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Australian Defence Force service

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According to the 2021 Census:

- There were 581,100 people who had ever served in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), 2.8% of the Australian population aged 15 years and over.
- Townsville, QLD had a higher number of current service (5,500 people) and previous service (8,700 people) members than any other region (at the SA3 level).
- One in twenty (5.3%) Australian households (dwellings) had at least one person who had served in the ADF (that is, at least one person who was either currently serving or had previously served in the ADF).
- 13% of previous service members needed assistance with the core activities of self-care, mobility or communication.
- Three in five (60%) previous service members had a long-term health condition.

- People who had served in the ADF were more likely to have volunteered in the previous 12 months (21%) than those who had never served in the ADF (15%).

Overview

Serving in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) provides a unique variety of opportunities and experiences (1) and can have a significant impact on a person's life, both during their service period and beyond. It may affect where they live, their connection with family and other social networks, as well as their health and wellbeing.

Returning to civilian life following ADF service can present challenges, and previous service members may have distinct characteristics and health needs (physical and psychological) that require special consideration due to their military training, service and deployments.

The 2021 Census included a new question about service in the ADF. While records exist for current Australian Defence Force service, limited records exist for previous service personnel.

The following article analyses the characteristics of both currently serving members of the ADF and those who previously served in the ADF, aged 15 years and over, based on 2021 Census data. The data provides information to enable better delivery of services and support for veterans, to geographic areas where it is most needed.

Definition of service

Currently serving includes those who, at the time of the 2021 Census were aged 15-64 years and were part of the:

- Australian Army (including NORFORCE (North-West Mobile Force))
- Royal Australian Navy
- Royal Australian Air Force

A current ADF service member may be engaged in:

- Regular service: considered a person's main ongoing job, with most roles full-time in nature. They may have also engaged in Reserves service previously.
- Reserves service: normally part-time in nature and can include up to 200 days of service per year, depending on the role. They may also have also engaged in Regular services previously.

Previous service includes former ADF members aged 15 years and over who served in Regular or Reserve services (including the National Service and the Second Australian Imperial Force) who are not currently serving in the ADF.

Total ever served includes those currently serving and those with previous service in the ADF.

Never served includes all people aged 15 years and over with no current or previous service in the ADF.

Note this analysis does not capture people who have served in non-Australian defence forces and excludes overseas visitors.

Detailed information on ADF service data variables is found in the 2021 Census dictionary.

[ADCP \(/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/service-australian-defence-force/australian-defence-force-service-detailed-adcp\)](/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/service-australian-defence-force/australian-defence-force-service-detailed-adcp) – Australian Defence Force service, detailed

[ADFP \(/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/service-australian-defence-force/australian-defence-force-service-adfp\)](/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/service-australian-defence-force/australian-defence-force-service-adfp) – Australian Defence Force service

Population

According to the 2021 Census, there was a total of 581,100 people who had ever served in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), 2.8% of the Australian population aged 15 years and over. Of those who had ever served in the ADF:

- 10.4% (60,300 people) were currently serving in Regular service
- 4.2% (24,600 people) were currently serving in the Reserves service
- 85.4% (496,300 people) had previously served in either the Reserve or Regular service and were not currently serving.

Among those who were currently serving:

- 79.4% were male (67,400 people)
- 20.6% were female (17,500 people)
- The average age of those in the Regular service was 34 years
- The average age of those in the Reserves service was 41 years.

Table 1. People currently serving in the Regular service by age and sex, 2021

	Male (no.)	Male (%)	Female (no.)	Female (%)	Total (no.)	Total (%)
15-24 years	10,893	74.1	3,815	25.6	14,710	100.0
25-34 years	16,499	77.9	4,666	22.0	21,168	100.0
35-44 years	10,514	81.1	2,447	18.9	12,963	100.0
45-54 years	7,092	83.2	1,434	16.8	8,528	100.0
55-64 years	2,498	85.6	424	14.5	2,917	100.0
Total	47,495	78.9	12,791	21.2	60,286	100.0

Table 2. People currently serving in the Reserves service by age and sex, 2021

	Male (no.)	Male (%)	Female (no.)	Female (%)	Total (no.)	Total (%)
15-24 years	2,004	80.0	506	20.2	2,505	100.0
25-34 years	5,242	80.8	1,240	19.1	6,486	100.0
35-44 years	4,682	79.5	1,206	20.5	5,889	100.0
45-54 years	3,881	78.4	1,074	21.7	4,950	100.0
55-64 years	4,082	86.0	662	14.0	4,745	100.0
Total	19,896	80.9	4,683	19.1	24,581	100.0

Among those who had previously served in the ADF:

- 86.6% were male (429,600 people)
- 13.4% were female (66,700 people)
- The average age was 64 years.

