



# **MILITARY VETERAN PRISONERS 2017**



**16<sup>th</sup> Survey Bulletin**

**Research, Strategy and Innovation**

**Róisín Broderick**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### ***Custodial History***

Military veteran prisoners were most likely to report having 'never' previously been on remand (40%), followed by been on remand between 1 and 5 times (39%).

Just under half of military veteran prisoners (45%) had 'never' previously served a prison sentence and just over one third had served between 1 and 5 sentences (36%).

### ***Atmosphere & Relationships***

A similar percentage of military veteran prisoners (86%) as all other prisoners (87%) described the atmosphere in their hall/dormitory in positive terms. Military Veterans also reported positive relations with other prisoners (94%) and officers in their hall (90%), compared to all other prisoners (96% & 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' (80%), 'been thinking clearly' (75%).

The results show little significant difference between the experiences of military veteran prisoners and all other prisoners in relation to their mental health. The only exception is with reference to 'I've been feeling interested in other people' where only 46% of military veterans responded positively compared to 55% of all other prisoners.

### **Use of New Psychoactive Substances**

Just on one in eight (13%, n=28) military veterans said that they had used New Psychoactive Substances prior to coming into prison compared to one fifth of all other prisoners (19%, n=488). Similarly numbers had also use these illegal drugs whilst in prison (15%, n=30 compared to 18%, n=413).

### ***Drug use***

One quarter of military veteran prisoners reported that drug taking was a problem for them on the outside (26%) and that they were under the influence of drugs at the time of their offence (26%), compared to 37% & 39% of all other prisoners.

One in ten military veteran prisoners (14%) committed their offence to get money for drugs and 16% were receiving treatment for drug use before coming into prison. Fewer military veterans were of the opinion that their drug taking will be a problem upon their release (14% compared to 23%).

### ***Alcohol use***

Three in ten military veteran prisoners (29%) 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 (12%) military veteran prisoners were worried that alcohol would be a problem for them upon their release compared to one fifth (20%) of all other prisoners reporting in the survey.

### ***Smoking***

Just under two thirds of military veteran prisoners reported that they smoked (64%), with 47% stating that they want to give up smoking compared to all other prisoners (68% and 53% respectively).

### ***Contact with family and friends***

The majority of military veteran prisoners were in regular contact with their friends and family by telephone (70%), letter (66%) and visits (50%), compared with similar proportions all other prisoners reporting (71%, 62% and 52% respectively).

Military veteran prisoner reported positively in relation to facilities for disabled visitors (83%) and children (82%). Military veteran prisoners reported less positively in relation to the length of the visit (65%) and access to the Family Contact Officer (66%).

### ***Domestic Violence***

There was little or no significant difference between military and non-military prisoners reporting in the survey in relation to domestic violence.

A quarter of military veterans (23%) have been involved in violence against their spouse and one fifth (18%) had at some point been convicted of an offence involving violence against their spouse or partner compared to all other prisoners (24% & 20% respectively).

### ***Knife Crime***

Just over a quarter of military veterans (28%) reported ever carrying a knife, compared to 42% of all other prisoners. Almost a third of military veterans (34%) reported being a victim of knife crime and over a fifth (22%) reported having used a knife to injure someone (compared to 38% and 32% of all other prisoners respectively).

### ***Bullying***

Although the majority of military veteran prisoners reported that they had not been bullied, almost one fifth (18%, n=41) reported that they had been bullied in the month preceding the survey, compared to 15% (n=400) of all other prisoners reporting.

### ***Safety***

One in five (21%) of military veterans reported fearing for their safety in prison during the last month, compared with 16% of all other prisoners. Of those military veterans

who reported fearing for their safety: 32% reported that another prisoner made them fear for their safety; 96% a non-uniformed member of staff; 51% a group of prisoners; 81% a group of prison officers (excluding control and restraint); and 70% a prison officer.

