Situation Personnel Report	Royal Navy and Royal Marines Monthly Situation Personnel Report
UK Code of Practice for Official Statistics	UK Code of Practice for Official Statistics
Ministry of Defence Statistics Web Archive	Ministry of Defence Statistics Web Archive
UK Government Data Archive	UK Government Data Archive
Monthly Service Personnel Statistics	Monthly Service Personnel Statistics