

July 2023



# Analysis Report

Independent Review into the service and experience  
of LGBT veterans who served prior to 2000

# **Analysis Report**

Independent Review by Lord Etherton into  
the service and experience of LGBT veterans  
who served in HM Armed Forces between  
1967 and 2000

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# Foreword

The Terms of Reference for the LGBT Veterans Independent Review stated that:

**“The Review will make evidence-based recommendations** as to how the Government can meet its commitment in the Veterans Strategy, to ensure the service and experience of every veteran is understood and valued, in relation to the LGBT veterans community.”

The Review wanted to understand the impact of the ban whilst allowing veterans to be able to tell their story. This is why we launched the Call for Evidence in July 2022 to gather personal testimony from LGBT veterans who served under the ban on homosexuality between 1967 to 2000, along with that of non-LGBT veterans and friends and families of LGBT veterans who could no longer tell their story.

With over 1,100 responses, including some from organisations and academics, the Call for Evidence resulted in an unprecedented amount of data about life under the ban and its impact.

To fully evaluate the experience of veterans, identify the effects of the ban, and collect their insight into how to make current services more accessible and how to make them accepted as full members of the Armed Forces community a qualitative analysis of the testimony was carried out. Each testimony was read line by line and statements categorised. This report reflects the emergent themes from that analysis.

The Recommendations made by the Chair in the Final Report are based on his personal analysis of the testimony and evidence received by the Review. This report categorises the evidence received.

The recommendations in the Final Report were also informed by discussions with leading officials and stakeholders in the veterans sector, the devolved administrations and the health and care sector.

**The LGBT Veterans  
Independent Review team**

July 2023

# 1. Introduction

When we refer to LGBT veterans or the LGBT veteran cohort in this report, we are referencing veterans who served between 1967 and 2000 who either identify as LGBT or were perceived-as-LGBT.

This analysis report summarises the collected testimony gained as part of the LGBT Veterans Independent Review. It is a companion piece to the Review's Final Report by Lord Etherton and does not replace or amend the findings of that document.

## 1.1 Background

In January 2022 the Government published the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan: 2022 to 2024<sup>1</sup>, which committed to:

**“...deliver an independent review into the impact of pre-2000 practices on LGBT veterans in 2022.”**

To deliver on this, the Review team was set up in March 2022 and its Chair, Lord Etherton, was appointed in June<sup>2</sup>. The Review's terms of reference<sup>3</sup> stated “The Review should examine and consider the experience of LGBT service personnel who served between 1967 and 2000” and should comment on:

- The range of potential impact that the ban may have had on those affected, including but not limited to consequences for future relationships, employability or financial position
- How services for veterans today could be made more accessible and inclusive so that LGBT veterans, dismissed or otherwise required to leave Her Majesty's Armed Forces because of their sexual orientation or otherwise adversely impacted by the historic ban feel welcome and that the services are ‘for them’

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1 [gov.uk/government/publications/veterans-strategy-action-plan-2022-to-2024](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/veterans-strategy-action-plan-2022-to-2024)

2 [gov.uk/government/news/chair-of-the-review-into-the-treatment-of-LGBT-veterans-announced](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chair-of-the-review-into-the-treatment-of-LGBT-veterans-announced)

3 [gov.uk/government/publications/terms-of-reference-for-the-LGBT-veterans-independent-review](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terms-of-reference-for-the-LGBT-veterans-independent-review)

- How Government can ensure that veterans dismissed or otherwise required to leave Her Majesty’s Armed Forces because of their perceived sexual orientation are recognised and accepted as full members of the Armed Forces community and that HMG acknowledges and appreciates their service
- Any further research, or policy review the Government could undertake to understand and seek to mitigate any impacts, including any financial impact.

## 1.2 Call for evidence

To meet the aims set out in the Terms of Reference (ToR), a questionnaire<sup>4</sup> was developed for the ‘Call for evidence’ (CfE). While there were autobiographical accounts<sup>5</sup> of individuals who had served under the ban on homosexuality between 1967 and 2000, there was no comprehensive literature on this population to review and develop recommendations from. A qualitative questionnaire was considered the best way to understand the effect of the ban and the impact it had on those who served during it. It would also meet the ToR’s requirement to ‘provide those impacted with the opportunity to be heard’. The Review needed to ensure it collected enough information to make evidence-based recommendations on how services for veterans today could be made more accessible and inclusive for LGBT veterans and for the government to ensure that LGBT veterans are recognised and accepted as full members of the Armed Forces community.

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4 [lgbtveterans.independent-review.uk/reports/call-for-evidence/](https://lgbtveterans.independent-review.uk/reports/call-for-evidence/)

5 Such as Hall, E. (1995) We can’t even march straight; Chambers, E. (2019) The Queer Angel; Jones, C. (2019) Fighting with Pride



To ensure that evidence could be collected in the most easy and effective manner, an appropriate online digital survey tool was selected to deliver the survey. Based on the requirements of the ToR, a questionnaire was developed, which would be used to collect testimony and quantitative information such as dates of service and demographic information.

We wanted responses from LGBT personnel, non-LGBT personnel involved with the ban and from friends and family of those who had been affected by the ban. Separate questionnaires were designed for these groups. We also wanted organisations, academics and others who work in the area to respond to the CfE.

As we did not want to limit the reach of the CfE, we made it available in offline digital format and requestable paper copies<sup>6</sup>. We would also accept evidence delivered in other formats, including personal histories and also verbally (using Google Keep's audio dictation facility). To ensure that the survey was cost free to the respondent, a freepost address was set up for postal responses. The CfE was launched on 15 July 2022.

Because the target population was considered to be small (LGBT people who had served in the UK military, regular and territorial, between 1967 and 2000), we needed to ensure that knowledge of the Review and the CfE was disseminated as widely as possible. There was also no existing contact list of LGBT veterans, so it was vital the Review was strongly promoted. The Review and the CfE was promoted via press notices, newsletters, digital social media (Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook) and promotion at Pride, military and veteran events. Relevant stakeholders across veteran and LGBT sector organisations and charities were encouraged to promote the CfE. We encouraged circulation throughout the military via the relevant senior personnel across each service and their internal LGBT networks. During the Review adverts were also placed in Northern Ireland newspapers due to a low response to the CfE from the region. TV and radio also picked up on the Review and shows included interviews with the Review's Chair, Lord Etherton, and relevant organisations. The Office for Veterans Affairs (OVA) also funded select organisations to support veterans contributing to the Review<sup>7</sup>.

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6 [www.gov.uk/government/publications/call-for-evidence](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/call-for-evidence)

7 [www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-boost-to-LGBT-charities-supporting-veterans](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-boost-to-LGBT-charities-supporting-veterans)

The CfE closed on 1 December 2022. Invalid responses were removed from analysis. These included: duplicates (which were merged or deleted as per respondent instructions); irrelevant submissions (not related to the ban); or internet trolls (containing discriminatory or abusive language). The Review collected 1,128 valid responses, which considerably was above expectations.

- 666 from LGBT veterans
- 415 from non-LGBT veterans
- 38 from family, friends or representatives
- 6 from organisations
- 3 from academics and others who work in the area.

## 1.3 Evidence analysis

The majority of veterans responded to our Call for Evidence via our questionnaire, which involved both open and closed questions. Some veterans chose to provide testimony in another format, which was treated in the same way as the open questions from the questionnaire.

A data cleansing exercise was carried out to remove any duplicate, offensive and empty responses.

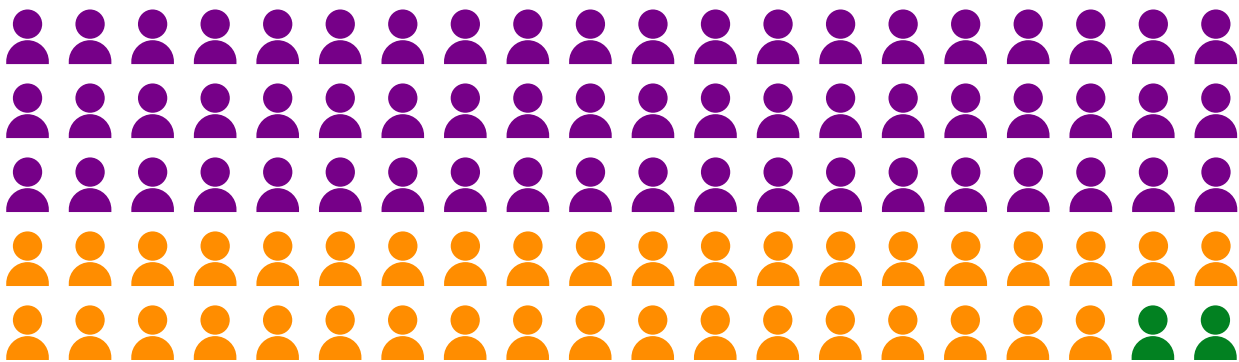
As part of data collection we asked respondents if they would consider being contacted again for further engagement. Of those that said yes, we asked if they could also supply their service number. The service number was checked with the Ministry of Defence to verify service between 1967 and 2000. This data sharing was set out in the Review's data notice.

Following this, responses from LGBT, non-LGBT and friends and family were thematically analysed. Themes were identified through evaluating a random sample of testimonies, and then reinforced by carrying out thematic coding of all LGBT testimonies, a random sample of 25% non-LGBT testimonies and all 38 friends and family testimonies. New themes emerged through this thematic coding and have been included in this report.

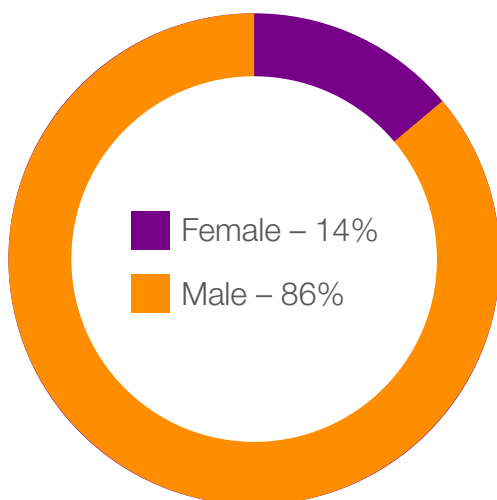
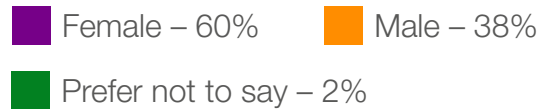
Throughout this analysis report you will find references to 'X% of LGBT veterans reported Y'. In most cases, these themes were collected via open text testimony, meaning the actual percent of individuals who experienced this could be higher due to omission (as we did not ask about most themes specifically).

## 1.4 Respondent demographics

We estimate<sup>8</sup> that there could be as many as 23,800 veterans who do not identify as straight or heterosexual, and 4,500 veterans who now identify as trans, who served between 1967 and 2000.



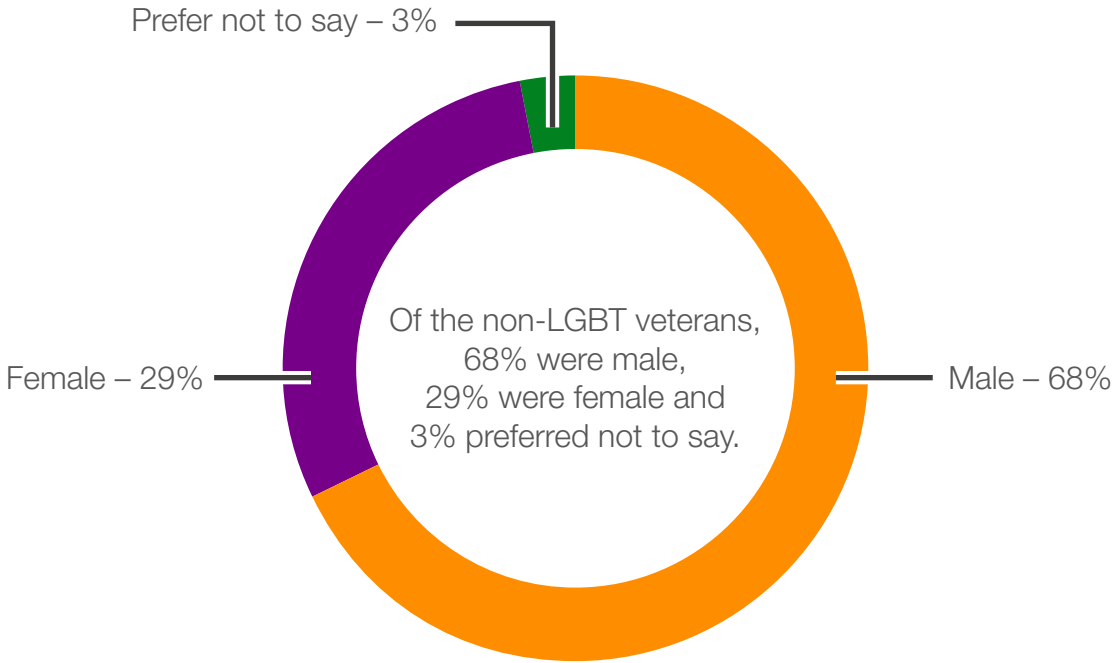
Of the LGBT veterans who had responded 60% were female, 38% were male and 2% identified as non-binary or preferred not to say. 4% identify as trans.



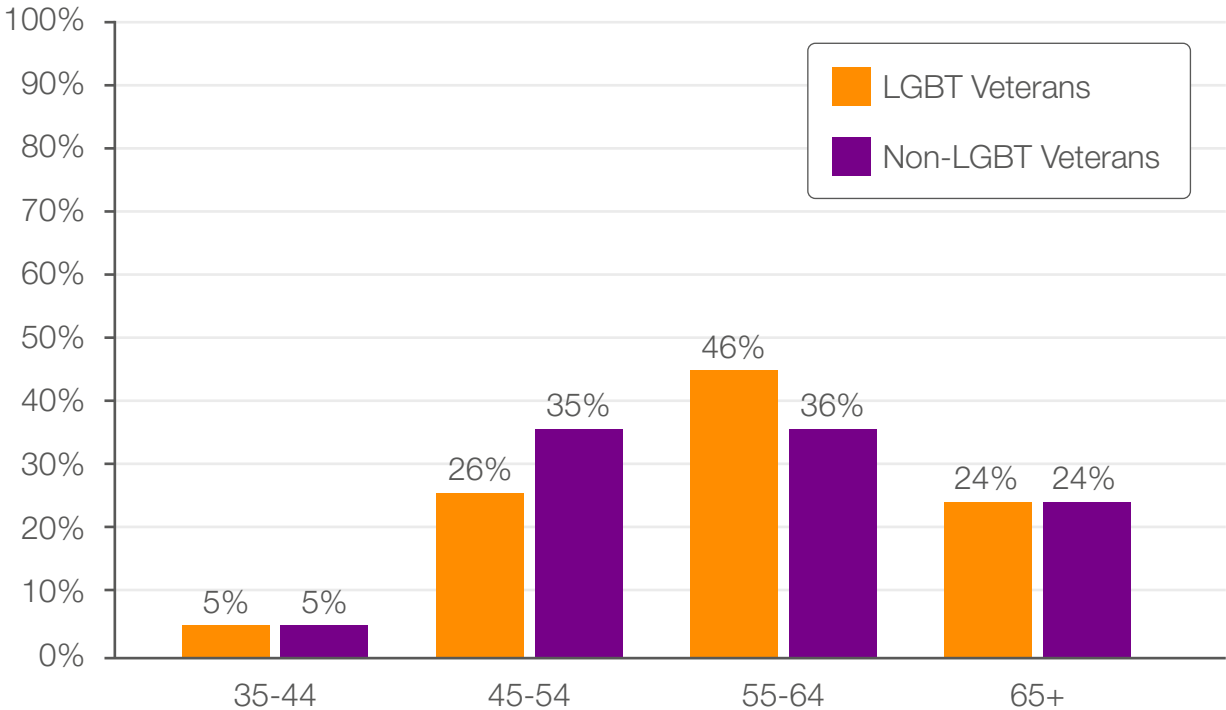
Compared to the current population of over 16 year olds, individuals from England and Wales who previously served in the armed forces<sup>9</sup>, where we see 14% female, 86% male and 0.33% trans. The significant difference in the gender distribution can be partially attributed to the higher proportion of LGBT females amongst all female previously serving personnel (5% compared to that for males (1%).