### ***Food***

In the region of half of military veterans were content with the choice of menu (58%), portion size (55%), and the condition of the food when it was served (56%) compared with all other prisoners reporting (62%, 61% and 56% 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.

## ***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 2017 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. The Survey informs and shapes change by contributing to establishment and corporate business plans.

The Survey was carried out between July and August 2017 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 sixteenth survey achieved an overall prisoner response rate of 46%.

A total of 248 military veteran prisoners participated in this Survey (8% of those who responded to the survey). Of those:

- 98% male, 2% female;
- 76% Army, 8% Air force, 8% Navy, and 8% reservist;
- Method of discharge: 58% normal, 28% medical, 12% administrative, and 2% 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 (40%), followed by been on remand between 1 and 5 times (39%).

Just under half of military veteran prisoners (45%) had 'never' previously served a prison sentence and just over one third had served between 1 and 5 sentences (36%).

<b>Table 1. Military Veterans 'Prison History'</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>1-5 times</b>	<b>6-10 times</b>	<b>Over 10 times</b>
Number of times previously on remand	40	39	11	10
Number of times previously on a sentence	45	36	8	11

## ***Atmosphere & Relationships***

A similar percentage of military veteran prisoners (86%) as all other prisoners (87%) described the atmosphere in their hall/dormitory in positive terms. Military Veterans also reported positive relations with other prisoners (94%) and officers in their hall (90%), compared to all other prisoners (96% & 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 2).

Eight in ten military veterans said that they have ‘been able to make up my own mind about things’ (80%), ‘been thinking clearly’ (75%). Table 2 below, shows little significant difference between the experiences of military veteran prisoners and all other prisoners in relation to their mental health. The only exception is with reference to ‘I’ve been feeling interested in other people’ where only 46% of military veterans responded positively compared to 55% of all other prisoners.

<b>Table 2. Mental health &amp; well-being</b>	<b>% of military veteran prisoners</b>	<b>% of all other prisoners</b>
I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future	63	67
I’ve been feeling useful	54	56
I’ve been feeling relaxed	62	67
I’ve been feeling interested in other people	46	55
I’ve had energy to spare	59	64
I’ve been dealing with problems well	71	74
I’ve been thinking clearly	75	75
I’ve been feeling good about myself	61	63
I’ve been feeling close to other people	48	52
I’ve been feeling confident	65	63
I’ve been able to make up my own mind about things	80	84
I’ve been feeling loved	48	52
I’ve been interested in new things	63	64
I’ve been feeling cheerful	62	64

### **Use of New Psychoactive Substances**

Just on one in eight (13%, n=28) military veterans said that they had used New Psychoactive Substances prior to coming into prison compared to one fifth of all other prisoners (19%, n=488). Similarly number had also use these illegal drugs whilst in prison (15%, n=30 compared to 18%, n=413).

### ***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 quarter of military veteran prisoners reported that drug taking was a problem for them on the outside (26%) and that they were under the influence of drugs at the time of their offence (26%), compared to 37% & 39% of all other prisoners.

One in ten military veteran prisoners (14%) committed their offence to get money for drugs and 16% were receiving treatment for drug use before coming into prison. Fewer military veterans were of the opinion that their drug taking will be a problem upon their release (14% compared to 23%). (See Table 3).

<b>Table 3. Drug Use</b>	<b>% of military veteran prisoners</b>	<b>% of all other prisoners</b>
My drug taking was a problem for me on the outside	26	37
I was under the influence of drugs at the time of my offence	26	39
I committed my offence to get money for drugs	14	15
I was receiving treatment for my drug use before prison	16	19
If I was offered help for my drug problem on the outside I would take it	28	38
If I was offered help for my drug problem in prison I would take it	31	40
I am worried that my drug problem will be a problem when I get out	14	23
I was assessed for drug use upon my admission to prison	29	39
I have been given the chance to receive treatment for drug use during my sentence	24	28
I have received help/treatment for drug use during my sentence	22	25

Just over a quarter of military veterans (27%) reported having used illegal drugs in prison compared to two fifths of all other prisoners reporting in the survey (40%). Of those who reported using drugs in prison, eight in ten (81%, n=44) military veterans said that their drug use had changed during their current period in prison. One in ten stated that their drug use had increased (12%, n=5), decreased (9%, n=4) or had the same use but used different drugs (7(n=3).

