



MILITARY VETERAN PRISONERS 2015



15th Survey Bulletin

Research, Strategy and Innovation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Custodial History

Half of military veteran prisoners (50%) had 'never' previously served a prison sentence and just over one third had served between 1 and 5 sentences (36%).

Atmosphere & Relationships

The same percentage of military veteran prisoners (87%) as all other prisoners (87%) described the atmosphere in their hall/dormitory in positive terms.

A particularly high percentage of veterans described their relationship with prisoners and officers in their hall in positive terms (96% and 94% respectively) compared to all other prisoners' (96% and 93% respectively).

Mental health & well-being

Eight in ten military veterans said that they have 'been able to make up my own mind about things' (81%), 'been dealing with problems well' (79%) and have 'been thinking clearly' (79%). There was little difference between the experiences of military veteran prisoners and all other prisoners in relation to their mental health. One exception is with reference to 'I've been feeling loved' where only 47% of military veterans responded positively compared to 55% of all other prisoners.

Smoking

Just under two thirds of military veteran prisoners reported that they smoked (63%), with 50% stating that they want to give up smoking. Almost three quarters of all other prisoners said they smoked (72%), with 51% wanting to give up. Just over one fifth of military veteran prisoners reported sharing their cell with a smoker (22%), down 11% from the 2013 survey and a similar percentage to all other prisoners reporting (25%).

Drug use

One fifth of military veteran prisoners (21%) reported that drug taking was a problem for them on the outside (compared to 39% of all other prisoners). Similarly, one fifth (21%) reported being under the influence of drugs at the time of their offence (compared to 41% of all other prisoners). One in ten military veteran prisoners (10%) committed their offence to get money for drugs and 11% were receiving treatment for drug use before coming into prison.

Alcohol use

Three in ten military veteran prisoners (30%) reported being drunk at the time of their offence, compared to 40% of all other prisoners reporting.

One quarter (24%) reported that drinking affected their relationship with family compared to 32% of all other prisoners. Just over one in ten (14%) military veteran prisoners were worried that alcohol would be a problem for them upon their release compared to 17% of all other prisoners reporting in the survey.

Food

In the region of half of military veterans were content with the choice of menu (62%), portion size (57%), and the condition of the food when it was served (53%) compared with all other prisoners reporting (61%, 55% and 54% respectively).

Cleanliness

Eight out of ten military veteran prisoners rated the cleanliness of their hall/dormitory (82%), toilets (85%) and cleanliness of the showers (78%) as 'ok' 'fairly good' or 'very good', compared to all other prisoners (85%), (84%) and (81%) respectively.

Contact with family and friends

The majority of military veteran prisoners were in regular contact with their friends and family by telephone (71%) and by letter (69%), compared with similar proportions all other prisoners reporting (77% and 71% respectively).

There was, however, a difference in relation to military veterans receiving visits from family/friends (48%) compared to 58% of all other prisoners reporting in the survey.

Bullying

Military veteran prisoners were asked to indicate whether they had been bullied in the previous month. Just over one in ten (14%, n=39) reported that they had been bullied in the month preceding the survey, compared to 12% (n=344) of all other prisoners reporting.

Safety

One fifth of military veteran prisoners (19%, n=51) expressed a fear for the safety in the last month, compared to 16% (n=474) of all other prisoners reporting in the survey.

In care as a child

One fifth (21%) of military veterans reported being in care as a child compared to 29% of all other prisoners.

Of those who reported being in care as a child one in ten military veterans (12%) were in care at the age of sixteen compared to almost one fifth (19%) of all other prisoners reporting in the survey.

Domestic Violence

Just over one in ten military veteran prisoners (14%) had been involved in violence against their spouse or partner compared with all other prisoners (23%). Just over one in ten military veteran prisoners (13%) had at some point been convicted of an offence involving violence against their spouse or partner compared to all other prisoners (18%).

One fifth of military veteran prisoners (22%) had been a victim of violence from their spouse or partner compared to 28% of all other prisoners reporting in the survey. As a child, four in ten (41%) military veteran prisoners witnessed violence between their parents/carer compared to 43% of all other prisoners.

Knife Crime

A quarter of military veterans (24%) said that they carried a knife compared to 48% of all other prisoners. A similar number (26%) said that they were a victim of knife crime and one fifth (21%) said they had used a knife to injure someone compared to 36% and 35% of all other prisoners respectively.