<sup>8</sup> Details of calculations can be found in Annex A

<sup>9</sup> [www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/armedforcescommunity/articles/characteristicsofukarmedforcesveteransenglandandwalescensus2021/census2021](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/armedforcescommunity/articles/characteristicsofukarmedforcesveteransenglandandwalescensus2021/census2021)



Age of respondents:



Distribution of ages of LGBT and non-LGBT veterans who responded to the question. Those aged below 35 would not have served between 1967 and 2000 and so were excluded from providing evidence.



## Location of respondents

Locations are largely representative of the wider veteran population<sup>10</sup>. Although we received low numbers from those currently living in Northern Ireland, 5% had served in Northern Ireland at some point in their career. Respondents living in other locations or outside the UK are not depicted in this chart.



Location	
East Midlands	6%
East of England	6%
London	6%
North East	4%
North West	11%
Northern Ireland	s <sup>11</sup>
Scotland	10%
South East	19%
South West	18%
Wales	5%
West Midlands	7%
Yorkshire and the Humber	7%

10 ONS figures for locations of veterans

11 Suppressed – the number of respondents in NI was under 10

98% of respondents were from white ethnicities compared to 96% of those who previously served in the UK Armed Forces<sup>12</sup>.

58% of respondents were Christian and 38% had no religion compared to 68% and 30% respectively of those who previously served in the UK Armed Forces<sup>13</sup>.

Responses were largely representative of the distribution between Army (62%), Navy (19%) and Air Force (19%) compared with the current distribution<sup>14</sup> of 58%, 21% and 21% respectively.

Due to the nature of the subject, we do not expect a similar proportion of sexual minority groups as compared to the wider population. Of the LGBT veteran cohort that responded to the question, 84% identify as gay or lesbian, 9% as bisexual, 4% as straight or heterosexual and 3% as something different. That 4% identifying as straight or heterosexual corresponds to those veterans who were perceived-as-LGBT and were impacted by the ban, or are straight trans.

Of the respondents that answered, 24% reporting having a disability, compared to 18% in the general population<sup>15</sup>.

Of the LGBT veterans who provided the information, 11% were in senior positions before they left the service and 89% in junior positions. In assessing responses, we saw no marked difference in treatment due to rank. Although we did receive anecdotal evidence that senior personnel tended to be more protected from investigation, this is not reflected in the quantitative data we collected.

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12 [www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/armedforcescommunity/articles/characteristicsofukarmedforcesveteransenglandandwalescensus2021/census2021](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/armedforcescommunity/articles/characteristicsofukarmedforcesveteransenglandandwalescensus2021/census2021)

13 In England and Wales, 2021 Census, excluding those who did not answer

14 [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2022/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-1-october-2022#full-time-trained-strength-rnrm--raf-and-full-time-trade-trained-strength-army](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2022/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-1-october-2022#full-time-trained-strength-rnrm--raf-and-full-time-trade-trained-strength-army)

15 In England and Wales, 2021 Census

## 1.5 Notes for the reader

All quotes throughout this document are taken from evidence provided to the Review. Grammar and spelling have not been altered. Redactions have been made so individuals cannot be identified. Some obscenities have also been redacted. In each of the sections, quotes have been used to illustrate the emerging themes.

Not all percentages may add to 100% due to rounding.

Word cloud represents distribution of themes appearing in responses.

Note: all 1,128 testimonies have been read thoroughly by the Review Chair and the Review Secretariat. The sections in this report reflect the most common themes which emerged from text analysis. 'Special topics' cover specific issues of interest.

Warning: Some of the quoted testimony in this report includes traumatic descriptions of assault, abuse and discrimination. If you find this content disturbing please consult the support organisations listed on the Review's website.

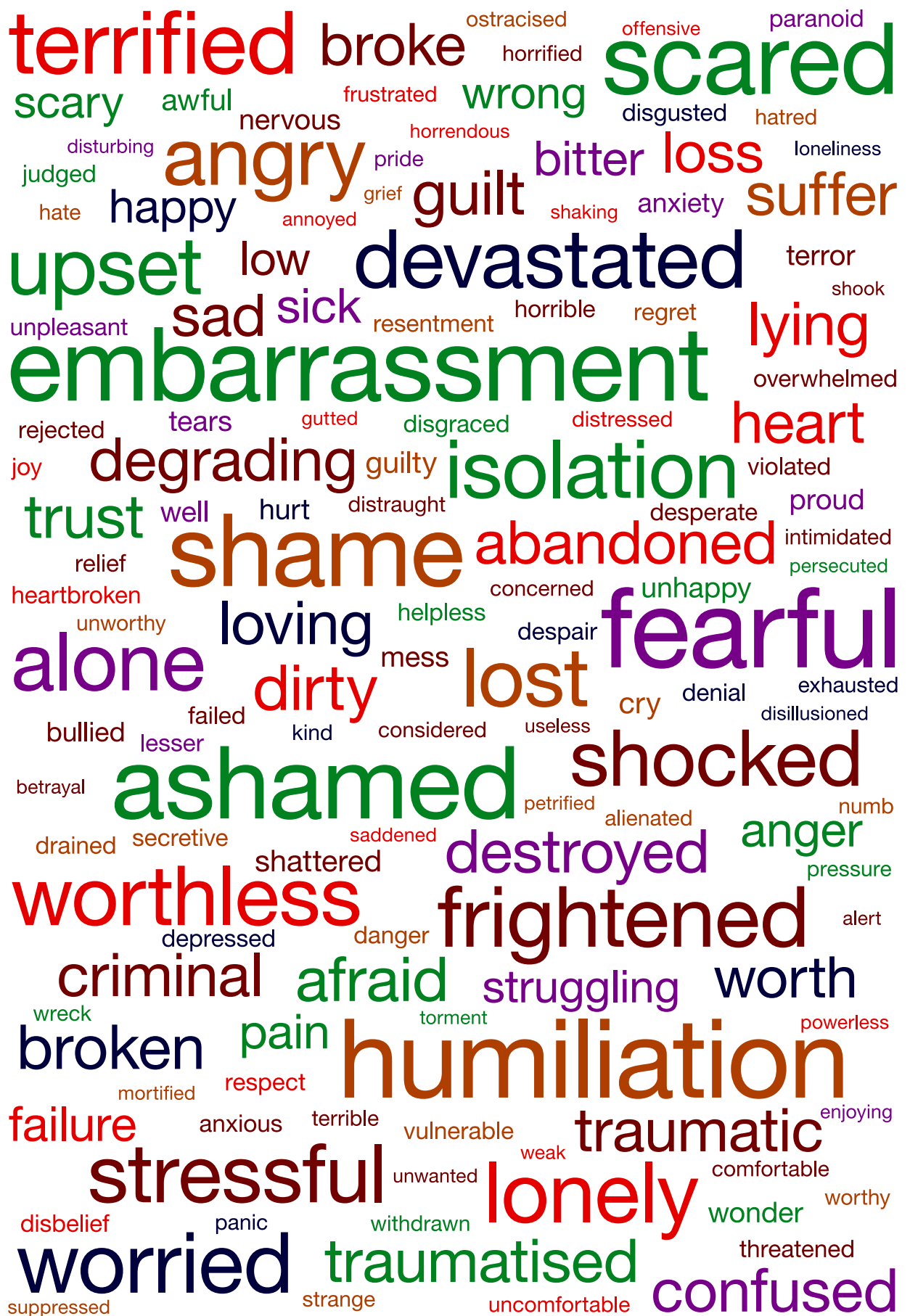


## 2. During-service experience

**“I was absolutely devastated and felt guilty that I had caused another human being to kill himself just because he was gay. Needless to say, I have suffered ever since over this, by the way I was treated by the MP’s, the R.A.F. and the fact someone died because of me.”**

**“I would have been given a medal for killing a man but was given a discharge for wanting to love one.”**





## 2.1 Overview

In the Call for Evidence, we asked respondents for their experience of life in service. This included questions on the impact of the ban and how they were treated.

A majority (80%) of the LGBT veteran cohort reported being treated unfavourably due to their sexuality or perceived sexuality. Many detailed their experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination while serving, before any investigation had commenced.

48% reported being dismissed or administratively discharged from the Armed Forces between 1967 and 2000 due to their sexuality or perceived sexuality.

9% had their medals or conduct badges removed. Of that group, 23% applied for medals or awards to be returned.

Not all experiences were negative. Individuals recounted many positive things about their experiences serving such as:

- Making life-long friends
- Loving the training
- The sense of camaraderie
- Pride that they were military trained
- Life was exciting, full of travelling, adventures and variety
- Proud to continue the family tradition.

However for many, the negatives by far outweighed the positives.

One individual recounted finding it beneficial to speak to a psychiatrist about their sexuality. They found it traumatic but it enabled them to bring their true nature to light which had been repressed. It was liberating and made the individual feel like a more complete human being.

Individuals note rumours of gay reservists who left but were recalled so they could be punished.

**“I loved being in the army. I was proud of being a soldier. I did my duty, went above and beyond and would have stayed to complete my term plus more given the opportunity.”**

Several reported that in Jan 2000 they felt relieved not to have to lie anymore and had supportive line managers. Others reported the opposite, still keeping their sexuality secret through fear of continued discrimination.

We received mixed reports of individuals being told during enlistment that homosexuality was banned. Whilst this was made explicit to some, others reported that the ban had not been mentioned. As part of enlistment, some recruits had to sign a form<sup>16</sup> to declare that they were not homosexual. A number of individuals noted that they did not know their own sexuality at time of enlistment, or did not understand what homosexual meant.

16 Such as MOD form 1111 Tri-service enlistment

**“I can not say that I am entirely comfortable with my own sexuality;** serving under the ban has certainly contributed to that.”

Many note that they had to live a double life, hiding their personal life from the military but also hiding their military life from friends back home.

**“I was devastated as I had come from an abused childhood and the Courts** had signed me into the army as I was a ward of court till I was 21.”

Many note the fear of becoming too close platonically with friends of the same sex, with worry that any association would implicate them.

One individual detailed that due to their age at the time, MOD was their legal guardian and stated that MoD subjected the individual to psychological harm due to the ban. They reported that MOD failed in its duty of care as their legal guardian and contributed to the individuals ‘failure to develop fully into a confident well adjusted human being.’

One individual noted that they left the army in 2003 as unofficially it was still considered unacceptable to be gay.

Many note that they would not have left the service as early as they did if it were not for the ban. Given the usual notice period at the time of service, individuals who were close to reaching milestones but were dismissed felt that they would have been likely to have reached them.

**“I had to ‘jump before I was pushed’.”**

## 2.2 Bullying, harassment and discrimination

Bullying, harassment and discrimination was a major theme in the testimonies. 29% of the LGBT veterans reported some form of bullying, harassment or discrimination in the military due to their sexuality (excluding experience during investigation – this will be covered in a later section).

Commonly mentioned examples of bullying, harassment and discrimination include:

- Name calling and verbal abuse
- Physical assault
- Sexual assault
- Threat of loss of job
- Blackmail
- Punishment.

Name calling was frequently experienced by many veterans. This included ‘non-stop’ harassment and homophobic verbal abuse. Many individuals experienced name calling and targeted jokes in the spirit of ‘banter’. Common insults reported include ‘dyke’, ‘faggot’, ‘poof’, ‘bender’, ‘queer’, ‘pillow biter’ etc. In many cases this was reported as occurring in front of large groups, causing individuals further humiliation and shame.

One individual received a threat from someone of the opposite sex to have their sexuality ‘cured’. This was a repercussion of rejecting their sexual advances.

Several noted that they had to join in with the bullying to deflect suspicion.

Some noted that the anti-gay jokes were encouraged by the ban and this has been described as ‘toxic masculinity’ in a few testimonies. It was also noted that these jokes and slurs were continued after the ban was lifted.

There were several reports from LGBT veterans about being bullied throughout basic training. This was known as ‘hazing’ and was considered to be severe. These bullying incidents varied from physical assault, sexual assault and sexual discrimination.

Examples of the bullying that individuals experienced due to their alleged sexuality include:

- Being forced to sleep on the floor instead of a bunk
- Being made to stand in a bin with lager poured over their head
- Finding their bed soiled (urination)
- Undergoing ‘initiations’
- Kit being stolen or destroyed
- Physical assault causing injury
- Threats of violence
- Being bullied into admitting to things they were not involved in.

It was reported that in many cases friends distanced themselves and avoided suspected gay individuals. This caused feelings of loneliness amongst LGBT veterans.

**“I was summoned to OCs office and was spoken to by civvy PA about wearing trousers and a large faced watch as this was too manish.”**

## 2.2.1 Senior officers and ranks

Many individuals felt let down by the chain of command in attempts to stop the bullying. A common theme was senior ranks ignoring reports of bullying and instead, turning a ‘blind eye’ to it. We received numerous reports of seniors actively encouraging bullying.

It was noted that individuals were treated badly by seniors if they were thought to be gay (regardless if they were or not). Many reported being given the worst jobs and extra duties if suspected to be gay or under investigation. Others reported that several of the seniors who engaged in bullying were gay themselves and did so to deflect suspicion,

Several individuals noted that they felt targeted or singled out by seniors. For example, by making the whole squad do ‘punishment runs’ or punishment by ‘extreme exercise’. Individuals note that these ended up turning peers against one individual. It was also specified that male seniors were often largely homophobic towards lesbians.

Many LGBT veterans lived and worked in fear due to constantly being warned of the consequences. Overtly homophobic seniors were known for organising block raids in the night as a warning. It was

noted that same-sex couples who were found in bed during block raids would get discharged whereas opposite-sex couples would only get given extra duties.