Sixteen percent of military veterans reported that their drug use had only started in prison while the majority (56%, n=24) had now stopped using. (See Table 4).

<b>Table 4. Has drug use changed since coming in to prison?</b>	<b>% of military veteran prisoners</b>	<b>% of all other prisoners</b>
Drug use <b>increased</b> since coming into prison	12(n=5)	14
Drug use <b>decreased</b> since coming into prison	9(n=4)	32
Same use but <b>different drugs</b>	7(n=3)	12
Only <b>started using in prison</b>	16(n=7)	12
Now <b>stopped using</b>	56(n=24)	30

One in ten military veterans (12%, n=25) reported using drugs in the last month while in prison compared to just over one fifth on all other prisoners (23%, n=514).

### ***Alcohol use***

As shown in Table 5, prisoners were asked a number of questions about alcohol use/dependency inside and outside prison. Three in ten military veteran prisoners (29%) 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 (12%) military veteran prisoners were worried that alcohol would be a problem for them upon their release compared to one fifth (20%) of all other prisoners reporting in the survey.

<b>Table 5. Prisoners views on Alcohol</b>	<b>% of military veteran prisoners</b>	<b>% of all other prisoners</b>
I was drunk at the time of my offence	29	40
My drinking affected my ability to hold down a job	12	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	30	33
If I was offered help on the outside for alcohol problems I would take it	34	40
I am worried that alcohol will be a problem for me when I get out	12	20
Have you used alcohol in prison in the last month	3(n=7)	4(n=92)
I was assessed for alcohol use on my admission to prison	28	29
I have been given the chance to receive treatment for alcohol problems during my sentence	25	22
I have received help/treatment for alcohol problems during my sentence	16	14

### ***Smoking***

Just under two thirds of military veteran prisoners reported that they smoked (64%), with 47% stating that they want to give up smoking compared to all other prisoners (68% and 53% respectively).



### ***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 (70%), letter (66%) and visits (50%), compared with similar proportions all other prisoners reporting (71%, 62% and 52% respectively).

In order to gauge their views on the quality of visits, prisoners were asked to consider a number of aspects relating to visits. Generally, prisoners rated visits in positive terms ('very good', 'fairly good' or 'ok'). The majority of military veteran prisoner reported positively in relation to facilities for disabled visitors (83%) and children (82%). Military veteran prisoners reported less positively in relation the length of the visit (65%) and access to the Family Contact Officer (66%), (See Table 6 below).

<b><i>Table 6. Contact with Family and Friends</i></b>	<b>Military Veteran Prisoners (%)</b>	<b>All Other Prisoners (%)</b>
Access to family and friends	75	85
Access to the Family Contact Officer in this prison	66	73
Length of visits	65	73
Ability to arrange visits	74	84
Facilities for children at visits	82	82
Facilities for disabled visitors	83	82
Timing of visits	72	78
Quality of the visit	77	81
Respectful behaviour shown by staff in relation to visits	80	79

A higher percentage of military veteran prisoners reported having children (75%) compared to all other prisoners reporting in the survey (61%). Three in ten military veterans (30%) are receiving visits from their children compared to 36% of all other prisoners.

### ***Domestic Violence***

There was little or no significant difference between military and non-military prisoners reporting in the survey in relation to domestic violence. A quarter of military veterans (23%) have been involved in violence against their spouse and one fifth (18%) had at some point been convicted of an offence involving violence against their spouse or partner compared to all other prisoners (24% & 20% respectively).

