



This publication provides information on the number of **Military Personnel** in (defined as the **strength**), joining (**intake**) and leaving (**outflow**) the UK Armed Forces. Detail is provided for both the **Full-time Armed Forces** and **Reserves**. Further statistics can be found in the [Excel tables](#).

The recent trends in personnel numbers in this report relate to the targets outlined in the **Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) 2010**, the **Three Month Exercise (3ME)**, **Army 2020 (A2020)** and the **Future Reserves 2020 (FR20)** programme.

This publication forms part of a new series of bulletins following the outcome of a public consultation on [Changes to Ministry of Defence Armed Forces Personnel Statistics](#).

Some of the statistics previously published in the following publications can now be found in this release: [Monthly](#), [Quarterly](#) and [Annual](#) Personnel Reports, [UK Reserve Forces and Cadets](#), [Service Personnel Bulletin 2.01](#) and [Service and Civilian Bulletin 2.03](#).

Key Points and Trends

▲ 195 670	Strength of UK Forces Service Personnel at 1 September 2015 <i>a slight increase of 150 (0.1 per cent) since 1 September 2014</i>
▼ 142 100	Full-time Trained Strength at 1 September 2015 <i>a decrease of 5 560 (3.8 per cent) since 1 September 2014</i>
▼ - 3.7%	Surplus/Deficit against the planned number of personnel needed (Liability) at 1 September 2015 <i>a reduction in the deficit from -4.7 per cent, as at 1 September 2014</i>
▲ 25 720	Strength of the Trained FR20 Volunteer Reserve at 1 September 2015 <i>an increase of 2 410 (10.4 per cent) since 1 September 2014</i>
▲ 13 420	People joined the Regular Armed Forces in the past 12 months (1 September 2014 – 31 August 2015) <i>an increase of 1 120 (9.1 per cent) compared with the previous 12 month period</i>
▲ 8 370	People joined the FR20 Volunteer Reserve in the past 12 months (1 September 2014 – 31 August 2015) <i>an increase of 3 430 (69.6 per cent) compared with the previous 12 month period</i>
▼ 18 080	Regular personnel left the Armed Forces in the past 12 months (1 September 2014 – 31 August 2015) <i>a decrease of 3 960 (18.0 per cent) compared with the previous 12 month period</i>
▼ 3 740	FR20 Volunteer Reserve personnel left the Armed Forces in the past 12 months (1 September 2014 – 31 August 2015) <i>a decrease of 1 390 (27.0 per cent) compared with the previous 12 month period</i>

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Background quality report: 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 DefStrat-Stat-Tri-Enquiries@mod.uk

Contents

Introduction	page 2
Policy background	page 3
UK Service Personnel	page 4 (National Statistic)
Full-time Trained Strength and Liability	page 5 (National Statistic)
Regular Personnel	page 6 (National Statistic)
Future Reserves 2020 Programme Monitoring	page 8 (National Statistic)
Further Information	page 10

Supplementary tables containing further statistics can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-monthly-service-personnel-statistics-2015>

A glossary and other supporting documents are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-monthly-service-personnel-statistics-supplementary-documents>

Introduction

This publication contains information on the **strength, intake and outflow** for the UK Armed Forces overall and each of the Services; **Royal Navy/Royal Marines (RN/RM), Army and Royal Air Force (RAF)**.

Detailed statistics and historic time series can be found in the **Excel tables**. These include statistics on **separated service** (the proportion of personnel breaching **harmony** guidelines), **rank structure, military salaries** and the number of **applications** to each of the Services. Additional historic statistics will be added to the Excel tables in due course; in the meantime, historic statistics can be found in the previous publications outlined below. The **glossary** contains definitions of terminology used in this publication.

The next edition of this publication will be published on GOV.UK at 9:30am on 12 November 2015. A calendar of upcoming MOD statistical releases can be found on **GOV.UK**.