Individuals felt like they had to accept the bullying and banter not to raise further suspicion, which was necessary as a means to survive. Some noted that reporting violence and abuse came at the cost of having to admit their sexuality and risk being discharged.

The impact of the bullying, harassment and discrimination from senior ranks outlined above includes:

- Loneliness and isolation
- Feeling like an outcast
- Humiliation
- Physical and emotional pain
- Distrust of the hierarchy and chain of command

**“insulted and mentally abused for your ‘perceived’ sexual preferences.** Constant jibes, jokes and being ridiculed, never being allowed to forget that they thought they were better than you.”

**“Homophobic comments were rife at all levels, if you were not white, alpha male, heterosexual, beer swilling rugby loving male, then the banter was aimed at you.”**

**“I had nowhere to turn as my senior ranks were part of the homophobic culture.”**



## Special Topic: Chaplains

Military chaplains provide pastoral care and spiritual support to every level of the military. For many service personnel of faith, chaplains provide an invaluable service.

Most discussions between the service personnel and chaplains are confidential. However, during the period of time covered by this Review, Chaplains were required to report anyone who said they were homosexual.

**“I went to his cabin but before I could speak, he held his hand out in a stop sign and said that if anything I said to him contravened military law, he had a duty to report it to the captain. I was devastated to hear that there was no confidentiality even amongst those of the cloth.”**

Respondents reported that Chaplains did report individuals who were homosexual, or reported other personnel for being homosexual if mentioned to them.

**“I confided in a navy Chaplain about my sexuality. The Chaplain encouraged me to disclose my sexuality to my Divisional Officer. This triggered an SIB investigation resulting in my discharge.”**

For service personnel who knew that chaplains could break confessional about homosexuality, meant for some people they had nowhere to turn to for advice or pastoral care.

**“The immediate impact was one of isolation, who do I turn to, who could I chat to without it getting back to the SIB. If I spoke to the padre, it would get back; there was no one within the RAF I could talk to.”**

## 2.3 Sexual abuse and harassment

10% of LGBT veterans reported rape, sexual abuse and harassment. Of those who reported this, 66% were female and 34% were male. Key themes reported include:

- Not being able to report rape and sexual assault due to fear of being ‘outed’
- Perpetrators of the abuse were both opposite-sex and same-sex
- There was a general sexist and homophobic environment, particularly towards female staff who were perceived as being lesbian or bisexual, or those being a lone female in a male dominated environment
- Abuse could be carried out by senior officers and medical personnel
- Some individuals entered opposite-sex relationships in order not to prevent suspicion
- Some LGBT individuals were subject to rape and sexual assault through blackmail – they were threatened with ‘outing’ to the military police if they did not have sex with the perpetrator. There was repeated testimony in which respondents said if they had reported sexual assault, it would have ended their own career.

Many noted senior personnel used their rank to exert leverage over the victim.

Several respondents noted that feeling forced to enter opposite-sex relationships was a form of institutional sexual exploitation, creating a culture where it was better to sleep with the opposite-sex to deflect suspicion and avoid investigation.

**“They dragged me to the back of the car park, the 2ic held me down on the floor while the sergeant tried to take my clothes off, they tried to rape me, [...] I was told to fuck off and if I reported it, they would deny it and say I was ‘asking for it’.”**

**“A corporal I worked with ‘groomed’ me [...] He also told me that no one would believe me anyway as he was married with children and my immediate boss. He actually raped me one evening by penetrating me against my will and I tried thereafter to keep out of his way.”**

**“The snide remarks, guys betting and then trying to get me to go to bed with them to make me straight!”**

**“This oppressive environment made me sleep with men when I did not want to. This made me feel ashamed and embarrassed as well as dirty and immoral.”**

## 2.4 Promotion prospects

10% of LGBT veterans reported impacts on their promotion prospects during service due to attitudes and treatment of LGBT personnel. Key themes reported include:

- Any suspicion or involvement in investigations for being gay, whether it was true or not, would remove individuals from the promotion pool for a significant period. This happened even when an individual was accused of being gay by peers, with no formal investigation
- Not applying for promotions due to not wanting to lie during positive vetting
- Receiving unfavourable assessments from senior leaders, when line managers provided a more positive assessment
- Being denied accolades that straight colleagues with similar performance received
- Annual appraisals showed that individuals who were suitable for promotion were passed over. Others who had been in service for less time and were rated lower ended up 'leap-frogging' them.

Other common themes include:

- feeling victimised by peers trying to prove that they were gay while being unable to complain or defend themselves, hurting promotion prospects
- feeling that they were denied promotions due to being unmarried
- having to accept and deal with their own sexuality covertly caused a lot of mental anguish which meant that their professional development fell behind, delaying their career
- respondents received suggestions that the best way to gain a promotion was to create a vacancy by reporting someone for being gay and getting them dismissed
- promotions were withheld due to appearance, with some cases of seniors being told to find ways of demoting the LGBT individuals
- receiving a warning order meant that individuals were unable to take up training that would have progressed their career until a certain amount of time had passed.

The impact of reduced promotion prospects included:

- Reduced terminal grant
- Reduced pensions, if they were able to claim it
- Lack of career satisfaction
- Leaving the service early due to lack of progression.

One individual's military parent was denied a promotion due to having a gay child.

**“I was told i would have to redo all my qualifications again as the person who did the qualifications was not me but the previous me.”**

**“I had to work twice as hard as I would have done pre-transition... ..** received praiseworthy assessments from my first reporting officers, my second reporting officers never backed it up, seemingly deliberately damaging promotion prospects.”

Several respondents noted feeling resentment toward the opportunities presented to today's LGBT military/personnel.

# 3. Investigation experience

## 3.1 Overview

We asked respondents about the investigation and dismissal process and any medical investigation. This section covers the testimony about the investigations, which includes bullying, harassment and discrimination, searches of property and belongings and medical investigations.

69% of the LGBT veteran cohort reported being investigated, cautioned or warned due to their sexuality or perceived sexuality.

30% reported being subject to a medical examination or treatment.

The majority of responses recounted negative experiences of investigations, with very few individuals reporting positive experiences. Of the positive responses, they were from commanders who considered the personnel under investigation to be an asset and their dismissal would be a loss to the service.

For those with friends being investigated, individuals could not be seen to support them for fear of being seen as gay too.

In some cases, playing on sports teams meant people automatically assumed individuals were gay which led to whole sports teams being investigated.

Several veterans viewed investigations as ‘witch hunt’ as seniors would target service personnel whose names were on a list. There was a common theme of individuals being caught and being forced to reveal the names of people they have been involved with. This resulted in further investigation and more individuals being caught which provoked feelings of guilt in some veterans.

**“...looking back, I now regularly ask myself how the SIB identified and subsequently traced me, based solely upon a greetings card which I had signed simply with my first name? How did the SIB identify me as the ‘[...]’ who had sent the card? To what ends did they go to identify and track me down?... I regularly question how many ‘stones’ were turned over or perhaps lives destroyed to make the link to me? Did I ever have a chance?...”**



For some veterans, all areas of their personal lives were investigated. It was noted that investigations would begin after friends and family would visit, or after friends being found in the rooms of service personnel. This led to friends and family being interviewed to gather evidence.

Many reported on discharge assessments were downgraded due to not being able to discharge someone rated any higher than 'good'.

Many victims of the ban were also forced into a situation where they had to also uphold the ban. This affected some of the individuals with feelings of guilt.

Non-married individuals in mid-30s raised suspicions and didn't fit in with the norm.









Some individuals reported being protected by their unit e.g. helping the individual to avoid military police, protecting against attacks, refusing removal from the unit, provision of keys for guard room etc.

**“...they reported me to [...] a Major that everyone knew to be lesbian,** yet she felt she had to behave as if these allegations were the most disgusting and abhorrent affront to heteronormative decency she had ever encountered.”


## 3.2 Bullying, harassment and discrimination, abuse

11% of LGBT veterans reported experiencing bullying, harassment or discrimination as part of investigations, or from peers who knew they were under investigation.

A range of incidents were reported including:

Made to sleep on the floor when in confinement 	Having head put in a toilet and flushed 
Forced to clean the toilet with a toothbrush and then brush teeth with it 	Watched using the toilet 
Denied food, only given liquids 	Verbally assaulted 
Physically assaulted 	Sexually assaulted 

Being abused




Spat at




Threatened



Mentally tortured for hours without break




Hounded into admission



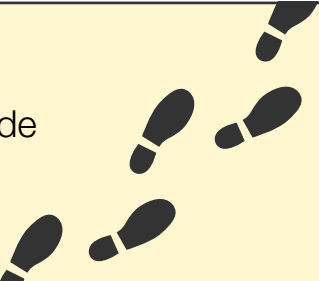
Ostracised and treated like a pariah




Escorted to canteen to humiliate individual in front of peers




Followed outside of work



Forced to strip and patted down




Threatened with beatings by peers to not give up other's names




Had private letters read out loud in front of peers



Being accused of sleeping with family members (mother, siblings etc)



Treated like a slave



Many veterans recalled there being no confidentiality about their investigation. Everyone knew if you were being investigated which would lead to gossip and ridicule.

Many of the experiences mentioned are reported to still impact individuals to this day, through poor mental health and PTSD.

Many recount being bullied by friends who would apologise privately but explain that they had to be seen to bully them or risk being put under suspicion themselves.

One individual recounts that only once they admitted they were gay were they given a drink and allowed to use the toilet (with the door open).

**“One evening I was asleep when in the very early hours my bed was overturned. I was badly beaten, sexually assaulted and dragged across the floor, my head was placed in a doorway and the door was violently kicked shut knocking me unconcise.”**

One individual reported that they were accused anonymously with no proof, no charges were made but they were harassed out.

**“[...]there I was abused, made to sleep on the floor, NCO’s held my head in the toilet and flushed it. I was forced to clean the toilet with a toothbrush and then clean my teeth as the stood over me saying ‘You like eating shiit so you are used to it’.”**

### 3.3 Arrested

8% of LGBT veterans described their experience of being arrested, with many noting resentment towards the people who arrested them. Some arrests appeared unnecessarily aggressive and intentionally humiliating for the individual.

Arrests often led to individuals being escorted everywhere, even to the toilet. Those detained were sometimes isolated and held in poor conditions. Some who were held in cells overnight were put on suicide watch. Some veterans reported being given a bed close to the window in sight of guards and being monitored overnight.

For some respondents, no reason was given for their arrest.

**“[...]the Commanding Officer went into full graphic detail of each charge, during which there was much commenting, catcalling and verbal abuse from the ‘audience’ with no attempt by the CO or others to stop them.”**

**“The mattress and bedding were filthy and crawling with crab lice.** I was not permitted to use the mess hall so all my meals were brought to my cell. They were always cold and occasionally my food was spat on and my drink was urinated in. At night I would lay on my bed, picking the lice off my body.”

## 3.4 Belongings

30% of LGBT veterans reported that their premises and belongings were searched as part of investigations into suspected homosexual activity. Of those who reported their belongings being searched, 74% were female, and 26% were male. Respondents reported that:

- Frequent searches were conducted without care and malicious damage was caused to property
- Possessions, many personal, were retained and never returned
- Searches were carried out with the intention to embarrass the service personnel.

Searches could involve personal letters from family being read and destroyed, contents from draws being emptied, legs removed from furniture, mattresses removed, posters ripped from walls, picture frames broken, underwear examined, toothpaste tubes and talcum powder containers emptied, tampon packets opened and the lifting of ceiling tiles.

Searching was exhaustive, with calls made to personal contacts found in correspondence and address books. Questions were asked about why certain clothing was worn and why certain posters were put on walls.

Many respondents felt violated and humiliated by the search, which they considered to be demeaning and were considered deliberately malicious. Some were so traumatised by the search that they cannot cope with messy rooms to this day.

Searching of property included off base property. Apart from searching the property, investigators would also interview other household occupants. Respondents mentioned that off-base personal property was searched without warrants being shown.

Belongings were often kept and not returned. These included items, such as diaries, personal mementos and financial records, some of which caused financial difficulty for the individual having not been returned.

The prospect of contact with the military police or SIB could make respondents hide personal items, even though they were not suspected of being homosexual. One individual was questioned by SIB in their own home about a sexual assault case. In preparation, they hid all of their personal items just in case attention was turned towards them.

**“I had to stand in my room whilst they turned the room upside down...**

They took my Tina Turner poster as proof that I was a lesbian because they said all lesbians like Tina Turner.”

**“I had a photo frame on my bedside table with a picture in it of me and my sister who had died in a car accident in 19[...]. They confiscated that; they said that the person in the picture was my girlfriend. I never got that photograph returned to me. It was the only picture I had of my sister and I together.”**

**“I don’t have any photographs from my service mainly due to having to destroy them when it was rumoured that there was going to be an SIB raid and in the end you just didn’t keep anything that could be used against you no matter how innocent the item was.”**

## 3.5 Interviews

We asked specifically for individuals to detail any experience of investigations they had. 69% of the LGBT veteran cohort reported being investigated, cautioned or warned due to their sexuality or perceived sexuality. Of those who reported being investigated, 66% were female and 34% male.

Key themes into the nature of investigations include:

- The length of the interviews, which could extend over several days, and be hours in length
- Respondents considered the interviewers crude, voyeuristic and unprofessional. Interviewers frequently asked about sexual practices, often in a salacious manner
- The interviews were not considered to meet the standards of civilian police interviews
- Interviewers would accuse the suspect of engaging in paedophilia, incest and bestiality
- Interviewers would attempt to coerce suspects to admit to homosexual behaviour by ‘outing’ them to their family.

The overall view is that the interviews were insensitive, intrusive and shameful.

Many respondents said that the interviews traumatised them. Respondents reported feeling suicidal at the end of the interview. Special Investigation Branch (SIB) personnel informed suspects they would be kept under surveillance and would eventually be caught. This led to increased anxiety.

Several individuals reported sexual assault as part of the investigations, with one detailing how the investigators slapped their genitals across the individual's face.

The interviews were considered crude. The interviewers could be physically aggressive towards the interviewee or threaten them with violence. Respondents considered that the nature of questioning went far beyond what was needed to prove the sexuality of those interviewed. Interviewers asked in-depth questions about sexual behaviour. Interviewers could be sexually suggestive, particularly towards female suspects. Several respondents said that interviewers would continue to ask about sexual activity even after they had admitted to being homosexual. One respondent was offered an 'easy exit' without further questioning if they were 'perhaps' bisexual rather than homosexual.

A few respondents, who later became police officers, commented how unnecessary the questioning was.

A major theme was the length of interviews. Service personnel were questioned for long periods of time, often without food, water or toilet breaks. Some interviews took place over days.

Along with accusing the suspect of homosexuality, interviewers would also accuse the suspect of other sexual behaviour, such as incest or bestiality.

