



Ministry
of Defence

Defence Statistics (Health)

Ministry of Defence

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Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your letter of 20 May 2015 requesting the following information:

"Can you please provide me with the total number of soldiers, airmen and sailors, who were discharged between 1 April 2014 and 1 April 2015, who were medically discharged, with injuries caused before April 2005"

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

Medical discharges are recommended by a Medical Board which may take place many months or even years after an event and it is not clinically possible in some cases to link an earlier injury to a later problem which may lead to medical discharge.

However, personnel that are medically discharged from service are entitled to submit a current invaliding claim for compensation under the War Pension Scheme (WPS) if they perceive the reason for discharge to be attributed to service prior to 6 April 2005.

Medical discharges for musculoskeletal disorders (M00-M99) or injuries (S00-T98) have been presented in this response (as opposed to only injuries) as it is often difficult to ascertain whether the medical board had intended the patient's condition to be clearly coded as an injury rather than a musculoskeletal disorder and vice-versa. If a medical discharge is for a musculoskeletal disorder, it is feasible the condition is the result of some injury that had occurred in the past.

Between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015:

- **45** UK Regular Naval Service personnel were medically discharged with a principal or contributory cause of musculoskeletal disorder or injury and also submitted a current invaliding claim under the WPS during the same period
- **159** UK Regular Army personnel were medically discharged with a principal or contributory cause of musculoskeletal disorder or injury and also submitted a current invaliding claim under the WPS during the same period
- **24** UK Regular RAF personnel were medically discharged with a principal or contributory cause of musculoskeletal disorder or injury and also submitted a current invaliding claim under the WPS during the same period

Under Section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note:

The figures in this response do not include personnel medically discharged with injuries prior to April 2005 that are not perceived to be attributable to service.

Medical Discharges

Defence Statistics release annual updates on medical discharges in the UK Armed Forces as an Official Statistic publication. The 2014/15 reports is due for release on 16 July 2015. The most recent report can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mod-national-and-official-statistics-by-topic>

Medical discharges in the UK Armed Forces involve a series of processes, at times complex, which differ in each Service to meet their specific employment requirements. Due to these differences between the three Services, comparisons between the single Service statistics are judged to be invalid. Therefore, the figures in this answer are presented separately for each Service.

Medical discharges are the result of a number of specialists (medical, occupational, psychological, personnel, etc) coming to the conclusion that an individual is suffering from a medical condition that pre-empts their continued service in the Armed Forces. Statistics based on these discharges do not represent measures of true morbidity or pathology. At best they indicate a minimum burden of ill-health in the Armed Forces. Furthermore, the number and diversity of processes involved with administering a medical discharge introduce a series of time lags, as well as impact on the quality of data recorded.

The information on cases was sourced from electronic personnel records and manually entered paper documents from medical boards. The primary purpose of these medical documents is to ensure the appropriate administration of each individual patient's discharge. Statistical analysis and reporting is a secondary function.

Although Medical Boards recommend medical discharges they do not attribute the principal disability leading to the board to Service. A Medical Board could take place many months or even years after an event or injury and it is not clinically possible in some cases to link an earlier injury to a later problem which may lead to a discharge. Decisions on attributability to Service are made by Defence Business Services (formerly SPVA).

War Pension Scheme

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 until 5 April 2005.

Individuals wishing to submit a new claim for a pension under the WPS submit a first claim to pension, with those medically discharged from service submitting a current invaliding claim.

Would you like to be added to our contact list, so that we can inform you about updates to our statistical publications and consult you if we are thinking of making changes? You can subscribe to updates by emailing: DefStrat-Stat-Health-PQ-FOI@mod.uk

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 me in the first instance. 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, 1st 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 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, <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

Defence Statistics (Health) Head