Changes to Armed Forces personnel statistics

The Ministry of Defence is implementing changes to Armed Forces personnel statistics. Previous Tri-Service publications have been reviewed, including: **Monthly, Quarterly and Annual Personnel Reports, UK Reserve Forces and Cadets, Service Personnel Bulletin 2.01, Service and Civilian Bulletin 2.03, UK Armed Forces Maternity Report, Diversity Dashboard and Quarterly Location Statistics**.

Following the consultation on **Changes to Ministry of Defence Armed Forces Personnel Statistics**, the above nine publications are being amalgamated into four new publications. The consultation response includes further detail on the changes we are making during 2015-16, including the introduction of this publication. For information on where updates to statistics in previous MOD Tri-Service publications are now located please see the following **guide**.

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.

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.

Policy background

The main factors affecting decisions about the size of the Armed Forces required by the MOD to achieve success in its military tasks include:

- An assessment of current and future threats to UK national security;
- The need for contingent / reactive capability – the requirement to be able to respond immediately to domestic or international crisis;
- Current operational and international obligations (e.g. NATO, UN);
- Changes in technology, the introduction of new equipment and restructuring that leads to equipment becoming obsolete or surplus to requirements;
- The need to deliver against the military tasks as efficiently as possible, maintaining a balanced, affordable defence budget.

The Service personnel statistics in this publication relate to the planned Future Force 2020, as set out in the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). SDSR 2010 set out reductions of 17,000 Full-time Armed Forces personnel by 2015. A 'Three Month Exercise' (3ME) and Army 2020 White Paper announced a further 12,000 reductions to the Army, to be fully implemented by 2020, bringing the total number of reductions to the Full-time Armed Forces, from the 2010 position, to approximately 29,000. Furthermore, Army 2020 states the reductions in the size of the Regular Army and the implementation of the Army 2020 structure will be achieved by 2018. In parallel, the Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) programme, which aims to increase the size of the Reserve Forces, targets the Volunteer Reserve.

Full-time Armed Forces personnel:

In order to meet the targets set out in SDSR 2010 and 3ME, a redundancy programme coupled with adjusted recruiting (intake) and contract extensions was set. This combination of measures enabled the Armed Forces to maintain the right balance of skills across the rank structures into the future. With the redundancy programme now complete, the Services continue to draw on a variety of measures to balance force levels against their 2020 targets.

Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) Programme

2010 The 2010 **Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR)** identified the future Armed Forces that the UK would need over the next ten years and beyond. It identified that the Reserve Forces should be an integral part of this Future Force; providing additional capacity as well as certain specialists whom it would not be practical or cost effective to maintain in the UK Regular Forces.

2011 The **2011 Independent Commission to Review the UK's Reserve Forces**, [available here](#), reported against this context and recommended:

Maritime Reserve should increase to **3,100** trained personnel.

Army Reserve should increase to **30,000** trained personnel.

Royal Air Force Reserves should increase to **1,800** trained personnel.

These became the FR20 Programme trained strength targets.

2013 Information on measures the MOD planned to take in order to achieve these targets is in the **FR20 White Paper "Reserves in the Future Force 2020: Valuable and Valued"** published in July 2013, [available here](#).

Subsequently to this, details of the planned growth of the FR20 over the next 5 years were placed in the House of Commons Library on 19 December 2013. This statement included annual trained strength targets along with intake targets to support the planned growth, and can be viewed in full [here](#).

UK Service Personnel

The **UK Service Personnel** comprise the total **strength** of the military personnel employed by the Ministry of Defence. The current strength of the UK Service Personnel is 195,670, which includes:

- All **UK Regular** personnel and all Gurkha personnel (which at 1 September 2015 comprised **78.9 per cent** of the UK Service Personnel);
- **Volunteer Reserve** personnel (which at 1 September 2015 comprised **17.0 per cent** of the UK Service Personnel);
- **Other Personnel** including the Serving Regular Reserve, Sponsored Reserve, Military Provost Guard Service, Locally Engaged Personnel and elements of the FTRS (comprised **4.1 per cent** of the UK Service Personnel at 1 September 2015).

Strength is the number of personnel.

Volunteer Reserves voluntarily accept an annual training commitment and are liable to be mobilised to deploy on operations. They can be utilised on a part-time or full-time basis to provide support to the Regular Forces at home and overseas.

