



Ministry
of Defence

Defence Statistics Health
Ministry of Defence
Oak 0 West (#6028)
Abbey Wood North
Bristol BS34 8JH
United Kingdom

Telephone: +44 (0)30679 84423
E-mail: DefStrat-Stat-Health-PQ-FOI@mod.uk

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9th April 2018

[Redacted]

Dear [Redacted],

Thank you for your email of 17 March 2018 requesting the following information:

“How many, and what proportion of, medical discharges from the army were due to musculoskeletal disorders/injuries of personnel in each of these two age groups: a) aged under 18; b) aged 18 and above.”

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

I am writing to confirm that MOD holds the information on the subject you have requested.

Between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2017 **5,791** UK Regular Army personnel were medically discharged from service. Of these, **3,732** personnel (64%) were medically discharged with a principal or contributory cause of Musculoskeletal Disorders and Injuries (MSK) (**Table 1**)

Table 1: UK Regular Army Personnel Medically Discharged, by Age Group and Financial Year, number and percentage

1 April 2014 to 31 March 2017

	Financial Year	Medical Discharge	With MSK ¹	
			n	%
Under 18	2014/15	7	4	57%
	2015/16	16	11	69%
	2016/17	13	8	62%
18 and over	2014/15	2,102	1,255	60%
	2015/16	1,734	1,184	68%
	2016/17	1,919	1,270	66%

1. Medically Discharged Personnel with a recorded principal or contributory cause of Musculoskeletal Disorders and Injuries

Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance), you may find it useful to note:

Medical discharges due to Musculoskeletal Disorders and Injuries were identified as personnel who were medically discharged with a principal or contributory cause of discharge coded as the following in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems Tenth Revision (ICD-10):

- M00-M99 (Diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue)
- S00-T98 (Injury, Poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes)

The principal condition of discharge is the first principal ICD-10 code on the medical discharge documents. Contributory causes of medical discharge are all other principal conditions and any contributory conditions on the medical discharge documents.

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.

Reported age refers to the age of the Service person at the point of the medical discharge. It is possible that a MSK leading to discharge was acquired under the age of 18, but the discharge was not completed until after the Service person had turned 18. It is not possible to identify if this is the case for personnel. Therefore, the number of medical discharges due to MSK sustained under the age of 18 should be treated as a minimum.

The information on cases was sourced from electronic personnel records from the Defence Medical Information Capability Programme (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.

Any data entered as free text only in patients' medical record will not be included in the figures presented as this information is not available in the data warehouse.

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, 2nd 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>.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

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