

Background Quality Report

War Pension Scheme Annual Statistics –

1 April 2006 to 31 March 2016

The purpose of a background quality report is to inform users of the statistics about the quality of the data used to produce the publication, and any statistics derived from that data. It also discusses existing uses of the statistics and user requirements.

This assessment relates to the annual 'War Pension Scheme' statistics published by Defence Statistics.

1. Introduction

1. This annual National Statistic provides summary statistics on claims and awards, made under the War Pension Scheme (WPS), including:
 - Current recipients of a war pension. This is provided to give a better picture of the type of people currently in receipt of compensation. Time trends are also provided.
 - Number of claims, awards and appeals under the scheme. 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.
 - Information on clearance times including the average working days it has taken for WPS claims to be cleared by Veterans UK.
 - Total amounts paid out in the form of ongoing pensions under the WPS by financial year.
2. These statistics present trends over time since between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2016, with some further detail presented for the latest five quarters.
3. The latest statistics are published as National Statistics, adhering to the [UK Statistics Authority \(UKSA\)](#)¹ protocols on [pre-release access](#)².
4. Ad-hoc interrogation of the data used to compile these statistics is regularly undertaken by Defence Statistics in order to answer Freedom of Information requests, Parliamentary questions and internal queries from within the Ministry of Defence.

Background

5. The 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.
6. The compensation arrangements provided by the WPS and the attributable elements of the Armed Forces Pension Scheme were replaced on 6 April 2005 by the [Armed Forces and Reserve Forces Compensation Scheme \(AFCS\)](#)³ to pay compensation for injury, illness or death caused by Service that occurred on or after that date. Defence Statistics also publishes [bi-annual AFCS statistics](#)⁴ on the Gov.UK website.
7. 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

8. 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.
9. Claims for injuries/illnesses as a result of Service cannot be made until an individual has left the Services.
10. Injuries and illnesses are awarded under the scheme based on an individual's percentage disablement. The degree of disablement was assessed on a percentage basis by the War Pension Agency medical advisors. The medical adviser assesses the level of disablement in comparison to that of an able-bodied person of the same age and sex.
11. [Further guidance on the WPS and how to claim](#)⁵ can be found on the Gov.UK website.
12. These statistics were released on a quarterly basis between 2001 and 2010; following consultations with users in 2010 and 2011 this statistical bulletin was reduced to bi-annual and annual releases respectively. Data are reported as at the end of the financial year, with the annual report published in June of each year.
13. The UKSA has designated these statistics as [National Statistics](#)⁶, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice](#)⁷ for Official Statistics.
14. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:
 - a) meet identified user needs;
 - b) are well explained and readily accessible;
 - c) are produced according to sound methods; and
 - d) are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.
15. Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.
16. Defence Statistics also publishes annual statistics on the [Location of Armed Forces Pension and Compensation recipients](#)⁸, presenting the location of Disablement pensioners and widow(er)s in receipt of a pension under the WPS as at the end of the financial year. The latest statistics were published in August 2015 on the Gov.UK website.

Report Development

Clearance Times

17. Clearance times analysis has been incorporated into these statistics following a high burden of requests for information from external users, including the media and members of the public requesting information on how long an individual may expect to wait for their claim outcome once submitted to Veterans UK.
18. The increase in interest in clearance times in more recent years is primarily driven by the Armed Forces Covenant, published in May 2011, which sets out the moral obligation of the nation to its members of the armed forces and their families. Therefore there is considerable public interest in the length of time injured (ex-)serving personnel and their dependants are waiting for financial compensation for service-related injury or death.

Financial Spend

19. These statistics, published on 2 June 2016, present for the first time the financial amounts paid out in compensation in the form of ongoing pensions to disablement pensioners and widow(er)s. Information is presented for the previous five financial years.

Methodology

Data Sources

20. Most of the information presented within this Statistical Bulletin is sourced from data held on the War Pensions Computer System (WPCS) which is managed by Veterans UK, responsible for administering the scheme. The finance information was provided by the Veterans UK finance team.

Process

21. Basic consistency checks are carried out on raw data. 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 Veterans UK to determine whether any changes are required.
22. Further validation checks are carried out after the data have been processed to ensure all processes and queries have run correctly and the final numbers are an accurate reflection of data received from Veterans UK. Manual checks are then carried out on the final report to ensure figures quoted in the commentary reflect those in the tables, and the numbers sum to the totals provided. If any data quality issues are evident following receipt of data, Defence Statistics liaise with Veterans UK to determine whether any investigation is required.
23. The WPCS data are processed through a series of automated programming in a MYSQL database that produces a series of summary tables on WPS claims and awards that are then used to populate final tables within the report. Manual checks are conducted on the final tables to ensure that the automated process has worked successfully.
24. The figures are based on the War Pensions Computer System data extract as at the end of each quarter, and will be correct as at the time each extract was taken. Therefore any update to claim information made on the WPCS after each quarterly snapshot will not be reflected in the report.
25. Historic data are only revised if errors are found in the data processing or statistical methods used during their publication. If an error was found all historic data would be revised, based on the quarterly snapshots of data, and Defence Statistics would highlight the error and the impact on the numbers presented. Revised figures can be identified by a revision marker 'r',

