

# Understanding the Armed Forces Community using Census Data

The Royal British Legion's Needs Analysis  
June 2025



# Who we are



Remembrance



Support

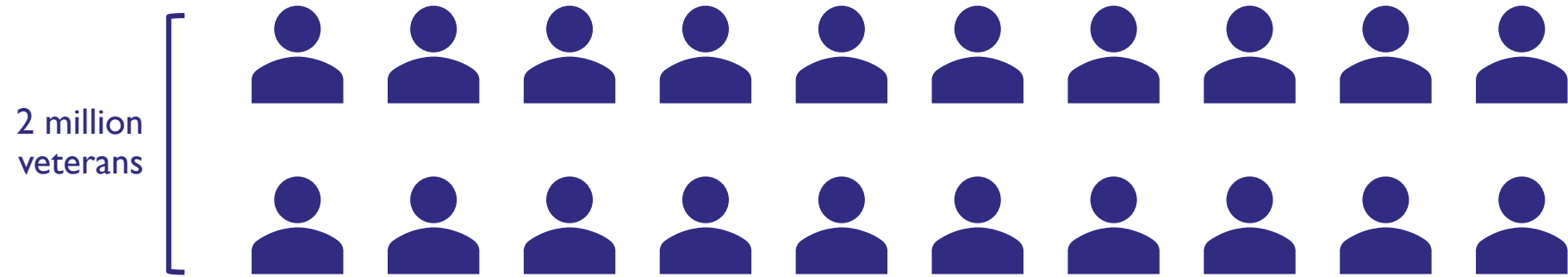


Campaigns

