

# Background Quality Report

## War Pensions Scheme Annual Statistics

### 1 Introduction

1. The War Pensions Scheme (WPS) provides no-fault compensation for all ex-Service personnel where illness, injury or death is caused by Service from the start of the First World War in 1914 up until 5 April 2005.
2. This annual National Statistic provides summary statistics under the War Pension Scheme, including:
  - Numbers of recipients
  - Numbers of new claims
  - Numbers of awards
  - Numbers of appeals
3. The compensation arrangements provided by the War Pensions Scheme (WPS) and the attributable elements of the Armed Forces Pensions Scheme were replaced on 6 April 2005 by the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS), to pay compensation for injury, illness or death caused by Service that occurred on or after that date. Defence Statistics also publish statistics on the AFCS and these can be found at the following link: <http://www.dasa.mod.uk/index.php?pub=AFCS>

### Background

4. A claimant is eligible for consideration under the WPS where disablement or death has occurred as a result of Service in HM Forces, prior to 6 April 2005. In addition, awards may also be made where disablement or death has occurred as a result of:
  - War-time Service in the Naval Auxiliary Service, or the Mercantile Marine
  - Service in the Polish Forces under British command during World War Two
5. Pensions, allowances or other payments may also be awarded where the disablement or death of a civilian or a member of a civil defence organisation is the direct result of an injury sustained as a result of enemy action in World War Two.
6. Claims for injuries/illnesses as a result of Service can not be made until an individual has left the Services.
7. Injuries and illnesses are awarded under the scheme based on an individual's percentage disablement. The degree of disablement is assessed on a percentage basis by the War Pension Agency medical advisors.
8. The report provides trends over time with figures for claims registered and awards made over the latest five financial years. Some tables show a snapshot of the number of pensions in payment as at the latest financial year.

9. The report was released on a quarterly basis between 2001 and 2010, and following consultation with users was changed to a bi-annual basis in 2010. Following a further consultation with users regarding a proposed reduction to the publication frequency, the 2011 report became an annual publication. Data is reported as at the end of financial year, with the annual report published in June (first annual publication June 2011).

## **Methodology**

10. Figures presented in this Statistical Notice are based on data stored on the Service Personnel and Veterans' Agency's War Pensions Computer System (WPCS). Defence Statistics receive quarterly data extracts from the WPCS which are used to compile the figures provided.
11. When Defence Statistics receive the WPCS data extracts basic consistency checks are carried out. For example, the numbers of records received is compared to the previous extract to ensure the total number is as expected. If any data quality issues are evident following receipt of data, Defence Statistics liaise with SPVA to determine whether any changes are required.
12. Further validation checks are carried out after the data has been processed to ensure that all processes and queries have run correctly and the final numbers are an accurate reflection of data received from SPVA. Manual checks are then carried out on the final report to ensure that figures quoted in the commentary reflect those in the tables, and that the numbers sum to the totals provided.
13. The quarterly data is stored on a MYSQL database. Ad-hoc interrogation of the MYSQL Databases is regularly undertaken by the Defence Statistics in order to answer Freedom of Information requests, Parliamentary questions and internal queries from within the Ministry of Defence.
14. The WPS statistics are not subject to routine revision. Figures are based on each quarterly extract of data from the WPCS at the time the data is provided. Historic data is only revised if errors are found in the classifications or processing methods used during preparation of the report for publication.

## **2. Relevance**

### **Coverage**

15. The following areas of information are covered in the report:
  - Number of current recipients of War Pensions; information is presented by pension type, level of disablement, demographic information and financial information. This information is provided to give a better picture of the type of people currently in receipt of compensation. Time trends are also provided to demonstrate the decreasing level of recipients under the scheme. This decline is due to the ageing population of recipients under the scheme and also due to the introduction of the AFCS for injuries/illnesses on or after 6 April 2005.

