



**Ministry
of Defence**

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Dear ██████████

Thank you for your email of 30 August in which you requested the following information:

'1. In 2015 you provided me with a Freedom of Information Act response [Ref: FOI2015/06137] where you answered a series of questions relating to the fitness and BMI of serving military personnel. Could you please provide me with an updated version of the reply to include the most recent data you hold?'

2. In 2013 you provided me with a Freedom of Information Act response [Ref: 09-08-2013 114240-006 ArmyHQ/Sec/04/02/71157] in which you provided me with tables relating to the physical condition of recruits to the Army in 2011-12 and 2012-13. Please could you provide me with similar tables for the individual intervening years?'

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 information in scope of your request is held. To answer each of your questions in turn:

1a. The number of UK Regular Armed Forces personnel medically discharged with a principal or contributory condition of obesity between 1 January 2007 and 31 March 2016, split by Service and calendar year, is shown in the following table:

Service	All	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016 ²
Royal Navy	13	~ ¹	0	~	~	~	~	~	~	~ ^P	0 ^P
Army	52	~	~	~	6	13	9	8 ^P	6 ^P	~ ^P	~ ^P
RAF	7	0	0	~	~	0	~	~	0	~ ^P	0 ^P

Notes:

¹ ~ between 1 and 4.

² Totals for 2016 include data from 1 January to 1 March 2016 only.

^P In 2013/14 and 2014/15, Defence Statistics (Health) did not receive all trained Army discharge paperwork (known as F MED23) which confirms the cause information for the discharge. In 2015/16, this issue was extended to include both Naval Service and RAF data. Therefore, Army

cause code data for 2013/14 2014/15 and 2015/16 are provisional. Naval Service and RAF cause code data for 2015/16 are also provisional.

1b. The last recorded weights of the last 10 UK Regular Armed Forces personnel medically discharged with a principal or contributory cause of obesity prior to 1 April 2016 are as follows:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
92.1kg	177.1kg	150.3kg	119.7kg	146kg	110.9kg	142.7kg	126kg	100kg	83.4kg

The actual weight of these personnel may have increased or decreased prior to medical discharge.

Defence Statistics release annual updates on medical discharges in the UK Armed Forces as an Official Statistic publication. The latest report can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/medical-discharges-among-uk-service-personnel-statistics-index>

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.

The information on cases was sourced from electronic personnel records 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.

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. Therefore, the figures in this answer are presented separately for each Service.

1c. The number of UK Regular Royal Navy, Army and RAF personnel recorded as failing a personal fitness assessment at the end of the six month reporting period on each 1 April and 1 October from 1 April 2015 to 1 April 2016; the number of UK Regular Royal Marine personnel currently recorded as failing a fitness assessment.

Date	Royal Navy	Army	RAF
1 October 2015	Not held	5110	315
1 April 2016	790	5540	405

The number of Royal Marines failing their basic fitness test as at 14 September 2016 was 15.

Note: this data has been rounded to the nearest 5 to limit disclosure and ensure confidentiality.

In order to provide some context, the total figures shown at 1 April 2016 represent 4% of the total UK Regular force at the same date (151,000). The personal fitness of all military personnel is monitored closely, and those failing their personal fitness tests undergo a range of targeted remedial activity. For example, Army personnel are retested after a suitable period of rest and if they are unsuccessful again are assessed by a Medical Officer to confirm that there are no medical grounds for failure. The Army's fitness, testing and supervision requirements are quantified as part of its Military Annual Training Tests.

1d. The number of UK Regular Royal Navy, Army and RAF personnel on strength as at 1 April 2016 whose last recorded Body Mass Index (BMI) indicated that they were (i) overweight or (ii) obese.

The following relates to UK Regular trained and untrained Armed Forces personnel in service as at 1 April 2016:

Last recorded Body Mass Index	Royal Navy	Royal Marines	Army	RAF
Between 25 and 29.9 (overweight)	9523	2404	32210	7539
Over 30 (obese)	2376	201	5146	1569

Please note that the MOD uses body composition in its health risk assessments which comprises BMI and waist circumference (WC), as well as satisfactory aerobic fitness, rather than BMI in isolation. BMI is a simple index of height-weight and does not differentiate between weight that is associated with muscle mass and weight associated with body fat. Therefore, the relationship between BMI and body fat varies according to body build and composition. Some members of the Armed Forces may have a high BMI score due to muscle mass rather than body fat levels.

BMI is not used alone but as part of a comprehensive assessment to determine suitability for employment. The overall fitness and functional capacity of the individual is also considered. Single-Service height and weight standards will apply for entry into specialist employment groups, such as aircrew, parachutists, Royal Marines and submariners.

Please note also that there may be a bias in the data provided, as personnel who appear underweight or overweight may have their BMI recorded more regularly than those personnel who appear to be of an ideal weight.

2. Figures showing how many potential recruits to the Army have been rejected from 2013/14 to 2015/16 because of their physical condition. Any statistical breakdown on this data that might indicate the reason they were rejected (eg medical, too weak, fitness etc).

The information held relates to those Regular and Reserve candidates who have withdrawn or have been rejected during application to the Army between 2013/14 and 2015/16 inclusive. There are various categories against which candidates are assessed on application. The categories shown in this case are those relating to medical and/or physical factors only, where specified. The total number of applicants against each relevant category is shown

Recruiting Year 2013/14	Totals	% Total Rejected /Withdrawn	% Total Applications
BMI	20	0.03%	0.03%
Fitness	25	0.03%	0.03%
Fitness (Self Certified)	65	0.08%	0.09%
Medical	12415	15.76%	17.36%
Medical (Self Certified)	345	0.44%	0.48%
Medical Criteria	525	0.66%	0.73%
Part 2 Medical (selection Only)	~	0.00%	0.00%

Recruiting Year 2014/15	Totals	% Total Rejected /Withdrawn	% Total Applications
BMI	15	0.02%	0.01%
Fitness	15	0.02%	0.02%
Fitness (Self Certified)	100	0.12%	0.10%
Medical	13020	15.07%	13.47%
Medical (Self Certified)	775	0.90%	0.80%
Medical Criteria	30	0.04%	0.03%
Part 2 Medical (selection Only)	5	0.01%	0.01%

Recruiting Year 2015/16	Totals	% Total Rejected /Withdrawn	% Total Applications
BMI	175	0.20%	0.19%
Fitness	15	0.02%	0.01%
Fitness (Self Certified)	145	0.17%	0.16%
Medical	13010	15.31%	14.58%
Medical (Self Certified)	880	1.04%	0.99%
Medical Criteria	0	0.00%	0.00%
Part 2 Medical (selection Only)	~	0.00%	0.00%

Note: the data in the 'totals' column has been rounded to the nearest 5 to limit disclosure and ensure confidentiality. '~' between 1 and 4.

The Tri-Service medical standards which govern entry into the Regular Army and Army Reserve are set only after extensive consultation between military hospital and occupational health specialists. These standards take into account the particularly demanding circumstances under which all Service personnel are expected to work. We have a duty of care to protect the individual from being harmed by their employment and from becoming a burden on their colleagues in circumstances that might endanger them.

There is no direct correlation between the total number of applications used to calculate the percentages in the final column and the rejections/withdrawals shown for the same period. Candidates may have applied during a previous period.

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, <https://ico.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

Army Secretariat