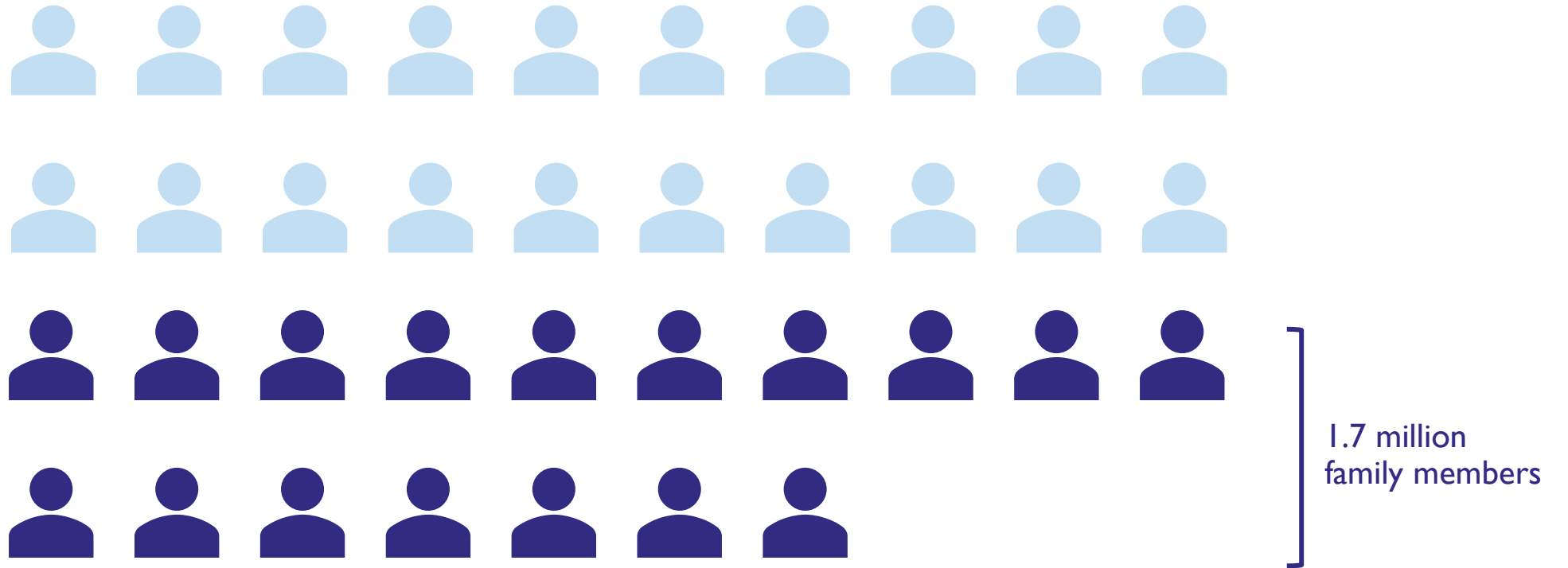
What we do



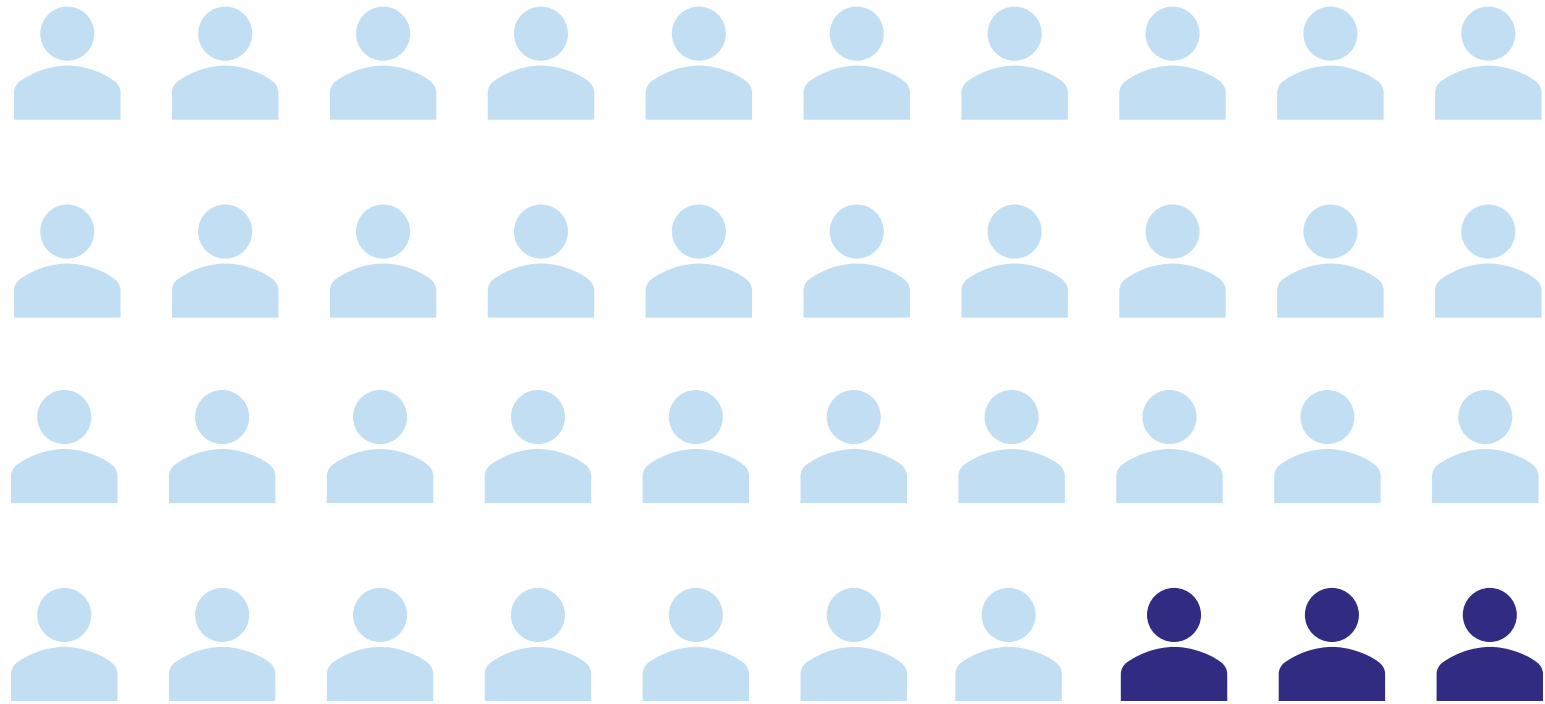
# What we know



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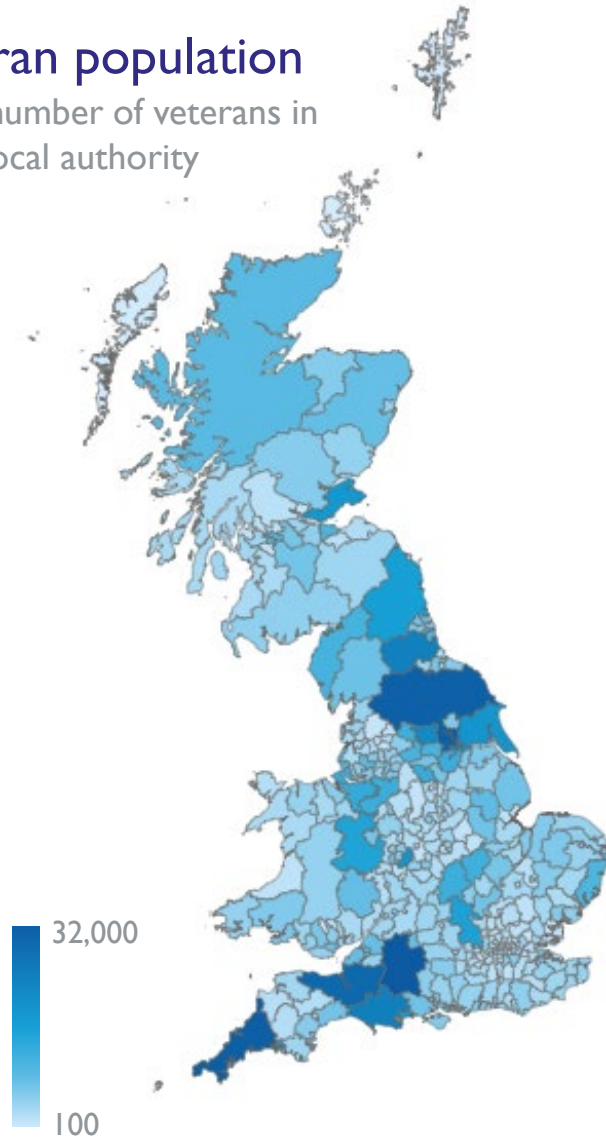


