

census 2021



UK armed forces veterans – a briefing

InformGloucestershire

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1. What is the 2021 Census?

The census is a survey of all people and households in England and Wales that happens every 10 years. It is designed to collect detailed information about where people live, what they do for a living, what sort of homes and families they have, their general health, their educational attainment and how these factors have changed over time. There is simply nothing else that gives so much detail about us and the society we live in. It tells us what our needs are now and what they are likely to be in the future. It also gives a snapshot of how we live, for future generations to look back on.

The information given by the public during the census helps local authorities plan and fund public services. It informs where billions of pounds are spent, for instance on things like roads, schools and hospitals.

The 2021 Census was conducted on the 21st March 2021, it is unique as it was conducted during national lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This briefing provides analysis of the data around UK armed forces veterans, released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on the 10th November 2022. 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 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 those 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.

2. Caveats – Covid¹

The 2021 Census took place during national lockdown which was initiated in response to COVID-19. *'For most of the population, the coronavirus pandemic would not have affected where they considered themselves resident.'*² However, there is indication that some subgroups of the population may have changed where they lived during this time, mainly students and some urban residents:

¹ See

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/methodologies/qualityandmethodologyinformationqmfforcensus2021#quality-summary> for further information

² ONS, 2022

- **Students-** There is evidence to suggest there was a higher proportion of students not living at their term-time address on the 21st March compared with previous years. Also, usually resident international students may have returned to their home country early and not have been residing in the UK at the time of the 2021 Census. To combat the impact of this, the ONS asked students to complete the form for their term-time address which they *'intended to stay at regularly during term time in this academic year, even if they are not currently there'*³. Furthermore, international students were counted if they were still present in the UK or had attended university during the Autumn 2020/Winter 2021 academic terms and were intending to return: up to the 21st March 2022.
- **Urban residents-** There is some evidence to suggest that the population of Greater London may have fallen in the COVID-19 pandemic due to young adults leaving, higher mortality of over 75s and increased internal migration. However, there is also indication that the population has begun growing since then. This may also have been reflected in other urban centers.

3. What do the results tell us about Gloucestershire?

3.1 Number of usual residents who have previously served in the UK armed forces

Table 1 indicates there were 27,418 people who had previously served in the UK armed forces in Gloucestershire in 2021, equating to 5.2% of the 16+ population. This is just over 1 in 20 people aged 16 years and over in Gloucestershire. The proportion of armed forces veterans was higher in Gloucestershire than it was nationally (3.2%), but slightly lower than the South West regional average (5.6%).

All districts in Gloucestershire had a higher proportion of armed forces veterans than the national average. Cheltenham had the lowest proportion of armed forces veterans at 4.5%, while Tewkesbury had the highest proportion at 6.2% of the 16+ population.

³ *Ibid.*

Table 1: Number of people who have served in the armed forces⁴

	Number				
	Previously served in regular or reserve UK armed forces: Total	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 not previously served in any UK armed forces: Total
Cheltenham	4,401	3,380	818	203	94,034
Cotswold	4,384	3,510	681	193	71,930
Forest of Dean	3,915	3,145	604	166	69,132
Gloucester	5,123	4,106	793	224	101,816
Stroud	4,794	3,725	866	203	95,401
Tewkesbury	4,799	3,951	643	205	72,554
Gloucestershire	27,418	21,818	4,405	1,195	504,867
South West	264,750	212,657	40,584	11,509	4,471,093
England	1,737,781	1,325,353	338,520	73,908	44,269,176
England and Wales	1,853,112	1,413,296	360,770	79,046	46,713,261

Figure 1 shows the distribution of armed forces veterans at Middle Super Output Area⁵. The areas with the highest proportion of veterans tend to be near existing or former armed forces bases, with areas around Innsworth, South Cerney, Fairford and Sedbury standing out as having a higher proportion of veterans than elsewhere in the county.