One fifth (21%) of military veterans said that they had been convicted of a knife crime, compared to over a third (36%) of all other prisoners. Sixteen percent also said if they were cautioned for carrying a knife that would stop them, compared to 36% of all other prisoners.

INTRODUCTION

This Bulletin, which deals specifically with military veteran prisoners held by the Scottish Prison Service, is one of a number of thematic commentaries presenting the key findings from the 2015 Prisoner Survey. The Prisoner Survey was introduced to the Scottish Prison Service in 1990 as a mechanism to inform and support the Service's business planning process. The focus of the Survey has expanded over the years.

The Survey continues to focus upon the core elements of prison life: living conditions, family contact, healthcare, relationships, atmosphere and perceived safety. This year's questionnaire also introduced new topics on carrying a knife, and on equality and diversity. The Survey informs and shapes change by contributing to establishment and corporate business plans.

The Survey was carried out between July and August 2015 on an establishment-by-establishment basis. Prisoners' views were collected by means of a self-completion questionnaire, which was distributed and collected personally by the members of the Survey team or by local staff. The Survey involves all prisoners and all establishments.

The Fifteenth Survey achieved an overall prisoner response rate of 55%.

A total of 286 military veteran prisoners participated in this Survey (9% of those who responded to the survey). Of those:

- 96% male, 4% female;
- 84% Army, 7% Air force, 3% Navy, and 6% reservist;
- Method of discharge: 54% normal, 24% medical, 19% administrative, and 3% still serving.

Respondents' remand and custodial sentence history is outlined in Table 1. This shows that military veteran prisoners were most likely to report having 'never' previously been on remand (48%), followed by been on remand between 1 and 5 times (38%).

Half of military veteran prisoners (50%) had 'never' previously served a prison sentence and just over one third had served between 1 and 5 sentences (36%).

Table 1 Military Veterans 'Prison History'	Never	1-5 times	6-10 times	Over 10 times
Number of times previously on remand	48	38	5	9
Number of times previously on a sentence	50	36	7	7

Table 2 shows that fewer military veterans had previously been on remand or served a prison sentence when compared to all other prisoners. Half of military veterans have 'never' previously been on remand (48%) or served a prison sentence (50%) compared to 24% of all other prisoners who said they had 'never' been on remand and 30% who said they had never previously served a prison sentence.

Table 2 Prisoners custodial history (% reporting <u>'Never'</u> to the questions below)	% of military veteran prisoners	% of all other prisoners
How many times have you been on remand?	48	24
How many times have you been in prison on a sentence before?	50	31

Atmosphere & Relationships

The same percentage of military veteran prisoners (87%) as all other prisoners (87%) described the atmosphere in their hall/dormitory in positive terms.

A particularly high percentage of veterans described their relationship with prisoners and officers in their hall in positive terms (96% and 94% respectively) compared to all other prisoners' (96% and 93% respectively).

Mental health & well-being

Prisoners were asked questions on mental health through an instrument known as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) (See Table 3).

Eight in ten military veterans said that they have 'been able to make up my own mind about things' (81%), 'been dealing with problems well' (79%) and have 'been thinking clearly' (79%). Table 3 below, shows little difference between the experiences of military veteran prisoners and all other prisoners in relation to their mental health. One exception is with reference to 'I've been feeling loved' where only 47% of military veterans responded positively compared to 55% of all other prisoners.

Table 3 Mental health & well-being	% of military veteran prisoners	% of all other prisoners
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	71	65
I've been feeling useful	60	63
I've been feeling relaxed	66	67
I've been feeling interested in other people	58	52
I've had energy to spare	64	66
I've been dealing with problems well	79	73
I've been thinking clearly	79	76
I've been feeling good about myself	67	67
I've been feeling close to other people	51	51
I've been feeling confident	68	68
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	81	85
I've been feeling loved	47	55
I've been interested in new things	67	66
I've been feeling cheerful	62	65

Smoking

Just under two thirds of military veteran prisoners reported that they smoked (63%), with 50% stating that they want to give up smoking. Almost three quarters of all other prisoners said they smoked (72%), with 51% wanting to give up. Just over one fifth of military veteran prisoners reported sharing their cell with a smoker (22%), down 11% from the 2013 survey and a similar percentage to all other prisoners reporting (25%).

Drug use

Military veteran prisoners appear to have fewer problems with drug use prior to coming into prison when compared to all other prisoners. One fifth of military veteran prisoners (21%) reported that drug taking was a problem for them on the outside (compared to 39% of all other prisoners). Similarly, one fifth (21%) reported being under the influence of drugs at the time of their offence (compared to 41% of all other prisoners). One in ten military veteran prisoners (10%) committed their offence to get money for drugs and 11% were receiving treatment for drug use before coming into prison (See Table 4).