180k serving  
270k family members

# What we know

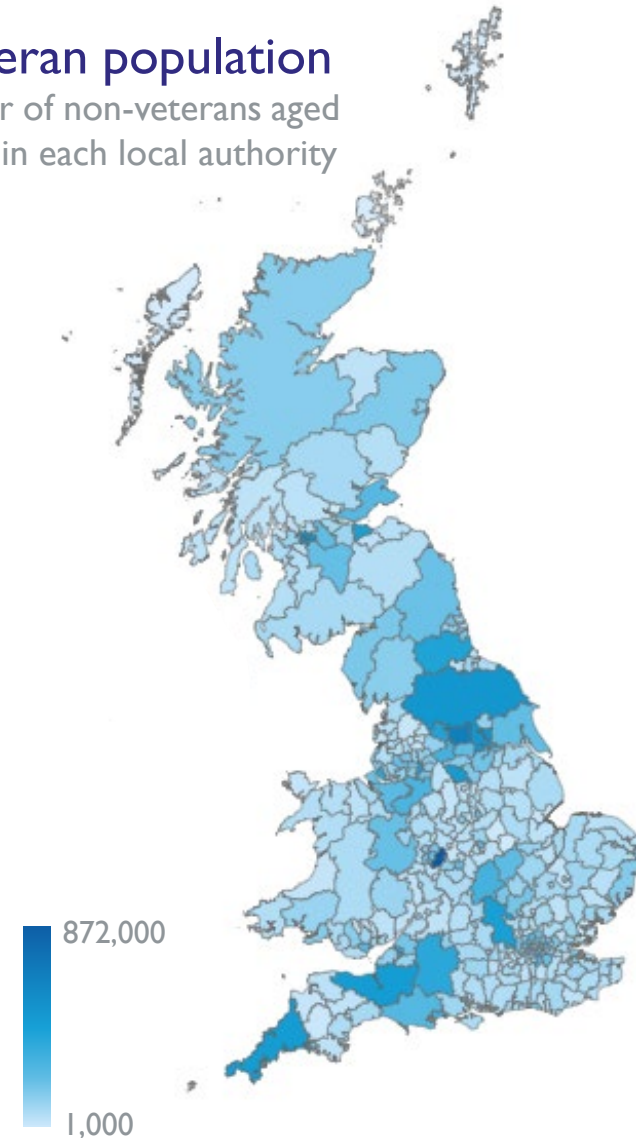
## Veteran population

Total number of veterans in each local authority



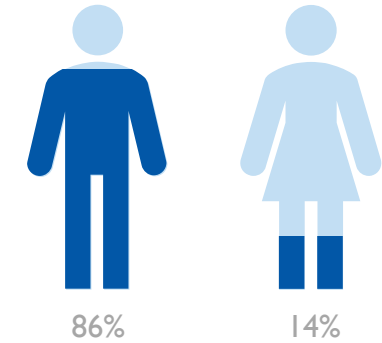
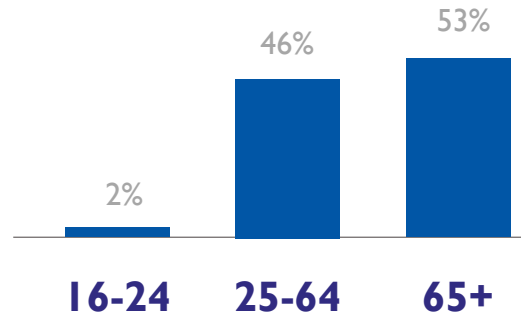
## Non-veteran population

Total number of non-veterans aged 16 and over in each local authority

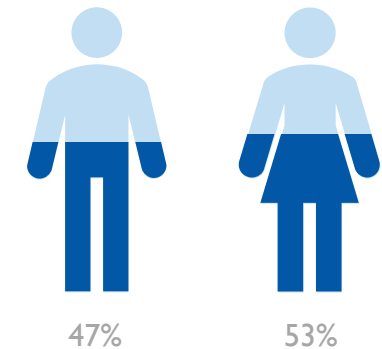
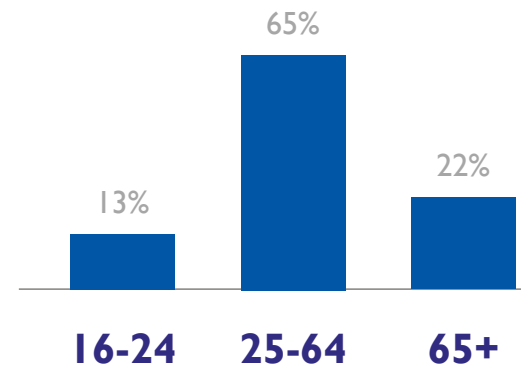