The strength of the UK Forces has increased slightly between 1 September 2014 and 1 September 2015, by 0.1 per cent (150 personnel). There has been a decrease in the strength of UK Regular personnel and Gurkhas, driven by planned reductions in the numbers of personnel under SDSR 2010, the 3ME and A2020, and there have been increases in the Reserves populations.

Table 1: UK Forces Strength by Service

Strength	1 Sep 14	1 Sep 15	Increase/ Decrease	% Increase/ Decrease
Naval Service	37 960	38 160	+200	0.5%
Army	120 330	120 590	+260	0.2%
Royal Air Force	37 240	36 920	-320	-0.9%

Source: Defence Statistics (Tri-Service)

Whilst the strength of the UK Regulars and Gurkhas has been maintaining a downward trend, the strength of the Volunteer Reserve has been increasing.

- The Maritime Reserve has increased by 440 (15.0 per cent) since 1 September 2014, the Army Volunteer Reserve has increased by 3,320 (13.7 per cent) since 1 September 2014 and the RAF Volunteer Reserve has increased by 600 (32.8 per cent) since 1 September 2014.

Table 2: Recent Trends in the Strength of the UK Forces

	1 Apr 13	1 Apr 14	1 Apr 15	1 Jun 15	1 Jul 15	1 Aug 15	1 Sep 15
UK Forces Personnel	211 340	198 810	195 690	195 820	195 600	195 600	195 670
UK Regulars	170 710	159 630	153 720	153 020	152 380	152 020	151 700
Gurkhas	3 510	3 050	2 870	2 840	2 720	2 710	2 700
Volunteer Reserve	30 360	28 860	31 260	32 090	32 560	32 920	33 290
Other Personnel	6 760	7 280	7 840	7 870	7 940	7 950	7 980

Source: Defence Statistics (Tri-Service)

Full-time Trained Strength and Liability

The **Full-time Trained Strength** (which comprises military personnel who have completed 'Phase 1' and 'Phase 2' training) is counted against the **Liability**. The difference between the two is measured as either a surplus or **deficit**. This is one indicator of the Service's ability to execute military tasks. Other indicators include the surplus / deficit within key trades or in specific Ranks.

Full-time Trained Strength includes all trained UK Regular personnel, Gurkhas and a number of Reserve Forces personnel filling Regular posts whilst serving on Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS).

Liability is the number of Service personnel needed, based on the Defence Planning Round, set for each of the three Services.

- The Strength of the Full-time Trained UK Armed Forces is 142,100, a decrease of 3.8 per cent (5,560 personnel) since 1 September 2014. The Full Time Trained Strength is 29,810 for the RN/RM, 80,860 for the Army and 31,420 for the RAF.
- Of this total, 17.5 per cent of personnel are Officers and 82.5 per cent are Other Ranks.
- The Full-time Trained Strength (FTTS) comprises: 139,290 Regular personnel (98.0 per cent); 2,430 Gurkhas (1.7 per cent); and 380 Full Time Reserve Service personnel (0.3 per cent) who can fill Regular posts and are deployable.

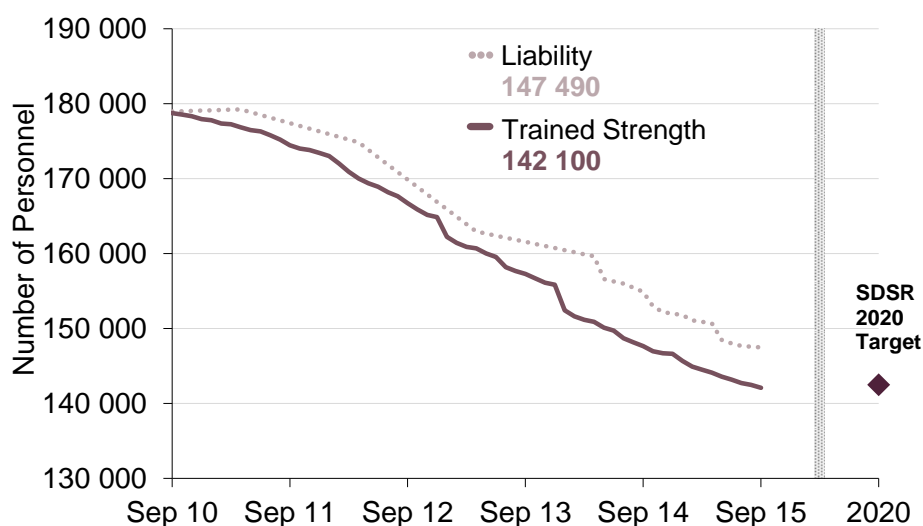
Table 3: Full-Time Trained Strength against the Liability