Table 4 Drug use	% of military veteran prisoners	% of all other prisoners
My drug taking was a problem for me on the outside	21	39
I was under the influence of drugs at the time of my offence	21	41
I committed my offence to get money for drugs	10	18
I was receiving treatment for my drug use before prison	11	21
If I was offered help for my drug problem on the outside I would take it	23	39
If I was offered help for my drug problem in prison I would take it	23	43
I am worried that my drug problem will be a problem when I get out	15	24
I was assessed for drug use upon my admission to prison	20	40
I have been given the chance to receive treatment for drug use during my sentence	16	28
I have received help/treatment for drug use during my sentence	14	24

Drug use in present prison

A quarter of military veteran prisoners (24% (n=49)) reported that they had used illegal drugs in prison compared to 44% of all other prisoners reporting. In the last month in prison, 15% of military veterans had used drugs compared to 23% of all other prisoners.

One in ten (11%) military veterans said that they have used other drugs known as legal highs during their time in prison compared to 12% of all other prisoners.

Of those who reported using drugs in prison, almost three quarters (72% (n=45) said that their drug use had changed during their current period in prison. One third stated that their drug use had increased (33%, n=16); over half had decreased (55%, n=27); 8% (n=4) had the same use but used different drugs; and 4% (n=2) had only started using in prison.

Despite small numbers, it is interesting to note that 33% of military veterans said their drug use increased during their time in prison in comparison to 20% of all other prisoners (See Table 5).

Table 5 Has drug use changed since coming in to prison?	% of military veteran prisoners	% of all other prisoners
Drug use INCREASED since coming into prison	33(n=16)	20
Drug use DECREASED since coming into prison	55(n=27)	59
Same use but DIFFERENT DRUGS	8(n=4)	9
Only started using IN PRISON	4(n=2)	10

Alcohol use

As shown in Table 6, prisoners were asked a number of questions about alcohol use/dependency inside and outside prison. Three in ten military veteran prisoners (30%) reported being drunk at the time of their offence, compared to 40% of all other prisoners reporting.

One quarter (24%) reported that drinking affected their relationship with family compared to 32% of all other prisoners. Just over one in ten (14%) military veteran prisoners were worried that alcohol would be a problem for them upon their release compared to 17% of all other prisoners reporting in the survey.

Table 6 Prisoners views on Alcohol	% of military veteran prisoners	% of all other prisoners
I was drunk at the time of my offence	30	40
My drinking affected my ability to hold down a job	13	19
My drinking affected my relationship with my family	24	32
If I was offered help in prison for alcohol problem I would take it	32	36
If I was offered help on the outside for alcohol problems I would take it	30	35
I am worried that alcohol will be a problem for me when I get out	14	17
Have you used alcohol in prison in the last month	5	5
I was assessed for alcohol use on my admission to prison	22	26
I have been given the chance to receive treatment for alcohol problems during my sentence	15	22
I have received help/treatment for alcohol problems during my sentence	9	14

Food

In the region of half of military veterans were content with the choice of menu (62%), portion size (57%), and the condition of the food when it was served (53%) compared with all other prisoners reporting (61%, 55% and 54% respectively). One fifth (21%) of military veterans said that the food did not meet their cultural/religious needs compared to 25% of all other prisoners.

Cleanliness

Eight out of ten military veteran prisoners rated the cleanliness of their hall/dormitory (82%), toilets (85%) and cleanliness of the showers (78%) as 'ok' 'fairly good' or 'very good', compared to all other prisoners (85%), (84%) and (81%) respectively.

Less positively, only six in ten military veteran prisoners (65%) reported being content with the cleanliness of their cell when they first moved in, similar to all other prisoners reporting (62%). Nine in ten (90%) military veterans reported having access to clean bed linen every week, the same as all other prisoners (91%).

Contact with family and friends

Contact with friends and family in the community is of vital importance to the majority of prisoners and can impact on their quality of life and mental welfare. The majority of military veteran prisoners were in regular contact with their friends and family by telephone (71%) and by letter (69%), compared with similar proportions all other prisoners reporting (77% and 71% respectively). There was, however, a difference in relation to military veterans receiving visits from family/friends (48%) compared to 58% of all other prisoners reporting in the survey.