# What we know

## Veterans



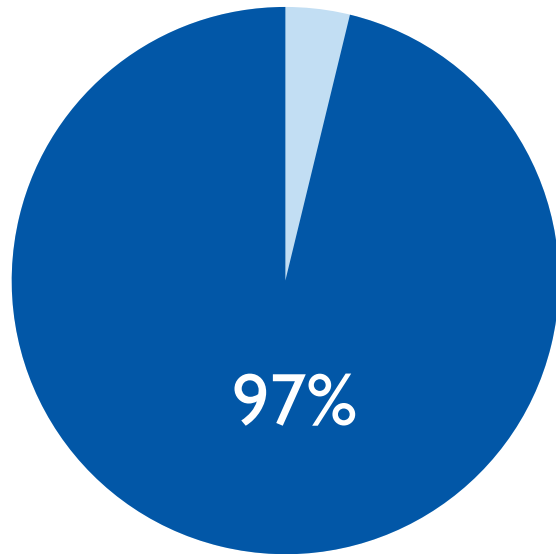
## Non-veterans



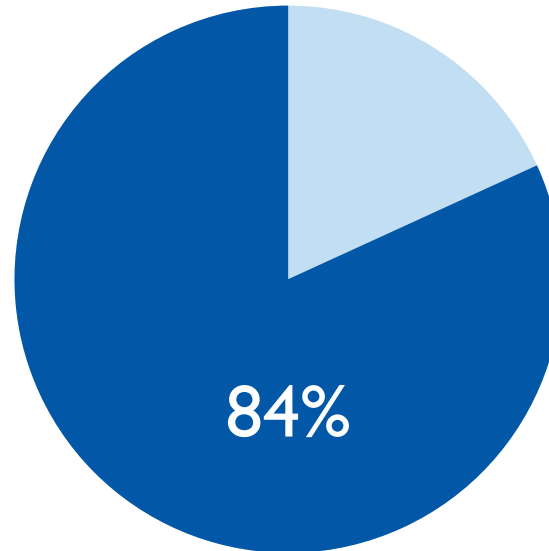


# What we know

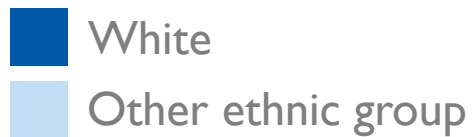
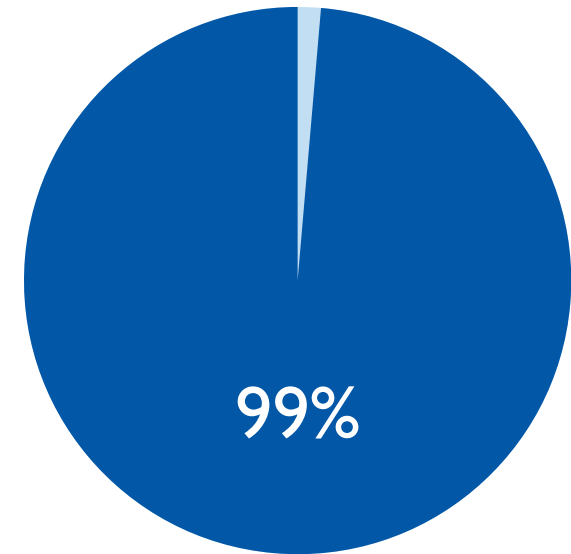
Veterans