	1 Apr 13	1 Apr 14	1 Apr 15	1 Jun 15	1 Jul 15	1 Aug 15	1 Sep 15
Trained Strength	160 710	150 890	144 120	143 200	142 730	142 490	142 100
Liability	162 940	159 640	150 700	148 030	147 670	147 580	147 490
Surplus/Deficit	-2 230	-8 750	-6 580	-4 830	-4 940	-5 090	-5 390
% Surplus/Deficit	-1.4	-5.5	-4.4	-3.3	-3.3	-3.5	-3.7

Source: Defence Statistics (Tri-Service)

- The current deficit is 3.7 per cent for the UK Armed Forces. There is a deficit of 1.5 per cent in the Royal Navy/Royal Marines (RN/RM), 3.4 per cent in the Army and 6.3 per cent in the Royal Air Force (RAF).
- A proportion of the Army deficit (of FTTS against the Liability) is likely to be due to the numbers of Service personnel reducing to meet the targets set out in the SDSR 2010 and 3ME/A2020 and planned Liability reductions not keeping pace. During this transitional drawdown period the published Army Liability will lag behind the number of personnel actually needed due to the way in which it is calculated.
- The SDSR 2010 envisaged that by 2020 the UK Armed Forces will have 142,500 personnel. This comprises 29,000 personnel for the RN/RM, 82,000 for the Army (following 3ME/A2020) and 31,500 for the RAF.

Figure 1: Full-Time Trained Strength against the Liability and SDSR 2020 target



Regular Personnel

As at 1 September 2015, the trained and untrained strength of the UK Regular Forces (which excludes Gurkhas) was 151,700, of which, 139,290 were trained personnel.

- The largest numbers of trained UK Regular Forces personnel are in the Army followed by the RAF and the RN/RM.
- There are 12,410 untrained personnel in the UK Regular Forces with 7,270 of them being in the Army. The untrained strength reflects the number of personnel who can potentially join the trained strength.

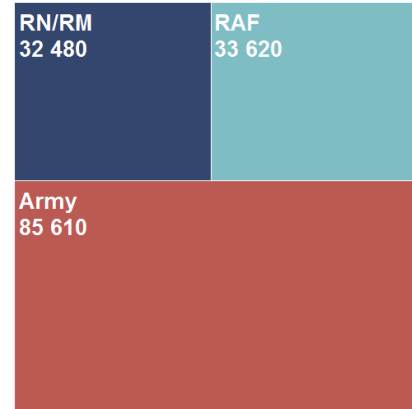


Figure 2: Trained and untrained Strength of the UK Regular Forces, by Service, as at 1 September 2015

Intake and Outflow since July 2010

Intake and Outflow over the past 5 years are presented in Figure 3. Since 2010 outflow has exceeded intake for each 12 month period, following the announcement of the reduction in the size of the Armed Forces.

- Excluding personnel who left on redundancy, in the 12 months to 31 August 2015, 3,790 more personnel left the UK Regular Forces, than joined. This difference has reduced compared with the 12 months to 31 August 2014, when 5,650 more personnel left the UK Regular Forces than joined.