**“I was so ashamed and traumatized by the questions, being called a dirty whore constantly, one of the interviews was done by 2 senior ranks (male and female) he actually told me I needed to be broken by a good man.”**

**“I went to shut the toilet door so that I could do my business but she pushed the door open, I asked why I couldn't had some privacy and she informed me that she had to watch me because I may have some lesbian stuff (!!!!) secreted inside myself.”**



### 3.5.1 Surveillance

Several respondents stated that SIB had used surveillance as part of their investigation. This included:

- Observation of ‘gay’ bars, which included photography both interior and exterior
- Surveillance of homes with notes made of visitors
- Phone tapping
- The use of personal recording devices ‘wires’ to gain evidence
- Being followed while off duty
- Post being intercepted.

**“I was aware of being followed everywhere I went, noting who I spoke to and for how long, questioned as to why I spent so much time talking to particular people.”**

**“I was part of the RAF Police and wore a wire as part of the investigative process [to] entrap LGBT personnel.”**

Some respondents were informed of a ‘mass sweep’ of gay men and women who had been under surveillance for some time. It was reported that the SIB celebrated these mass sweeps as a great success.

### 3.5.2 False evidence and entrapment

In some cases respondents stated that investigation involved attempted entrapment by giving misleading information about evidence, or using colleagues or other personnel to gain a confession from an individual. 2% of LGBT veterans reported attempted entrapment and 5% reported false evidence was used against them.

Respondents also claimed that they would be ordered to sign false statements.

**“I remember a colleague of mine at the unit, who was on a secondment with SIB at the time came to see me in my room. He told me that he had been sent by his superiors to gain my trust and effectively see if ‘I really was gay’ implying that he should sleep with me.”**

**“I was presented with a statement that they said was made by my girlfriend. It was not in her hand writing, yet it appeared to have her signature.”**

One dismissed individual was propositioned to rejoin the Military and act as bait to find gay service personnel.

## 3.6 Medical investigations and treatments

As part of the investigation process, service personnel suspected of homosexual activity underwent medical examinations. 30% reported being subject to a medical investigation or treatment.

The medical staff involved included psychiatrists, doctors and nurses. It was reported that medical staff passed personal judgments that homosexuality was ‘immoral’ but ‘fixable’.

Respondents felt the examinations were demeaning, humiliating and abusive. Several respondents considered it sexual assault.

Respondents reported that medical examinations involved the use of an evidence kit which included a large, folded piece of paper and evidence bags. The suspect was required to stand on the paper, strip and have their body hair combed through. The paper, samples and clothing were then bagged and kept as evidence.

The examinations involved stripping naked and could involve the size of the penis being measured and walking around whilst naked. The medical investigation also involved examination of the anus, which could include digital penetration and use of swabs; this was done to determine whether the individual had anal sex. Women were also subject to invasive medical examinations where the medical officer would examine the vagina, including inserting their fingers and penetrating the individual under the guise of searching for any infections. It was reported that these

examinations were usually done without consent. A few respondents said that they refused to be examined.

One respondent stated that clinicians had carried out tests to identify whether individuals were aroused by homoerotic imagery.

**“I was then taken to a doctor [...] where I had several appointments in which had to get naked and sit on what I can only describe as a dentist type chair and he would show me pictures of naked men/women and the measure my penis to see if any reaction.”**

**“he also asked me if I ate bananas as they are a phallic symbol.”**

**“I was given a medical examination, without the presence of another female, where the male MO inserted his fingers into my vagina. I asked him why and he said it was to see if I had any infection. I was traumatised at the time and I should have reported this SEXUAL ASSAULT.”**

General medical treatment unrelated to the ban did not appear to offer medical confidentiality. A respondent reported that after requesting a HIV test, he was reported for homosexuality by the clinician.

### 3.6.1 Treatment for homosexuality

As part of the testimony received on medical investigation, several respondents stated that electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), otherwise known as ‘shock therapy’ was routinely offered to homosexual military personnel. There was a suggestion that if personnel consented to conversion therapy, they may remain in the military. Respondents stated they refused the offer of ECT, however, we received testimony from one respondent which stated that they had undergone ECT.

Apart from the use of ECT, service personnel were also treated with drugs. Sometimes the drugs prescribed were unnamed or side effects were not explained.

**“When I had my medical before prison, the RAF doctor gave me a digital penetration inspection and discussed the process of reversion therapy. The benefit would be that, if cured, there may not be dismissal or prison...”**

**“[...] they put these electrodes in my head and showed me pictures of men and gave me nice feelings and they then showed me pictures of women and gave me electric shocks [...] I had some type of bruising burn marks where they put the electrodes [...] I was very frightened and willing to do anything that they asked me to do so I wouldn’t be discharged.”**

**“I was working as an armourer on explosives and despite having been put on Anafranil<sup>17</sup> I was sent back to work, which was an extremely dangerous thing to do.”**

**“Every day I felt like a zombie after taking the tablets I was made to take. Dizzy, sick, like I said walking around like a zombie because I was made to take medication I didn’t need.”**

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17 Anafranil is the trade name for Clomipramine, a tricyclic antidepressant. Common side effects can include: concentration impaired; confusion; drowsiness and tremors.

[bnf.nice.org.uk/drugs/clomipramine-hydrochloride/#side-effects](https://bnf.nice.org.uk/drugs/clomipramine-hydrochloride/#side-effects)

### 3.6.2 Gender Dysphoria and variation in sexual characteristics

During the period covered by the Review, it appears that service personnel with Gender Dysphoria and wider transgender identity issues were not fully understood and it was routinely confused with homosexuality.

In one reported case, an Individual with variation in sexual characteristics (VSC)<sup>18</sup> was dismissed due to their condition.

**“I am not gay but am non binary, trans and pan sexual. At the time** not much was known about this. I was becoming severely depressed because I was not able to be myself...”

**“I was rushed straight into surgery during which time I was found to have** both male and some remnants of female organs. When I awoke I was in a ward by myself which seemed strange. The surgeon [...] explained that my condition was not compatible with service life.”

### 3.7 Investigation support

A key theme to come out of the testimony is the lack of support provided to those being investigated. Of those who detailed the support they were provided throughout investigations, 89% reported negative experiences. Of those who detailed their experiences of negative investigation support, 59% were female, 41% were male.

Many respondents stated that:

- Legal support was either not provided or the request was refused
- Personal support was not provided
- Rights of those being interviewed were not stated
- No offers to appeal were given
- Court martial and hearings offered no defence
- Discharged without real proof of relationships.

Many respondents stated that at no time throughout the investigation was advice or support offered or given. Individuals accused of homosexuality were not provided with pastoral support or care. In some cases legal support was denied when requested.

<sup>18</sup> Government documentation uses VSC as a preferred term, although this is by no means a statement on what terminology people should feel comfortable using

Many respondents also stated that they were interviewed without a caution being given or their rights explained.

If the investigation reached a hearing or court martial, several respondents reported that they had little or no legal support, and in a few cases were not even given an opportunity to provide a defence. One individual was given a pre-written statement to read in court, apologising about bringing shame to the service. The lack of legal advice and support could continue throughout the investigation, up to and including dismissal.

Many respondents who were dismissed stated that they were not told of any route to appeal or how to raise a grievance.

A few respondents were provided with legal support, either in person or via telephone. In one instance an officer gained the support of a friend who was a barrister. Some respondents were supported by a padre and medical staff.

A few respondents commented that their peers gave them moral support. However, there was a general lack of peer support. It was suggested that peers did not want to be associated with the person under investigation, in case they were investigated as well.

In some cases where support was provided, respondents note it was not adequate.

**“I was neither read any legal rights, offered no access to outside legal representation or any form of representation or contact with anybody else.”**

**“I was put before a court martial... My defending officer had not even spoken to me prior to the trial and put up no defence.”**

**“He also asked if I would like anyone to sit in with me for the interview with S.I.B, I said yes, the Welfare Officer. If I tell you that the Welfare Officer excused herself from the interview after just 10 minutes because the questions I was being asked were all too upsetting for her!”**

# 4. Post-service experience

## 4.1 Overview

We asked respondents how did dismissal or leaving the service impact their life post service – on their health and wellbeing (including physical and mental health), relationships (including service, family, friends, & partners), employability and career, housing and financial position.

The ban being lifted, or even just leaving service left many veterans feeling relief at not having to lie anymore and feeling free. Others, however, reported feeling abandoned, mentally broken, cast aside and considered that they were letting their family down. Many note that they felt fearful of coming out and closed their real self off from those around them.

Individuals' post-service experience was dependent on many factors, including their support network, official reason for leaving the service, their mental health and support available through support services.

There were some positive experiences. Some veterans returned to supportive families, some found their 'Red book' did not state the reason for dismissal as homosexuality or found employers that understood and supported them and some found positive support from services.

Others however found it much more difficult, coming home and being disowned by family, having difficulties securing employment, having their experience cause

a detrimental impact on their mental health and being excluded from support services. Some veterans struggled to identify with the LGBT community after leaving the service.

Upon requesting military records post service, some individuals were told they did not exist or received redacted copies. One individual noted that after a long journey to gaining access to their records, they were sent the records of other serving personnel with their own by the MoD.

One individual requested records about their investigation interview but were told by the military police that they could not be located and were likely destroyed.

Despite the ban being lifted, one individual's records still state they had committed a crime upon being called to provide DNA evidence for a historical crime many years later.

Some individuals went on to re-enlist later.

**“I returned to my old trade group as a reservist years later. The officer who interviewed me said ‘welcome back Corporal [...] we got it wrong the first time, it won’t happen again’.”**

## 4.2 Post-service employment

78% of LGBT veterans reported negative outcomes with their post service employment, compared to 22% reporting positive outcomes.

A few individuals noted they had to work twice as hard to make up for having to start from scratch again.

**“My salary and career prospects never matched up afterwards.”**

Of those who reported negative outcomes, key themes include:

- Being rejected from jobs due to criminal conviction or record of dismissal
- Finding it difficult to settle into jobs, nothing gave them the satisfaction that serving in the military did
- No job security
- No resettlement support
- Unable to secure employment due to poor mental health caused by experience serving under the ban
- Starting at the bottom rung of the career ladder
- Experiencing discrimination in employment to this day
- Salary never matching what they received in the military
- Having to refuse roles that required positive vetting
- Not feeling able to socialise with colleagues

- Having to work much harder than colleagues.

A few individuals reported resorting to sex work, theft or crime to make up for poor financial position after dismissal.

Others reported being asked unusual questions in interviews such as whether they were able to work with people of the same sex

**“I approached my local HMF Careers Office in 2018 to enquire about joining the Royal Naval Reserve. I disclosed the reason for my discharge which was immediately viewed with suspicion. This response discouraged me from proceeding with my application.”**

Another respondent noted that having a criminal record of gross indecency robbed the individual of their right to a private life, having to declare this everywhere.

One individual told prospective employers they’d misplaced their discharge papers which made it harder to get a job. They couldn’t claim benefits as they’d destroyed their evidence of discharge.

One individual noted they found a job that gave stimulation similar to the type of work they did in the military, however without the systems of safe working that the RAF had, the individual found the work consumed them and had a breakdown.

Several individuals mention if they had stated in the military they could have retired a lot sooner than they did.



Of those who reported positive outcomes, common themes include:

- Finding a satisfying civilian career
- Colleagues and organisations finding out about their reason for dismissal and supporting them
- Gaining further qualifications
- Received references from their military CO that were exemplary, helping them gain employment.

Several note that although they have had a successful career, they have had to work harder than they would have due to the knock on their confidence that the military caused.

Some individuals found success but also felt they had to put on a persona, to show happy, strong, confident when at times they felt they were dying.

**“I was the only male person to be recruited to the airline for the whole year which has always been something I have been extremely proud of; it was also essential for my well-being that I was ‘needed’ and ‘wanted’ again.”**

## 4.3 Veteran support service experience

We asked respondents what their experiences have been of veterans services, and how can services for veterans today be made more accessible and inclusive for LGBT veterans. This section covers respondents’ experience of veterans services.

Of those who mentioned veteran services, 39% had neutral experiences, 35% had negative experiences and 27% had positive experiences.

Those who reported neutral experiences mainly reported not engaging with veterans services and charities either due to not having any need to contact them or due to lack of knowledge about what veteran organisations offer.

Those who reported negative experiences said that they did not engage with veterans charities due to:

- Fear of encountering homophobia
- Not being able to consider using such services after spending their career having to conceal their true self
- Their previous experiences engaging with the support service.

Another barrier to accessing veterans services was the image that they were ‘filled with old men drinking, talking of the military’ A few recognise that veterans organisations have made attempts to become more LGBT friendly, but consider it just tokenism.

Respondents stated that they had experienced:

- Organisations refusing any help or support, including membership, because of their sexuality
- Encountering an overtly homophobic environment
- Encountering peers who had harassed or bullied them whilst in service
- A lack of understanding what LGBT veterans went through.

Although many of the poor experiences were historic, some respondents stated that negative attitudes still persisted. It was also suggested that the pro-LGBT messaging and initiatives from organisations' central office may have made a change at the centre, but it had made little-to-no difference at local level.

**“I have kept veterans services at arms-length, due to them being filled with many of the same sort of closed-minded and bigoted people I served with.”**

**“I have always felt completely excluded from any veterans' services, at least until very recently. For example, when I joined the Legion a few years ago, I went to my local branch with my husband (this would be about 4 years ago) and we were made to feel very unwelcome (this despite the clear support that the RBL has given us).”**

Those who had positive experiences of engaging with veteran organisations and services. Respondents said that their sexuality had never been an issue when dealing with veteran services. Engaging with services was an important way to make friends, accessing health and welfare services and finding a safe place.

Some respondents had been asked to share their experiences with other members, and found it a positive, supportive environment.

Positive responses have been made about Royal British Legion, SSAFA, Combat Stress, WRAC, Officers' Association, Guitars for veterans and Fighting with Pride. Respondents mentioned how veterans organisations helped them in gaining pensions and benefits.

Some spoke very positively about Rank Outsiders, an early LGBT organisation, and the contribution that organisation made to overturning the ban and the support they offered.

## 4.4 Finance

Financial outcomes were mentioned in a number of testimonies. 37% of LGBT veterans detailed having their finances negatively impacted after being discharged from the military.

Common themes include:

- Difficulty obtaining benefits
- Reliance on benefits
- Lacking financial resources or support

Some individuals reliant on benefits reported having no home, financial help, savings or pension. Many individuals reported struggling to get benefits due to being ineligible. For example, no fixed address meant individuals were not entitled to benefits. Being discharged with 'disgrace' meant individuals could not claim benefits until a certain amount of time had passed.

Some individuals stated that they did not know how to claim benefits due to their young age. Some misplaced their discharge papers rendering them ineligible. Others were told [by officials] that their military wage should last them, until they could claim.

Several LGBT veterans mentioned that the benefits wage was far less than the amount they received in their military pay. This often would lead to debt and financial difficulty.