⁴ Census 2021, ONS

⁵ Middle layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) are made up of groups of LSOAs, usually four or five. They comprise between 2,000 and 6,000 households and have a usually resident population between 5,000 and 15,000 persons. MSOAs fit within local authorities. Outputs from Census 2021 are for 2021 MSOAs and are made up of unchanged 2011 MSOAs and new 2021 MSOAs.- ONS

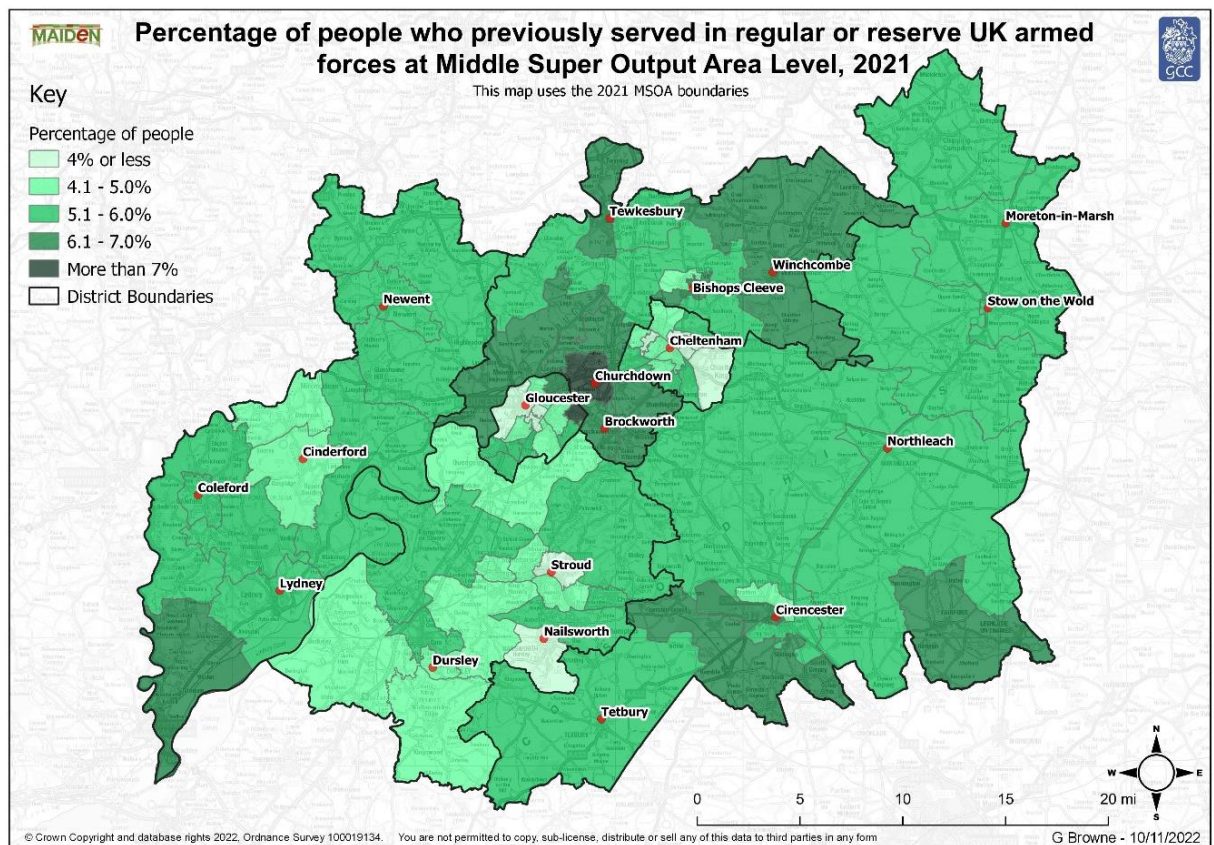


Figure 1: Percentage of people aged 16+ who previously served in regular or reserve UK armed forces at Middle Super Output Area Level, 2021⁶

The Census also collected information about whether those who had served in the armed forces, had served in the regular armed forces, the reserved armed forces or both. In Gloucestershire 4.1% of the 16+ population had served in the regular armed forces, 0.8% had served in the reserved armed forces and 0.2% had served in both. The proportion of people who had served in the regular armed forces was higher than the national average, while the proportion of people who had served in the reserved armed forces or both the regular and reserved armed forces was in line with the national average. The districts follow a similar picture to the county average, with the proportion of people who had served in the regular armed forces exceeding the national average, while the other proportions are in line with the national average.