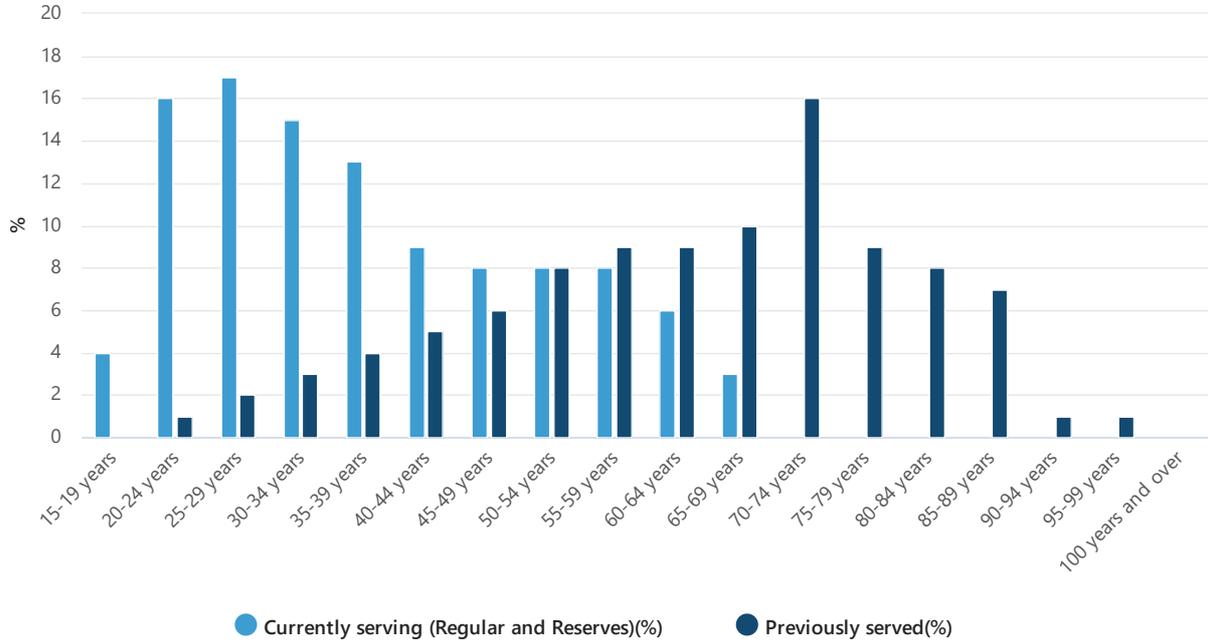
Table 3. Previous service members of the ADF by age and sex, 2021

	Male (no.)	Male (%)	Female (no.)	Female (%)	Total (no.)	Total (%)
15-24 years	3,501	73.9	1,238	26.1	4,735	100.0
25-34 years	22,133	83.7	4,310	16.3	26,441	100.0
35-44 years	34,324	81.9	7,583	18.1	41,909	100.0
45-54 years	56,384	79.8	14,290	20.2	70,673	100.0
55-64 years	72,773	81.5	16,492	18.5	89,268	100.0
65-74 years	116,853	90.3	12,583	9.7	129,437	100.0
75-84 years	79,469	93.0	5,950	7.0	85,416	100.0
85 years and over	44,207	91.3	4,194	8.7	48,396	100.0
Total	429,637	86.6	66,639	13.4	496,276	100.0

The age profile of ADF service members varies considerably by whether they were current or previous service members. Currently serving ADF members have a much younger age profile, with over half (53%) aged under 35 years.

Those who previously served in the ADF were more likely to be older, with over half (53%) aged 65 years or more.

Graph 1. Currently or previously served in the ADF by age group(a), 2021



(a) Proportions in each age group are calculated based on the national total of people who had currently or previously served in the ADF. Please see Australian Defence Force service ([ADFP](https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/service-australian-defence-force/australian-defence-force-service-adfp)) variable.

