



# Ministry of Defence

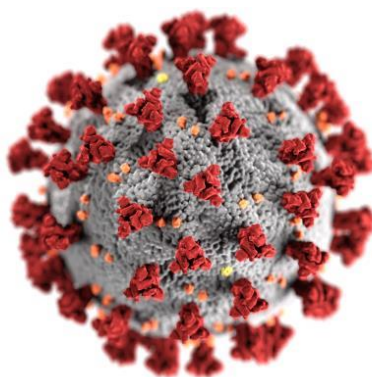
## Coronavirus Cases in Defence: Number of COVID-19 tests in Defence & positive cases in the UK armed forces

**As at 19 March 2021**

Published 1 April 2021

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that cause disease in people and animals. COVID-19 refers to the “coronavirus disease 2019” and is a disease that can affect the lungs and airways. The World Health Organization classified COVID-19 as a pandemic on 11 March 2020. This fortnightly official statistic provides information on the number of Defence personnel who have had a COVID-19 test administered through the UK national testing programme; and for the UK armed forces, the number of positive cases of COVID-19.

### Key Points



- As at 19 March 2021:
  - 169,518 Defence personnel had a COVID-19 test administered as part of the national testing programme, of these:
    - 158,587 UK armed forces personnel.
    - 10,931 civilian personnel.
  - 8,157 UK armed forces personnel had a positive test for COVID-19 recorded in their medical record.

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**Background quality report:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/number-of-covid-19-tests-in-defence-and-positive-cases-in-the-uk-armed-forces-2021> .

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## Introduction

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Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that cause disease in people and animals. They can cause the common cold or more severe diseases, such as COVID-19. COVID-19 refers to the “coronavirus disease 2019” and is a disease that can affect the lungs and airways. The World Health Organization classified COVID-19 as a pandemic on 11 March 2020. A pandemic is where a disease is prevalent over a whole country or the world.

Defence, in line with the rest of the country, continues to follow guidance on restrictions as provided by the UK government and devolved administrations.

COVID-19 will be a defining feature of the Defence operating environment for the foreseeable future. As such, the Ministry of Defence has moved from the COVID Defence management plan to the COVID Defence recovery and response plan. This plan is to enable Defence to adapt to living with COVID-19 for an extended period and prepare and respond to changes in government guidance.

The COVID Defence recovery and response plan has several objectives including:

- a. ensuring effective governance and collective oversight of Defence's COVID plans and activity;
- b. ensure Defence is recovering in a coherent fashion, using national advice as the basis for broad direction from head office, which will be implemented through local plans;
- c. ensure Defence is ready for a resurgence of the virus at home or overseas and can respond to outbreaks as they occur;
- d. support the adaptation and transformation of working practices, systems and processes within Defence as a result of COVID.

Personnel reporting, including testing for Defence personnel and reporting of positive cases in the UK armed forces, is being used to monitor the effect that COVID-19 is having on Defence outputs.

In April 2020 the House of Commons Defence Committee (HCDC) requested that the MOD provide fortnightly updates on the numbers of Defence personnel tested for COVID-19, and positive cases in the UK armed forces.

## Findings

### Defence Personnel – COVID-19 tests

All symptomatic Defence personnel and household members are eligible for testing in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Armed forces personnel are also eligible for testing where it is relevant to their military role, for example, those working in NHS healthcare settings or testing centres. This ensures the MOD can bring its key personnel back to the workplace, further enabling the support of the national effort and ensuring the delivery of essential Defence activity, including the COVID Support Force.

The Ministry of Defence has been collecting data on the number of Defence personnel who have had a COVID-19 test administered through the national testing programme. This includes data on UK armed forces personnel and civilian defence personnel (**Table 1**). People who live in the same household as UK armed forces or civilian personnel have not been included in the numbers presented.