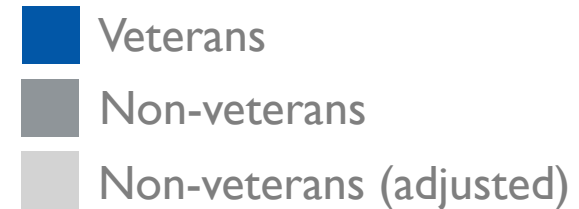
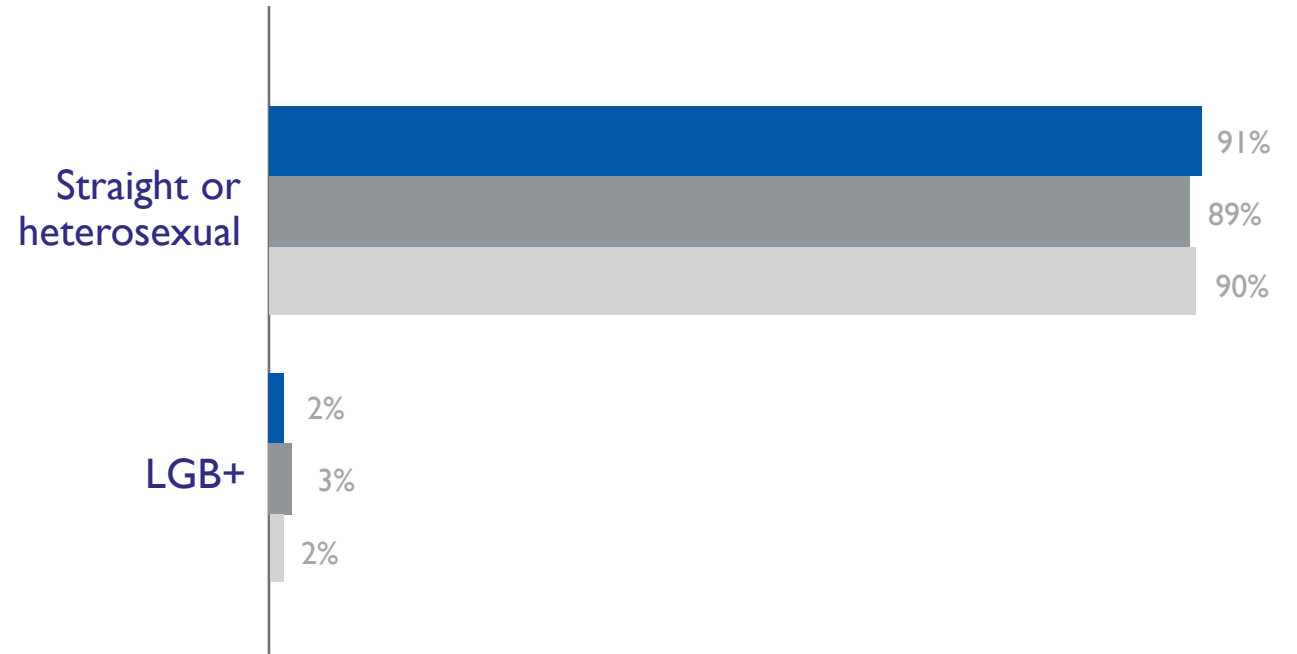
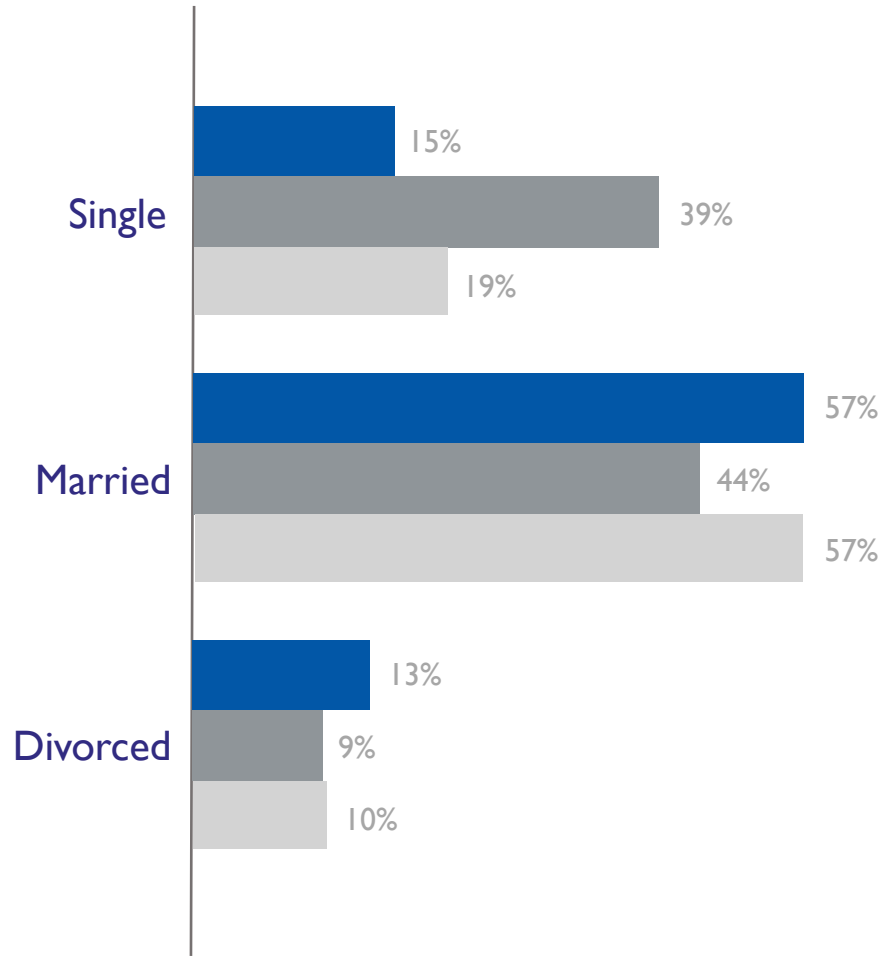
Non-veterans



Non-veterans  
who are male, aged 65+, and  
live in South-West England



# What we know



# Exploring AFC Needs

# Current Evidence & Gaps

Census data has provided **new insights**, highlighted both **differences and similarities** in the needs of the Armed Forces community compared to the general population, and helped to **identify gaps in data** and evidence.



