



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

STATISTICS

# UK Armed Forces veterans in Wales (Census 2021)

Census 2021 data about UK Armed Forces veterans in Wales by local authority and whether or not they had served in the Regular or Reserved UK Armed Forces.

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# Introduction

UK armed forces veteran population who have either previously served in the regular forces, reserve forces or both: Census 2021 data.

The [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) has also published '[UK armed forces veterans, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)'.

## Main points

- In 2021, around 115,000 people in Wales reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces. This is around 4.5% of usual residents aged 16 years or older.
- The percentage of UK armed forces veterans was higher in Wales than it was in England (3.8%, 1.7 million).
- Of the UK armed forces veteran population in Wales, 76.3% (88,000 people) previously served in the regular forces, 19.3% (22,000 people) previously served in the reserve forces, and 4.5% (5,000 people) served in both the regular and reserve forces.
- Around 2,000 UK armed forces veterans (1.8%) lived in communal establishments and the remainder (around 113,000, 98.2%) lived in households.
- The percentage of households with one or more persons who had served in the UK armed forces was higher in Wales (8.1%, 109,000) than it was in England (7.0%, 1.6 million).
- Across Wales, the local authorities with the highest proportion of veterans include Conwy (5.9%, 6,000 people), Pembrokeshire (5.7%, 6,000 people) and the Isle of Anglesey (5.6%, 3,000 people).

# Population who had previously served in the UK armed forces in Wales

Census 2021 in Wales and England was the first to ask people if they had previously served in the UK armed forces. People aged 16 years or older 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”.

People who have previously served in the regular or reserve UK armed forces are often known as the veteran population and form part of the armed forces community (along with people who currently serve in the armed forces or Merchant Navy and their families). The question on UK armed forces veterans was added to better meet the needs for service providers and others who support veterans, in line with the [Armed Forces Covenant](#). You can read more about why this question was added in the ONS’ white paper, [Help Shape Our Future: The 2021 Census of Population and Housing in England and Wales \(Cabinet Office\)](#), and about the ONS’ plans for data on the armed forces community more generally on its [armed forces community question development webpage \(Office for National Statistics\)](#).

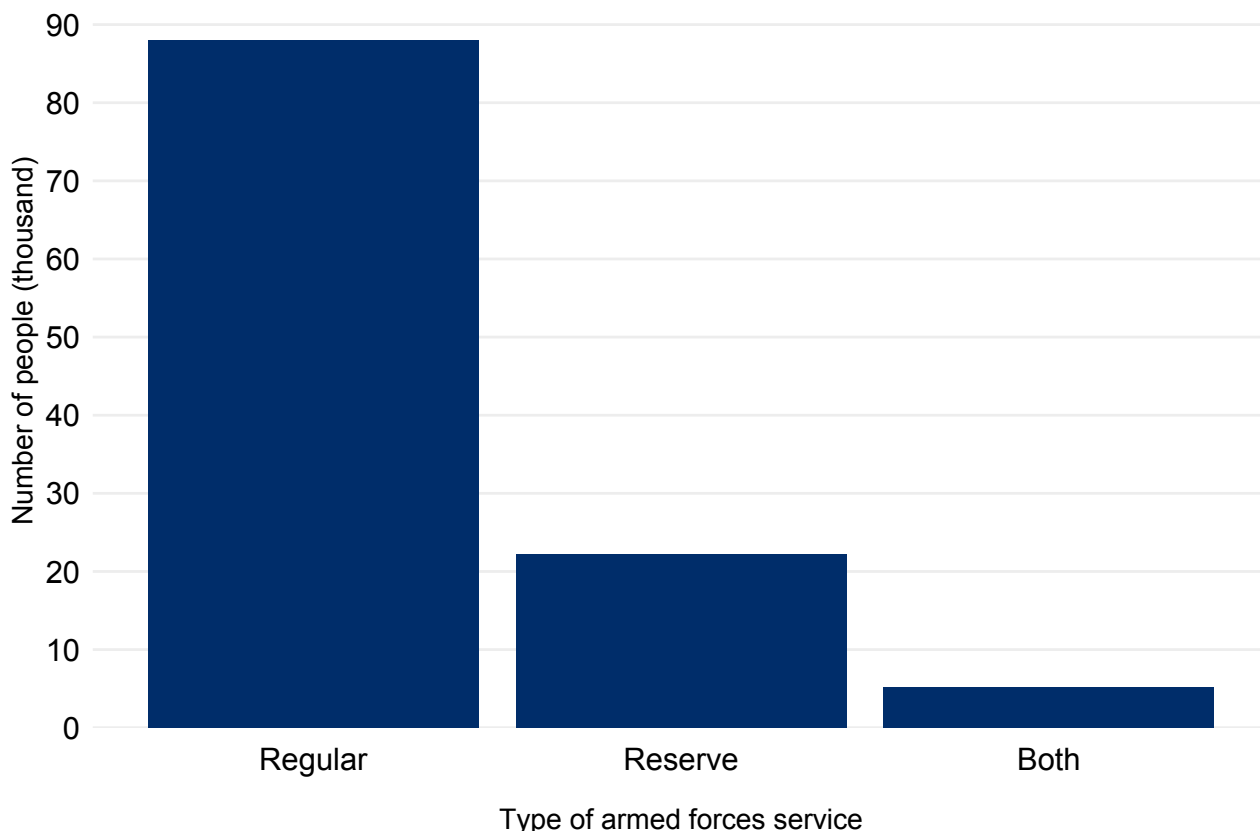
In 2021, there were 115,000 people who had previously served in the UK armed forces in Wales, 4.5% of the population aged 16 years or older. This is almost 1 in 22 people aged 16 years or older in Wales.