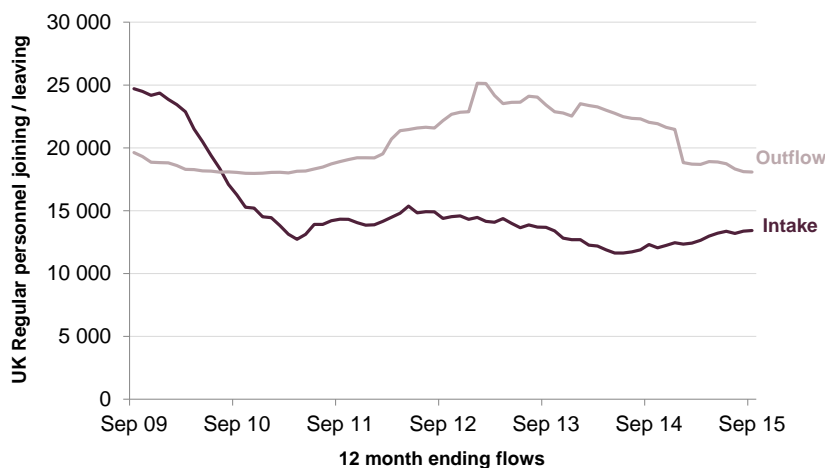
Intake

- Intake into the trained and untrained UK Regular Forces was 13,420 in the 12 months to 31 August 2015. This has remained about the same compared to the 12 months to 31 July 2015 (13,370) and is up from 12,300 in the 12 months to 31 August 2014.
- Of the current intake, 8.6 per cent was into the Officers and 91.4 per cent was into the Other Ranks.
- From the beginning of the financial year on 1 April 2015 to 31 August 2015; 5,020 people have joined. This is an increase compared with intake of 4,580 in the same period last year (1 April to 31 August 2014).
- The intake pattern for each Service differs. Compared to the 12 months to 31 August 2014, intake to the RN/RM decreased by 5.7 per cent (180 personnel), the Army has increased by 16.4 per cent (1,200 personnel) and the RAF has increased by 5.8 per cent (110 personnel).

UK Regulars are full time Service personnel, including Nursing Services, excluding FTRS personnel, Gurkhas, mobilised Reservists, Military Provost Guarding Service (MPGS), Locally Engaged Personnel (LEP), and Non Regular Permanent Service (NRPS).

Intake is defined as the number joining the Strength, whereas **outflow** is the number leaving.

Figure 3: Intake to and Outflow from the UK Regular Forces (over a 12-month period)



Regular Personnel

Outflow

- Outflow from the trained and untrained UK Regular Forces was 18,080 in the 12 months to 31 August 2015; down from 22,030 in the 12 months to 31 August 2014.
- From the beginning of the financial year on 1 April 2015 to 31 August 2015; 7,060 people have left the UK Regulars. This is a decrease compared with outflow of 7,900 in the same period last year (1 April to 31 August 2014).
- In the 12 months to 31 August 2015, 860 trained and untrained personnel left the UK Regular Forces under Tranche 4 of the Armed Forces Redundancy Programme. This compares to 4,080 in the 12 months to 31 August 2014, leaving on Tranche 3; the largest of the 4 Tranches of redundancies. As a result, overall outflow is now lower.

Armed Forces Redundancy Programme Tranche 1-4 statistics are available at:

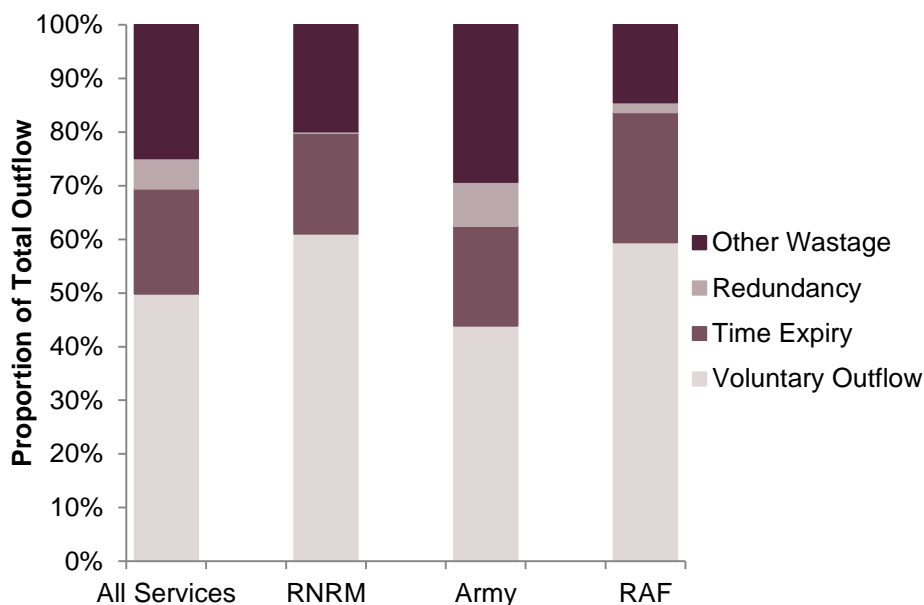
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-redundancy-program-statistics-index>

At a Tri-Service level, more personnel left the trained UK Regular Forces by Voluntary Outflow (VO) than for any other reason (Figure 4).

- In the 12 months to 31 August 2015, 7,590 trained personnel left through VO.
- The VO rate is higher amongst Other Ranks (5.5 per cent), compared to Officers (4.9 per cent). This **difference** between Officers and Other Ranks VO rate varies between Services. The VO rate for Other Ranks is higher than for Officers in the RAF and RN/RM whilst the VO rates for Officer and Other Ranks in the Army are broadly similar.

There is no single reason why personnel leave on Voluntary Outflow, but the **Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey** shows reasons that Service personnel have given for leaving the Armed Forces, including the impact of Service life on family and personal life and opportunities outside the Armed Forces.

Figure 4: Outflow from the trained UK Regular Forces, by exit reason, in the 12 months to 31 August 2015



Voluntary Outflow

encompasses all trained personnel who voluntarily exit before the end of their agreed engagement or commission period.

Time Expiry is a term used to describe those in the Armed Services who reach the end of their engagement or commission and then leave.

Other Wastage is outflow from the trained strength due to, amongst others, medical reasons, misconduct, compassionate, dismissals and death.

Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) programme monitoring

FR20 Volunteer Reserve Strengths as at 1 September 2015

The **total trained and untrained strength** of the FR20 Tri-Service Volunteer Reserve was 32,930; an increase of 4,630 or 16.4 per cent since 1 September 2014.

The **trained strength** of the FR20 Tri-Service Volunteer Reserve was 25,720; an increase of 2,410 or 10.4 per cent since 1 September 2014.

The **untrained strength** of the FR20 Tri-Service Volunteer Reserve was 7,210; an increase of 2,210 or 44.3 per cent since 1 September 2014.

Table 4: FR20 Volunteer Reserve trained strength, by Service

	1 Sep 14	1 Sep 15	Increase/ Decrease	% Increase/ Decrease
Trained Strength				
Maritime Reserve	1 910	2 160	+260	+13.5%
Army Reserve	19 990	21 870	+1 880	+9.4%
RAF Reserves	1 410	1 690	+280	+19.6%

Source: Defence Statistics (Tri-Service)

FR20 Intake as at 1 September 2015

Intake statistics report how many people have joined the trained or untrained strengths. As well as new recruits, this can include personnel coming from the Regular Forces, other Reserve populations, or Reserve re-joiners.

In the 12 months between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2015 **8,370 people** joined the Tri-Service FR20 Volunteer Reserve (2,880 trained and 5,480 untrained); a **69.6 per cent increase** on the same 12 month period last year.

Table 5: Intake to FR20 Volunteer Reserve, trained and untrained

	1 Sep 13 31 Aug 14	1 Sep 14 31 Aug 15	Increase/ Decrease	% Increase/ Decrease
Intake				
Maritime Reserve	810	1 010	+200	+2.4%
Army Reserve	3 540	6 420	+2 880	+81.4%
RAF Reserves	580	940	+360	+61.4%

Source: Defence Statistics (Tri-Service)

FR20 Outflow as at 1 September 2015

Outflow statistics report how many personnel have left the trained or untrained strengths. The majority of outflow is personnel leaving the Armed Forces, though a substantial proportion do transfer to another part of the Armed Forces, such as the Regulars or another Reserve Force.

