

News story: New stats reveal veterans' contribution to society, as Ministerial Board steps up support to Armed Forces

The stats show that, contrary to common misconceptions, veterans are as likely to be in employment as the general population, with 78% of veterans in employment, compared to 79% in the general population.

The stats come on the day of the inaugural meeting of a new Ministerial Board, co-chaired by Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon and First Secretary of State Damien Green, which discussed the Government's support to the Armed Forces, their families and veterans.

The new Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Board will drive forward and coordinate better Government support to the Armed Forces, their families and veterans.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Veterans and their families have given so much to this country to help keep us safe. We need all of Government working together to deliver a better deal for Veterans during and after their move to civilian life. We will examine new ways to repay our armed forces for the bravery, honour and sacrifice they demonstrate when defending this country.

A number of other statistics released today by the Office of National Statistics also outline how prevalent myths around the employment, education and health of veterans are untrue. The statistics found that:

- There were no differences between veterans' and non-veteran's self-reported general health and health conditions. 35% of veterans aged between 16-64 reported their general health as very good, compared to 36% of non-veterans. 18% of over 65 veterans also reported very good general health, compared to 19% of non-veterans.
- Working age veterans were as likely to have a qualification as non-veterans, (92% and 89% respectively) and more likely to have gained qualifications through work (63%) and leisure (17%) than non-veterans (45% and 10% respectively). This is likely a result of the training opportunities offered by the MOD to support service personnel in their military career and during transition out of the services.

- Veterans were as likely to have bought their own home (outright or with a mortgage) (75%) as non-veterans (77%). The MOD's Armed Forces Help to Buy scheme recently revealed that over 11,000 service personnel had been assisted in buying or renovating their own home through the scheme. Forces Help to Buy is just one of the initiatives under the Armed Forces Covenant to support Armed Forces personnel and veterans.

On Tuesday the Defence Secretary called on businesses to do more to promote the positive role veterans play in the workplace. Speaking at an Armed Forces charity dinner he said that veterans play an important part in the nation's economy, contrary to prevalent misconceptions surrounding those who have served.

Research published last week by Lord Ashcroft, the Prime Minister's Special Representative for Veterans' Transition, found that while people on the whole were positive about veterans, some 54% of the general public estimated that service leavers had some kind of physical, emotional or mental health problem as a result of their time in the military

Lord Ashcroft's report highlighted the pervasive nature of myths surrounding public perception of veterans, pointing towards research which debunks a number of these:

- The employment rate for veterans six months after leaving the military is higher than in the UK workforce as a whole
- The vast majority of former service personnel go on to lead normal, healthy, productive lives
- Suicide is less common among the military population than the general public
- Veterans are less likely to go to prison, not more.

The new Ministerial Board which met for the first time today will have a specific focus on the priority area of healthcare, including mental health, but will also look at housing, education, and employment opportunities.

The new Board comes just weeks after the MOD established a new partnership with the Royal Foundation, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry's charity, on improving mental fitness. The partnership delivers on a commitment made in the MOD's recently launched Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.