



Ministry of Defence

Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB
United Kingdom

Telephone : +44 (0)20 721 89000

Our Reference: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) dated [REDACTED] in which you requested the following information:

Under the freedom of information act 2000, could you please disclose a table, broken down by year and by force, recording the number of army, RAF and navy personnel discharged for health problems where obesity was a contributory factor from 2006-2015.

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

In regard to your request for data from 2006 to 2014 this is exempt under Section 21 of the FOIA, because it is reasonably accessible to you by other means. It is already in the public domain at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/484509/FOI2015_10043.pdf

I can confirm the MOD does hold some information regarding data for 2015; this is provided in the attached Annex.

Section 40(2) has been applied to some of the information in order to protect personal information as governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. This is also in line with Defence Statistics rounding policy, in which numbers fewer than five are suppressed in order to reduce the possible inadvertent disclosure of individual identities. Section 40 is an absolute exemption and there is therefore no requirement to consider the public interest in making a decision to withhold the information.

Under Section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance), you may find it useful to note that Defence Statistics release annual updates on medical discharges in the UK Armed Forces as an Official Statistic publication. The next statistical release is due on 14 July 2016. The latest report can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/medical-discharges-among-uk-service-personnel-statistics-index>

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, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,
Defence People

Table 1: UK Regular Armed Forces personnel medically discharged with a principal or contributory condition of Obesity by Service, 1 January – 31 December 2015,

	Number¹
Naval Service²	~ ^p
Army	~ ^p
RAF	0 ^p

Source: FMed 23 & Joint Personal Administration system

1 - Data presented as “~” has been suppressed in accordance with Defence Statistics’ rounding policy

2 – Includes Royal Navy and Royal Marines

p – Figures for the period 1 April to 31 December 2015 have not been fully validated and are therefore provisional.

1. It is a condition of service that personnel must be fit and healthy. 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 introduces a series of time lags, as well as impact on the quality of data recorded.
2. The information on cases was sourced from electronic personnel records from the Defence Medical Information Capability System (DMICP) 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.
3. 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.
4. 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 Vets UK (formerly Service Personnel and Veterans Agency).
5. The tables in this FOI response have been scrutinised to ensure individual identities have not been revealed inadvertently. In line with Defence Statistics’ rounding policy for health statistics (May 2009), and in keeping with the Office for National Statistics Guidelines, all numbers less than five have been suppressed and presented as ‘~’. Where there is only one cell in a row or column that is less than five, the next smallest number (or numbers where there are tied values) has also been suppressed so that numbers cannot simply be derived from totals.
6. Principal condition is the first principal ICD 10 code on the medical discharge documents (FMED 23). Contributory cause contains all other principal conditions and any contributory conditions on the medical discharge paper (FMED 23).