- Number of claims, awards and appeals under the scheme; information presented by scheme type, claim/appeal type, outcome and disablement percentage. This information is provided to show the volume of claims that are dealt with under the scheme, to show the success rates associated with each type of claim and appeal, and to show the key trends over time.
16. All claimants or recipients of an ongoing War Pension would be expected to be included within the figures. Snapshots of the numbers in payment are provided as at the end of each financial year. However please note that the publication does not give overall figures for all individuals who have ever received payments under the scheme.
  17. The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) replaced the War Pension Scheme from 6 April 2005. Users may wish to consider figures relating to the War Pension Scheme from 2005 onwards alongside figures relating to the AFCS.

### **User Needs**

18. These statistics have been provided in response to an increasing number of requests for information about claims and awards under the scheme, and the number of individuals currently in receipt of War Pensions. A range of information is requested including further details of claims and awards (e.g. by claim type or outcome) and further information on those awarded compensation (e.g. age, sex or Service). The report is used by external organisations such as NHS trusts, local Government and Armed Forces charities. The report is also used to support other MOD departments in work planning and policy development.
19. Defence Statistics recently carried out consultations to review the War Pension Scheme (WPS) National Statistic and the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) Official Statistic to ensure they are coherent and continue to meet users' needs. The consultations were prompted by the UK Statistics Authority Assessment Report 197: Statistics on Defence Health, which required a review of the content of the publications in consultation with users
20. A consultation was carried out with internal stakeholders in September 2012. Five responses were received to the internal customer consultation - three from DCDS Pers (the policy area for the two schemes) and two from SPVA (the department responsible for processing claims under the schemes). Based on the feedback received during the internal consultation, an external consultation was run alongside the release of the AFCS Official Statistic on 6 December 2012. This gave an opportunity for external customers to give feedback on the proposed changes to the AFCS and WPS publications. This consultation ended on 31 January 2013. No feedback was received during the external consultation.
21. A summary of these two consultations are published on the Defence Statistics website<sup>1</sup>. The proposed changes to the War Pension Scheme were:

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.dasa.mod.uk/applications/newWeb/www/index.php?page=48&pubType=4&thiscontent=5630&PublishTime=09:30:00&date=2013-06-05&disText=SingleReport&from=listing&topDate=2013-06-05>

- **Include the number of people as well as the number of claims/awards in each report table. This has been proposed due to the high volume of requests Defence Statistics receive for the number of people who have made claims/been awarded under the scheme.**

These additional figures were added to the latest WPS statistics, published on 6th June 2013.

- **Include total amounts paid out under the WPS (dependant on what is available from SPVA Finance). This will give an idea of the overall amounts paid out each financial year under the scheme.**

We are investigating the potential to publish total amounts paid out under the WPS in the future

- **Include numbers in receipt of war pensions for mental health conditions. Defence Statistics frequently receive requests for this information.**

This was included in the June 2013 release.

- **Provide information on groups that are no longer in receipt of pensions, but who have previously been in receipt of a war pension. Information in this area is requested by policy areas**

Defence Statistics will liaise with internal policy areas to identify the types of figures that would be useful and the potential to publish these figures in the future.

### 3. Accuracy

22. The Service Personnel and Veterans' Agency are responsible for ensuring the quality of War Pension Computer System (WPCS) data supplied to Defence Statistics. The WPCS is a large administrative database and is subject to the data quality issues of any large administrative system with data collated by a large number of staff for operational delivery purposes.
23. The main sources of potential error in the WPS statistics are as follows:
  - Incomplete data extracts from the SPVA
  - Data processing errors resulting in incorrect data outputs
  - Manual error during production of report tables, graphs and commentary
24. To ensure that potential errors are identified and resolved, Defence Statistics implement a series of data quality checks throughout the report production. These checks involve close liaison with the SPVA when required, to ensure the accuracy of the figures published (see paragraphs 11 and 12 for details).

## **4. Timeliness and Punctuality**

### **Timeliness**

25. Data are provided to Defence Statistics on a quarterly basis, and until 2010 figures were also published on a quarterly basis. Following user consultation the frequency of publication was reduced from quarterly to biannual in 2010, and then further reduced down to an annual frequency from 2011.
26. Figures as at 31 March 2013 were published on 6 June 2013, ten weeks after the end of the reporting period.

