

UK armed forces veterans in Surrey: Census 2021

The 2021 Census identified people who had previously served in the UK armed forces. This includes those who have served for at least one day in armed forces, either regular or reserves, or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations.

The question asked of all Census respondents aged 16 or above was:

Have you previously served in the UK Armed Forces?

With answers of: Yes, previously served in Regular Armed Forces
 Yes, previously served in Reserve Armed Forces
 No

Responses were then coded to the following 5 data types for use in subsequent releases & analyses:

Code	Name
1	Previously served in the UK regular armed forces
2	Previously served in UK reserve armed forces
3	Previously served in both regular and reserve UK armed forces
4	Has not previously served in any UK armed forces
-8	Does not apply (i.e. aged 15 or under)

Codes 1, 2, and 3 – added together – define all veterans.

Total Resident Veterans

Surrey had a total of 32,596 veterans (those who had served in regular forces, reserve forces, or both), comprising 3.4% of the total eligible population. This is just lower than the England position of 3.8% of country population.

Amongst Districts and Boroughs the number ranged from 1,671 in Epsom and Ewell (2.6%) to 4,347 in Waverley (4.2%). Surrey Heath had a lower number of veterans, but the highest proportion of total eligible population (4.4%; 3,246).

In all areas, the vast majority of veterans had formerly served in regular forces, with a lower proportion having served in reserve forces, and even fewer having served in both. In broad population terms, across Surrey: 23,769 in regular forces (2.4%); 7,404 in reserve forces (0.8%); 1,423 in both (0.1%). That's a ratio of roughly 17 : 5 : 1 for the county (comparable to England – 18 : 5 : 1). The ratio is highest in Guildford, Mole Valley and Runnymede (19 : 6 : 1) and lowest in Epsom and Ewell, and Tandridge (13 : 5 : 1).

When mapped out at the level of Electoral wards, the ward with highest number of veterans is Mytchett and Deepcut, in Surrey Heath (with 347 veterans, 5.9% of ward 16+ population) and that with the lowest is Leith Hill in Mole Valley (with 40 veterans, 2.9% of ward population).

As a proportion of the local population, values vary from a high of 6.8% in the Waverley ward of Alfold, Cranleigh Rural and Ellens Green (117 veterans) to a minimum of 1.4% in Englefield Green East, Runnymede (69 veterans).

Veterans are therefore present in tangible numbers in every ward of the county.

Figure 1: Heat map of Surrey, electoral wards shaded according to the proportion of population who are veterans.

