



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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[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 25 May 2018 requesting the following information:

“

1. *The number of medically downgraded Regular UK Armed Forces Personnel in each Service (Naval Service, Army and Royal Air Force) as at 1 December.*
  - a. *Of which – how many had a principal cause of downgrading of Musculoskeletal Disorders and Injuries (MSKI).*
2. *The total number of UK Armed Forces personnel who had at least one record of MSKI in their electronic medical record, by Upper Limb, Lower Limb and other injuries over a 12 month period. ... would it be possible to categorise the upper/lower/other injuries for the army, navy and RAF?”*

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

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that the information in scope of your request is held.

At 1 December 2017, there were **27,226** (20%) UK Regular Armed Forces personnel<sup>1</sup> who were medically downgraded. Of these, **14,746** (54%) were downgraded with a principal cause of Musculoskeletal Disorders and Injuries (MSKI):

- **4,818** (16%) Naval Service personnel were medically downgraded, of which **2,123** (44%) had a principal cause of MSKI.
- **17,183** (22%) Army personnel were medically downgraded, of which **10,059** (59%) had a principal cause of MSKI.
- **5,225** (17%) RAF personnel were medically downgraded, of which **2,564** (49%) had a principal cause of MSKI.

In the whole year 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2017, **74,065** UK Regular Armed Forces personnel had at least one record of MSKI in their electronic medical record (**Table 1**).

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<sup>1</sup> Full time trained (Naval Service and RAF)/ trade trained (Army) and serving against requirement.

**Table 1: UK Regular Armed Forces Personnel with a MSKI<sup>1,2</sup>, by Service and location of injury, numbers<sup>3</sup>**

1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017

	All Services	Naval Service	Army	RAF
<b>All MSK</b>	<b>74,065</b>	<b>12,947</b>	<b>46,239</b>	<b>14,888</b>
Upper Limb	30,621	5,592	19,197	5,833
Lower Limb	38,050	6,082	24,985	6,986
Other <sup>4</sup>	36,608	6,081	23,105	7,425
Unspecified <sup>5</sup>	3,246	570	1,902	775

Source: JPA and DMICP

1. MSKI were identified through presence of a Read code in the electronic medical record (DMICP).

2. Full time trained (Naval Service and RAF)/ trade trained (Army) and serving against requirement.

3. Totals do not add to the sum of their parts. This is because personnel may have multiple MSKI records or may move between services. Each service person is counted only once in the total, regardless of how many different records they have or services they were part of.

4. Other refers to MSKI which are not upper limb or lower limb, e.g head, back etc.

5. Unspecified refers to MSKI where the Read code does not identify an injury location. For example, osteoporosis.

Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you should note:

Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) is the most accurate source for demographic information for UK Armed Forces personnel and was used to gather information on a person's Service.

Defence Medical Information Capability Programme (DMICP) has a centralised data warehouse of coded information. It is the source of electronic, integrated healthcare records for primary healthcare and some MOD specialist care providers. DMICP was rolled out in 2007 and legacy medical data for currently serving personnel was migrated across during rollout.

Service personnel with medical conditions or fitness issues which affect their ability to perform their duties are assessed in Primary Care or referred to a Medical Board for a medical examination and review of their medical grading. The patient may be downgraded to allow for treatment and rehabilitation. Medically downgraded personnel are those personnel who have been assessed by a Medical Board or in primary care and subsequently awarded a Medical Deployability Standard (MDS) of either MLD or MND. The MDS awarded can be on a temporary or permanent basis.

Figures on principal cause of medical downgrading were produced using the principal condition as recorded on the Defence Medical Information Capability Programme (DMICP). Each principal condition has a Read code and description which was converted to the International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems version 10 (ICD-10) where possible.

Medical downgradings due to MSKI were identified as personnel who were medically downgraded with a principal cause of downgrading coded as one of the following chapters in ICD-10:

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

Codes in these chapters cover a broad range of diseases (for example arthritis to pain in limb) and injuries (from superficial cuts and abrasions to traumatic amputation of a limb).

MSK was identified using a list of 2,364 read codes on DMICP as authorised by a number of clinicians who are members of the Defence Musculoskeletal Health Advisory Group (DMHAG). If a member of personnel had at least one of these read codes on their electronic medical record within the year 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2017, they were classed as having MSK. Personnel were not identified as affected by MSK if a read code not within this list was used, or if free text was input instead of a Read code. This results in potential undercount of MSK.

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](mailto: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

Defence Statistics Health