Background Quality Report

Introduction

Figures on 'sickness absence' for civilian personnel employed by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) are published on an annual basis as an Official Statistic on the MOD page of www.gov.uk

The report presents the latest sickness absences for the main budgetary areas of the MOD. It also provides a time-series of civilian sickness absences for the main categories of MOD employment, including the number of working days lost, the average number of working days lost, the number of occurrences of sickness absence, and the cause of sickness absence as defined by the World Health Organisation International Classification of Diseases.

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Timeliness and Punctuality

This section reports on the time gap between publication and the reference period (timeliness) and the gap between planned and actual publication dates (punctuality).

Data are made available to the production team four weeks after the situation date.
The publication date is pre-announced, in line with the Official Statistics Code of practice on the Publication Release Dates section of the Defence Statistics webpage.
For Pre-release access see Defence Statistics pre-release access lists for details.

The provisional publication date for the Civilian Personnel Sickness Absence annual report is May of each year.

Relevance

This section is about the degree to which the statistical product meets user needs in both coverage and content.

The Civilian sickness absence statistics are used to answer Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests, and by the Cabinet Office and MOD to measure and evaluate policy around sickness absence. The detailed breakdowns available in Civilian Sickness Absence publication were produced to facilitate better development and monitoring of sickness absence within the MOD.

Accessibility and Clarity

This section reports on the: ease with which users are able to access the data and the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information (accessibility); and the quality and sufficiency of the metadata, illustrations and accompanying advice (clarity).

The Civilian Personnel Sickness Absence Annual Report is published on [Defence Statistics at Gov.UK](#) and is available in pdf format, with the tables also available in MS Excel format.

The publication is accompanied by notes explaining the categories and definitions used and the main changes that have impacted the statistics. Graphics are used to present time-series and quarter-on-quarter changes. The tables are accompanied by an explanation of some key terminology and footnotes.

Methodology and Production

The data is from the MOD's self-service Human Resources Management System (HRMS) administrative tool and the Human Resources Systems of the two Trading Funds Defence Science and Technology Laboratory and UK Hydrographic Office.

The methodology for counting days of sickness absence is defined by the Cabinet Office to ensure comparability across the Civil Service. See the joint HSE, DWP and Cabinet office review into [Managing Sickness Absence in the Public Sector](#).

Accuracy and Reliability

This section is about the differences between the estimates and the unknown true values.

Validation and editing processes are undertaken as a second sight check of extracted data fields and variables and a check that the methodology has been applied correctly. The counts of full-time employees equivalents used for producing the average number of working days lost per staff year are those personnel in post as at the 1st of the month.

The quality of the data is reliant on all episodes of sickness being reported on the human resource systems and the correct sickness code being chosen. Whilst it is mandated that all episodes of sickness are reported in the MOD, the recording is reliant upon staff and their managers entering all episodes of sickness on their human resource systems and choosing the right sickness code. Therefore there is likely to be some under-reporting and incorrect categorisation which is not corrected for.

Performance, Cost and Respondent Burden

This section is about the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the statistical output

The statistics are produced from the Department's mandated self-service tool. There is no other source of information for sickness absence, other than taking a random sample of MOD civilians, which would be far more costly.

Confidentiality, Transparency and Security

This section is about the procedures and policy used to ensure sound confidentiality, security and transparent practices.

Confidentiality
All published outputs are counts of individuals in particular groupings. Disclosure control is applied to statistical or numeric information to safeguard the confidentiality of individuals. 'Disclosure control' refers to the efforts made to reduce the risk of disclosure, such as applying

statistical methods to protect 'personally identifiable information' (PII) in aggregate data tables. These safeguards can take many forms (e.g. data suppression, rounding, recoding etc.).

An updated MOD Disclosure Control and Rounding policy has been published on GOV.UK and this policy has been applied to MOD civilian personnel statistics. The policy is available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-statistics-policies

Transparency

The outputs identify any issues or caveats relating to the data or statistics. This quality report provides further information on the method, production process and quality of the output.

Where rounding has been used, totals and sub-totals have been rounded separately and so may not equal the sums of their rounded parts. When rounding to the nearest 10, numbers ending in "5" have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent systematic bias.

All percentages are calculated from headcount totals (part time equivalent to one person), from unrounded figures and are shown to 1 decimal place.

Security

All staff involved in the production process have undertaken the necessary Data Protection Act training and all MOD, Civil Service and data protection regulations are adhered to. The data is stored, accessed and analysed using the MOD's restricted network and IT systems, and the access to raw data is password protected.

Assessment of user needs

The UK Statistics Authority produces the 'Code of practice for statistics' which provides producers of official statistics with the detailed practices they must commit to when producing and releasing official statistics. The Code ensures that the statistics published by government serve the public. When producers of official statistics comply with the Code, it gives users of statistics and citizens confidence that published government statistics are of public value, are high quality and are produced by people and organisations that are worthy of trust.