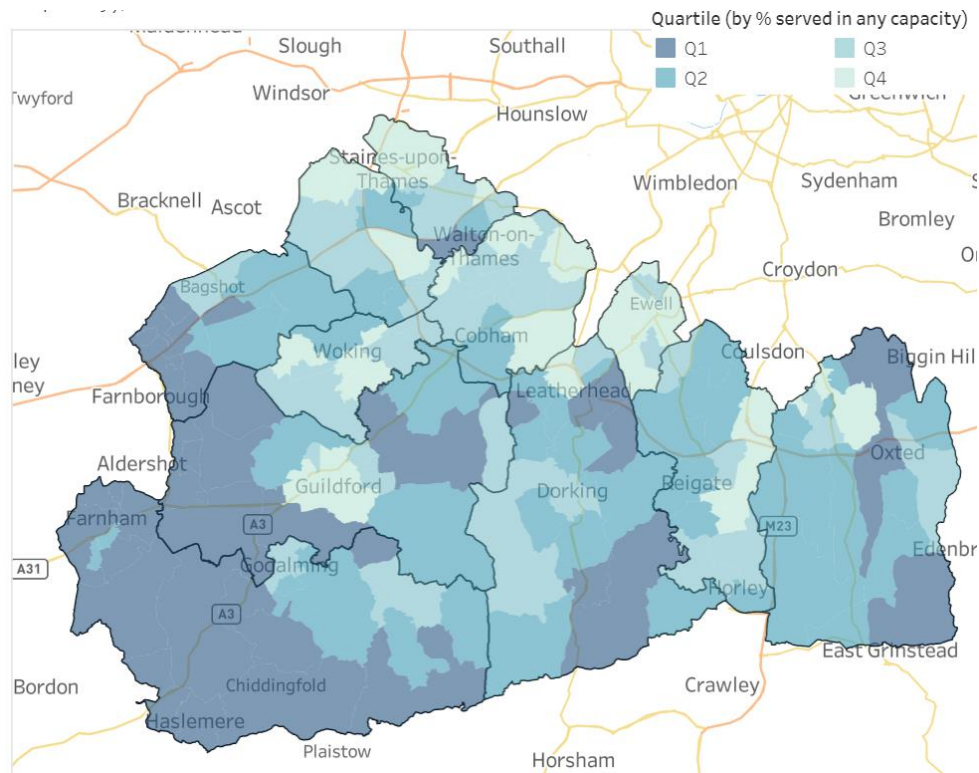
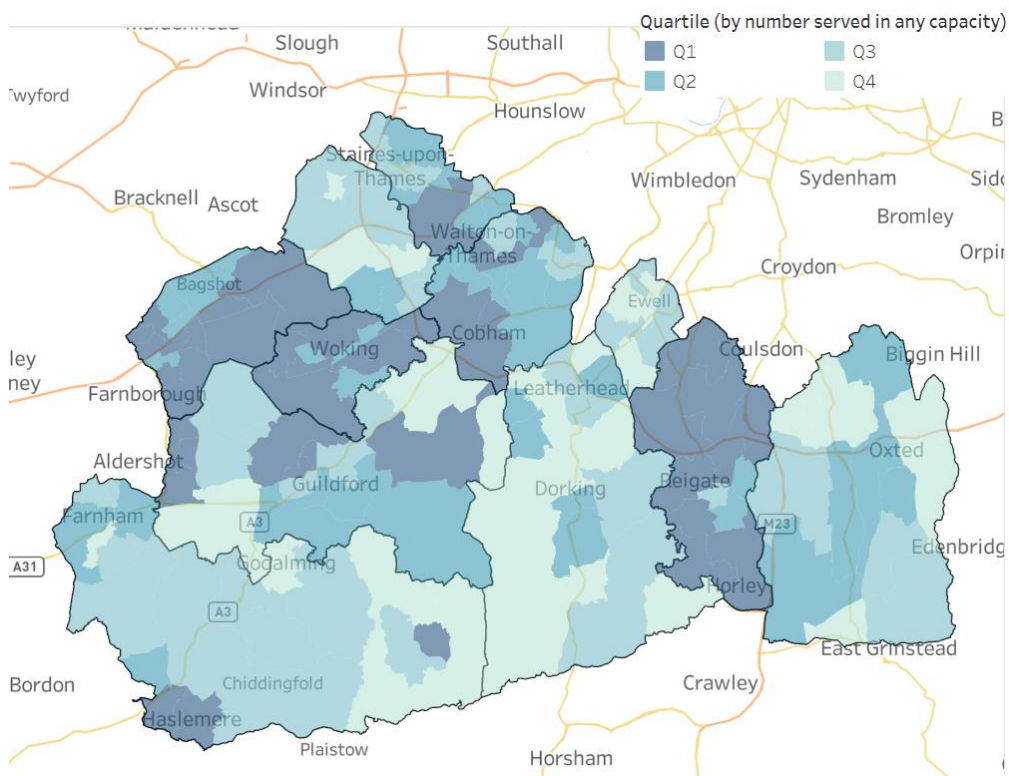


Figure 2: Heat map of Surrey, electoral wards shaded according to the total number of residents who are veterans



N.B. these maps can be accessed at [Veterans in Surrey - Census 2021 Maps | Tableau Public](#)

Veterans by age

The age structure of veterans reflects changing patterns in the size of the armed forces over time, including the cessation of national service in 1960, as well as reflecting the fact that younger people are more likely to still be members rather than former members of the armed forces. Nonetheless, across Surrey we see very young veterans (139 aged between 16 and 19 years), right through all age groups to those aged 85 years or older (9,091).