Many individuals reported having no money and having to 'live off very little' to survive. For example, individuals reported having to use food banks and choosing to feed their dog(s) over themselves due to limited finances.

Where possible, some individuals were able to rely on family and friends for 'handouts' or financial support. A 'clean discharge' meant individuals were less likely to suffer any financial penalty or hardship in life after the military.

Some of the issues raised:

- Poverty causing health issues due to lack of food
- Resorting to sex work, theft and crime to make up for poor financial position after dismissal (also in post-employment section)
- Gambling addictions and debt
- Could not afford solicitors fees to sue the navy for unfair dismissal

- Buying self out of military contract left them in debt
- Long-term debt
- Unable to obtain a mortgage or life insurance due to registered status of being gay
- Pay was rarely comparable outside of the military. Even when take-home pay was similar, this had to stretch further as living costs are paid for you in the military
- Pay own way through university
- Bankruptcy
- Paying for therapy at their own cost
- Choosing to live outside of the mess to get more privacy cost a lot
- Finances are about living day-to-day.

One individual noted they were dismissed three months short of long service award that came with money. Another detailed that on arrest, their service kit had been collected from sleeping quarters. On discharge, final pay had deductions for the missing kit that was taken.

## 4.5 Pensions

Veterans reported receiving no pension because of their dismissal from the military. Respondents reported that pensions had been stripped from service personnel who were dismissed for homosexuality.

**“I am no longer entitled to a pension (however small).”**

Many stated that if it was not for their dismissal, they would have served for longer and received a higher pension. However, many found they were not eligible and had to survive off other means e.g. benefits or financial support from family and friends.

For some, the fear of losing a good pension meant they left the military through other means. For example, securing a medical discharge would maintain a limited pension. Others reported switching to private pensions as they were told they would not be allowed to withdraw their Service pension.

One respondent reported gaining their pension back, however, it was a long process spanning more than 2 decades.

## 4.6 Homelessness

11% of LGBT veterans who were forced to leave service, whether it be via formal routes or due to attitudes towards the LGBT community, reported being homeless at some point in their post-service life. For some, this was a short period immediately after leaving the military, staying on friends and families sofas or in a car while they searched for employment, but for others this was much longer term. A few indicated they will potentially be made homeless again in the future due to their lack of pension.

Key causes of homelessness reported include:

- Being unable to claim state support for a certain amount of time due to the nature of dismissal
- Feeling unable to return to their family, either due to not being comfortable explaining why they left the military, or because their family had already found out and were unsupportive. We note that in many cases, the military police outed individuals to their families without their consent
- Losing their homes due to the loss of employment
- Finding themselves in 'catch-22' situations, where they could not find accommodation due to having no money, but could not gain employment without a fixed address.

Impacts of homelessness include:

- Individuals becoming depressed and self-harming
- Feelings of shame causing individuals to close off their life, negatively impacting friendships and relationships
- Malnutrition
- Lack of opportunities to find a job due to not having a fixed address.

Several individuals recount being homeless during the winter across Scotland.

**“I ended up sleeping rough around [location] in freezing cold weather – it was in February.”**

One individual reported staying at a hostel and were the victim of a hate crime.

**“I was homeless for six months and was only saved because I passed out from malnutrition and some very kind gay guys took me in. They nursed me for four days and whilst I slept and fed me and helped me to move on and get my life into some sort of order.”**

## 4.7 Previous compensation

As part of the Call for Evidence we asked respondents whether they had received compensation following the 2000 ECHR judgement. 19% reported applying for compensation after their dismissal. Of that group, 46% received some sort of remedy or compensation.

A few respondents stated that they were part of a group, led by a firm of solicitors, with several reporting that they had been part of the taken legal action against the Ministry of Defence in 2000. They finally received compensation in 2008 with many feeling that the compensation awarded was not enough.

There was particular criticism of the Treasury Solicitor, who managed the claims on the government's behalf, due to the difficulty they posed in negotiating compensation; and unhappiness that a considerable proportion of any compensation was taken by legal fees.

Many respondents said that although they had applied for compensation, they were informed that they were too late and 'that the window had closed', particularly for those who had been dismissed in the 70s and 80s. Respondents stated that they were told that the MoD were not looking to compensate 'historical cases'.

Some respondents who knew of compensation did not claim as they:

- could not afford legal costs if they lost
- did not want to bring it to the attention of family, claiming would have 'outed' themselves
- could not face remembering their experience.

Many respondents stated that they were unaware of compensation being available.

# 5. Health

## 5.1 Overview

This section explores the impacts on individuals' health, both physical and mental, caused by experiences serving under the ban. In our Call for Evidence we specifically ask how the ban, and any dismissal, impacted life post dismissal from service including health and wellbeing (including physical and mental health). Of those LGBT veterans who reported negative and positive health impacts, 99% reported negative health impacts.

Many individuals report that conversations with military medical professionals were not in confidence. This is reported both in the case of conversations about being LGBT and about other issues such as depression.

Many individuals noted that the ban led to the inability of military medical staff to properly care for an LGBT personnel experiencing mental health issues.

## 5.2 Mental health

### 5.2.1 Suicide and Self harm

There were reports of LGBT peers dying by suicide and self-reports of clear intention to attempt suicide. 17% of LGBT veterans detailed experiences of self harm and suicide. Of that group, 60% were male and 40% were female. Some respondents stated that they had known colleagues to die by suicide, due to harassment for their sexuality.

**“she was bullied throughout her RN career as she looked ‘typically gay’ and she hung herself on her ship – she will never have her voice heard.”**

Several individuals reported self harming, with one individual reporting that a friend started self harming after being made homeless post dismissal.

Respondents reported attempted suicide and suicidal thoughts following investigation or dismissal for homosexuality. Suicide ideation and attempted suicide was reported more often by men than women.

Some reasons given for considering suicide include:

- fear of prison
- meeting abusers again
- shame.



Suicidal ideation was mentioned alongside substance abuse and depression, as co-occurring issues.

It was reported that military personnel had readily accessible means to attempt suicide e.g. access to weapons. Other methods of suicide were considered e.g. jumping off a window ledge, jumping under a train or dying in the wilderness.

**“I would go to the toilet block on night duty, cock my pistol, take the safety off, push it against my head and squeeze the trigger....right up to the point I knew it would go off.”**

There were few references to mental health support. Some individuals claimed that they lacked much needed support or follow up after incidents of self harm. For example, gay individuals were considered ‘low risk’ by doctors and psychiatrists despite several attempts of suicide.

For several respondents, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts continued post dismissal or after leaving the service.

**“I was totally broken and didn’t want to go on, I took myself to a quiet corner folded up a £5 note into a sharp edge and repeatedly slit at my wrists causing deep cuts and lots of bleeding. I wanted to end it all.”**

## 5.2.2 Anxiety

9% of LGBT veterans reported experiencing anxiety either during service or post leaving, attributed to their experience while serving. Some reported that the effects only lasted for a short time, while many still feel the impacts of this today. Impacts reported include:

- Panic and anxiety attacks
- Panic disorder
- Low confidence and self-esteem
- Difficulty sleeping
- Social anxiety
- Solitary life, recluse or housebound
- Paranoia
- Hair loss.

Many individuals reported ongoing professional treatment for their anxiety, either through medications or medical professionals.

**“The fear of being discovered caused debilitating anxiety.”**

A few individuals report that their anxiety is so severe it prevents them from reaching out for help.

One individual reported that pursuing heterosexual relationships during service caused them anxiety.

### 5.2.3 Depression

15% of LGBT veterans reported depression either during service or after leaving service attributed to the trauma they experienced while serving under the ban. Many reported being formally diagnosed and treated for depression and were still being affected by it to this day. Experiences range from dysthymia (persistent mild depression) to severe clinical depression.

Common impacts reported include:

- Feelings of worthlessness
- Being unable to work
- Overwhelmed and deflated
- Lonely.

One individual noted that they had depression while serving but army psychiatrists were prevented from properly diagnosing them due to the anti-homosexual regime.

A few individuals report being placed on very strong medication by military medical professionals.

Only a few individuals reported recovering from depression.

### 5.2.4 Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

6% of LGBT veterans reported suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) since leaving the service, many of whom are still experiencing it to this day. Commonly reported triggers include:

- Seeing authority figures such as police officers
- Hearing the names of those who caused harm while in service
- Hearing sounds at night (likened to room searches)
- Seeing mess in a bedroom (likened to room searches).

Commonly reported symptoms include:

- Flashbacks
- Panic attacks
- Nightmares
- Triggers of the trauma that bring on 'blackness' and tears.

**“The SIB tore my bunk apart, looking for photos, letters – looking for ‘evidence’.** I had to watch as they gleefully went through my dirty washing, my bedding, my underwear, all of my personal belongings, which were strewn all over my bunk. When they had finished it was just left for me to tidy up. Even today, I cannot bear to see mess in a bedroom; it triggers this traumatic memory.”

**“The trauma, left a lasting mark so that whenever something triggers memories of the event it brings back a blackness and still brings tears.”**

One individual reported their PTSD stemmed from sexual abuse suffered at the hands of a trusted friend.

**“My mental health has been a constant battle.”**

**“the mental cost of keeping that lie going would be intolerable.”**

## 5.2.5 Other mental health issues

Respondents reported a range of other mental health impacts attributed to their experiences serving under the ban. Commonly reported impacts include:

- Bipolar type 2 – stressful situations often trigger the symptoms of bipolar disorder<sup>19</sup>
- Agoraphobia or social phobia
- Post-traumatic embitterment disorder
- Insomnia
- Emotional distress
- Mental, emotional, or psychological trauma
- Eating disorders rooted in sexual orientation which meant the individual could not get support
- Mental breakdowns
- Paranoia
- Cognitive dissonance
- Panic and fear if someone is positioned behind them
- Melancholia
- being sectioned under the Mental Health Act.

These impacts have been attributed to adversely affecting individuals' life outcomes in varying amounts, from causing poor physical health to causing strain on relationships. Many individuals note the lack of high quality support provided by health professionals due to a lack of understanding of the impact of the ban. Others noted finding supportive

and understanding mental health professionals, however, reported that healing only started recently.

Of those who had supportive families, individuals note the adverse mental health impacts on said family members due to taking the role of ‘mental health professional’ when actual mental health professionals were unequipped to help.

One individual recounted being ridiculed by the police and treated like a child due to the mental health issues caused by their service.

A few individuals noted that they were aware of their deteriorating mental health while in service but were unable to access support due to the risk of being found out.

**“That was mentally and psychologically crushing.”**

**“it was necessary to listen to, and accept, homophobic ‘jokes’** and commentary which mocked, demeaned and undermined people like me [...] A culture which allows or encourages these attitudes and behaviours (actively reinforced by the systemic exclusion and criminalisation of gay servicemen and women) is deeply corrosive to individual self-worth and mental health.”

## 5.3 Physical health

Individuals reported a range of physical health issues attributed directly to, or caused secondarily, by impacts of the ban. These include:

- Comfort eating
- Poor and minimal diet due to finances
- Weight loss due to worry and having little money to survive on
- Weight gain due to letting physical fitness slide
- Becoming physically ill due to the stress the lies put on their body
- Crohn’s disease triggered by stress and anxiety
- Eating disorders
- Issues sleeping
- Stress-induced gut pain.

One individual reported that they developed cervical cancer. Due to lack of education around the causes, they did not realise lesbians could get cervical cancer. When asked by health professionals if they had had sex with a man they did not realise this would include being raped.

Several individuals reported entering sex work to survive. Others reported practising unsafe sexual behaviour.

One individual reported being later diagnosed with Klinefelter Syndrome which could have affected their behaviour. Symptoms of this were noticed by military medical personnel who failed to act on them.

### 5.3.1 Substance abuse

12% of LGBT veterans reported that during service or after leaving service they consumed recreational drugs or alcohol in excess with many becoming dependent on them. Reported common triggers for this behaviour include:

- As a coping mechanism for the discrimination faced during service
- As a sedative to help the individual sleep due to feelings of fear of getting caught
- To forget about the trauma experienced
- To lower inhibitions and enable the individual to enter opposite-sex relationships to prevent suspicion
- As a coping mechanism for poor mental health
- To help them get through day-to-day life due to their time in the military causing them to believe having homosexual tendencies was wrong
- To numb the feeling of loneliness.

The impacts reported of this excessive alcohol consumption include:

- Receiving severe reprimands during service
- Being discharged for drug use
- Admission to hospital
- Preventing the seeking, gaining and retaining of employment
- Experiencing health issues later in life due to the damage the alcohol and drugs caused.

Individuals attribute the military attitude to drinking as an enabler and meant that their relationship with alcohol was accepted.

**“cut down on the amount I drank. This did not go unnoticed and I would of get comments of ‘woss’, and occasionally ‘your not turning queer are you?’”**

**“Had I had support, I would not have reached for alcohol, I would not have pretended to be someone I wasn’t, I would have been far happier and I would not have left as early as I did.”**

The majority of respondents to reported substance abuse did so after leaving service.

One individual’s therapist believes the discharge was the seed event leading to a period of substance abuse.

One individual was diagnosed with alcohol dependence syndrome.

## Special Topic: Sexual Health

One of the outcomes of the ban on homosexuality was the absence of information in the military on sexual health for LGB people, particularly on HIV and AIDS, or appropriate treatment. This meant that some service personnel contracted STDs whilst in service, or outside of service, due to lack of knowledge.

It has been suggested that the lack of sexual health information put gay and bisexual men, and their partners, including opposite sex partners, at elevated risk from STDs including HIV.

As anyone in the military system who was diagnosed with HIV could be dismissed for being gay, some personnel who had been diagnosed as HIV+ did not disclose their diagnosis and attempted to manage symptoms themselves.

**“I engaged in high risk sexual activity, sheltered from sexual health advice and education in the army – I contracted HIV.”**

A few respondents reported that they were discharged from the military for being HIV+ and not being gay.

# 6. Relationships

## 6.1 Overview

Being forced to come out affected individuals' relationships with everyone – some found acceptance from friends, family and acquaintances, however many relationships did not fare so well.

Overall, 60% reported negative relationship impacts, while 10% reported positive impacts.

Many individuals found they could never feel proud to be gay and this affected all relationships as they did not feel able to be honest.

Many reported feelings of unease and suspicions of the motives of authority figures such as the police, with immediate presumption that they are there to cause them harm. For some, these suspicions extended to everyone they met.

Many found that they were unable to trust in medical professionals or chaplaincy as they were instructed to override confidentiality and report suspected gay individuals.

One individual reported that using a professional title (e.g. DR) over 'Miss' saves them from having to explain not having a husband and feels it offers them credibility as a human.

Several individuals noted that they rarely tell anyone about their sexuality for fear of prosecution, and for a long time after leaving the army felt they could be prosecuted still.

## 6.2 Family

Family relationships were a key theme throughout testimonies. Of those who described their relationship with their families, 85% of LGBT veterans report negative experiences with their family relationships following investigation or discharge while 15% reported positive experiences.

