

Briefing Note

Census 2021

Topic summary release ⁽⁰⁰³⁾

11 November 2022

census 2021

UK armed forces veterans

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has published the next phase of Census 2021 outputs for England and Wales which provide data on specific topic areas.

This latest release shows the UK armed forces veterans population.

The 2021 Census in England and Wales was the first to ask people if they had previously served in the UK armed forces. People aged 16 years and over were asked whether they had previously served in the regular or reserve UK armed forces, or both. People currently serving in the UK armed forces and those who had never served were both advised to tick 'no'.

The veteran population is known as those who have previously served in the regular or reserve UK armed forces and form part of the armed forces community. This also includes those who are currently serving in the armed forces or Merchant Navy and their families.

This question was added to the 2021 Census to better meet the needs for service providers and others who support veterans. This is in line with the [Armed Forces Covenant](#) which is, "A promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly."

There were **1,853,112 people who had previously served in the UK armed forces in England and Wales in 2021, 3.8% of the population aged 16 years and over** (1 in 25 people aged 16 years and over in England and Wales).

Armed forces veterans' population in South Gloucestershire

There were 9,498 people aged 16 years and over who had previously served in the UK armed forces in South Gloucestershire (4.0%). 6,970 of these had served in regular UK armed forces (2.9%) and 2,124 in reserve UK armed forces (0.9%).

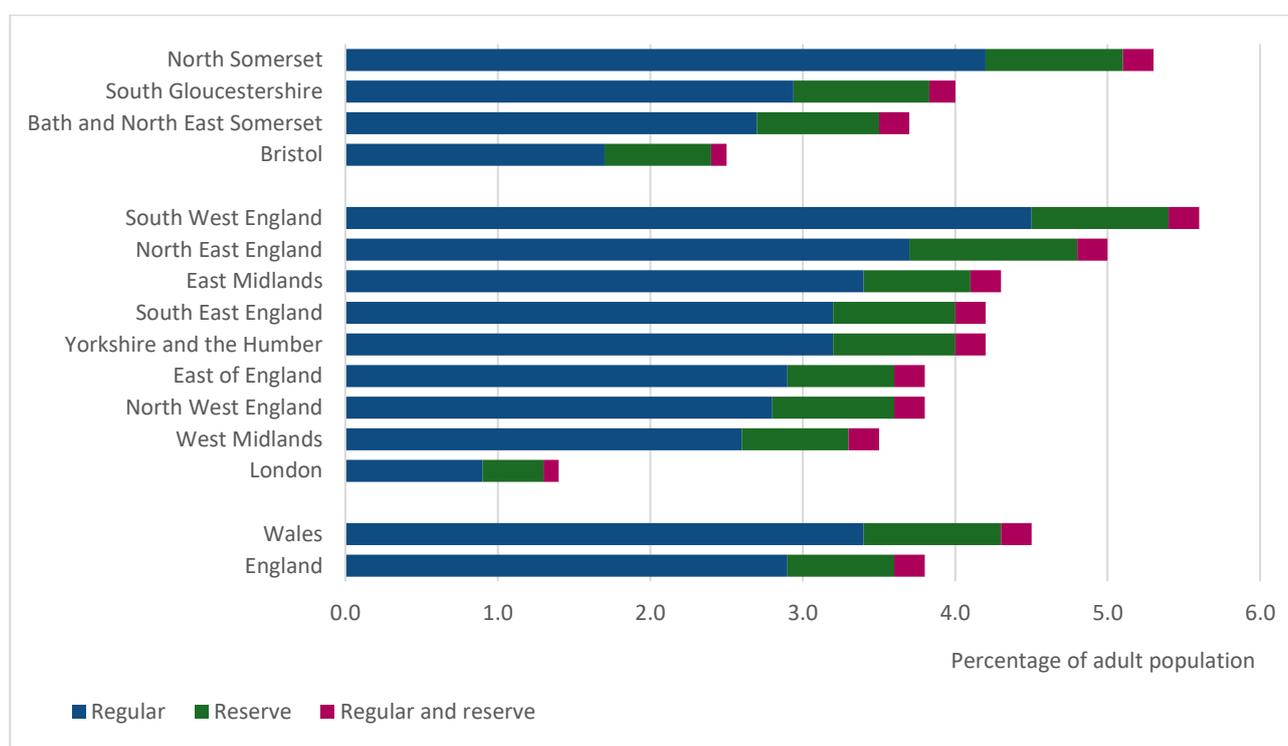
This compares to Bristol with 2.4% (9,491 people), Bath and North East Somerset 3.6% (5,858) and North Somerset with 5.3% (9,443).

Table 1: Population aged 16 years and over who had previously served in the UK armed forces 2021, WoE local authorities.

	Previously served in regular UK armed forces		Previously served in reserve UK armed forces		Previously served in both regular and reserve UK armed forces		Has previously served in any UK armed forces	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
South Gloucestershire	6,970	2.9%	2,124	0.9%	404	0.2%	9,498	4.0%
North Somerset	7,426	4.2%	1,593	0.9%	424	0.2%	9,443	5.3%
Bath and North East Somerset	4,341	2.7%	1,274	0.8%	243	0.2%	5,858	3.6%
Bristol	6,450	1.7%	2,623	0.7%	418	0.1%	9,491	2.4%

The South West was the region within England that had the highest proportion of veterans (5.6%, 265,000 people) along with the North East of England (5.0%, 109,000 people). The areas in the South West with the highest percentages were Plymouth (8.4%, 18,279), Wiltshire (7.5%, 31,378), West Devon (7.3%, 3,508) and Dorset (7.1%, 22,884). Across the country, the areas with the highest proportion of UK armed forces veterans tended to be near existing armed forces bases.

Figure 1: Percentage of the population aged 16 years and over who had previously served in the UK armed forces, 2021, England, Wales, Regions and West of England



Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021

Additional information

Census dictionary

ONS have published a 'Census 2021' dictionary with detailed information about variables, definitions and classifications. This can be viewed on their [website](#).

About the Census

Every ten years a census is carried out in England and Wales to produce an accurate estimate of the population. The 2021 Census for England and Wales took place on 21 March 2021 and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has now published the first release of data.

A significant volume of more detailed data is scheduled for release over the winter and throughout 2023.

Data Source: Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government Licence.

For further information, please contact research@southglos.gov.uk.

Revisions

Corrections and amendments have been made on reviewing and checking of data as more data is released. Depending on the data tables used there are some variations in rounding which have been corrected or amended in the following revisions. This latest version includes all amends and supersedes previous versions. For any reporting or forward planning, please contact the Insight and Engagement team to provide latest updates and tables as variations can occur between different sources and the geographies used for calculation.

V1.1 revisions

Proportion of residents aged 16 and over who had previously served in the UK armed forces in Bath and North East Somerset amended from 3.7% to 3.6%.

Number of veterans in the South West amended from 317,000 people to 265,000.