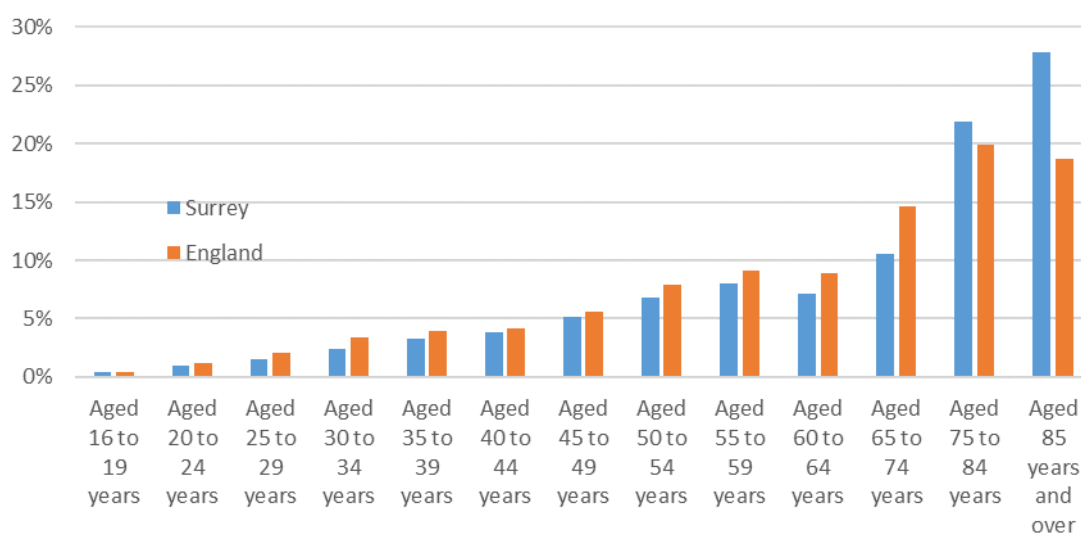
The nature of former service experienced by these men and women will vary immensely, as will their current and future support needs.

Table 1: Surrey veterans by age group; number and percentage of cohort.

SURREY	Previously served in the UK regular armed forces	Previously served in UK reserve armed forces	Previously served in both regular and reserve UK armed forces	Previously served in ANY CAPACITY#	Previously served in ANY CAPACITY %	
Aged 16 to 19 years	65	73	1	139	0.4%	
Aged 20 to 24 years	127	199	1	327	1.0%	2.9%
Aged 25 to 29 years	219	256	6	481	1.5%	
Aged 30 to 34 years	455	310	30	795	2.4%	
Aged 35 to 39 years	685	366	26	1,077	3.3%	14.7%
Aged 40 to 44 years	720	483	39	1,242	3.8%	
Aged 45 to 49 years	921	683	74	1,678	5.1%	
Aged 50 to 54 years	1,361	778	97	2,236	6.9%	
Aged 55 to 59 years	1,640	862	129	2,631	8.1%	22.1%
Aged 60 to 64 years	1,603	613	122	2,338	7.2%	
Aged 65 to 74 years	2,485	795	148	3,428	10.5%	
Aged 75 to 84 years	5,890	955	289	7,134	21.9%	60.3%
Aged 85 years and over	7,603	1,028	460	9,091	27.9%	

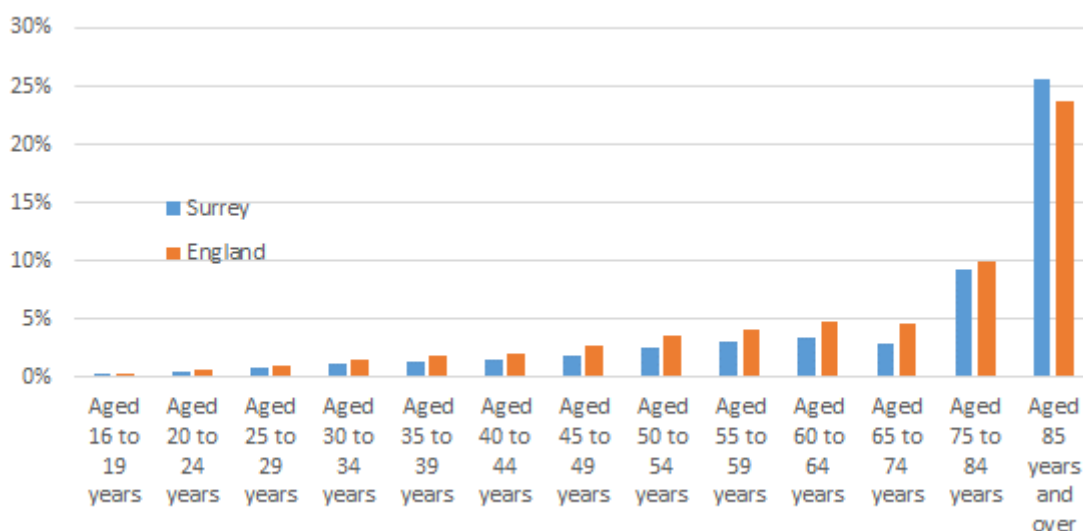
Veterans in Surrey tend to have an older average age than for England as a whole. For example, 60.3% of Surrey resident veterans are aged 65 years or above; for England, this is just 53.2%. For those of most advanced years, across Surrey almost a third of veterans are aged 85 or above (27.9%); for England this is less than one-fifth (18.7%).

