



Ministry  
of Defence

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FOI2020/11473

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11 November 2020

Dear Mr Overton,

Thank you for your email of 14 October 2020 requesting the following information:

*"I understand that Mr J Mercer wants to make this country the best place in the world for veterans. To this end, can I ask how Mr Mercer proposes to gauge success in this area? More specifically can I ask the following under FOI:*

*Can you please share reports or data that Mr Mercer's office has on the following (specifically data - broken down by year if possible) in the last decade:*

- the number of veterans who are homeless*
- the number of veterans who have committed suicide*
- the number of veterans living with life-changing combat injuries."*

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

I am writing to advise you that following a search of our recorded information, I have established that the information you requested is not held by the Ministry of Defence.

Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it useful to note:

As part of delivering the Strategy for our Veterans, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) alongside the Office for Veterans Affairs within the Cabinet Office is committed to enhancing the collection, use and analysis of data on the needs and experiences of the veteran community.

*In regard to the number of veterans who are homeless:*

The Government has taken a number of measures to identify and support veterans who are experiencing, or who are at risk of, homelessness. The Homelessness Reduction Act includes a statutory duty for members of the Armed Forces, who it is believed may be at risk of homelessness after discharge, to be referred to a local housing authority in England. The MOD, through Veterans UK, also provides a Defence Transition Service which offers those personnel who are known to be at risk of challenges, which may impact on making a successful transition back into civilian life, with enhanced support and a Veterans Welfare Service which provides support and assistance to veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness across England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland.

Existing government data collection on homeless veterans:

- Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) does not currently collect statistics on whether people sleeping rough have served in the Armed Forces. However, statistics from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network suggest that 2% of the rough sleeping population in London are UK nationals who have served in the Armed Forces. Other independent research shows that the rough sleeping figures for veterans are around 3% across the UK.

- H-CLIC (Homelessness Case Level Information Collection) is currently still the main vehicle to capture more detailed data on those offered assistance in England through the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA), including whether an individual is a veteran.
- The latest H-CLIC data, April to June 2020, for England shows that of the 63,570 households owed a homelessness duty, 410 had support needs because they had previously served in the armed forces (less than 1% of all those presenting as homeless in England). Published information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-april-to-june-2020>
- The Scottish Government publish statistics on homelessness in Scotland, including the percentage of households which had a member who was previously a member of the Armed Forces (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2019-2020/pages/6/>). Of the 31,333 homeless households in 2019/20, 3% had a member which was previously a member of the Armed Forces.

*In regard to the number of veterans who have committed suicide:*

Suicide data for all veterans of the UK Armed Forces is not currently captured by the Government. However, the MOD has commissioned a new study to investigate causes of death, including suicide, amongst all those who served in the UK Armed Forces between 2001 and 2014, covering combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, encompassing veterans and those still serving:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-study-into-iraq-and-afghanistan-veterans-launched>. MOD

officials are continuing to work with colleagues in NHS Digital, the Health Research Authority and National Records Scotland and are hopeful that the initial report will be published later this year.

In 2019 the Secretary of State for Defence directed that the study be extended to include all veterans who served after 2014, now and into the future. Thus MOD will be able to track the impact of future deployments on the health of Service personnel both whilst serving and as veterans.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-secretary-calls-for-veteran-led-support-to-be-at-the-heart-of-mental-health-services>

The MOD also publishes studies on the causes of death, including suicide, of veterans from the 1982 Falklands war (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/causes-of-deaths-among-the-uk-armed-forces-veterans-of-the-1982-falklands-campaign>)

and from the 1990/91 Gulf war (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/causes-of-deaths-that-occurred-among-the-uk-veterans-of-the-199091-gulf-conflict>). Both studies show that the suicide rates amongst veterans were lower than comparative rates in the civilian population.

*In regard to the number of veterans living with life-changing combat injuries:*

The MOD does not use the definition “life changing injuries” as military personnel are assessed against medical employment standards associated with their role. However, the MOD have previously provided numbers of serious injuries sustained including amputations and injuries classified via the Notification of Casualty system (NOTICAS) as very serious and serious injuries. NOTICAS is the name for the formalised system of reporting casualties within the UK armed forces. It sets in train the MOD's next of kin informing procedure. The MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Policy and procedures set out the guidance under which a NOTICAS report is to be raised. NOTICAS takes precedence over all but the most urgent operational and security matters.

The MOD publish an annual report on the number of personnel who have sustained an amputation during service, the report is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-service-personnel-amputation-statistics-index>. This report presents the number of UK service personnel who sustained a partial or complete amputation because of injuries or illness and of which have been medically discharged.

In addition, MOD publishes the number of military personnel who have been medically discharged, the report is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/medical-discharges-among-uk-service-personnel-statistics-index>

The MOD has also published information on the types of injuries sustained as a result of combat

operations in Afghanistan: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/types-of-injuries-sustained-by-uk-service-personnel-on-operations-in-afghanistan-op-herrick-1-april-2006-to-30-november-2014>

The MOD has published information on patients that were very seriously injured, or seriously injured in Afghanistan: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/op-herrick-afghanistan-very-seriously-injured-and-seriously-injured-tracking-index> Publication of this report ceased in 2016 following a public consultation due to a drop in the number of casualties sustained in Afghanistan.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance

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](mailto: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,

Defence Statistics Health