### **Punctuality**

27. The National Statistics reports have all been published on time to meet pre-announced release dates. A one year release schedule outlining the following financial year's publication date is published on the Defence Statistics website. Future publication dates will also be announced on the UK Statistics Authority hub at least one month in advance.

## **5. Accessibility and Clarity**

### **Accessibility**

28. The statistics can be accessed through the Defence Statistics website ([www.dasa.gov.uk](http://www.dasa.gov.uk)). They can be found under 'National Statistics' and 'War Pension Statistics'.

### **Clarity**

29. Users with an interest in the key findings can read a short summary of main messages within the Introduction.
30. The report is then split into two sections, including an index of all tables and charts, to help users navigate their way through the publication.

Section 1: Recipients of War Pensions  
Section 2: Number of claims, awards and appeals

31. From the end of July 2013, Microsoft Excel versions of all AFCS report tables will also be available on the Defence Statistics website.

## **6. Coherence and Comparability**

### **Coherence**

32. The War Pensions Scheme was replaced by the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme in 6 April 2005. Although there are differences between the way the two schemes are structured, where possible, Defence Statistics attempt to keep summary tables consistent between the two publications to enable comparisons between the schemes. For example, Defence Statistics provide

the same detail of location breakdowns in each report to enable comparisons between the numbers of people in receipt of compensation under each of the schemes.

### **Comparability Over Time**

33. Trends over time are presented for the previous five financial years, with some tables also presenting trends over time for the latest five quarters.
34. Trends over time are particularly relevant as the War Pension Scheme was replaced by the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme from 6 April 2005. As at 31 March 2013 new claims for War Pensions decreased by 5% since 31 March 2012. This decrease is expected due to the ageing population of war pension recipients and also because there are fewer people joining the scheme as injuries and illness since 6 April 2005 will now be eligible under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

## **7. Trade-offs between output quality components**

35. Defence Statistics minimise the cost to Government of producing these statistics through using data already collated for operational delivery purposes within the MOD's administrative system. As a large administrative system, data quality across fields is of varying quality and completeness and this limits the information available to customers in our statistics and requests for information.

## **8. Assessment of User Needs and Perceptions**

36. In reference to the UK Statistics Authority report, The Use Made of Official Statistics, the WPS statistics are used by:
  - (i) Government – Policy Making
  - (ii) Government – Policy Monitoring
  - (iii) Local Government – Service Delivery
  - (iv) Academia – Facilitating Research
  - (v) Charities – Service Delivery

### **Description of Users and Usage of Statistics**

37. The War Pension statistics have been published in response to user demand. Interest has come from internal MOD policy makers, Parliament, Government Departments, the third Sector, academics, the media, and the general public.
38. The WPS statistics are used by the following groups of customers:
  - Within the MOD, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff Personnel (DCDS Pers) use these statistical publications as a basis for policy making. The Service Personnel Veterans Agency (SPVA) use the figures for background information and for planning purposes e.g. estimating the volume/workload for different types of claims. An additional internal War Pension report is prepared annually for internal customers to meet their specific needs.
  - External organisations such as NHS trusts, local Government and Armed Forces charities (e.g. RBL) use the reports and location figures as part of estimating and planning veteran casework provision e.g. to

assess the numbers and needs of Service personnel and veterans in their local area.

- WPS statistics are also used by the media to give context to reports on Armed Forces Compensation.
39. Following the MOD's launch of the Armed Forces Community Covenant in June 2011, Defence Statistics received an increasing volume of requests from within the MOD, local Government departments and NHS trusts for information on the number of veterans by location. This was required to assist with planning for the needs of Service personnel and veterans in each specific area of the UK.
40. To meet these requirements Defence Statistics compiled information on the numbers of Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS), War Pension Scheme (WPS) and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) recipients with summaries by location. This was initially published in November 2011 and the latest update was published in March 2013. A further update will be provided by the end of 2013. The latest figures can be found at [www.dasa.mod.uk](http://www.dasa.mod.uk) under 'other publications', 'health/medical statistics'.
41. The publication of the statistics also plays an important part in ensuring the Department's accountability to the British public.
42. WPS questions from outside the MOD (e.g. FOI requests) tend to ask for more detailed information on the data provided e.g. age, Service, location breakdowns. Defence Statistics receive a high volume of requests asking for information on the types of injuries/illness that people are awarded war pensions for and also for information on the financial amounts paid out in compensation to particular subsets of individuals. Defence Statistics also receive a high volume of requests from external organisations e.g. NHS primary care trusts and charities, who use breakdowns by detailed location for estimating the number of veterans in particular regions of the UK