Individuals who had a positive experience largely attributed this to having supportive relationships. This had a positive and powerful impact on their lives. Some individuals expected negative responses or rejection from their families yet received warm, loving responses instead.

Supportive families (i.e. parents and siblings) often helped individuals affected by the ban return home to live, as opposed to being left homeless.

One individual considered themselves one of the 'lucky ones' as they were able to return home and be supported (emotionally and financially) by their family.

Common themes amongst LGBT veterans who had negative experiences included:

- Individuals lying to family about why they were discharged due to embarrassment and shame. This lying caused many individuals to hide their 'true self' from those closest to them, leading to feelings of guilt and stress. Several individuals reported feeling guilt for lying to family members, especially those whose parents have died not 'knowing the truth'



- Family members responding negatively to finding out an individual had been discharged from the military for being gay. Some parents disowned their children and did not allow them to return to their family homes. Others were shunned and became estranged from their families (including their own children), for a number of years or even throughout their lifetimes. Common emotional responses of families include: embarrassment, disgust, outrage and shame
- Fear of their families knowing the truth about an individual's sexuality or reason for discharge, to the point where some individuals chose homelessness to avoid it.

Some individuals reported still leading a closeted life to this day, with one individual only telling the truth to their mother about their sexuality and discharge recently.

Many individuals reported being 'outed' or being forced to admit their sexuality to their family members despite not being ready to. This was a result of being investigated, discharged or directly contacted by the military police.

A few individuals reported family members finding out about their sexuality through a News of the World article which named a number of people involved in a 'scandal'. Others had the Service informing their parents about their child's sexuality due to them being under the legal age for homosexuality, which was 21 years of age at the time.

Individuals who had other family members in the military felt particular strain. It was reported that a serving parent refused to speak to their child for a number of years and even threatened to report them to the Service Police for being gay. Other family members claimed that they were unable to get a promotion in the Service due to being linked to a LGB individual.

Several individuals note that secrets were formed in their family due to one parent, often their mother, finding out about their sexuality. There were several reports of mothers begging their child not to tell their fathers or siblings the truth of their sexuality or discharge. Often these secrets also led to further estrangement from family members.

The reported impact of negative family relationships include:

- Closeted lives
- Damage to mental health
- Loneliness and isolation
- Estrangement from family members.

**“I had to out myself to my family, before I had even truly come to terms with my sexuality. My mother was outwardly extremely supportive, as she hated injustice as much as I did.”**

**“I was one of the ‘lucky ones’ in that my parents let me come home to live.”**

**“I come from a military family with my father a proud serving Naval officer for over 25 years my life ambitions were to follow his footsteps. I feel a failure.”**

**“My father passed away many years ago and he died not knowing the true me as I kept this from him. This haunts me daily.”**

## 6.3 Friendships inside and outside the military

Many LGBT veterans recounted the impact of the ban on their relationships with peers and friends from back home, with many noting that military friends tended to be friends for life. Of those who described their relationship with their friends and peers, 90% of LGBT veterans report negative experiences with their friendships following investigation or discharge while 10% reported positive experiences. Some individuals retained their friends through their experience serving, recounting positive support from their peers, while many LGBT veterans experienced negative treatment from those they once called ‘friend’.

Key themes include:

- Having no friends outside of the army due to the age they entered
- Being disowned by friends when they came out. This includes both pre-service and military friends. There was a clear stigma associated with being gay which resulted in the loss of friendships. Existing friends distanced themselves from suspected or outed individuals, or even turned against them and started bullying. It was reported that friends were afraid to socialise in case they were thought to also be gay (regardless if they were or not)
- Strained relationships with military friends for fear they would also be investigated or thought less of. Some individuals found lying to their friends about the reason for their departure mentally challenging

- Having toxic relationships with friends
- Avoiding difficult conversations for fear of rejection
- Not feeling comfortable with new friends due to how they were treated before
- Finding it difficult to create and maintain friendships due to lack of trust.

It was also reported that some military friends felt betrayed and turned their backs on the individual. This was both figuratively and literally – leaving the room when a ‘gay’ individual entered.

The impact of this included:

- Feeling isolated
- Feeling shunned
- unable to enjoy social activities
- having little or few friends due to trust issues
- feeling wary of new people and for fear of them discovering the truth behind them leaving
- avoiding crowds, social events and anywhere where they may have the opportunity to reveal the past.

After leaving the military, a number of individuals reported losing all of their friendships. This resulted in having to start over, creating a new life for themselves with new friends. Many individuals found it difficult to make new friends in the civilian world because of trust issues or inability to connect with people. Some individuals stated that they prefer to lead a closed life and remain suspicious of others motives to this day.

It was reported that the LGBT world was challenging to negotiate. One individual stated they had no gay friends and were afraid to go to gay bars, while others were only able to make friends within the LGBT community.

One individual had to navigate a ‘second adolescence’ to learn who they were, without the support of friends or family.

Several reported that many peers were genuinely saddened by the prospect of the individual’s departure.

Some individuals reported having good, strong relationships with long term friends. These friendships were vital in getting individuals feel supported through investigations or discharge. Several individuals recalled friends letting them stay with them until they were able to find employment after their dismissal.

Others recall their friends and peers protecting them from potential investigation. Not everyone in the military agreed with the ban.

**“The hardest thing was then coming out to friends and undoing the lie, the double life I had fabricated, and admitting that I had not trusted them. Some were deeply hurt by that.”**

**“my unit did protect me from the military police and actually posted me away from my unit to keep me safe from abuse and attacks but this was due to my RSM and a CO of another unit.”**

**“all my friends disowned me and avoided any contact in fear of the finger of suspicion aimed at them.”**

**“I met my old unit commander six months ago. He said that it was one of the worst memories he had, that he continued to feel ashamed for his forced actions towards me and considered my loss to have been substantially the airforces.”**

## 6.4 Partners

Of those who described their relationship with their partners, 88% of LGBT veterans reported negative impacts due to how serving under the ban affected them. Only 12% reported positive impacts.

Of those who reported positive impacts, key themes include:

- Having stayed with the partner at time of dismissal to this day
- Opposite-sex spouse being supportive of the individual’s gender identity
- Opposite-sex ex-spouse staying life-long friends
- The relief of being able to be a visible married couple in civilian life
- Having a stable relationship now
- Partner supports them with their mental health journey.

Some individuals chose to leave service to protect the career of their still serving partner.

Key themes during-service include:

- Hiding sexuality through entering heterosexual marriages. Some spouses threatened to ‘out’ individuals, with some following through
- Being posted apart from partner causing stress
- Entering heterosexual relationships to prove they were straight

- Hiding their partner from their family to this day
- Having only their partner as their support network put strain on the relationship
- Being unable to comfort a partner admitted to military hospital.

Of those who reported negative impacts, we can split this further into experiences during-service and post-service.

Key themes post-service include:

- Never entering or taking many years to enter meaningful relationships
- Partners becoming hostile upon finding out the individual is LGBT and in some cases, denying access to children
- Having secret relationships affected the quality of the relationship and at a detriment to their mental health
- Relationships breaking down due to stress
- Unhealthy sexual relationships
- Keeping their service history secret from spouse
- Difficulty forming relationships due to experiences in a previous relationship where the partner found out the individual was LGBT and used it against them
- Struggling to be open and honest with partners
- Entering abusive or unhealthy relationships due to vulnerability or thinking it was normal due to how they were treated during-service.

A few individuals reported having their same-sex partner sign correspondence as the opposite sex to avert any suspicion.

Several individuals recounted protecting their partner with some ending up outed by them to get a better posting.

Many individuals entered heterosexual relationships to enhance the image that they were straight. Many recount negative feelings about having to lead people on and ‘wreck their lives.’

**“I am quite clear that serving under the ban has negatively affected my approach and ability to form emotional relationships.”**

Some found it difficult to form relationships when their beliefs caused them to see their sexuality as wrong.

One individual had their partner pretend to be engaged to their sibling – even requested permission from CO for the partner and brother to marry.

**“Never felt good enough for any relationship as the army drummed it into me I wasn’t allowed to have these feelings.”**

**“The long term effect of all of this was for me to trust no-one on a personal level, which is completely contrary to the whole military ethos whereby you must trust, and be trusted by, all those you work / live / fight with.”**

One individual reported feeling a lack of relationship maturity due to having to hide sexuality in the years where one would be exploring relationships.

Partners parents threatened to report individual.

One individual recounted not being allowed to attend the funeral of partner while serving.

# 7. Friends and family

As part of the Call for Evidence, we also sought testimony from family, friends and representatives of LGBT service personnel who could not respond to the Review, for whatever reason. We received 38 responses from this group.

A strong theme is how family members in military service kept their sexuality hidden from the rest of the family. Many reported that they only found out about a person's sexuality when they were dismissed from service.

The negative impact of dismissal and outing of an individual could be exacerbated by homophobic attitudes within their family, mostly by parents. This could result in the person being estranged from their family for many years. Siblings, usually younger ones, did not understand why they no longer saw their brother or sister, as the reason for the estrangement from their sibling was not explained. Several veterans were left homeless following dismissal as their family would not accept them.

However, several respondents reported that the individual was fully accepted by the family and that the family resented the way the military had treated them. This was not always enough – one respondent stated that a gay son would not return home after being dismissed due to shame, and became homeless, even though the family was fully supportive of them.

Many spoke of the isolation their siblings felt in service continuing in civilian life, where they were unable to form attachments, either in their personal life or in employment.

Others spoke about how people were 'frozen out' of the military community. One respondent said that not one person from the army had turned up to their father's funeral because he was gay, even though he had served 24 years.

**“Sadly my wife passed away, knowing that the army in which she served her Queen & Country though she was a disgrace because of who she chose to love.”**

Other themes raised:

- Damage to the individual's self-esteem and confidence
- Turning to substance abuse and reports of early deaths as a consequence
- Mental health problems caused by the ban or dismissal, including self-harm, eating disorders, suicide attempts and death by suicide
- Financial difficulties due to loss of a career.

The ban had an impact on other family members. In one instance a gay son did not come out to his parents as he did not want to impact his father's position in the air force. Families reported that individuals had to be careful of who they dated, as dating someone from the same base may have risked 'outing' them.

The suggestions put forward by friends and family generally reflect those raised by LGBT veterans. They thought it was important to acknowledge the ban was a mistake and have the government apologise for it, for veterans to be able to tell their story and make all the information about the ban public, so the full story can be told.

**“The review has the opportunity to be a part of the healing process, a chance for those traumatised by their ill-treatment to be heard.”**



# 8. Non-LGBT-Veterans

As part of the Call for Evidence, we sought testimony from non-LGBT individuals who served between 1967 and 2000 who witnessed the implementation of the ban. We received 415 responses from this group.

The majority of non-LGBT respondents disagreed with the ban. Many noted they were pleased the ban was overturned.

Other responses highlighted that many were and still are unaware of the issues faced by LGBT veterans. Many viewed the issues as non-existent in today's society. This directly contradicts 6% of non-LGBT responses which contained homophobic content.

Not all LGBT veterans agreed with the Review. One non LGBT individual responded to the Review as they thought it was useful, whereas their LGBT veteran friend reported to have said it was 'pointless wokeism'.

**“The ban reinforced homophobia and its legacy casts a shadow.”**

**“I witnessed a warrant reading [...] It was clearly not sufficient to expose his supposed ‘crime’, but necessary to attempt to use his humiliation as a deterrence.”**

## 8.1 Support of the ban

All non-LGBT responses were thoroughly read, with a minority of 6% containing text supportive of the ban.

Key themes coming through these responses include:

- Respondents agreeing with the ban
- Respondents requesting the ban be put back in place
- Justifying the ban due to the risk of blackmail
- Detailing experiences of the LGBT rumour-mill causing unrest
- The ban seeming normal at the time
- The ban being ‘for the best’ due to societal views
- Descriptions of the situation as an ‘unnatural act between men’
- Noting that the policy should be viewed based on context of the time.

Many regarded the situation as ‘the law as the law’, and that LGBT personnel broke the law:

**“The ban was justified by the then current laws.”**

The lifting of the ban was given as a reason not to join the military for one family member:

**“my own graduate daughter did not join the RN as an engineer officer as she had no wish to serve in close proximity to homosexual personnel 24 / 7.”**

## 8.2 During Service

We asked non-LGBT veterans whether they witnessed people being treated unfavourably due to their sexuality or perceived sexuality. 51% noted that they had witnessed unfavourable treatment due to sexuality or perceived sexuality.

Key themes about witnessed incidents during usual service include:

- ‘Brutal banter’
- Covert bullying
- Verbal and physical abuse
- Physical and sexual assault
- Seeing colleagues being coerced into same-sex relationships
- Senior personnel being actively hostile to anyone that they suspected could be gay
- Junior personnel actively trying to help protect those under suspicion
- Recruits being questioned by medical staff to find ‘lesbian traits.’

Some non-LGBT personnel were informally interviewed to try and out LGBT colleagues.

One person noted that they witnessed minimal unfair treatment, and this was usually accompanied by an individual trying to get out of service.

A number of respondents reported being the victim of bullying and harassment by LGBT people; or witnessing LGBT and non-LGBT service personnel acting as the perpetrator in bullying and abuse incidents, usually towards someone of a differing sexual orientation to the individual. It was noted several times that LGBT individuals would join in with the bullying to avoid suspicion being cast on themselves.

A large proportion of respondents noted that when they served, themselves and their peers had no issues with LGBT colleagues so they ‘turned a blind eye’ and thus they did not witness any mistreatment. Some noted that they would receive comms from senior management to keep opinions on potential LGBT colleagues to themselves. Some non-LGBT veterans stated that gay and lesbian personnel were known of, but were not investigated – one individual reported that lesbian women were ‘tactically tolerated’.

Several non-LGBT respondents stated that they were chaplains and provided pastoral care to LGBT personnel. One chaplain mentioned that they would allow LGBT personnel to confide in them, and provided advice to help them avoid suspicion.

**“I joined as a chaplain [...] I was told by the Principal that ‘the normal provisions of the Seal of the Confessional apply, except where any serviceman/woman confessed to any LGBT thought or behaviour when they were to be reported to RAF P&SS.”**

A few noted they were unaware of the ban existing.

Several respondents note working in areas with many known LGBT personnel, where they felt excluded as they were not LGBT.

**“you saw good people being forced to leave.”**

**“Homophobia didn’t disappear with the ban.”**

**“In the military you either conformed, and were seen to conform during both work and leisure time, or you were ostracised.”**

## 8.3 Investigation

Of non-LGBT respondents, 17% stated that they were involved in implementing and enforcing the ban. Interestingly, of those who were involved in implementing and enforcing the ban, 31% stated they did not witness any unfavourable treatment.

Key themes of witnessed incidents through investigations include:

- Witnessing raids
- Letters being intercepted
- Rooms being searched for evidence whilst they were out on exercise
- People being removed from post, regardless of performance – with rumours associated with their sexuality
- Witnessing peers' promotion prospects being reduced due to their alleged sexuality.