Among previous service members, the most common 5-year age group was 70 - 74 years (16% or 81,800 people). In 1964, selective conscription was introduced in Australia, which meant that 20-year-old men were chosen, through a ballot system, to serve in the Australian Army. The scheme ran from 1964 - 1972, increasing the size of the army by 40,000 people (2). Individuals conscripted through this process would be between 69 and 76 years old today, explaining the high count in that age group.

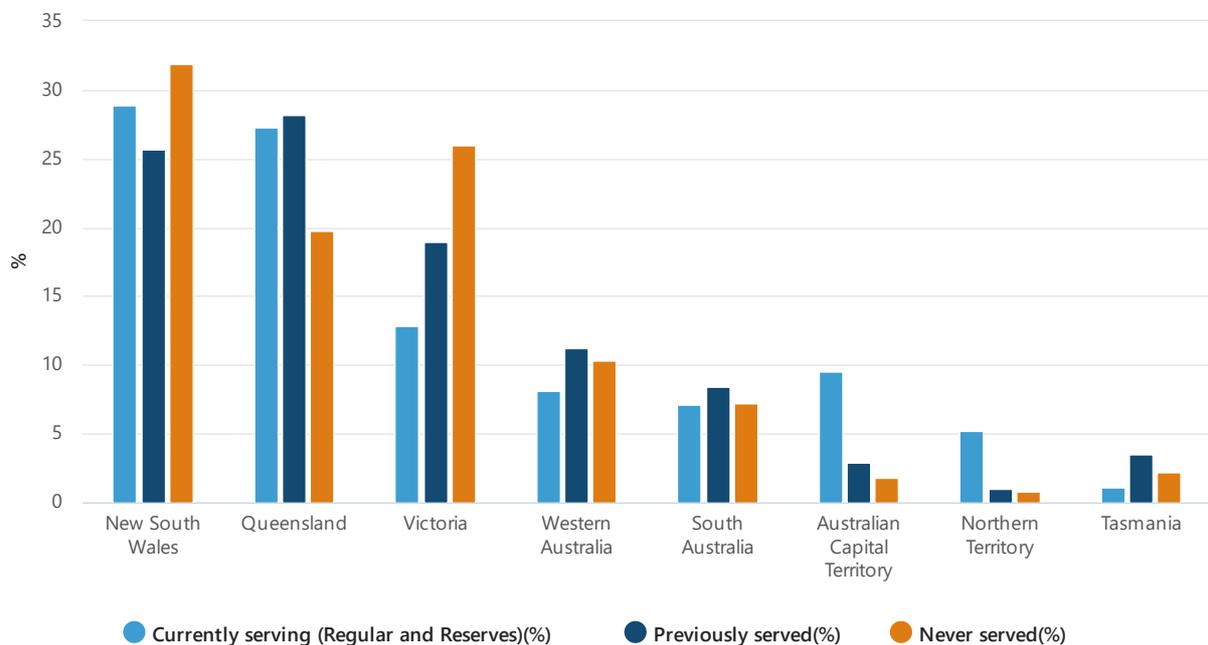
Location

States and territories

According to the 2021 Census, over half of both current service members (56% or 47,700 people) and previous service members (54% or 267,600 people) were living in either New South Wales or Queensland, in part reflecting the relatively larger populations within these states.

There were some notable differences in the proportion of ADF members in other states and territories, reflecting in part the location of bases where current service members are located.

Graph 2. Whether served in ADF by state or territory of usual residence(a), 2021



(a) Proportions in each state and territory are calculated based on the national total of people who had currently, previously, or never served in the ADF. Please see Australian Defence Force service ([ADFP \(/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/service-australian-defence-force/australian-defence-force-service-adfp\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/australian-defence-force-service)) variable.

Capital cities or regions

Around two-thirds (67%) of current service members lived in a greater capital city ([Greater Capital City Statistical Area](https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/australian-defence-force-service)) (/statistics/standards/australian-statistical-geography-standard-asgs-edition-3/jul2021-jun2026/main-structure-and-greater-capital-city-statistical-areas/greater-capital-city-statistical-areas), similar to those who had never served in the ADF (68%). Just over half (55%) of

previous service members lived in a greater capital city, with 45% living in a regional area, reflecting the older age profile of this group, many of whom may no longer be working (3).

Certain regional areas ([Statistical Area Level 3](https://statistics/standards/australian-statistical-geography-standard-asgs-edition-3/jul2021-jun2026/main-structure-and-greater-capital-city-statistical-areas/statistical-area-level-3)) had high numbers of current and previous ADF service members, reflecting the location of bases in those regions.