**Table 1: Tests administered to Defence personnel who have attended the COVID-19 national testing programme, by Top Level Budget<sup>1</sup>, numbers<sup>2,3</sup>**

As at 19 March 2021

Top Level Budget	ALL	Service Personnel	Civilian Personnel
<b>ALL</b>	<b>169,518</b>	<b>158,587</b>	<b>10,931</b>
Navy	26,174	23,484	2,690
Army	65,546	63,403	2,143
RAF	2,105	1,910	195
UK Strategic Command	71,217	69,462	1,755
Other	4,476	328	4,148

Source: Top Level Budget (TLB) weekly returns.

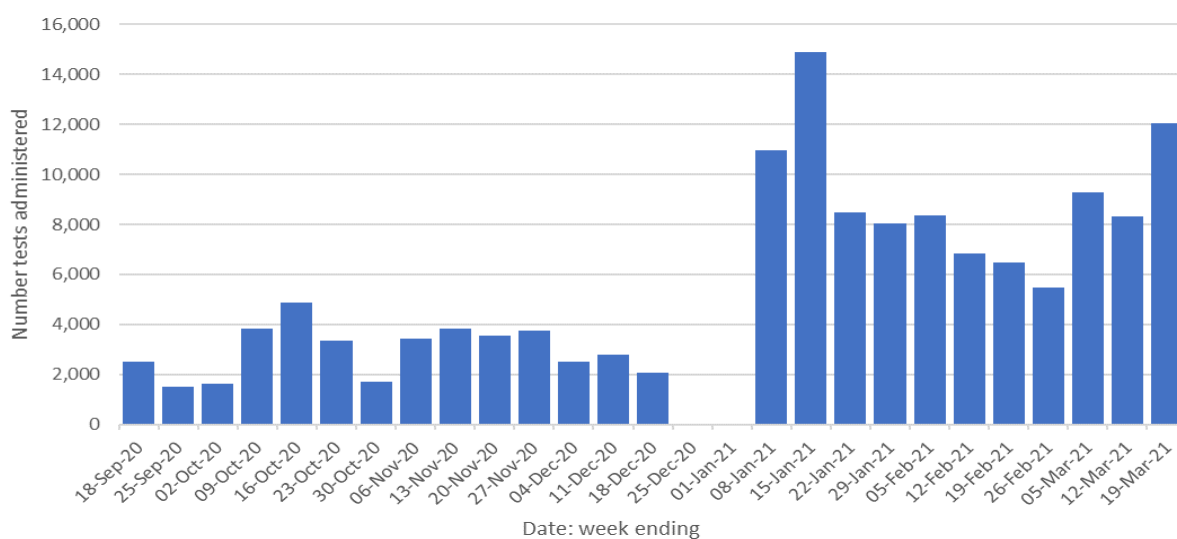
<sup>1</sup> "Other" includes Defence Electronics and Components Agency, Defence Equipment & Support, Defence Infrastructure Organisation, Defence Nuclear Organisation, Defence Science and Technology Laboratories, Head Office, Oil & Pipelines Agency, Submarine Delivery Agency, UK Hydrographics Office.

<sup>2</sup> Personnel report each week they have a test, thus personnel may have had more than one COVID test since the start of the pandemic.

<sup>3</sup> Excludes lateral flow tests being used to test personnel attending defence sites

**Figure 1: Tests administered in the past six months to Defence personnel<sup>1</sup> who have attended the COVID-19 national testing programme<sup>2</sup>, by week, numbers<sup>3,4</sup>**

As at 19 March 2021



Source: Top Level Budget (TLB) weekly returns.

<sup>1</sup> Includes UK armed forces personnel and MOD civilians.

<sup>2</sup> Personnel who have attended the COVID-19 national testing programme over the previous six-month period. For full time series and numbers, please see the OpenDocument Spreadsheet (ODS) or Excel supplementary tables.

<sup>3</sup> Data collection was suspended over the Christmas period and therefore the week ending 8th January 2021 represents the previous three weeks.