Of those who reported enforcing the ban, key themes include:

- Working as part of raids
- Working as medical officers investigating suspected LGBT personnel.

**“Even measuring the gap between their beds, if it was too close that was recorded as positive evidence.”**

One respondent noted they never saw evidence of a witch hunt.

Several respondents recall feeling as if the ban was enforced for men but broadly ignored for women. Others respondents said in general men were prosecuted, whereas women were administratively discharged. It was noted that lesbians tended to be more widely accepted and therefore far more visible than gay men, who were far less tolerated.

**“Even joking around in the mess and calling someone a poof would result in an investigation by military police involving locker searches.”**

**“we’d seen enough to know it was wrong to treat someone this way.”**

**“SIB came on board and treated the officers like criminals, causing a great deal of distress [...] One officer was so distressed the XO asked other members of the Wardroom to pay special attention in case of self-harm.”**

## 8.4 Suggestions

The majority of suggestions from non-LGBT veterans reflect those raised by LGBT veterans. They thought it was important that:

- The government apologise and acknowledge the service of service LGBT veterans
- Awards and medals are returned including an LGBT badge
- Compensation is provided and pensions reinstated
- Diversity and inclusion training in MOD and the military is effective
- Charities and organisations have financial support for diversity and inclusion training and accreditation
- LGBT veterans are fully integrated into veteran life, including as visible role models
- Support service communications targetting LGBT veterans
- Records are updated.

A few non-LGBT respondents stated that those LGBT personnel who sexually assaulted others should not receive compensation.

**“But I don’t believe an apology should be made for applying what was law at the time.”**

# 9. Recommendations

We asked respondents how services could be improved for LGBT veterans, and how their service could be recognised.

The themes which emerged from this section are:

- Apologies
- Return of awards and medals
- Compensation
- Pension
- Updating records
- Diversity training
- Badge
- Stories
- Military community
- Health services.

## 9.1 Apology from Government

The most called for request, with 294 responses, is for an apology for the treatment of LGBT service personnel under the ban. A public apology is necessary to recognise the harm experienced by many under the ban, to make clear that those who suffered under the ban are part of the military family and for public recognition of their service.

A strong theme from respondents is that the apology should be given by a very senior individual. Many mentioned the Monarch as the Commander in Chief.

Respondents considered that the apology should recognise the pain and suffering that had been caused by the ban, a description of how the ban was implemented, the investigation process, the lack of legal representation and the impact on people who were dismissed. Several respondents pointed out that an apology needed to recognise that the ban was wasteful and many service personnel, with exemplary records, were dismissed for no lawful reason.

Apart from a public apology, many suggested a written apology should be provided as well. It was also suggested that where the veteran is no longer living a posthumous apology should be made to the veteran's nearest living relative, next of kin, husband, wife or partner.

**“I would like to see that every one of us affected by the ban is provided with a written and public apology from the highest levels within the MOD, Government and State.”**

Some respondents requested that veteran organisations should apologise for their past behaviour towards LGBT veterans.

**“Armed Forces charities have been complicit and accepting of homophobia for a significant amount of their existence and have done little to address or change this view; except a minimal amount of lip service to ensure contributions from corporate donors where financial contribution would be impacted.”**

## 9.2 Compensation

There was a substantial call for compensation to be made to those who had suffered under the ban. 264 individuals had made requests for compensation.

Several reasons for compensation were made:

- The humiliation experienced whilst serving
- For loss of earnings from premature dismissal, pension loss and loss of career opportunities
- Reparation, particularly those who had undergone traumatic interviews by the Special investigation Branch (SIB)
- consequences in the civilian world for people forced out of the armed forces, such as not being able to gain suitable employment following dismissal, homelessness
- Many viewed their dismissal had led to substance abuse, mental health problems and alienation from family and society
- It was felt that because Canada has already provided compensation to LGBT veterans who had gone through the 'Purge', the UK Government should do the same.

Respondents considered that being offered anything less than financial compensation was insulting as it was the only acceptable example of restorative justice the government could offer. There were a number of calls for full expected service to be compensated. However, a few respondents disagreed with compensation being offered, or noted that compensation should be limited.

**“They can’t give me my career back so all I would expect them to do is to financially compensate us for what we have lost and the pain and humiliation they have caused.”**

Respondents suggested that a fund should be set up, along the lines of the Canadian Purge Fund settlement, in order to provide compensation. Some respondents said that there should be no involvement of government lawyers (the ‘Treasury solicitors’), who had reduced the settlements paid out in the 2000s following the ECHR decision.

It was suggested that the compensation fund needed to be endowed by an agreed amount and be established over a limited time period, sufficient for all so affected by the ban to apply for recompense. There needed to be an easy, but also rigorous, process both to ensure speed but also to ensure that only those eligible are passed through for consideration. It was also suggested that a sliding scale so those who were most adversely affected by the ban receive a more significant settlement than those less affected.

## 9.3 Updating Records

157 respondents asked for service records of veterans to be updated – for offences and any references to being LGBT to be removed – and reissued. Respondents considered that their sexuality and gender identity should have no bearing on their record. As the ban on homosexuality was declared unlawful, any marking due to the ban should be removed. They consider updating their records part of the restorative justice they deserve.

Respondents stated that those service people who were given criminal records, or were administratively dismissed, for homosexuality, should be pardoned or have their offences be disregarded.

Several respondents noted that their current record would deny them access to services, and prevent them from being identified as a veteran. Having updated records would make them feel as full veterans and engage with services.

Any references to dishonourable discharge, or ‘services no longer required’ due to sexuality should be removed.



A few respondents had said that they had already sought access to their records. Some responded that there had been inconsistencies in the record or that they had been destroyed.

For many veterans, their certificate of service was recorded in a paper record, known as the 'Red book'. Many respondents called for their 'Red book' to be reissued with their updated status.

It was also noted that records for transgender veterans may include deadnaming and should be reissued in their chosen name.

**“A public pardon would help, I think some LGBT+ veterans that were dishonorably discharged may believe that they are not entitled to any veterans’ services.”**

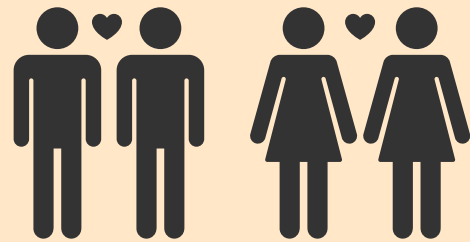
**“Something to show we left in honour, not in disgrace [...] Every time I look at my discharge paper and it I see it says ‘dismissed’ it makes me feel great shame, loss and brings up painful memories and emotions, and so I can not look on it.”**

## 9.4 Support services

131 respondents called for:

- better regulation of support services, to ensure all support services are inclusive
- More inclusive promotion of services, to raise awareness of what support is available and who for.

Key suggested improvements for support services include:



Same sex-partners should be treated equally to opposite-sex partners.

Offering gender specific services.

Promoting LGBT safe spaces.



Role models in the organisations.



Having a dedicated LGBT representative or section that can provide support and advice to those impacted.



Publicly reaffirming their stances with LGBT veterans and personnel, not just being tolerant but accepting and celebrating diversity. Specifically, acknowledging that LGBT veterans who served under the ban are entitled to support.

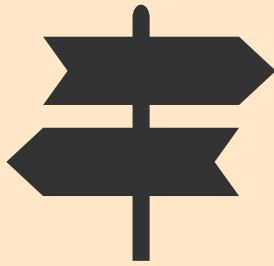
Organisations must condemn any instance of discrimination.

Holding staff accountable for their behaviour, performance and inclusiveness.



Diversity of membership should be representative of the armed forces.

Military leavers being told what support services are available upon leaving.



Signposting to other support that the service does not offer themselves.

Better mental health support, specifically for LGBT veteran issues. Priority pathways for those who suffered due to the ban.



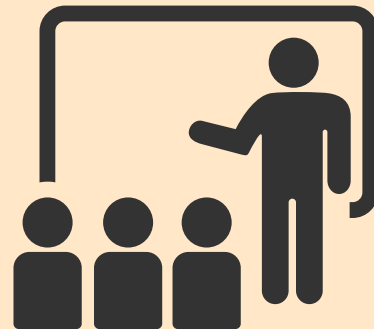
Organisations should initiate contact with leavers rather than the other way around. Some veterans are fearful to approach them.



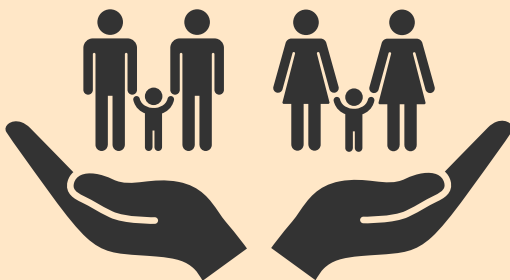
Having inclusive documentation, e.g. sign up forms, promotional materials, website etc.



Offering support to those affected by the ban as they would have been entitled if they had left by usual routes, e.g. housing, welfare, health, education etc.



Training to educate on language and behaviours, and ensuring prejudices and negative attitudes are challenged. LGBT veterans should be included in designing such training.



Support for families is hetero-normalised currently and needs reforming to enable effective support of families of LGBT veterans.

Using diverse imagery and language in their literature. There should be clear representation of both LGBT and women through imagery and language.

It was noted that benchmarking of the services provided would enable veterans to make informed decisions when accessing support services. With a further suggestion that charities found to not be inclusive should have charitable status removed.

It was noted that some charities have been complicit in accepting homophobia and have done little to address or change this view.

It was noted that female LGBT veterans experience barriers not just for LGBT but for being women too and that organisations and their boards may not fully understand the issues and barriers faced by female LGBT veterans in accessing services.

A number of individuals requested that support services acknowledge any historical wrongdoings and promote the changes they have made. This would be beneficial to those who may have been hurt by the support service in the past.

## 9.5 Pension

Closely tied in with calls for compensation was the suggestion that pensions for veterans should be reinstated. This was one of the highest ranked suggestions, with almost 127 veterans requesting it.

Respondents considered that a pension should be offered to LGBT veterans, as either they were stripped of their pension as part of their dismissal, or they were forced out early, either due to dismissal or due to the environment they worked in.

Some respondents stated that apart from not being recompensed for the time served, a pension should also be offered in light of the mistreatment veterans had experienced.

A number of responses requested that LGBT veterans be awarded a full 22 year pension, as that is the length of service they would have served had they not been dismissed.

Many respondents requested access to the pension which they are entitled to.

**“Would be nice to have a pension as I served six years. Now I am retired (74 years old) and only have a state pension to live off.”**

**“I was prepared to give 22 years of my life to the Navy and in return, I would have received a good pension.”**

**“I have tried many times over the years to try and access my military pension with no success, this pension money would be a great help.”**

## 9.6 Return of awards and medals

There was a call for medals and awards to be reinstated and returned where they had been removed as a part of dismissal, with 125 calling for this. This included the return of commissions, warrants, badges and other medals which had been removed.

Apart from the medals and awards that were earned and removed, some respondents said that awards which they would have earned had they not been dismissed, should also be awarded

Several respondents asked that the Ministry of Defence should set up a straightforward process for the return of the awards and medals.

**“Give them any medals they would’ve missed out on eg Jubilee medals and LSGC<sup>20</sup> medals which they should have received if they had not been dismissed.”**

**“To be given any badges or memorial materials that my naval colleagues got that I missed out of, for example, the WRNS disbanded and became part of the Royal Navy, and they were given little badges to commemorate this. I want one, ditto any other things given out.”**

**“Those who had their medals removed in the humiliating court martial ritual of ripping them from uniforms should have them restored via a process that is easy and straightforward to use and is widely advertised to all those affected.”**

## 9.7 Diversity training

49 respondents called for better diversity training to be offered, mainly within the military but also within support organisations in the third sector and education.

### In the military

- Ensure diversity training is mandatory so that current and future service personnel are aware of what happened so that it doesn’t happen again
- Ensure the military and MOD has benchmarking on inclusivity
- Being transparent about the openness of the services right now
- Making clear that discrimination is an offence
- Foster an environment where people feel confident to speak out regardless of rank, gender etc
- Including LGBT individuals in the creation of any training
- More education while young soldiers are growing up. Some join at 17 or 18 years old and may not know their sexuality yet
- Ensuring people are not afraid to be an ally.

One individual suggested having a plaque in training establishments about LGBT veterans who served during the ban and have a QR code linking to the history.

## In the third sector

- Charities in receipt of government funding should have a named, dedicated LGBT representative, with larger charities having LGBT sections
- Veteran charities require training into the needs of the LGBT community and the impact of the ban
- Including LGBT individuals in the creation of any training.

There are many misconceptions of the difficulties faced by the LGBT community making it hard for caseworking services to get all the info they need to help.

## Education

- Including LGBT history and the ban in education.

## 9.8 Health services

41 respondents called for changes in health services, including:

- Free, priority access to long and short-term mental health support
- Training to ensure medical professions understand LGBT mental health issues
- Ensure LGBT veterans are entitled to the same health and medical help as any other veteran
- Medical boards to include LGBT individuals, ideally LGBT veterans who served during the ban.

More inclusive language for medical admin. Individuals note they are constantly 'coming out' to services, especially when asked who next of kin are.

Better understanding of trans health – some transgender individuals using the NHS were told they are mentally ill.

Some individuals choose not to disclose their veteran status so they do not have to answer questions about it.

## 9.9 Military community

39 respondents called for reform in how LGBT veterans affected by the ban integrate into military community life. Respondents welcomed the work already done in this space, including having LGBT veterans at remembrance parades but noted there's more work to be done, including:

- LGBT veterans being included and actively encouraged to attend armed forces events that any other veteran is eligible for, and being included in planning where other veterans are
- Armed Forces reaching out to invite veterans rather than the other way around
- Having LGBT veterans at Armistice day parades
- Invite LGBT veterans as guests of honour at passing out parades, open days, remembrance day services, tramping of the colour, royal Albert hall etc
- Host a series of 'understand us now' events to return LGBT veterans to the heart of the military
- Removing regulations that stop LGBT veterans wearing their uniforms
- Be classed as a veteran officially.

## 9.10 Stories

26 respondents called for LGBT veteran stories to be told, to ensure their experiences are not forgotten and that future generations are aware of what they went through.

**“So many people are unaware of this part of our history and the only way to move forward is to share so that this doesn't happen again.”**

## 9.11 Badge

24 respondents called for an officially sanctioned badge to commemorate service of veterans serving under the ban.

**“Being awarded a badge or medal. I have fought my own war, against the odds, for too many years now.”**

# 10. Conclusion

The population covered by this Review, LGBT personnel who served during the military ban on homosexuality between 1967 and 2000, is a small and ‘hidden’ group, which appears to have been neglected by veteran and LGBT studies.

The 1,128 responses collected, particularly the 666 received from LGBT veterans, provide detailed testimony into the experience of living under the ban on homosexuality and the impact it had on people’s lives.

