



Ministry of Defence

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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RT HON DR ANDREW MURRISON MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE AND MINISTER
FOR DEFENCE PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

15571, 17039, 17042

1 May 2024

Dear John,

I undertook to write to you on 29 March 2024 with an answer to your Parliamentary Question about how many applications to join the Armed Forces were received from Commonwealth citizens in 2023. I also undertook to write to you on 11 March 2024 with answers to your Parliamentary Questions about how many applications to join the UK Armed Forces have been made by individuals from Commonwealth nations in each year since 2010 and how many applications to join the UK Armed Forces by individuals from Commonwealth nations were (a) rejected and (b) voluntarily withdrawn in each year since 2010. Responses to the three questions are below and I would like to apologise for the delay in providing this information.

Table 1 below shows the number of applications to join the Regular Armed Forces (Officers and Other Ranks) received from Commonwealth citizens in the period 1 January to 30 September 2023.

	1 January - 30 September 2023
RN/RM	3,210
Army	16,990
RAF	2,890

Source: Single Service Estimates

Notes/Caveats:

1. The data period provided is to align with published national statistics.
2. The figure is for numbers of applications rather than applicants so will include where individuals have submitted multiple applications.

Rt Hon John Healey MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Enclosure(s)

3. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10, though numbers ending in a "5" have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent the systematic bias caused by always rounding numbers upwards.

Table 2 at Annex A provides information about applications received in each year since 2010 from Commonwealth citizens, and of those, how many were rejected and how many were voluntarily withdrawn.

I am placing a copy of this letter and Annex A in the Library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Murrison." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'M'.

RT HON DR ANDREW MURRISON MP

Annex A

Table 2: Rejections and Withdrawals of Applications by Commonwealth¹ Citizens for the UK Regular² Armed Forces since 2010 by Calendar Year.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	1 Jan – 30 Sep 2023
RN/RM Applications	270	170	220	140	90	130	1,220	720	2,010	4,590	2,640	1,700	5,610	3,210
<i>Rejections</i>	120	90	110	80	60	80	700	500	720	2,120	2,290	1,540	5,300	2,520
<i>Withdrawn</i>	100	60	80	40	30	40	360	190	1,060	2,160	210	60	280	360
Army Applications	4,020	4,280	4,860	1,630	1,270	1,910	23,200	21,810	3,530	14,420	7,420	8,170	8,830	16,990
<i>Rejections</i>	860	840	790	1,240	700	1,140	7,130	7,500	1,660	4,230	4,540	5,140	4,530	7,880
<i>Withdrawn</i>	3,320	2,880	4,160	340	240	350	10,730	11,110	590	4,210	1,950	1,280	1,080	1,360
RAF Applications	20	110	250	300	290	260	270	190	600	1,380	1,530	2,210	1,920	2,890
<i>Rejections</i>	10	90	200	270	260	220	230	150	460	1,070	1,200	2,000	1,790	2,670
<i>Withdrawn</i>	10	20	40	30	30	20	30	20	110	260	300	200	100	70

Source: Analysis Tri-Service and single Service Recruitment Teams

Notes/Caveats:

1. The Commonwealth grouping includes all personnel with a nationality, as recorded on JPA at the time of publication, that is reported in the British Nationality Act 1981, SCHEDULE 3 (Countries Whose Citizens are Commonwealth Citizens), further information of which is available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/61/schedule/3>. On the 12th November 2015, under the British Nationality (The Gambia) Order 2015, the Gambia was omitted from the Commonwealth. Figures relating to personnel with a nationality, as recorded on JPA, of Gambian are still included in the Irish and Commonwealth grouping. For further information see <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/1771/contents/made>. This is the same Commonwealth grouping that is used in the Biannual Diversity publication.

2. UK Regulars comprise Full time Service personnel, including Nursing Services, but excluding Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel, Gurkhas, mobilised Reservists, Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS), Locally Engaged Personnel (LEP), Non Regular Permanent Staff (NRPS), High Readiness Reserve (HRR) and Expeditionary Forces Institute (EFI) personnel. Unless otherwise stated, includes trained and untrained personnel.

RN/RM

3. Where possible, Navy applications have been counted as withdrawn and rejected against their original Application Date.
4. The Royal Navy (RN) updated the system it used to record information about applications to join in 2014. Before this date, data was recorded differently and so the analysis of Navy application data from 2010 – 2014 should be treated with lower confidence than data from 2015 onwards. Please be aware that the same caution should be taken when considering the answers that have been provided to PQ numbers: PQW07757, PQW07758, PQW07759, PQW07760, PQW07778 and PQW08311.
5. The link to the RN online application portal, under normal circumstances, is sent to a candidate who has completed an Expression of Interest (EOI) and confirmed basic Service eligibility with regards to age, nationality and residency requirements. As the number of roles in which the RN can employ Commonwealth citizens is limited, application links sent out to Commonwealth candidates in response to EOIs are similarly limited to enable effective management of the Commonwealth applicants already in the system. However, in November 2022 the link that was sent to an individual candidate was shared online to a wide audience in certain Commonwealth countries, which then allowed a large number of individuals who had not gone through the EOI process to submit an online application. This resulted in a large surge of applications from Commonwealth citizens in the months of November/December 2022. This has now levelled out to higher, but more consistent applications in 2023.
6. Navy data from 2010 to 2014, and 2022 to 2023 has been provided by Recruitment and Attraction, data from 2015 to 2021 has been provided by Analysis (Navy).
7. Between the introduction of the Digital Recruiting System (DRS) in November 2017 and 1 August 2019 some applications were not recorded on DRS; these applications are not included in the statistics as they cannot be verified and there is a risk of double counting. Between 1 July 2018 and 1 August 2019 there were an estimated 200 applications to the RN/Royal Marines submitted outside of DRS.
8. DRS closed in December 2021, the change over to the new application system – the Recruitment IT System (RITS) - may have resulted in some of the applications being double counted.
9. The Candidate Portal was temporarily offline for a short 10-day period between late September 2023 to early October 2023. As a result, new applications were unable to be submitted during this time. Caution should therefore be taken when comparing September 2023 applications figures directly to previous months.
10. Figures for 2015 to 2018 will not align to the Service Personnel Statistics publication. The publication uses a different definition for this time period. For consistency and comparability, the figures above have been produced with one consistent definition.

Army

11. The Army figures supplied are a single Service estimate.
12. Army Recruiting Group data is sourced from the DRS, which is a live system and therefore data may not be consistent with previous answers supplied.

RAF

13. Within the Royal Air Force (RAF), prior to 1 November 2017, ineligible individuals were not able to submit a full application and so application numbers and rejections are expected to be lower.
14. Between the introduction of DRS in November 2017 and 1 August 2019, owing to migration issues, a large volume of RAF applicants were processed manually and not recorded on DRS. These are not included in this data.
15. In transitioning to the RITS, the RAF ceased activity until the new recruiting system was operational. The RITS system was in use from end of March 2022.

16. Whilst application counts for each service are based on online applications submitted by an individual and accepted by the service's applications system, we would recommend that numbers should not be aggregated to show Armed Forces totals.
17. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10, though numbers ending in a "5" have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent the systematic bias caused by always rounding numbers upwards.