<sup>4</sup> Excludes lateral flow tests being used to test personnel attending defence sites

## Findings Continued

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### Positive test results in the UK armed forces

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Following a test for COVID-19, the results are provided to the individual's primary health care provider. For UK armed forces service personnel, results are sent to Defence Primary Health Care (DPHC) and records show that, as at 19 March 2021, a minimum of **8,157** service personnel had tested positive for COVID-19 (**Table 2**).

**Table 2: UK armed forces personnel<sup>1</sup> with a positive COVID-19 test result, by service and location<sup>2</sup>, numbers**

As at 19 March 2021

	ALL
<b>Service</b>	<b>8,157</b>
Navy	2,371
Army	4,493
RAF	1,293
<b>Location</b>	<b>8,157</b>
UK	7,547
Overseas	610

Source: DMICP and NOTICAS.

<sup>1</sup> Personnel include all UK armed forces regular and reserve, trained and untrained personnel.

<sup>2</sup> Location is where the positive test result for the individual was first entered. This is not necessarily where personnel are currently located or where they were first exposed to COVID-19.

## Methodology

**This section provides a brief summary of the methodology and data sources; more detailed information is available in the Background Quality Report for this bulletin.**

### COVID-19 Testing Data

As part of the national testing programme<sup>1</sup> MOD civilians, contractors and armed forces personnel are considered essential workers and thus eligible for priority testing.

The tests may be administered at regional test centres, mobile testing units, in hospital or as home test kits.

The MOD require TLBs to report on a weekly basis, with returns submitted by 12:00 every Friday, specifying the number of personnel who have taken a COVID-19 test over the previous 7 days for:

- Military (regulars and reservists, if mobilised or full-time reserve service).
- Civilian Defence personnel (civil servants and crown servants, other than members of the armed forces; and fixed defence contractors).
- Household persons (which are to include any persons living in the same household as military or civilian defence personnel).

Each weekly submission represents the total number of PCR COVID-19 tests administered to personnel during that week. Thus, personnel who have been tested more than once will have been included in each week they had a test administered. TLBs are responsible for the accuracy of their testing data.

Limitations of the test data:

- As the test data is based on aggregate counts supplied by the TLB on a weekly basis, it is not possible to link the aggregate counts with other data such as the military personnel record or the civilian personnel record including demographic information or other data such as the military medical record.
- It is not possible to identify the total number of defence personnel who have or have not had a COVID test as personnel may be counted multiple times throughout the time period.
- It relies on Defence personnel informing their line management chain that they have had a COVID-19 test administered.
- Although TLB aim to have all their data submitted every Friday, some of the data may not be available in time and thus will be included in subsequent bulletins, reported in the week the tests were administered. Thus, the number of new tests for the latest period cannot be derived by subtracting the number of tests in the previous fortnightly bulletin.
- MOD does not require reporting of the number of personnel mass tested using lateral flow devices for those attending defence sites.

The MOD does not receive any information from the national testing programme on the outcome of tests administered to MOD personnel.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>

## Methodology continued

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### Positive COVID-19 Test Data

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It is the responsibility of UK armed forces personnel to inform their military GP of the outcome of their COVID-19 test. The information on positive test results are then documented in their military healthcare record by Defence Primary Health Care (DPHC)

UK armed forces personnel with a confirmed test result of COVID-19 were identified using;

- Electronic medical records (Defence Medical Information Capability Programme, DMICP) with a COVID-19-related Read code. Please note that DMICP is a live data source and subject to change. Date of data extract 22 March 2021.
- Notification of Casualty (NOTICAS) data where a positive test for COVID-19 was recorded. A casualty notification is raised when a member of the UK armed forces is admitted to hospital for more than 72 hours and/or where there is serious risk to life.

Location of where personnel were diagnosed with COVID-19 was identified as the first location at which a positive test result was entered for that individual. This is not necessarily where personnel are currently located or where they were first exposed to COVID-19.