The main areas of MOD that use civilian sickness absence statistics are:
- People CivHR Policy; and
- Civilian HR Business Partners.

Both areas use the statistics to formulate return to work policy and to implement measures to counteract sickness absence.

Frequency of publications relating to Sickness absence

Defence Statistics (Civilian) completed a consultation on reducing publication of 'Civilian Personnel Sickness Absence Report' from quarterly to once a year for the following reasons:

a. The information could still be provided to internal customers, but published less frequently, reducing the time spent on ministerial submissions and report commentary.
b. To free up resource to spend on reactive ad hoc analysis to meet our policy customers' requirements.

Defence Statistics concluded that this would not have a significant detrimental impact on transparency, accountability or informing public debate. The consultation ran from 21 April 2017 to 2 June 2017. Following the conclusion of the consultation this publication is now published one a year.

The consultation process was in line with the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics and the Civil Service Consultation Principles (2016).

Details of the proposed changes and results can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-ministry-of-defence-mod-personnel-statistics

Coherence and Comparability

This section examines: the degree to which data are derived from different sources or methods, but refer to the same topic, are similar (coherence); and the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain (comparability).

The production of these statistics is governed by the Cabinet Office methodology and therefore they are fully coherent with sickness absence statistics for other Government Departments. The statistics utilise the World Health Organisation International Classification of Diseases codes for classifying absence and should therefore also be coherent with other sickness absence statistics.

In April 2008 the Cabinet Office requested that the calculation of sickness absences exclude staff on zero pay from both the strength and the absence figures. All annual figures from 31 March 2009 have been produced on this basis; historical figures were not revised.

Structural changes
In 2004 following changes in employment legislation and a requirement to better plan for the future of the civilian workforce, definitions were changed to better reflect human resources methods and policies. Two levels of civilian were introduced:

- **Level 1**, includes Top Level Budgetary areas (TLBs), Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA), but excludes Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S) Trading Entity, Trading Funds, Executive Agencies, and Locally engaged civilians (LECs). This is generally used for MOD internal reporting and planning.

- **Level 0,** contains all those at Level 1 plus DE&S Trading Entity, Trading Funds, Executive Agencies and LEC's. This is used for external reporting, including National Statistics publications, Strategic Defence and Security Review Baseline and Parliamentary business.

Summary table:

	Civilian Level 0	Civilian Level 1	MOD main personnel (strength)
Top Level Budgetary area (TLB)	✓	✓	✓
Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA)	✓	✓	
DE&S Trading Entity	✓		
Trading Funds & Executive Agencies	✓		
Locally engaged civilians (LEC)	✓		

Structural changes have occurred during the time-series covered by MOD civilian personnel statistics. In some cases this means that figures are not directly comparable across the whole period. To aid understanding of these changes and how they have impacted upon the figures the detail of these changes is provided here:

i.   As part of Defence Equipment and Support's (DE&S) implementation of the Materiel Strategy Programme, the transfer of responsibility and resources for key outputs to Navy Command, Head Office & Corporate Services and Joint Forces Command resulted in a transfer of 2,640 personnel from DE&S as at 1 April 2014.

ii. As at 1 April 2015 approximately 2,000 posts within the Defence Support Group (DSG) Trading Fund have been privatised and transferred to the private sector via Babcock, approximately 450 posts covering the Defence Electronic Components Agency (DECA) transferred to HO&CS and are reported within the MOD Main TLB total within Level 1 as at 1 April 2015.

iii. Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) changed status as at 1 April 2015 and was reclassified as a Bespoke Trading Entity. It is reported outside Civilian level 1, but within level 0. Prior to this it was categorised as a Top Level Budgetary Area, which was part of the Civilian Level 1 total.

iv. As at 1 April 2018 approximately 1,160 posts transferred out of DE&S Trading Entity to form Defence Nuclear Organisation (DNO) as an Executive Agency, additionally approximately 80 personnel within DG Nuclear also transferred to DNO, moving from Level 1 to Level 0 reporting.

v.   As at 1 April 2018, approximately 400 posts forming the Defence Electronics Components Agency (DECA) previously reported in Head Office & Corporate Services (HO&Cs) within Level 1 were reported separately as an Executive Agency within level 0, for improved consistency and transparency of data reporting.

References

	Reference	Website location
1	gov.uk	https://www.gov.uk/
2	Civilian Personnel Sickness Absence Annual Report	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-civilian-sickness-absence-annual-statistics-index
3	Managing Sickness Absence in the Public Sector	http://www.hse.gov.uk/gse/sickness.pdf
4	Biannual Civilian Personnel Report (BCPR)	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-biannual-civilian-personnel-statisticsindex
5	Biannual Diversity Dashboard	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-diversity-dashboard-index
6	MOD statistics pre-release access list	https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/defence-statistics-pre-release-access-list
7	Defence Statistics Policies	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-statistics-policies
8	Code of practice for statistics	https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/

Contact details

Defence Statistics welcome feedback on this Background Quality Report or any of the statistics mentioned.
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