⁶ 2021 Census, ONS

Percentage of 16+ residents who have previously served in the armed forces, 2021

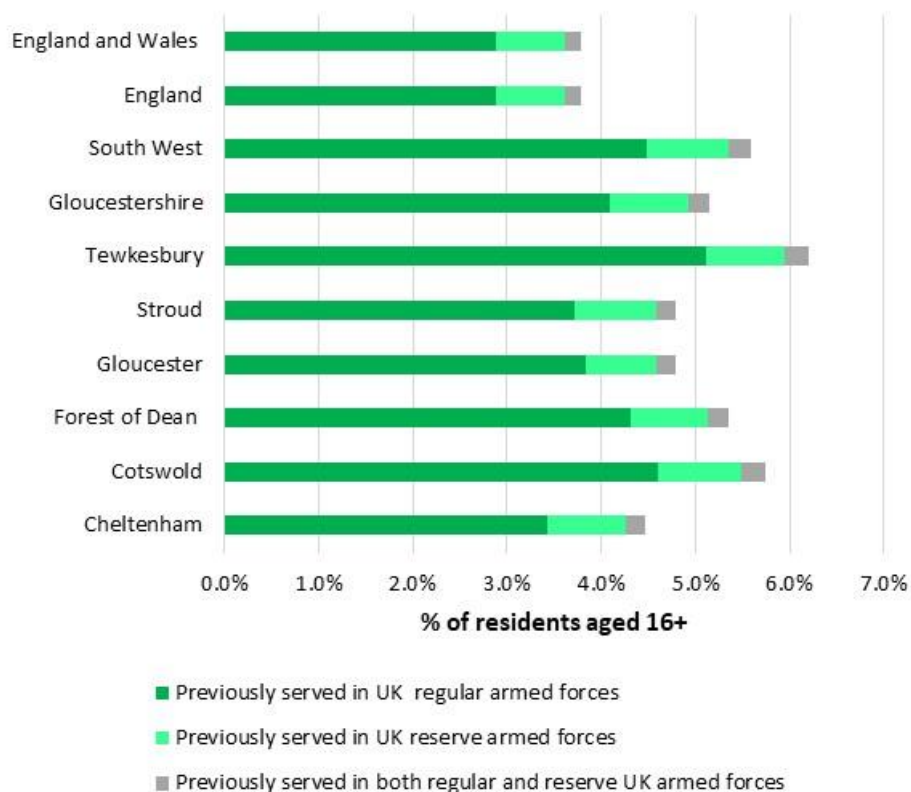


Figure 2: Percentage of 16+ residents who have previously served in the armed forces, 2021⁷

3.2 Households and communal establishments

Of the UK armed forces veteran population in Gloucestershire, 98.3% (26,963) lived in households and 1.7% (455) lived in communal establishments. This is similar to the breakdown for the population as a whole; 98.4% of usual residents in Gloucestershire lived in households and 1.6% lived in communal establishments. A similar picture is also reflected at a national, regional and district level.

3.3 Households with veterans

The census also calculated the number of households that included one or more veterans. In total, 25,598 households in Gloucestershire had at least one person who had previously served in the UK armed forces (9.2% of all households in Gloucestershire). The proportion of households with armed forces veterans was higher in Gloucestershire than it was in nationally (7.0%), but slightly lower than

⁷ Ibid.

the regional average (10.1%), reflecting the picture seen in the proportion of the population who were veterans.

All districts in Gloucestershire had a higher proportion of households containing armed forces veterans than the national average. Cheltenham had the lowest proportion of households containing armed forces veterans at 7.7%, while Tewkesbury had the highest proportion at 10.8% of households.

Of households in Gloucestershire around 24,270, 8.7% included only one veteran, 1,294 (0.5%) included two veterans, and the remaining 34 (0.01%) included three or more veterans. Gloucestershire has a higher proportion of households with only one veteran and two veterans than nationally. All districts have a higher proportion of households with only veteran than the national average, and all districts apart from Cheltenham have a higher proportion of households with two veterans than nationally.