**What I'll cover in 5 minutes**

**New Findings:**  
Justice System

**General  
Population  
Comparisons:**  
Health &  
Disability

**Data Gaps:**  
Finances

# New Findings: Justice System

**Over 3200 people in prison in England & Wales are veterans - almost 5% of the recorded Census prison population\*.**

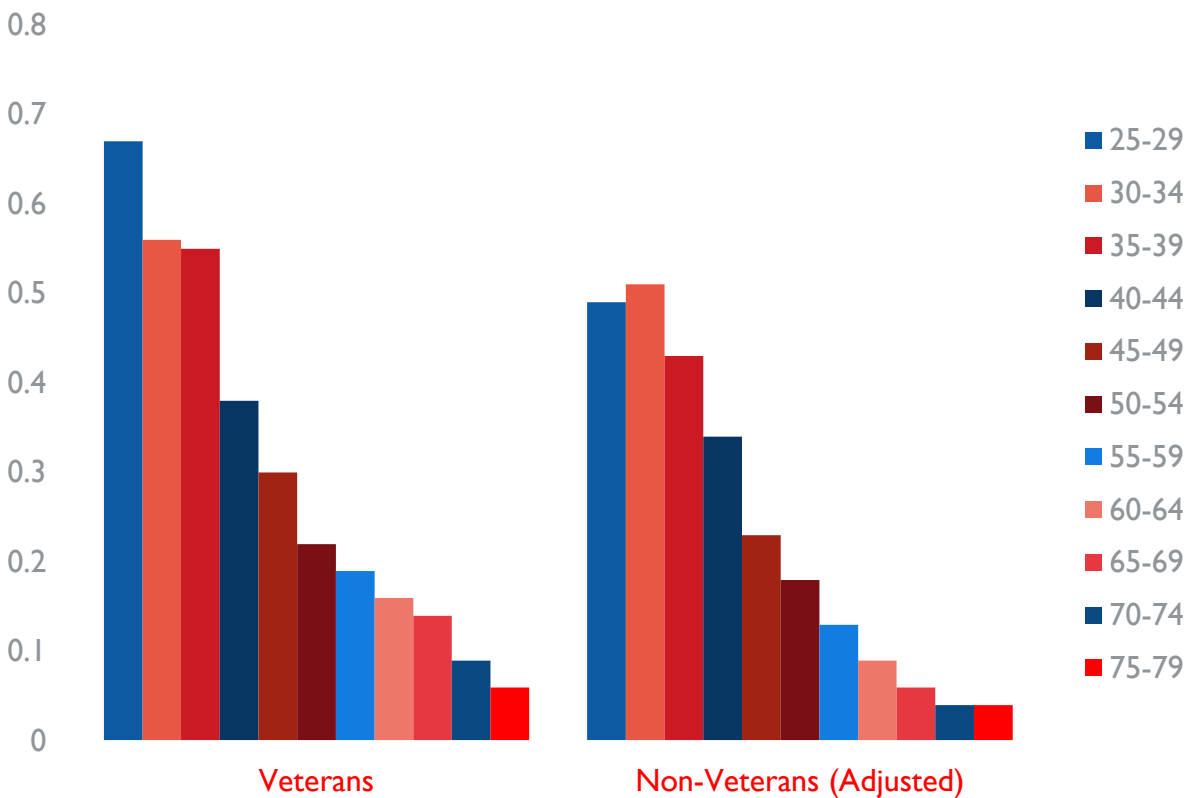
Nearly three-quarters of prisons have at least one veteran.

*\*Census England & Wales captures those people in prison, detention centres or approved bail and probation premises who had been sentenced to 12 months or longer at these establishments, were awaiting sentencing, or had no other address or person to complete the Census at another address\**



**A larger percentage of veterans than non-veterans aged 25-74 are in prison (the biggest differences, ages 25-39).**

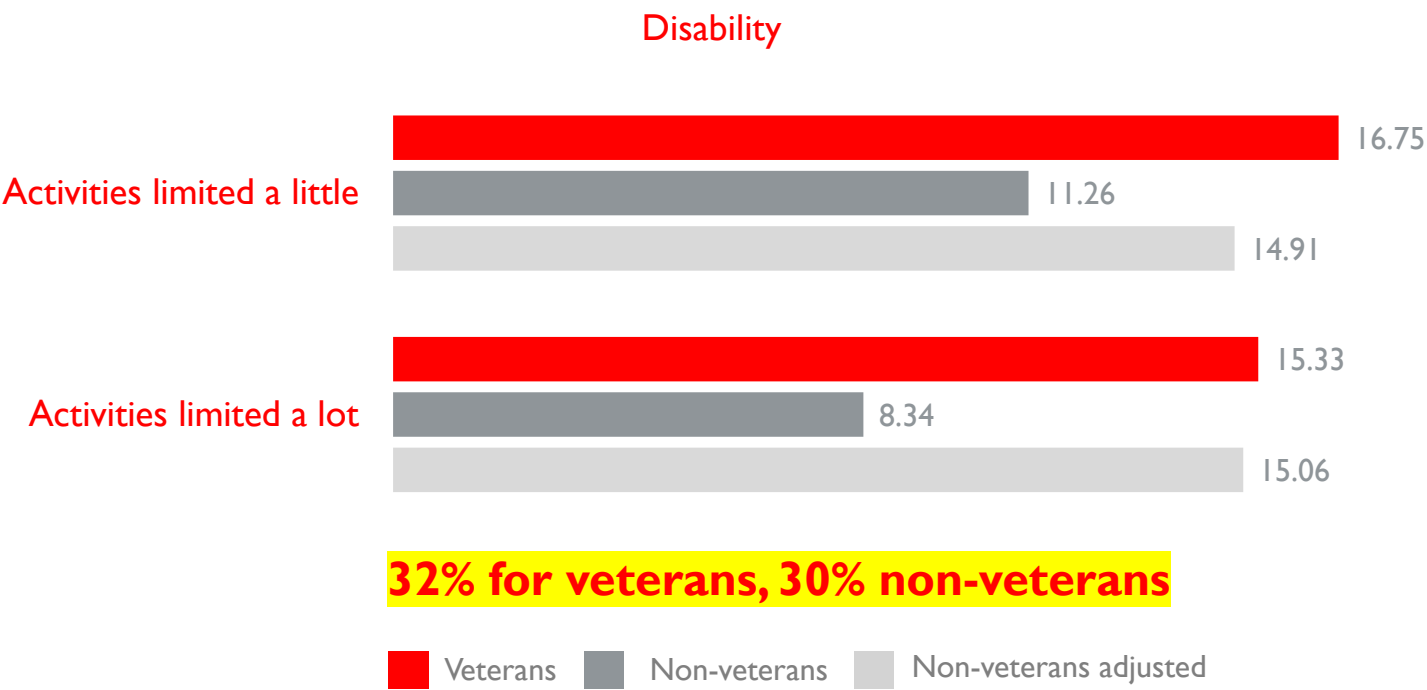
Residents aged 16 years and over in prisons, detention centres and approved premises for bail and probation, by age groups