The percentage of UK armed forces veterans was higher in Wales than it was in England (3.8%, 1.7 million). In England, almost 1 in 25 people aged 16 years or older had previously served in the UK armed forces.

Over three-quarters of UK armed forces veterans residing in Wales had previously served in the regular armed forces only (88,000 people, 76.3%), while 22,000 (19.3%) had served in the reserve armed forces only. The remaining

5,000 (4.5%) had served in both the regular and the reserve armed forces.

**Figure 1: UK armed forces veterans, 2021**



Source: Census 2021

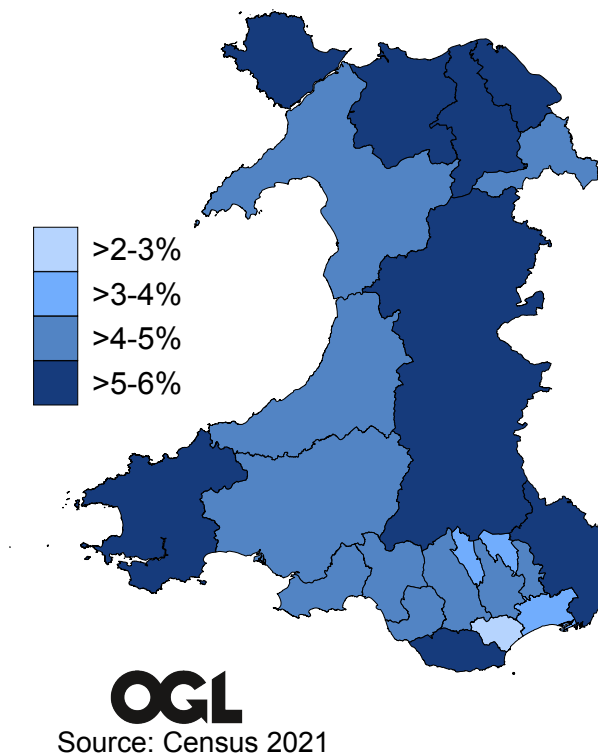
Of the UK armed forces population in Wales, 98.2% (113,000) lived in households and 1.8% (2,000) lived in communal establishments. This is the same as the **population as a whole**, where 98.2% lived in households and 1.8% lived in communal establishments. Communal establishments include residential care homes, university halls of residence, boarding schools, and prisons.

The ONS also used the answers to this question to calculate the number of households that included one or more veterans. In 2021, 109,000 households in Wales had at least one person who had previously served in the UK armed forces (8.1% of all households in Wales).

Of these households, the vast majority included one veteran only. Around 104,000 households had one veteran only, which is 95.9% of all households with at least one veteran. Around 4,000 (4.0%) included two veterans, and the remaining 100 included three or more veterans.