Three in ten military veterans (30%) had been a victim of violence from their spouse or partner, the same percentage as for all other prisoners. As a child, just under two fifths of military veterans (37%) witnessed violence between their parents/carers, compared to 40% of all other prisoners.

### ***Knife Crime***

Just over a quarter of military veterans (28%) reported ever carrying a knife, compared to 42% of all other prisoners. Almost a third of military veterans (34%) reported being a victim of knife crime, and over a fifth (22%) reported having used a knife to injure someone (compared to 38% and 32% of all other prisoners respectively).

One fifth (21%) of military veterans said they had been convicted of a knife crime, compared to almost a third of all other prisoners (35%). Almost two fifths (39%) said if they were cautioned for carrying a knife that would stop them, compared to 43% of all other prisoners.

<b>Table 7. Knife Crime</b>	<b>Military Veteran Prisoners (%)</b>	<b>All Other Prisoners (%)</b>
Have you ever carried a knife?	28	42
Have you carried a knife in the 12 months before coming into prison?	16	22
Have you been a victim of knife crime?	34	38
Have you ever used a knife to injure someone?	22	32
Have you ever been cautioned by the Police for carrying a knife?	16	30
Have you ever been convicted of a knife crime?	21	35
If you were cautioned for carrying a knife would this stop you? Yes?	39	42
Are you a gang member? Yes?	8	7
Will you ever carry a knife again? Yes?	15	16

### ***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, almost one fifth (18%, n=41) reported that they had been bullied in the month preceding the survey, compared to 15% (n=400) of all other prisoners reporting.

### ***Safety***

One in five (21%) of military veterans reported fearing for their safety in prison during the last month, compared with 16% of all other prisoners. Of those military veterans who reported fearing for their safety: 32% reported that another prisoner made them fear for their safety; 96% a non-uniformed member of staff; 51% a group of prisoners; 81% a group of prison officers (excluding control and restraint); and 70% a prison officer.

### ***Food***

In the region of half of military veterans were content with the choice of menu (58%), portion size (55%), and the condition of the food when it was served (56%) compared with all other prisoners reporting (62%, 61% and 56% 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.

## ***Conclusion***

The thematic analysis of the 16<sup>th</sup> Prisoner Survey 2017 demonstrates that in respect to basic relationships, atmosphere, cleanliness and other environmental matters, the experience of military veteran prisoners continues to be no different to that of any other prisoner. Indeed, with regards to drug use, alcohol and knife crime, military veterans give more positive responses when compared to other prisoners. By contrast, military veterans report more negative experiences when it comes to contact with family and friends, bullying and mental health.

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 indicate only slightly less positive responses from military veterans when compared to all other prisoners, with the exception of 'I'm feeling confident' (65% compared to 63%).

Fewer military veterans reported being drunk at the time of the offence (29%) compared to all other prisoners (40%) reporting. Similarly fewer military veterans (30%) reported that drinking affected their relationship with their family compared to 33% of all other prisoners reporting in the survey. Drinking habits amongst military veterans, along with their adverse effects, were also reported as slightly lower than all other prisoners, including failure to do what was normally expected (12% compared to 19%), and feelings of guilt or remorse after drinking (18% compared to 21%).

Similarly, fewer military veterans (26%) reported being under the influence of drugs at the time of their offence when compared to all other prisoners (39%) who said this was the case. Further, fewer military veteran prisoners (26%) reported that drug taking was a problem for them on the outside when compared to all other prisoners (37%).

A quarter of military veteran prisoners (27%) reported that they had used illegal drugs in prison compared to 40% of all other prisoners reporting. In the last month in prison, 12% of military veterans had used drugs compared to 23% of all other prisoners.

Just on one in seven (15%) military veterans said that they have used new psychoactive substances during their time in prison compared to 18% of all other prisoners.

Military veterans reported fewer visits from family and friends across the survey's range of frequencies and gave lower positive responses with regards to their access to family and friends (75% compared to 85%) and their ability to arrange visits (74% compared to 84%).