# General Population Comparisons

For the first time, Census data lets us compare veterans' **health and disability** with the non-veteran population using adjusted figures.

211,850 (11.4%) veterans in England & Wales reported bad or very bad health. **General Health is in line with the wider population when adjusted for age, gender, and location.**



*This kind of insight helps us, and others, shape services that really meet the health and disability needs of our Armed Forces community.*



# Data Gaps & Future Priorities

The 2021 Census has been **vital in mapping what we know about the Armed Forces community** - especially when combined with other robust data, such as Ministry of Defence statistics.

Cross-referencing these revealed key gaps, like limited data on finances. This process didn't just show what we knew - it also highlighted what we didn't.

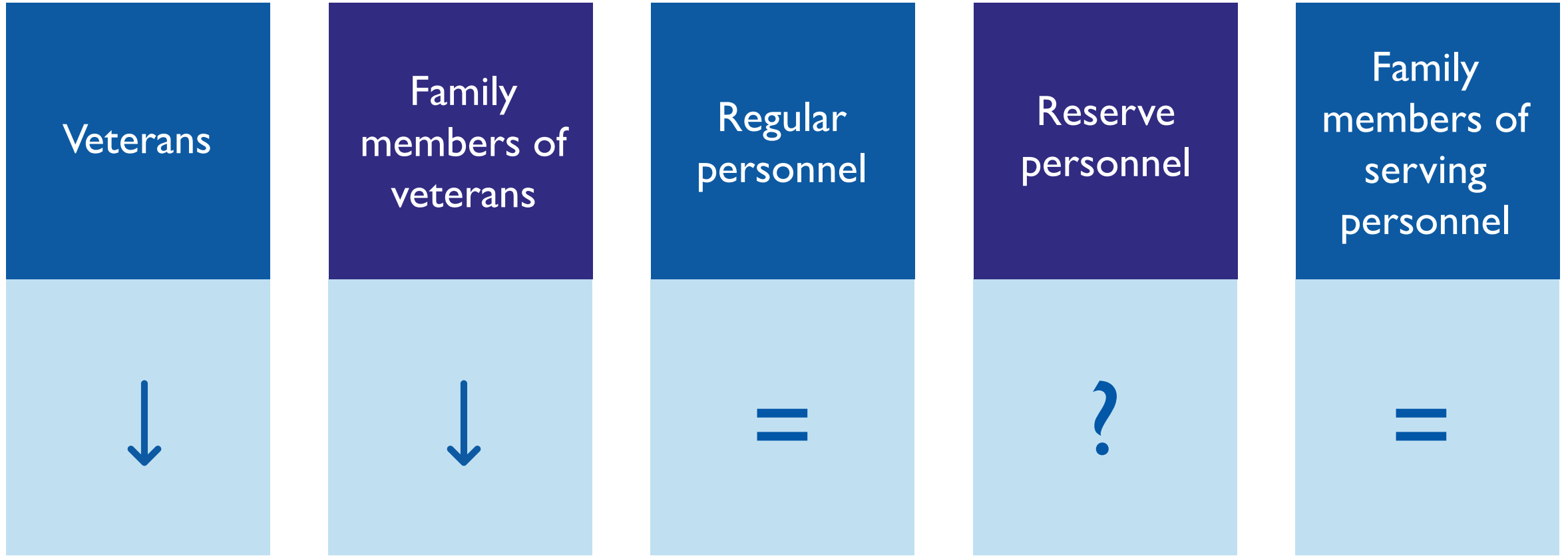
This method helped us build a **targeted list of high-priority questions** we still need answers to, **shaping both our research priorities and overall strategy**. Finances - alongside other critical areas - have emerged as a key focus