In the 12 months between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2015 **3,740 people** left the Tri-Service FR20 Volunteer Reserve (2,540 trained and 1,200 untrained); a **27.0 per cent decrease** compared to the same 12 month period last year.

Table 6: Outflow from FR20 Volunteer Reserve, trained and untrained

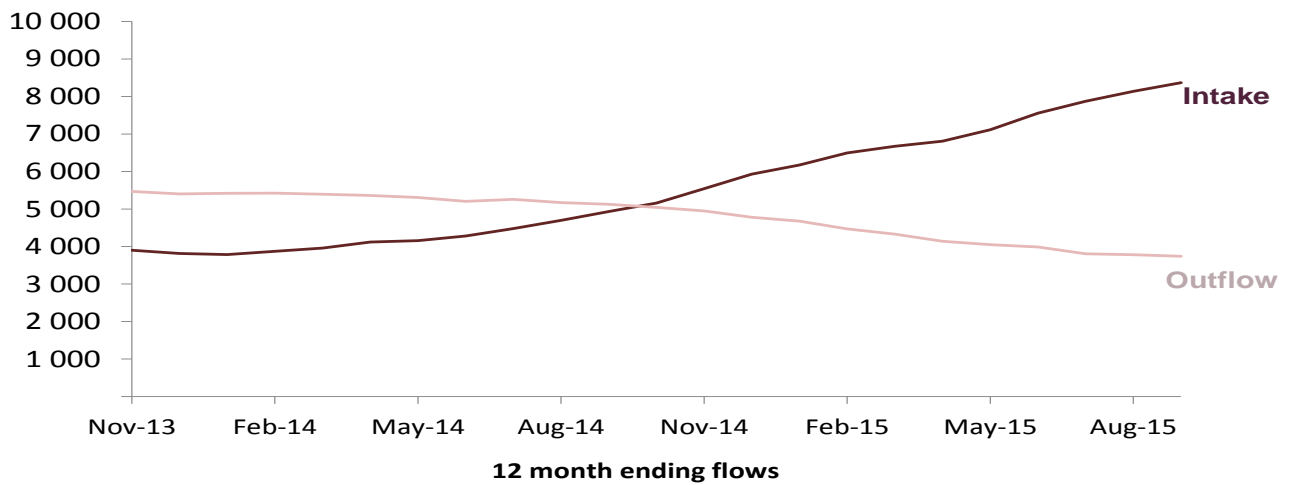
	1 Sep 13 31 Aug 14	1 Sep 14 31 Aug 15	Increase/ Decrease	% Increase/ Decrease
Outflow				
Maritime Reserve	470	570	+100	+20.2%
Army Reserve	4 360	2 830	-1 530	-35.1%
RAF Reserves	300	340	+50	+15.9%

Source: Defence Statistics (Tri-Service)

Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) programme monitoring

Strengths, Intake and Outflow over time

Figure 5: FR20 Volunteer Reserves (Trained and Untrained) Joining and Leaving



By studying intake (number of people joining) and outflow (number of people leaving) over time, Figure 5 shows that since the start of the FR20 Programme, more people are now joining the Reserve Forces and less people are leaving. Initially outflow was higher than intake; this situation results in a decrease to the total strength (as illustrated in Figure 6). During 2014 a crossover occurred whereby intake became higher than outflow; once this happens the total strength starts to increase (again illustrated in Figure 6).