Additional Clearance Times Calculations

26. Due to variations in the time taken to process each type of WPS claim, average clearance times were calculated separately for each claim type: first disablement claims, second/subsequent disablement claims, widow(er)s' claims and appeals.
27. Average clearance times were produced for first disablement claims, second/subsequent disablement claims and widow(er)s' claims by calculating the number of working days (to exclude weekends and bank holidays) between the date of claim registration and the date that the claimed was cleared by Veterans UK, as recorded on the WPCS.
28. The average clearance times for appeals were produced by calculating the number of working days (to exclude weekends and bank holidays) between the date of claim registration and the final date that appeals were cleared by the Pensions Appeal Tribunal (PAT). This provides an indication of the total length of time that a claimant may wait for a final decision to be reached following the submission of an appeal. However, the commentary in the main Statistical Bulletin also presents the average length of time Veterans UK take to complete their processing of appeals prior to appeals going to the PAT.

29. Information on WPS claim clearance times has been presented as a median average with an inter-quartile range, rather than a mean average and standard deviation as these statistics are affected less by outliers. An outlier is an observation within a dataset that appears to be inconsistent with the remainder of the dataset.
- The median is the value in the centre of the data set when they are arranged from smallest to largest.
 - A quartile is any of three values (first/lower quartile, second quartile (median), third/upper quartile) that divides the sorted (from smallest value to largest value) dataset into four equal parts. The lower quartile (LQ) is the value that at which 25% of the values in the dataset will be below. The upper quartile (UQ) is the value that at which 75% of the values in the dataset will be below.
 - The inter-quartile range (IQR) is the range in which the middle 50% of the data points fall (i.e. the distance between the lower and upper quartile). The longer the inter-quartile range the wider the spread of data.
30. The median has been presented in these statistics as it better reflects the average typical experience for the individual making a claim. The accompanying Excel tables to this publication also present the mean average. The mean average has also been presented as it is used internally as a measure of performance on the management of cases.
31. Please note the overall number of claims included in the calculations for average clearance times differs to the number of cleared claims reported in Table 2. This is due to cases with incomplete registered/cleared dates being excluded from the analysis. Veterans UK will investigate these records and, once corrected, the claims will be included in the analysis.

2. Relevance

Coverage

32. These statistics include all disablement pensioners and war widow(er)s in receipt of an ongoing pension under the WPS as at 31 March 2016. All UK Service personnel, and widow(er)s of all UK Service personnel who have claimed for compensation under the WPS between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2016 are also included. However please note that the publication does not provide overall figures for all individuals who have ever received payments under the scheme.
33. In a given table, numbers of claims registered or cleared within a given time period may not sum to the total number of people. This is because one person can make more than one claim spanning different quarters or financial years, but would only be counted once in the overall total.

User Needs

34. 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.

35. In 2012 and 2013 Defence Statistics carried out an internal and an external consultation 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.
36. Following this consultation the proposed changes to the War Pension Scheme were to:
- 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 to provide an idea of the overall amounts paid out each financial year under the scheme. *This was included in the 6th June 2013 publication.*
 - Include numbers in receipt of war pensions for mental health conditions. Defence Statistics frequently receive requests for this information. *This was included in the 6th June 2013 publication.*

3. Accuracy

37. Veterans UK are responsible for ensuring the quality of 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.
38. The main sources of potential error in the WPS statistics are as follows:
- Incorrect information entered onto the WPCS by Veterans UK staff
 - Incomplete data extracts from Veterans UK
 - Data processing errors resulting in incorrect data outputs produced by Defence Statistics
 - Manual error during production of report tables, graphs and commentary by Defence Statistics
39. To ensure 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 Veterans UK when required, to ensure the accuracy of the figures published. Where there is concern over the accuracy of data, Defence Statistics will publish the information as provisional (p).

4. Timeliness and Punctuality

Timeliness

40. Data are provided to Defence Statistics on a quarterly basis. Between 2008 and 2010 figures were 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.
41. Figures as at 31 March are published in early June, ten weeks after the end of the reporting period. It takes four weeks to extract, validate and process data extracted from the WPCS. It takes a further six weeks to compile and quality assure the report.

Punctuality

42. These National Statistics reports have all been published on time to meet pre-announced release dates. Future publication dates will also be announced on the Gov.UK at least one month in advance.

5. Accessibility and Clarity

Accessibility

43. The statistics can be accessed through the Gov.UK website at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/war-pension-recipients-index>
44. 24 hour pre-release access to the report is available to a limited distribution list within MOD. The full list can be found in the pre-release access list available on the Gov.UK website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/defence-statistics-pre-release-access-list>.

