



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.gov.uk

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Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 30 November 2019 requesting the following information:

"Please could you supply me with any Statistics or information regarding the health and fitness of "Armourers" that have left the RAF since 1997, relating to "Bad/Damaged Knees, and problems with neck/spine injuries.

For example how many claims through the "Forces Veterans Association" have been successful for the above injuries for Armourers?

Also how many personnel, ex RAF Armourers, or other RAF trades, have claimed against the RAF (MOD) for the above injuries listed above. Knees/Neck/spine."

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

The Ministry of Defence requires further information in order to determine how to answer your request. In particular we need clarification on what you mean by;

- a) "the health and fitness of 'Armourers' that have left the RAF since 1997".
Are you referring to the current health of RAF veteran 'Armourers' or are you asking for numbers of 'Armourers' who were medically discharged from the UK Armed Forces with knee, neck and/or spine injuries?
- b) "how many claims through the "Forces Veterans Association" have been successful".
Service personnel and veterans can claim no-fault compensation for Service-attributable injury through the War Pension Scheme (for pre-April 2005 injuries) and the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (for post-April 2005 injuries). Service personnel and veterans may also claim against the Ministry of Defence for compensation at common law. Please can you clarify which compensation scheme(s) you are interested in.
- c) "how many personnel, ex RAF Armourers, or other RAF trades, have claimed against the RAF (MOD).."
In relation to RAF trades, please can you confirm if you are asking for the numbers of RAF Other Ranks (not Officers) who have claimed for compensation under the scheme(s) of interest.

Once you have clarified your request, I will be pleased to consider it again.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Under Section 16 (Advice and Assistance) you may find it useful to note that the MOD holds the following information:

The MOD does not hold information on all UK Armed Forces Veterans suffering from knee, neck and/or spine injuries. The provision of veterans' healthcare is primarily the responsibility of the NHS in England and the Devolved Administrations.

The MOD holds electronic information on regular RAF personnel medically discharged from the UK Armed Forces since 1 April 1995. Service personnel medically discharged with a primary or contributory condition related to knee, neck and /or spine injuries can be identified.

For information the MOD publishes annual Official Statistics on regular Service personnel medically discharged from the UK Armed Forces:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/medical-discharges-among-uk-service-personnel-statistics-index>.

The MOD holds information on RAF personnel who have claimed for no-fault compensation under the War Pension Scheme (WPS) for Service-attributable injuries sustained prior to 6 April 2005. Note that electronic information is only held for claims registered since 1 April 2003. Paper claim records will have to be manually searched to determine any claims registered between 1997 and 2003. WPS claims and awards for knee, neck and /or spine injuries can be identified by searching for these terms in a free-text field. Note that the free-text search may also identify claimants suffering with illness (not injury) affecting these body parts. Therefore, any figures supplied would be treated as estimates.

For information the MOD publishes annual Official Statistics on WPS claims and awards:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/war-pension-recipients-index>.

The MOD holds electronic information on RAF personnel who have claimed for no-fault compensation under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) for Service-attributable injuries sustained on or after 6 April 2005. AFCS claims and awards for knee, neck and /or spine injuries can be identified by searching for these terms in a free-text field. Note that AFCS claims for these conditions does not mean that there has been a formal injury diagnosed and successful claimants may have been awarded compensation for another condition. In addition the free-text search may also identify claimants suffering with illness (not injury) affecting these body parts. Therefore, any figures supplied would be treated as estimates.

For information the MOD publishes annual Official Statistics on AFCS claims and awards:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-compensation-scheme-statistics-index>.

The MOD has access to electronic information on RAF personnel who have made a common law claim against the MOD since 1 June 1996. The trade of a claimant is not recorded against each claim on the claims management systems and it would be necessary to check against centrally held records in cases where a service number is held. It would be necessary to carry out a search on the body part injury for MODs contractors' data, however, this will not pick up all claims for knee, neck and /or spine injuries as some will be recorded as Multiple body parts.

For information the MOD publishes annual Official Statistics on claimed and settled common law claims: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-compensation-claims-statistics>.

Identifying 'Armourers' in the medical discharge and compensation data would require matching to Service personnel records. Electronic personnel records for those who have served in the UK Armed Forces on or after 1 April 2007 is held centrally. This includes those who served as 'Armourers', identified as those who served in one of the following main trades: 'Engineering Technician Weapon', 'Propulsion Mechanic (Technician)', 'Weapon Mechanic' and 'Weapon Technician'. Electronic information on RAF personnel who served in the UK Armed Forces between 1997 and 2007 is held on single Service legacy databases. Note that main trade information may not be complete for this cohort and therefore paper Service records may need to be manually searched to determine 'Armourers' who served during this time.

Please note that if your clarification requires the manual search of personnel, medical or compensation claim records, then it may exceed the appropriate cost limit. If the appropriate cost limit is exceeded, we will provide advice on how you can reduce or refine your request to bring the cost of compliance under the limit.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

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