# How the UK armed forces veteran population varied across Wales

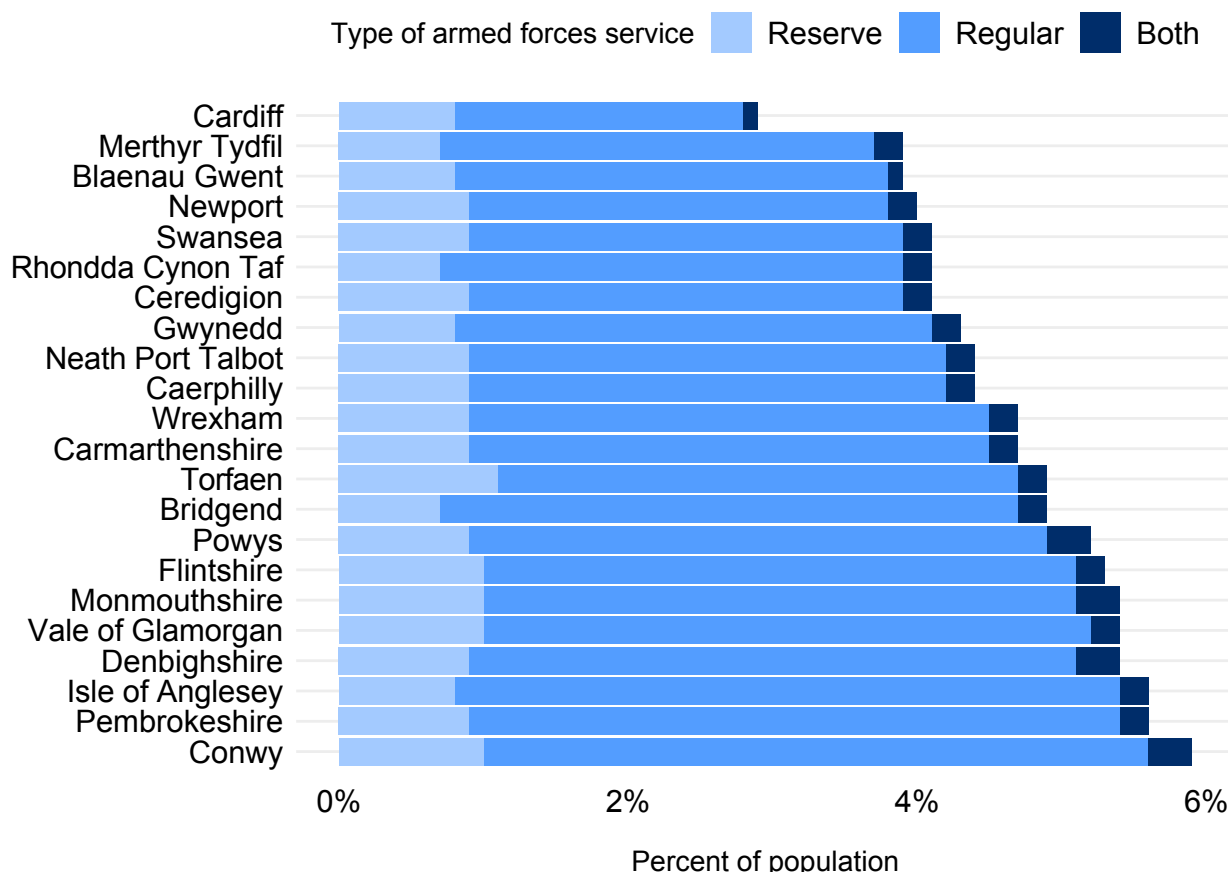
Figure 2: UK armed forces veterans by local authority, 2021



Across Wales, the local authorities with the highest percentage of veterans were Conwy (5.9%, 6,000 people), Pembrokeshire (5.7%, 6,000 people) and the Isle of Anglesey (5.6%, 3,000 people).

Cardiff had the lowest proportion of veterans with less than 2.9% of the population.

**Figure 3: UK armed forces veterans by service type and local authority, 2021**



Source: Census 2021

Conwy and the Isle of Anglesey had the highest percentage of veterans who had previously served in the regular armed forces only, at 4.6%. Torfaen had the highest percentage of veterans who had previously served in the reserve armed forces only, at 1.1%. Monmouthshire and Denbighshire had the highest



percentage of veterans who had previously served in both the regular and the reserve armed forces, at 0.3%.

## Quality and methodology information

For full quality and methodology information, including a glossary of terms, please visit the [ONS' quality and methodology information report](#).

More detailed data and analysis of UK armed forces veterans will be published by the ONS in the coming months, alongside the release of multivariate data. This will enable breakdowns of the UK armed forces veteran population by other census variables, such as age, health and labour market characteristics. Read more about the [ONS' UK armed forces veterans analysis plans](#) and its [release plans for Census 2021 \(Office for National Statistics\)](#) more generally.

## Glossary

### UK armed forces veteran

People who have previously served in the UK armed forces. This includes those who have served for at least one day in the UK armed forces, either regular, reserves, or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations.

### National Statistics status

The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](#) has designated these statistics as

National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality, and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed to the ONS in June 2022 following a [full assessment against the Code of Practice by the Office for Statistics Regulation](#).

## **Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)**

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier, and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement

of the wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

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