Clarity

45. Users with an interest in the key findings can read a short summary of main messages within the Introduction of the report. The report is then split into several sections to help users navigate their way through the publication.
46. Microsoft Excel versions of all AFCS report tables are also available on the Gov.UK website alongside each published report.
47. A glossary of key terms is provided in the Statistical Bulletin.

6. Coherence and Comparability

48. The War Pensions Computer System is the administration system for the War Pension Scheme; there are no other data sources from which information is being presented. However, Veterans UK create management information from CAPS. There are currently a number of data quality issues, as outlined in section 3, which are resulting in the management information and the National Statistic not always aligning. Veterans UK and Defence Statistics are working closely to resolve the issues and ensure the management information and the statistics within the National Statistic are consistent.
49. All definitions within this bulletin are consistent with the terms used by Veterans UK.

7. Trade-offs between output quality components

50. 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

51. In reference to the UK Statistics Authority report, [The Use Made of Official Statistics](#)⁹, 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

52. 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.
53. The WPS statistics are used by the following groups of customers:
- WPS policy teams use these statistical publications as a basis for policy making.
 - Veterans UK use these figures for background information and for planning purposes e.g. estimating the volume/workload for different types of claims.
 - External organisations such as Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), local Government and Armed Forces charities 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.
54. 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.
55. 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, with the latest update published in July 2015.
56. The publication of these statistics also plays an important part in ensuring the Department's accountability to the British public.

Strengths and Weakness in Relation to User Needs

57. Consultations to review the WPS statistics have been held 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.
58. During 2015/16, the War Pension Scheme National Statistics had 1,050 hits via the Gov.UK website.
59. The key strength of the WPS 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.
60. The key weakness is that Defence Statistics have to rely on the level of detail that Veterans UK manually enter for each claim. There are 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 it is not always possible able to identify information requested in ad-hoc 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 to acquire more comprehensive information.

61. Users external to the MOD are encouraged to give feedback via email (DefStrat-Stat-Health-PQ-FOI@mod.uk) and publications provide details of how to give feedback.

9. Performance cost and respondent burden

Operational Cost

62. The production of the WPS statistics required approximately 0.27 FTE in 2015/16. This was broken down into the following:
- Time taken to produce annual WPS Statistical Bulletin and WPS internal reports – approximately 23 days
 - Time taken to respond to around 20 requests for information (including internal adhoc requests, FOI requests and PQs) – approximately 30 days
63. The WPS report uses an administrative data source which is already collected by the MOD. Therefore, the main operational cost to production of the statistics is liaison with Veterans UK, for quality assurance and data interpretation.

10. Confidentiality, Transparency and Security

64. Defence Statistics have data access agreements with Veterans UK 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 Responsible for Information: General User training and they understand their responsibilities under the Data Protection Act and the Official Statistics Code of Practice.
65. Only individuals who produce these statistics have access to the underlying data. Defence Statistics ensures that the WPS data are kept confidential by holding this data on a secure server.
66. In line with the directives of the JSP 200, disclosure control is conducted on all statistical information provided by the MOD to safeguard the confidentiality of individuals. Within these statistics a risk of disclosure has been considered to be high where numbers presented are fewer than three. In cases where a risk of disclosure exists, one of three appropriate disclosure control methods have been applied:
- a) Figures have been suppressed: In most cases where there may be a risk of disclosure, numbers fewer than three have been suppressed and marked as '~'. Where there is only one cell in a row or column that is fewer than three, secondary suppression has been applied where the next smallest number has also been suppressed so that numbers cannot simply be derived from totals.
 - b) Figures have been grouped: In some cases where the suppression of information would result in larger numbers being 'hidden' as a result of secondary suppression, columns and/or rows have been grouped together in order to present larger numbers.
 - c) Figures have been rounded to the nearest five: In some cases where the suppression of information would result in larger numbers being 'hidden' as a result of secondary suppression and it has not been possible to group columns and/or rows, figures have been rounded to the nearest five.

11. References

1. . UK Statistics Authority (UKSA): <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>
2. UKSA Protocols on Pre-Release Access: <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/uk-statistical-system/legislation/pre-release-access/>
3. Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-compensation/armed-forces-compensation-what-you-need-to-know#payment-arrangements>
4. Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Bi-annual Statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-compensation-scheme-statistics-index>
5. War Pension Scheme Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/war-pension-scheme/war-pension-scheme-what-you-need-to-know>
6. Types of Official Statistics: <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/types-of-official-statistics/>
7. UKSA Code of Practice: <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/>
8. Location of armed forces pension and compensation recipients Statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/location-of-armed-forces-pension-and-compensation-recipients>
9. The use made of Official Statistics: <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/archive/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-reviews/monitoring-brief-6-2010---the-use-made-of-official-statistics.pdf>

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