Figure 3: Veterans by age band, Surrey versus England comparison



When we consider veterans of different age groups as a proportion of all residents of that same age, the proportion of veterans in Surrey is lower than the England position for all age groups other than those aged 85 or above. This means that veterans are “rarer” in Surrey amongst their non-serving peers across all life stages other than the most elderly. This relative local rarity may mean there is lower appreciation and understanding of veterans’ experiences and requirements.

Figure 4: Veterans as a proportion of age group, Surrey versus England comparison



Veterans by general health

Census respondents were asked to rate their own general health according to a five-point scale: “Very good”, “Good”, “Fair”, “Bad”, or “Very bad”. For the veterans release, answers have been aggregated to form just two statements: “Good health” or “Not good health”. Unfortunately, the basis for these two groupings has not been clarified, so it is not currently possible to state which classification includes the response “Fair”.

Table 2: Proportion of Veterans in “Good health”; England versus Surrey comparison

Proportion of veterans in “Good health”	Previously served in the UK regular armed forces	Previously served in UK reserve armed forces	Previously served in both regular and reserve UK armed forces	Previously served in any capacity	Did not previously serve
England	63%	72%	62%	64%	79%
Surrey	63%	77%	69%	66%	84%

Surrey veterans who previously served in the reserve forces or in both regular and reserve forces were slightly more likely to be in good health than their peers across England as a whole. Those who served in regular forces only were equally likely to be in good health. Both nationally and locally, those who’d only served in reserve forces were most likely to declaim good health.

Significantly, both nationally and locally, the proportion of veterans in good health was significantly below the proportion of those who had never served. However, care should be taken in considering the ramifications of this finding, since veterans are generally more likely to be male and older, whereas those who have never served will constitute a generally younger population, with more

women. A direct comparison between veterans and non-veterans is therefore difficult to draw with accuracy.

Veterans by disability

All Census respondents are classified as either Disabled under the Equality Act, or Not Disabled under the Equality Act.

For those who are Disabled, further segmentation distinguishes those whose day-to-day activities are limited a lot, from those whose day-to-day activities are limited a little, by their disability.

Amongst veterans, the proportion who are disabled is significantly above the level seen in those who have never served. This is likely to be partially explained by the tendency of the veteran community to be older than those who have never served, and partially will arise from injuries or experiences received during the course of their service. It is not possible with the current data releases to tease these entwined origins apart.

Just under one-third of Surrey resident veterans are disabled (31%; 10,058 people). This is on a par with the national position for veterans (32%) but double the incidence of disability for the population of Surrey who have never served (15%).

14.5% of Surrey resident veterans have their daily activities limited a lot, and 16.4% a little, through disability. That equates to 4,718 and 5,340 people.

Veterans by economic activity

Adult Census respondents are classified as either economically INACTIVE (e.g. retired, not working for other reasons and not seeking to work) or Economically ACTIVE. The Economically active cohort is further separated to distinguish those who are in employment (including full time students) from those who are unemployed.

The majority of veterans are economically inactive, both nationally (58% of veterans) and locally within Surrey (62%). These are much higher proportions than the “never served” population (38% and 36% respectively), reflecting the tendency of the veterans’ group to be older than the general population against which they are compared.

Restricting our view to the economically active, veterans are **more likely to be employed** than those who have never served. Nationally, for every one unemployed veteran there are 25 in employment; amongst those who have never served there are 16 in employment for every one unemployed.

The Surrey position for veterans is a ratio of 27 in employment for every 1 unemployed, again better than the local position for non-veterans (21 : 1).

The Census identified 449 unemployed veterans: 280 former Regular forces; 154 former Reserve forces; and 15 who had formerly served in Regular and Reserve forces.