## 10.1 In-service experience

From the responses, personnel could experience during service:

- bullying, harassment and discrimination
- isolation
- blackmail
- rape, sexual abuse and sexual harassment
- damaged promotion prospects.

Those suspected of being homosexual faced being investigated by the Special Investigation Branch<sup>21</sup> (SIB) of the military police. Each service had its own SIB.

Many respondents faced bullying, harassment and discrimination during these investigations. Compounded by the investigation not being confidential. The investigations included searching of premises and belongings, frequently conducted without care with malicious damage being caused. Interviews carried out by SIB were considered ‘traumatic’ due to the interviews being lengthy, often without food or water. The Interviewers were often crude, physically aggressive and salacious in their interviews. Legal or pastoral care and support was rarely provided and in some instances refused.

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21 In December 2022, a new tri-service Defence Serious Crime Unit replaced all three service SIBs, which were disbanded



People were fearful to defend colleagues, in case they were investigated by the SIB as well.

Investigations could include friends and family, and for many, due to the SIB investigation, found out that the person under investigation was gay.

The investigation process also involved medical examination. The examinations included intimate physical examinations which respondents felt were humiliating and abusive. Some clinicians would offer ‘shock therapy’ as a cure for homosexuality; and some also gave medication, not explaining the drugs or noting side effects.

The impact of the ban was not just felt by LGBT service personnel. Due to its crudity, straight service personnel were also dismissed or discriminated against. Some clinicians and others involved in investigations and enforcement of the ban did so against their morals. Family and friends of those who suffered under the ban had to provide care and support to them.

Dismissal from service was usually abrupt, with no follow up care or support.

## 10.2 Post-service experience

Whilst some respondents reported positive post-service experience, many found it difficult experiencing difficulty in finding employment, having no savings, reliance on benefits and becoming temporarily homeless. Some respondents stated that they had their service pension stripped from them as part of their dismissal.

We also asked about engagement with veteran support services. Some respondents said that their sexuality had never been an issue when dealing with veteran services and that services provided a way to make friends, accessing health and welfare services and finding a safe environment. However, some respondents experience of veterans services to be:

- Homophobic, refusing help or support, because of their sexuality
- Experiencing a homophobic environment
- Bullying and harassment from peers
- Having no insight into the history, experience and needs of LGBT veterans.

We asked about respondents' health and wellbeing. Common themes raised in the testimony were:

- Attempted suicide and self-harm
- Anxiety and depression
- PTSD and other mental health problems
- Substance abuse.

The ban and being forced to come out and being dismissed from service, affected individuals relationships with peers, friends and family. Family relations was a major theme in testimonies, some reporting positive and supportive family relationships, but more reporting negative outcomes such as being disowned by their parents and wider family. Many were isolated after leaving service, as they had their only friends there who were now disowned by them. Many found that they had no support network outside of the service. The ban also had an impact on personal relations, with either difficulty in forming relationships or having to hide their relationship in order not to be discovered.

## 10.3 Non-LGBT veterans

We also asked for testimony from non-LGBT veterans about their experience of the ban. We had 415 responses from this group.

The majority of non-LGBT veterans disagreed with the ban and were pleased with the ban being overturned. However, their response indicated that they were unaware of the legacy of the ban and the extent to which it had affected LGBT veterans.

Some responses were supportive of the ban, stating that the ban was justified at the time.

## 10.4 Recommendations and suggestions from veterans and others

We asked respondents how present day services could be improved for LGBT veterans and how their service could be recognised. The main recommendations were:

- Apology from the government and support services for their past behaviour towards LGBT veterans
- Reinstatement of awards and medals removed as part of dismissal
- Compensation
- Pension reinstatement
- Updating of service records
- Diversity training for the military and veterans services
- Badge to mark the service of those who served under the ban
- LGBT veterans stories to be preserved
- Integration with the current military community
- Improved health and support services.

## 10.5 Research findings overview

The evidence collected and summarised in this report illustrates the effect of the ban on homosexuality in the UK armed forces between 1967 and 2000 and its consequential impact on those affected by it.

Based on the testimony received, overall the ban had a negative impact on LGBT personnel who served during that period. They were fearful of being found out and dismissed from a job many of them were dedicated to. The ban affected those who were gay or lesbian, sexually active or not, or those perceived to be LGB. Personnel with gender dysphoria were also caught by the ban.

The overall sense was the ban generated an environment which allowed homophobia to be pervasive and gave carte blanche to humiliating and abusive investigations. The result of this led to lifelong negative impact to the majority of those affected by the ban – dismissed or otherwise, LGBT or otherwise.

It is hoped that the findings of this Review, both qualitative and quantitative, can spur further research into this part of UK's hidden LGBT history and insight into how this group of veterans and be helped and supported.

## 10.6 Sampling considerations and limitations

We recognised that one of the main barriers that we would face in collecting personal testimony to inform the review was the small size of the target audience – LGBT veterans who served between 1967 and 2000. Due to the barriers they faced, the overall percentage of the military LGBT population would likely be smaller than the civilian population during this period, and that percentage would likely be smaller than the present day number of LGB people due to pressure of social norms. As we focused on the period of 1967 to 2000, the median age of the population was likely to be in the 60s, with the youngest possible candidate 38 and the oldest possible candidate being in their 90s. An older age group may not have access to social media and may not be connected to the LGBT or veteran communities, so overall the target population group would be small.

Consequently, we had to ensure that the questionnaire was easy to use and was widely known about. The primary tool to collect evidence was via an online survey platform. There were several advantages to using an online questionnaire – it was relatively low cost, convenient to use, the questionnaire could be accessed on a variety of devices, including mobile phones; allowed flexible design, including skip logic so response questions could be tailored to the individual; the data could be easily transferred to other applications for analysis and we could monitor responses and collection information in real time. As outlined earlier, we also

provided a range of alternative formats for responses so access to the internet was not a barrier to providing testimony.

Considering the size of the eventual response and the quality of the testimony provided, we can consider that we were successful in gaining a robust insight into the challenges faced by LGBT service personnel between 1967 and 2000.

However, there are a few limitations to the evidence collected. We could not hope to have a stratified sample and had to rely on a self-reporting convenience sample. One of the outcomes of this is that the majority of people who responded to the review may have been motivated by bad experience during service.

This is not to diminish the experiences of those who responded, we just do not know whether our Call for Evidence sufficiently represented this silent group of LGBT veterans who did not experience harassment and discrimination whilst in service. We did however encourage those from this potential silent group to come forward and tell us their story through social media posts and at LGBT events.

To meet the aim of the ToR we had carry out a qualitative survey, which focussed on understanding experiences, and not a quantitative assessment. The focus was the voice of the veterans affected by the ban.

To meet the requirements of the Review the set of questions was long, so prospective users may have experienced survey fatigue. We did receive 945 partial responses which tailed off in their response (400 answered the first closed question, 194 answered the second, 158 the third, 110 the fourth, 127 the fifth).

The survey platform allowed respondents to save their response and return to it later to mitigate against survey fatigue. Future research may want to consider shorter and more targeted surveys to reduce survey fatigue.

Having cleaned the data, and verified service numbers, survey fraud did not seem an issue. The low number of unverified service numbers by MoD were attributable to service number error or missing records.

We could not estimate the chilling effect the ban had on recruitment of deterring prospective LGBT applicants.

## 10.7 Recommendations for further research

For further work in this area, we have suggestions for research:

- Mental health: One of the stark findings of this Review was the enduring legacy of poor mental health experienced by those who served under the ban, particularly those who had been dismissed. Any study of the mental health of veterans should identify this group to help determine the difference, and any support needs, of this group compared to the wider veteran population
- Testimony suggests that those who experienced childhood adversity, such as being in the care system, experienced worse outcomes post service. Further research may want to identify childhood experience as a factor in health and wellbeing outcomes for veterans and whether this is a particular vulnerability factor for LGBT people
- Although during the time period under review women only formed a small percentage of service personnel, around 60% of responses were from women<sup>22</sup>. Further research may want to reconfirm this finding and, if confirmed, consider why lesbian and bisexual women were disproportionately a larger percentage of the service population during the ban (and consider the argument that this finding may be an artefact of simply having more women respond to the call for evidence)

22 The current population of over 16 year olds from England and Wales who previously served in the armed forces are 14% female, 86% male

[www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/armedforcescommunity/articles/characteristicsofukarmedforcesveteransenglandandwalescensus2021/census2021](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/armedforcescommunity/articles/characteristicsofukarmedforcesveteransenglandandwalescensus2021/census2021)

- Further research may want to be undertaken to examine the present culture around LGBT veterans accessing both support services and the military community, to provide a practical understanding of attitudes and barriers to access, and what improvements can be made.

To ensure further work can be carried out on this neglected cohort, future data collections should include questions on sexual orientation and transgender status; along with veteran status and date of service, to ensure this cohort can be identified. Some of the experiences identified in this report will have happened to other non-LGBT veterans – interviews, searches, dismissal etc. – as part of military life. However, improved data collection will be able to disentangle the effect of the ban over and above the impact of these events to other veterans and identify the specific impact of the ban and how its enduring impact can be mitigated.

Our survey was very general and did not specifically request information about most themes that emerged from our analysis. This was to enable broad feedback, but further research may want to be more targeted in its focus to help unpack the impact of the ban and identify what can be done to mitigate its impact.

# Annex A –

## Best estimate of numbers of LGBT sexual orientation in UK Armed Forces between 1967 to 2000

We have estimated the number of LGBT individuals who served in the UK Regular Armed Forces between 1967 and 2000 using data from MoD's annual service numbers<sup>23</sup> and the UK 2021 Census<sup>24</sup> alongside the following assumptions:

1. With the earliest usual enlistment age being 16 and latest being 36, we can determine age bounds of 57 (36 in 2000) and 70 (16 in 1967). From the 2021 census, it is highly likely that those that report having previously served in the UK Armed Forces and are within the above age bounds, served within the 1967 to 2000 time period. This corresponds to the two age brackets surveyed – 60-64 and 65-69.
2. That LGBT reporting in the census of those between the ages of 60 and 69 is representative of LGBT individuals who served in the armed forces between 1967 and 2000;
3. That there were between 1.2 to 1.3 million leavers<sup>25</sup> of the UK Regular Armed Forces between 1967 and 2000;

4. That individuals did not re-enlist after leaving (we know that some did, however these figures are assumed to be so small as to be negligible for this estimate) so the number of people serving in 1967 + the number of joiners from 1967 to 2000 equals the number of unique individuals

Of those who reported previously serving in the UK Armed Forces in England and Wales within our age bracket, we find that:

1.58% identify as non-heterosexual (excluding those who did not answer) and 0.3% identify as trans.

Now we use the equation:

$$(1967 \text{ figure}) + (\text{joiners}) - (\text{leavers}) = (2000 \text{ figure})$$

$$407000 + (\text{joiners}) - 1300000 = 208000,$$

solving for (joiners) we get  
 $(\text{joiners}) = 1101000$

For an approximation of the number of unique individuals serving between 1967 and 2000, we add the number serving in 1967 to the number of joiners from 1967 to 2000.

$$407000 + 1101000 = 1508000$$

23 [webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20140116144856mp\\_/http://www.dasa.mod.uk/publications/UK-defence-statistics-compendium/2000/2000.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20140116144856mp_/http://www.dasa.mod.uk/publications/UK-defence-statistics-compendium/2000/2000.pdf)

24 [www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/armedforcescommunity/bulletins/ukarmedforcesveteransenglandandwales/census2021](http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/armedforcescommunity/bulletins/ukarmedforcesveteransenglandandwales/census2021)

25 MoD Statistics

Using the 1.58% and 0.3% figures  
calculated earlier

1.58% of 1508000 ~ 23794 and 0.3% of  
1508000 ~ 4536

Taking these assumptions, a best estimate  
of the number of non-heterosexual  
individuals serving in the UK Regular  
Armed Forces between 1967 and 2000  
is 23,800, and for transgender individuals  
we find 4,500.



# Annex B –

## Official number of dismissals and administrative discharges

### Number of dismissals

Using official sources, including files from the National Archives, responses to written parliamentary questions and the Homosexuality Policy Assessment Team report, the number of service personnel dismissed or administratively discharged is collated below.

There is no complete set of figures from 1967 to 1999 (when discharges were suspended). Also, before 1990, data for the three services is patchy.

## Number of those dismissed for homosexuality: official sources

Year	Sex		Service				Rank		Source
	Male	Female	Total	Army	Navy	Air Force	Officer	Other	
1967					40				3
1968					91				3
1969					105				3
1970					102				3
1971					21				6 (1/11/70-30/6/71)
1972					20				6 (1/11/71-30/6/72)
1973	18	53		71					2, 4
1974	14	64		78					2, 4
1975	9	14		23					2, 4
1976	45	51		96					2, 4
1977	19	37		56					2, 4
1978	22	35		57					2, 4
1979	42	36		56	22				2, 4
1980	16	11						27	2

Year	Sex		Service				Rank			Source
	Male	Female	Total	Army	Navy	Air Force	Officer	Other		
1990	39 (51)	26 (26)	65 (77)	(42)	(15)	(20)	(7)	(70)	1, (5)	
1991	23 (33)	19 (19)	42 (52)	(39)	(6)	(7)	(4)	(48)	1, (5)	
1992	30 (34)	23 (23)	53 (57)	(29)	(16)	(12)	(4)	(53)	1, (5)	
1993	32 (43)	21 (20)	53 (63)	(35)	(13)	(15)	(5)	(58)	1, (5)	
1994	29 (30)	21 (21)	50 (51)	(30)	(13)	(8)	(1)	(50)	1, (5)	
1995	53 (52)	9 (9)	62 (61)	(26)	(19)	(16)	(9)	(52)	1, (5) to 30/11/95	
1996	43	22	65						1	
1997	20	7	7						1 (at 30/6/1997)	

Note: The difference in reported number between 1990 and 1995 may be due to the PQ reporting number of administratively discharged while the HPAT report figures (in brackets) reports dismissals and administrative discharges.

Gaps in the figures means no record was found, rather than no dismissal.

It is worth noting the number of those dismissed or discharged by sex between the 1970s and 1990s.

## Sources

[1] Written PQ: Volume 298: debated on Wednesday 16 July 1997<sup>26</sup>

[2] National Archive file 603/13/2: Statistics released to 'Gay news' on administrative discharges due to homosexuality

[3] National Archive file: Number of ratings discharged due to homosexuality

[4] National Archive file DEFE- 24-1318

[5] National Archive file 69-2119: Taken from Homosexual Policy Assessment Team report.  
Note – Air force calculated by financial year, army and navy by calendar year; also combines dismissals and administrative discharges

[6] ADM 330-45 Homosexual cases – Review of administrative procedure

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<sup>26</sup> [hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1997-07-16/debates/02512d6d-466e-4875-b32a-ce1b5496b88d/Homosexuality](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1997-07-16/debates/02512d6d-466e-4875-b32a-ce1b5496b88d/Homosexuality)