Applying the Evidence to inform  
research, policy and campaigning

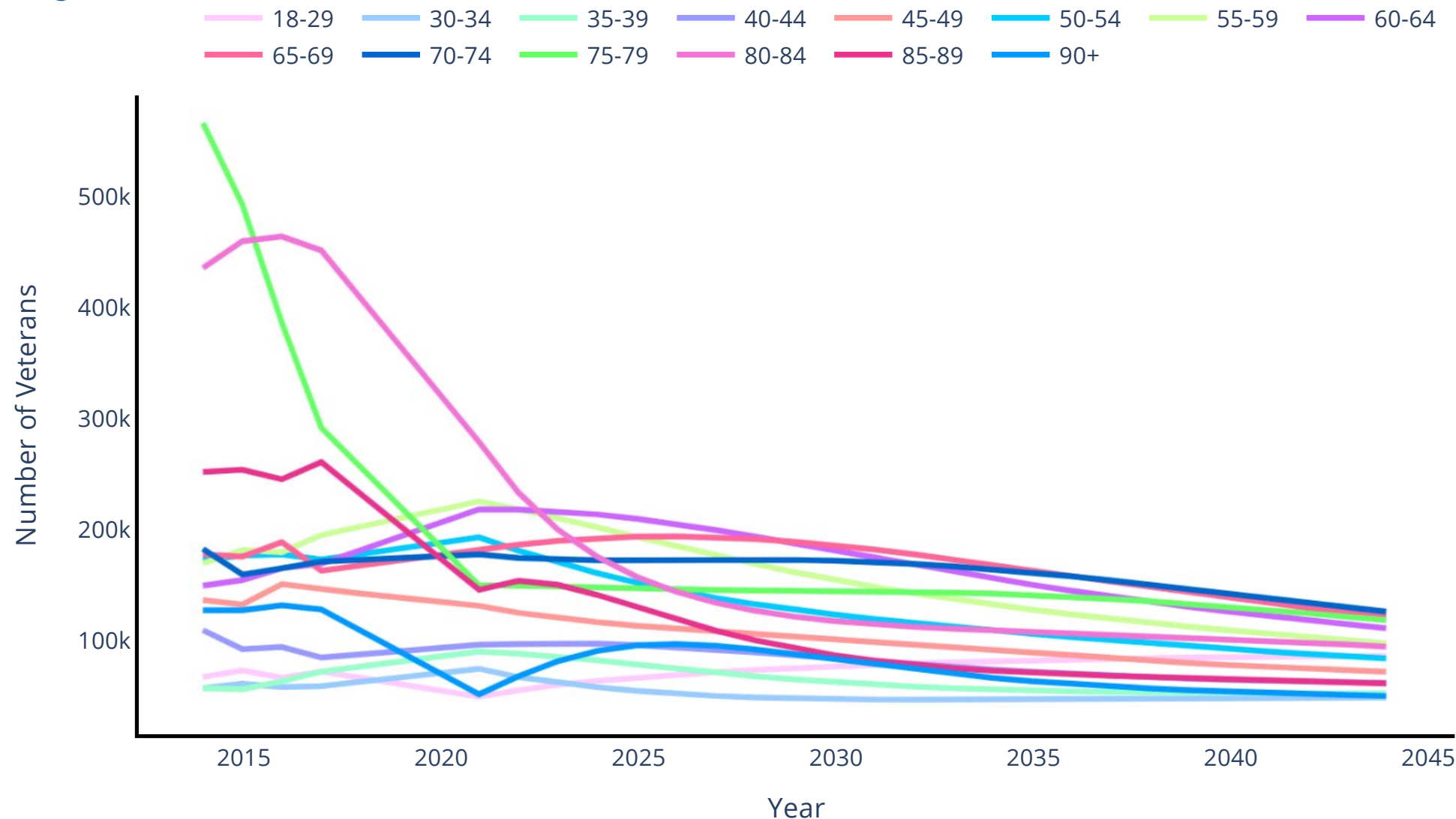


# The future of the AFC



# The future of the AFC

Forecasted ages of veterans



# Voices & Views: YouGov

We commissioned **YouGov** to undertake a survey of **3000+** members of the **Armed Forces Community** across the UK, to understand their experiences and views of issues they face, RBL, and our future direction. Respondents were:

242

**Currently serving**  
(regular or reservist)

*(weighted by age, region,  
regular/reservist, ethnicity)*

1386

**Veterans**  
(regular, reservist or  
National Service)

*(weighted by age, region,  
regular/reservist, ethnicity)*

584

**Immediate  
family members  
of those  
currently  
serving**

*(weighted by age)*

1538

**Immediate  
family members  
of veterans**

*(unweighted)*

571

**Immediate  
family members  
bereaved of  
someone who  
served in the UK  
Armed Forces**

*(unweighted)*

There is cross over between each group, with some respondents belonging to more than one option.

# Policy Development

Our policy team uses robust research and data to understand the key issues facing the Armed Forces community and **shape national policy and services**.

We also collaborate with **government and policymakers** to ensure the voices of the Armed Forces community lead to lasting change.

**The 2021 Census has been vital in giving us a clear picture of veterans, their families and their needs.** This, combined with other evidence, underpins a strong policy programme and manifesto for the next Government.

Our **manifesto sets out a wide range of practical, evidence-based ideas to significantly improve the lives of the Armed Forces community.** These include improving healthcare access, reducing homelessness, and supporting veterans in the criminal justice system – helping ensure those in the AFC receive the tailored support and fair treatment they are entitled to.



## Supporting those who Serve Us

Royal British Legion Manifesto 2024

[rbl.org.uk](http://rbl.org.uk)



ROYAL BRITISH LEGION



For questions or more information,  
please contact:  
[policyandresearch@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:policyandresearch@britishlegion.org.uk)

*If someone you know is a member of the Armed Forces Community and needs support, contact the RBL contact centre, open 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week, on **0808 802 8080** for practical help and guidance, or find out more about the services and support we provide at: [www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk)*

