



Headquarters Defence Medical Services
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Reference: FOI2023/16030

Date: 02 February 2024

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your enquiry of 22 December 2023 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD), in which you asked the following:

“Under the FOI Act, can you provide figures for how many UK Armed Forces personnel were categorised as NATO Category (a) 2 and (b) 3 on the basis they need dental care or treatment to achieve optimal dental fitness. Separately, could you also provide figures for how many whole-time equivalent dentists are employed by (a) his Department, (b) the armed forces, (c) the Royal Air Force, (d) the British Army and (e) the Royal Navy.”

Your request is being treated as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. A search for the information has been completed within the MOD, and I can confirm that the information in scope of your request is held.

As at 1 December 2023 **15,084** UK armed forces personnel were categorised as NATO Category 2, and **11,541** were categorised as NATO Category 3.

The figures provided in this response are for all entitled UK armed forces personnel, trained and untrained, in service as at 1 December 2023. This does not include entitled or non-entitled civilians, foreign service or non-UK military.

The NATO categories 2 and 3 for dental fitness are defined as:

- NATO Category 2: Service personnel whose existing dental condition is unlikely to result in a dental emergency within 12 months.
- NATO Category 3: Service personnel who require dental treatment to correct a dental condition that is likely to cause a dental emergency within 12 months. This includes patients currently under care for a dental condition that, if the treatment is not completed, the patient would likely experience a dental emergency.

Trained (Royal Navy and Royal Air Force) and Trade Trained (British Army) Regular and Trained FR20 Reserve Dental Officers in the UK Armed Forces by Service, as at 1 October 2023.

	Total	Royal Navy	British Army	Royal Air Force
Total	180	40	100	40
Regular Full Time	140	40	70	30
FR20 / Part Time	40	~*	30	10

* Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 in line with disclosure control policy. Figures ending in 5 are rounded to the nearest 20 to avoid bias, 5 or fewer is represented by '~', 0 is represented by '-'.

In addition to the above figure, the total number of Civilian Dentists as at 1 October 2023 was **102**.

Under Section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note, the MOD dental service is actively engaging in a post COVID recovery programme to improve dental fitness in service personnel. This has resulted in higher levels of treatment requirements being reported.

You may also find it helpful to note the following examples of clinical cases and NATO Category treatment need:

NATO Category 2 Dental Fitness:-

- A tooth with a small decay cavity (less than one third into the dentine layer) and no symptoms. Treatment: a simple filling
- Early signs and medium risk of tooth wear due to acidic causes and grinding teeth. Treatment: prevent the cause and some protective fillings.
- Gum disease, that is unstable (bleeding gums) where some bone supporting the tooth has been lost. Oral hygiene education and professional cleaning.
- A tooth that has recently had a large filling close to the nerve, that requires review in the next 6 months. Review to check the nerve is healthy in 6 months.

NATO Category 3 Dental Fitness:-

- One tooth with a large decay cavity. Treatment, a large filling.
- Gum disease that is unstable (bleeding gums), where a lot of bone supporting the tooth has been lost or there are abscesses due to the gum disease. Oral hygiene education and professional cleaning.
- An abscess at the end of the tooth root. Root canal treatment or extraction of tooth.
- A wisdom tooth that is causing decay or swollen gums due to its position in the mouth. Extraction and or a filling of the tooth next door.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office.

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.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 FOIA. 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,

HQ Defence Medical Service