### **Strengths and Weaknesses in Relation to User Needs**

43. Users external to the MOD are encouraged to give feedback via the MOD website and both publications provide details of how to give feedback (see section 3.1 above). Defence Statistics also hold annual UKDS user consultation meetings, to which internal and external interested parties are invited.
44. Defence Statistics have recently carried out consultations to review the War Pension Scheme (WPS) National Statistic and the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) Official Statistic to ensure they are coherent and continue to meet users' needs. The consultations were prompted by the UK Statistics Authority Assessment Report 197: Statistics on Defence Health, which required a review of the content of the publications in consultation with users.

45. A consultation was carried out with internal stakeholders in September 2012<sup>2</sup>. Based on the feedback received during the internal consultation, an external consultation was run alongside the release of the AFCS Official Statistic on 6 December 2012. This gave an opportunity for external customers to give feedback on the proposed changes to the AFCS and WPS publications. A final set of proposed changes is published on the Defence Statistics website including proposed timescales for the delivery of these changes. Refer to paragraph 22 for a summary of the key changes proposed.
46. During 2010, the War Pension Scheme National Statistic averaged approximately 720 hits per month on the Defence Statistics external website.
47. Following a high volume of requests for veteran information at local area levels, Defence Statistics now also publish information on Armed Forces Pension, War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation recipients by location. This is available on the Defence Statistics website ([www.dasa.mod.uk](http://www.dasa.mod.uk)) under 'other publications', 'health/medical statistics'.
48. The key strength of the War Pensions data is the efficient methods adopted to capture WPS data extracts. Validation checks are undertaken to ensure that the information provided in the reports is accurate.
49. The key weakness is that Defence Statistics have to rely on the level of detail that SPVA record for each claim. There is also no other data sources that can be used to validate the information provided to Defence Statistics. Furthermore, a great deal of the information is recorded in free text fields e.g. medical conditions and therefore we are not always able to identify information requested in adhoc requests. Information is not always complete, For example, Service Number is not complete and therefore cannot be used to link the WPS data to other datasets within Health Information.

## 9. Performance cost and respondent burden

### Operational Cost

50. The production of WPS statistics has required **0.45 FTE** in 2012. This was broken down into the following:
- Time taken to produce annual WPS Nat Stat and WPS internal report (including report development) - 38 days
  - Time taken to respond to requests for information (32 received in 2012) - 57 days
    - i. 19 internal adhoc requests (33 days)
    - ii. 11 FOI requests (21 days)
    - iii. six PQs (3 days)
51. The WPS report uses an administrative data source which is already collected by the MOD. Therefore, the main operational cost to production of

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.dasa.mod.uk/applications/newWeb/www/index.php?page=48&pubType=4&thiscontent=5630&PublishTime=09:30:00&date=2013-06-05&disText=SingleReport&from=listing&topDate=2013-06-05>



the statistics is liaison with SPVA, for quality assurance and data interpretation.

## **10. Confidentiality, Transparency and Security**

52. Defence Statistics Health Information have data access agreements with SPVA with respect to obtaining the WPS data extracts. All Defence Statistics staff involved in the production have signed a declaration that they have completed the government wide Protecting Information Level 1 training and they understand their responsibilities under the Data Protection Act and the Official Statistics Code of Practice.
  
53. Defence Statistics Health Information also adhere to the Defence Statistics Rounding Policy. Defence Statistics ensure that the WPS data is kept confidential by holding this data on a secure server. Only individuals who work on the reports have access to the data. In presenting WPS and AFCS information, Defence Statistics provide as much detail as possible, whilst maintaining the medical confidentiality considerations of serving and ex-serving UK Armed Forces personnel.