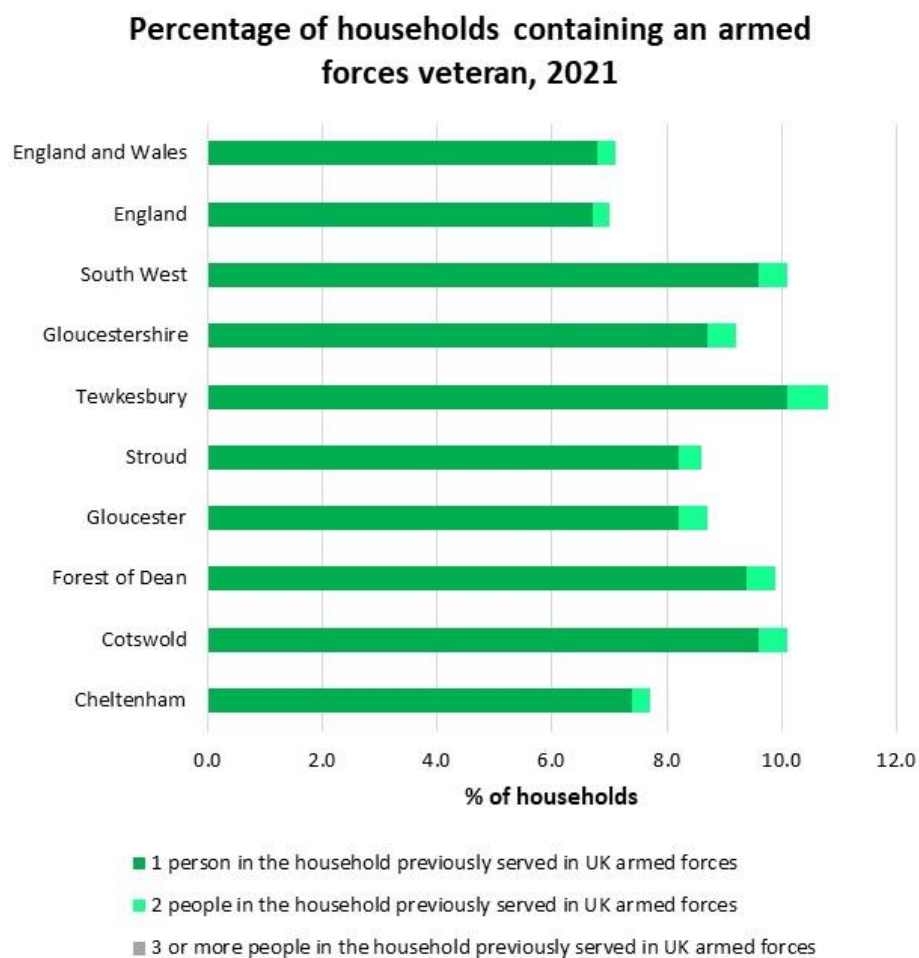


Figure 3: Percentage of households containing an armed forces veteran, 2021⁸

⁸ *Ibid.*

3.4 UK armed forces veterans who are the Household Reference Person

The concept of a Household Reference Person (HRP) was introduced in the 2001 Census (in common with other government surveys in 2001/2) to replace the traditional concept of the 'head of the household'. It refers to the householder, who is the household member who owns the accommodation; is legally responsible for the rent; or occupies the accommodation as reward of their employment, or through some relationship to its owner who is not a member of the household. If there are joint householders, the one with the highest income is the HRP. If their income is the same, then the eldest one is the HRP.

In 2021 around 20,451 Household Reference Persons had previously been in the UK armed forces, equating to 7.3% of total Household Reference Persons, which was higher than the national average of 5.5%. At district level Tewkesbury had the highest proportion of Household Reference Persons who had previously been in the armed forces at 8.7%, while Cheltenham had the lowest at 6.2%.

The breakdown of veterans by type showed the proportion of Household Reference Persons who had served in the regular armed forces was higher in Gloucestershire and most of its districts than the national average, while the proportion of Household Reference Persons who had served in the reserved armed forces or both the regular and reserved armed forces was in line with the national average.

4. Key messages

- There were 27,418 people who had previously served in the UK armed forces in Gloucestershire in 2021, equating to 5.2% of the 16+ population. The proportion of armed forces veterans was higher in Gloucestershire than it was in nationally.
- At district level Tewkesbury had the highest proportion of armed forces veterans, with the group accounting for 6.2% of the 16+ population.
- At MSOA level the areas with the highest proportion of veterans tend to be near existing or former armed forces bases, with areas around Innsworth, South Cerney, Fairford and Sedbury standing out as having a higher proportion of veterans than elsewhere in the county.
- The majority of veterans in Gloucestershire and its districts had served in the regular UK armed forces.
- The proportion of UK armed forces veterans living in households and communal establishments is similar to the breakdown for the population as a whole.

- 9.2% of households in Gloucestershire contain someone who has previously served in the UK armed forces, higher than the national average.

5. What's next?

In 2023 the Office for National Statistics will release multivariate data which will allow us to combine variables and explore relationships between the data.

6. Where can you find out more?

For further information please visit:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/inform/population/census-of-population/census-2021/>

Or contact us by emailing informgloucestershire@gloucestershire.gov.uk