The voluntary reserves not undertaking MOD tasks receive their primary medical care from the NHS. Any information on COVID-19 entered in an NHS record is not held by MOD thus has not been included in the figures presented.

MOD civilian personnel receive their primary medical care from the NHS. Their results are sent to the individual and their NHS GP, therefore Defence does not hold information on the number of positive tests for civilian personnel.

Limitations of the positive test data for UK armed forces:

- The reporting process relies on the individual reporting the positive test result to their military medical centre.
- Positive tests results were sourced from the military medical record, DMICP, using Read codes from the data warehouse where the Read code indicated a positive test for COVID-19 or coronavirus. Information entered using free text has not been included as the information is not held in the central data warehouse; therefore, the figures provided are a minimum.
- NOTICAS data relies on the chain of command/line manager and the medical officer completing the form documenting that a positive test has been received, thus the figures provided are a minimum.
- The data presented is the total number of cases, it is not possible from the data held to report how many personnel are affected by COVID-19 at a point in time.

DMICP and NOTICAS are live data sources and subject to change due to late reporting. Thus, the total number of new positive cases cannot simply be derived by subtracting the number of positive cases from the total presented in the previous fortnightly bulletin.

## Glossary

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**Army** - The British Army consists of the General Staff and the deployable field army and the regional forces that support them, as well as joint elements that work with the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. Its primary task is to help defend the interests of the UK.

**Coronavirus** - Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that cause disease in people and animals. They can cause the common cold or more severe diseases, such as COVID-19.

**COVID-19** - COVID-19 refers to the “coronavirus disease 2019” and is a disease that can affect the lungs and airways. It is caused by a type of coronavirus.

**COVID Support Force (CSF)** – UK armed forces personnel stood at readiness to assist public services with their response to COVID-19.

**Defence Medical Information Capability Programme (DMICP)** - The DMICP programme commenced during 2007 and comprises an integrated primary Health Record (iHR) for clinical use and a pseudo-anonymised central data warehouse.

**Full time reserve service** - are personnel who fill service posts for a set period on a full-time basis while being a member of one of the reserve services, either as an ex-regular or as a volunteer.

**Lateral Flow Device/Test** - used to test for COVID-19, similar to a pregnancy test, used for mass testing by schools/employers to test individuals who cannot work at home and maybe asymptomatic. This test gives results within two hours.

**Lockdown** - Lockdown is the shutting down of all non-essential activities to slow the spread of COVID-19. In the UK, this has seen strict limits imposed on daily life. The UK lockdown was applied on 23 March 2020. This has formed the basis for each nations’ stay at home guidance.

**Mobilised reservists** - are volunteer or regular reserves who have been called into permanent service with the regular forces on military operations under the powers outlined in the Reserve Forces Act 1996.

**Navy** - Royal Navy, the sea-going defence forces of the UK, and Royal Marines, sea-going soldiers. Excludes the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Service (RFA).

**NOTICAS** - Notification of casualty is the name for the formalised system of reporting casualties within the UK armed forces.

**Pandemic** - A pandemic is where a disease is prevalent over a whole country or the world. The World Health Organization classified COVID-19 as a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

**PCR COVID-19 test** - The PCR COVID-19 test is the polymerase chain reaction test and is used when individuals have COVID symptoms, for confirmation of a positive test, if an individual has received an unclear result or if a member of the National Tactical Response Group. Tests are sent to a laboratory and can take up to 3 days for results to be available.

**Top level budgets** - The MOD comprises seven top-level budgets. The head of each TLB is personally accountable for the performance and outputs of their organisation.

**Royal Air Force (RAF)** - the aerial defence force of the UK.

**UK Armed Forces** - full time service personnel, including nursing services and Gurkhas, naval activated reservists, mobilised reservists, Military Provost Guarding Service (MPGS), Non-Regular Permanent Service (NRPS) and reservist personnel. Unless otherwise stated, includes all trained and untrained personnel.

**UK StratCom** – UK Strategic Command, provides strategic and operational integration across the five war-fighting domains



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