Figure 6: FR20 Volunteer Reserves Trained and Untrained Strengths

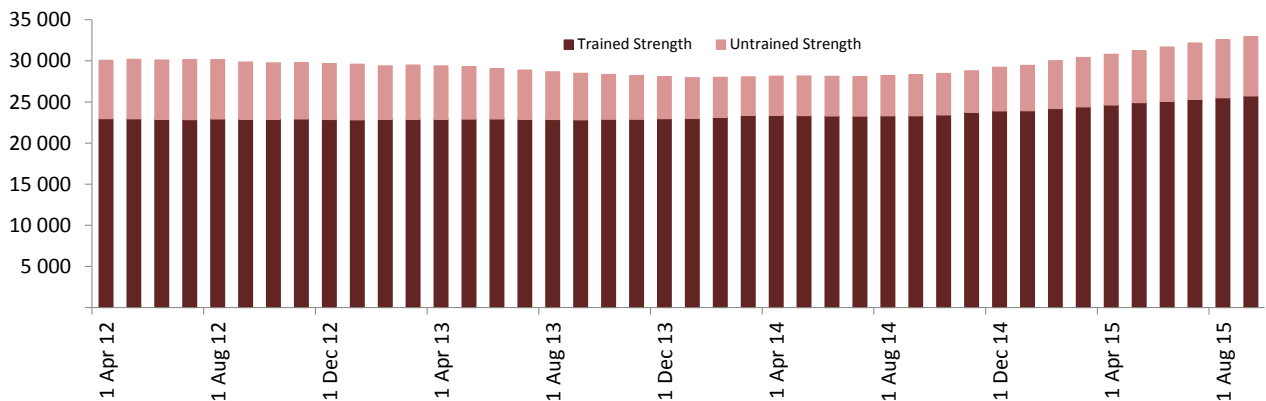
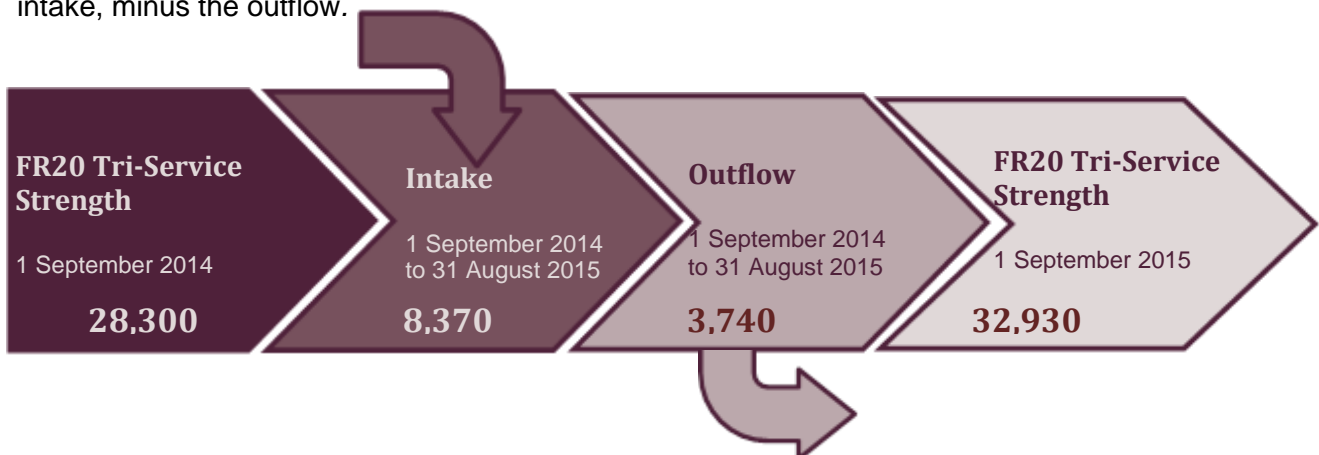


Figure 7: Impact of Intake and Outflow on the FR20 Tri-Service strengths

The change between the strengths over any time period is always the strength at the start, plus the intake, minus the outflow.



Further Information

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.

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”.

Additionally, 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 one decimal place.

Revisions

There are no regular planned revisions of this Bulletin.

Further Information (cont.)

Contact Us

Defence Statistics welcome 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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If you require information which is not available within this or other available publications, you may wish to submit a Request for Information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to the Ministry of Defence. For more information, see:

<https://www.gov.uk/make-a-freedom-of-information-request/the-freedom-of-information-act>

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