Bullying

Military veteran prisoners were asked to indicate whether they had been bullied in the previous month. Although the majority of military veteran prisoners reported that they had not been bullied, just over one in ten (14%, n=39) reported that they had been bullied in the month preceding the survey, compared to 12% (n=344) of all other prisoners reporting.

Safety

One fifth of military veteran prisoners (19%, n=51) expressed a fear for the safety in the last month, compared to 16% (n=474) of all other prisoners reporting in the survey.

In care as a child

One fifth (21%) of military veterans reported being in care as a child compared to 29% of all other prisoners. Of those who reported being in care as a child one in ten military veterans (12%) were in care at the age of sixteen compared to almost one fifth (19%) of all other prisoners reporting in the survey.

Domestic Violence

Just over one in ten military veteran prisoners (14%) had been involved in violence against their spouse or partner compared with all other prisoners (23%). Just over one in ten military veteran prisoners (13%) had at some point been convicted of an offence involving violence against their spouse or partner compared to all other prisoners (18%).

One fifth of military veteran prisoners (22%) had been a victim of violence from their spouse or partner compared to 28% of all other prisoners reporting in the survey. As a child, four in ten (41%) military veteran prisoners witnessed violence between their parents/carer compared to 43% of all other prisoners.

Knife Crime

Table 7 shows that a quarter of military veterans (24%) said that they carried a knife compared to 48% of all other prisoners. A similar number (26%) said that they were a victim of knife crime and one fifth (21%) said they had used a knife to injure someone compared to 36% and 35% of all other prisoners respectively.

One fifth (21%) of military veterans said that they had been convicted of a knife crime, compared to over a third (36%) of all other prisoners. Sixteen percent also said if they were cautioned for carrying a knife that would stop them, compared to 36% of all other prisoners.

Table 7 Knife crime	% of military veteran prisoners	% of all other prisoners
Have you ever carried a knife?	24	48
Have you carried a knife in the 12 months before coming into prison?	11	24
Have you been a victim of knife crime?	26	36
Have you ever used a knife to injure someone?	21	34
Have you ever been cautioned by the Police for carrying a knife?	16	31
Have you ever been convicted of a knife crime?	21	36
If you were cautioned for carrying a knife would this stop you?	36	39
Are you a gang member?	10(n=27)	9(n=268)

Conclusion

The thematic analysis of the 15th Prisoner Survey 2015 demonstrates that in respect to basic relationships, atmosphere, contact with family and friends, cleanliness and other environmental matters, the experience of military veteran prisoners is no different to that of any other prisoner.

Over the years, evidence has been gathered to support the view that some military veterans can experience adjustment and mental health issue on returning to civilian life after discharge. As a consequence, there is an underlying assumption that the mental health of veterans in custody is worse than civilian prisoner counterparts because of experiences encountered during military service. However, the WEMWBS findings would seem to suggest that veterans are just as positive as the general prisoner population. One exception is with reference to 'I've been feeling loved' where only 47% of military veterans responded positively compared to 55% of all other prisoners.

Fewer military veterans reported being drunk at the time of the offence (30%) compared to all other prisoners (40%) reporting. Similarly fewer military veterans (24%) reported that drinking

affected their relationship with their family compared to 32% of all other prisoners reporting in the survey.

Far fewer military veterans (21%) reported being under the influence of drugs at the time of their offence when compared to all other prisoners (41%) who said this was the case. Similarly, fewer military veteran prisoners (21%) reported that drug taking was a problem for them on the outside when compared to all other prisoners (39%).

A quarter of military veteran prisoners (24% (n=49)) reported that they had used illegal drugs in prison compared to 44% of all other prisoners reporting. In the last month in prison, 15% of military veterans had used drugs compared to 23% of all other prisoners.

One in ten (11%) military veterans said that they have used other drugs known as legal highs during their time in prison compared to 12% of all other prisoners.

Despite small numbers, it is interesting to note that one third (33% n=16) of military veterans said their drug use increased during their time in prison in comparison to 20% of all other prisoners who said it had increased.

It may be worth commenting on the finding that fewer military veteran prisoners had been receiving visits from family/friends (48%) compared to 58% of all other prisoners reporting in the survey. Contact with friends and family in the community is of vital importance to the majority of prisoners and can impact on their quality of life and mental welfare. The majority of military veteran prisoners were in regular contact with their friends and family by telephone (71%) and by letter (69%), compared with similar proportions all other prisoners reporting (77% and 71% respectively).

For most military veterans, prison life is much the same as their civilian counterparts, although some differences in attitudes and disposition have been revealed.