At a headline view therefore, veterans locally seem to fare very well at securing employment, though of course the nature of that employment, and whether it is sufficiently rewarding will also matter but cannot be derived from this dataset.

Veterans by occupation

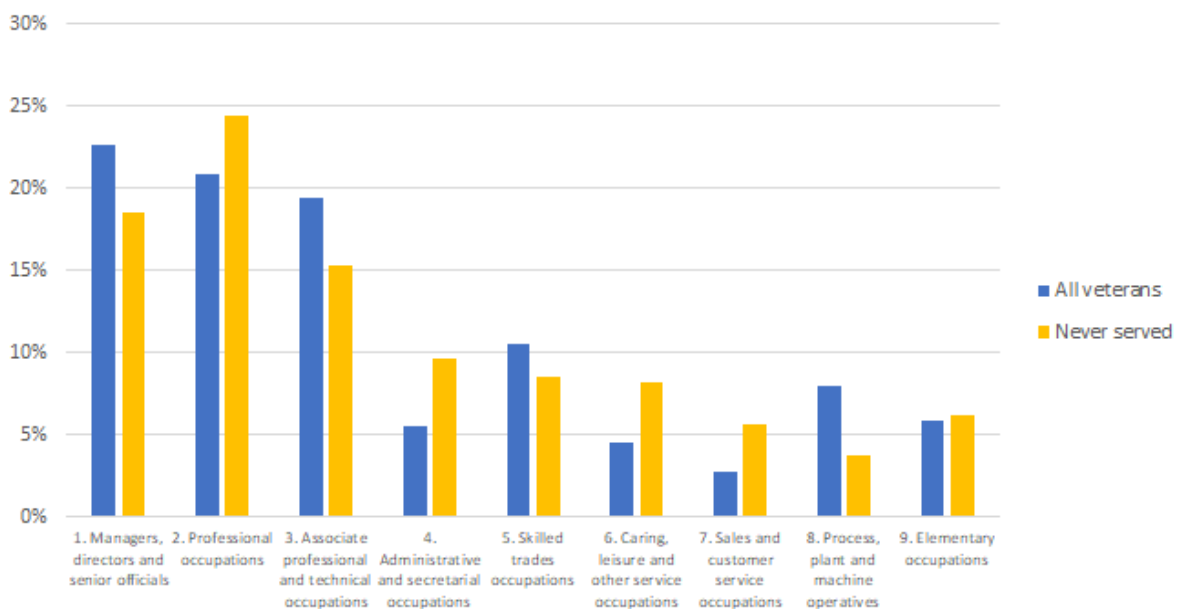
The final dataset currently available describes the main occupation of each employed veteran according to the following groupings:

1. Managers, directors and senior officials
2. Professional occupations
3. Associate professional and technical occupations
4. Administrative and secretarial occupations
5. Skilled trades occupations
6. Caring, leisure and other service occupations
7. Sales and customer service occupations
8. Process, plant and machine operatives
9. Elementary occupations

These categories represent a directional hierarchy of occupations in a broadly accepted view of generally “better” to “worse” job types, with an implication / assumption that income-levels and job satisfaction will generally decrease as one traverses down the list. That is of course a questionable concept.

Across Surrey, for the 12,029 veterans in employment, the proportion of veterans in each occupation type broadly matches that of the wider non-veteran population. Indeed, a greater proportion of veterans are to be found in the first three categories (63% of Surrey veterans compared to 58% of those who have never served). While there are differences in the relative proportions in individual occupation categories, there is no stark indication of additional disadvantage to veterans in job type.

Figure 5: the proportion of Surrey resident veterans and non-veterans in different occupations



That is the full extent of data relating to veterans that is currently available at a local level. Unfortunately, data that would enable a multi-variate analysis (e.g. of occupation by age, or of veterans by gender) has not been released for access.

Should more information be forthcoming, this report can be updated accordingly.

The Office for National Statistics has published a number of reports relating to veterans at a national level, and these can be found at the following link: [UK armed forces veterans analysis plans - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#).

Data sources for this report:

[UK armed forces veteran indicator variable: Census 2021 - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

[Veterans by age - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

[Veterans by general health - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

[Veterans by disability - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

[Veterans by economic activity status - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

[Veterans by occupation - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

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