Townsville, QLD is the site of Australia's largest Army base, Lavarack Barracks, and according to the 2021 Census, had more currently serving ADF members than any other regional area:

- 4,960 people from Townsville were in the Regular service, accounting for 8.2% of all current Regular service members, higher than any other regional area
- 565 people from Townsville were in the Reserve service, accounting for 2.3% of all Reservists, higher than any other regional area
- 3.5% of the usual resident population (aged 15 years and over) in Townsville were currently serving in the ADF. In contrast, ADF current service members accounted for less than 1% (0.4%) of the total Australian population.

In addition, Townsville had more previous service members (8,660 people) than any other regional area (SA3 level), accounting for 5.6% of Townsville's usual resident population (aged 15 years and over).

Following Townsville, the areas with the highest numbers of currently serving ADF members were:

- North Canberra, ACT (2,610 people, accounting for 3.1% of North Canberra's population) which includes the Royal Military College (Duntroon) and the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA)
- Rockingham, WA (2,240 people, accounting for 2.6% of Rockingham), which includes the HMAS Stirling Naval base
- Gungahlin, ACT (2,050 people, accounting for 2.4% of Gungahlin's population), likely due to its proximity to Duntroon and ADFA.

Table 4. Top 15 regional areas (SA3) for people currently serving in the ADF, by service type, 2021

Regular			Reserves		
Statistical Areas Level 3 (SA3)	no.	%	Statistical Areas Level 3	no.	%
Townsville, QLD	4,962	8.2	Townsville, QLD	565	2.3
North Canberra, ACT	2,244	3.7	Queanbeyan, NSW	534	2.2
Rockingham, WA	1,995	3.3	Gungahlin, ACT	464	2.0
The Gap - Enoggera, QLD	1,643	2.7	North Canberra, ACT	369	1.5
Gungahlin, ACT	1,583	2.6	Tuggeranong, ACT	360	1.5
Ipswich Inner, QLD	1,495	2.4	Newcastle, NSW	347	1.4
Sydney Inner City, NSW	1,387	2.3	Ipswich Inner, QLD	318	1.3
Wagga Wagga, NSW	1,355	2.2	Belconnen, ACT	315	1.3
Shoalhaven, NSW	1,341	2.2	South Canberra, ACT	277	1.1
Mornington Peninsula, VIC	1,299	2.2	The Hills District, QLD	268	1.1
Queanbeyan, NSW	1,211	2.0	Stirling, WA	251	1.0
Liverpool, NSW	1,130	1.9	Rockingham, WA	240	1.0
Darwin City, NT	1,117	1.9	Port Stephens, NSW	239	1.0
Wodonga - Alpine, VIC	1,061	1.8	Shoalhaven, NSW	232	1.0
Newcastle, NSW	981	1.6	Toowoomba, QLD	230	1.0

Following Townsville, the areas with the highest numbers of previous service members were:

- Toowoomba, QLD (5,060 people)
- Rockingham, WA (4,720 people)
- Onkaparinga, SA (4,700 people)

Table 5. Top 15 regional areas (SA3) for previous service members of the ADF, 2021

Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3)	no.	%
Townsville, QLD	8,661	1.7
Toowoomba, QLD	5,063	1.0
Rockingham, WA	4,717	1.0
Onkaparinga, SA	4,696	1.0
Mornington Peninsula, VIC	4,394	0.9
Ipswich Inner, QLD	4,217	0.9
Shoalhaven, NSW	4,123	0.8
Newcastle, NSW	4,083	0.8
Geelong, VIC	4,068	0.8
Gosford, NSW	3,877	0.8
Mandurah, WA	3,857	0.8
Wyong, NSW	3,735	0.8
Joondalup, WA	3,638	0.7
Stirling, WA	3,577	0.7
Tuggeranong, ACT	3,499	0.7

Living arrangements

Of the 581,100 people who had ever served in the ADF:

- 94% (547,900 people) were at home (at their usual residence) on Census Night
- 5.7% (33,200 people) were elsewhere in Australia on Census Night.

Almost one in ten (10%) current service members were away from home on Census Night, twice that of previous service members (5%), reflecting the mobile nature of a current service role.

Of those who had never served in the ADF (aged 15 years and over) just 3.6% were away from home on Census Night.

Type of dwelling

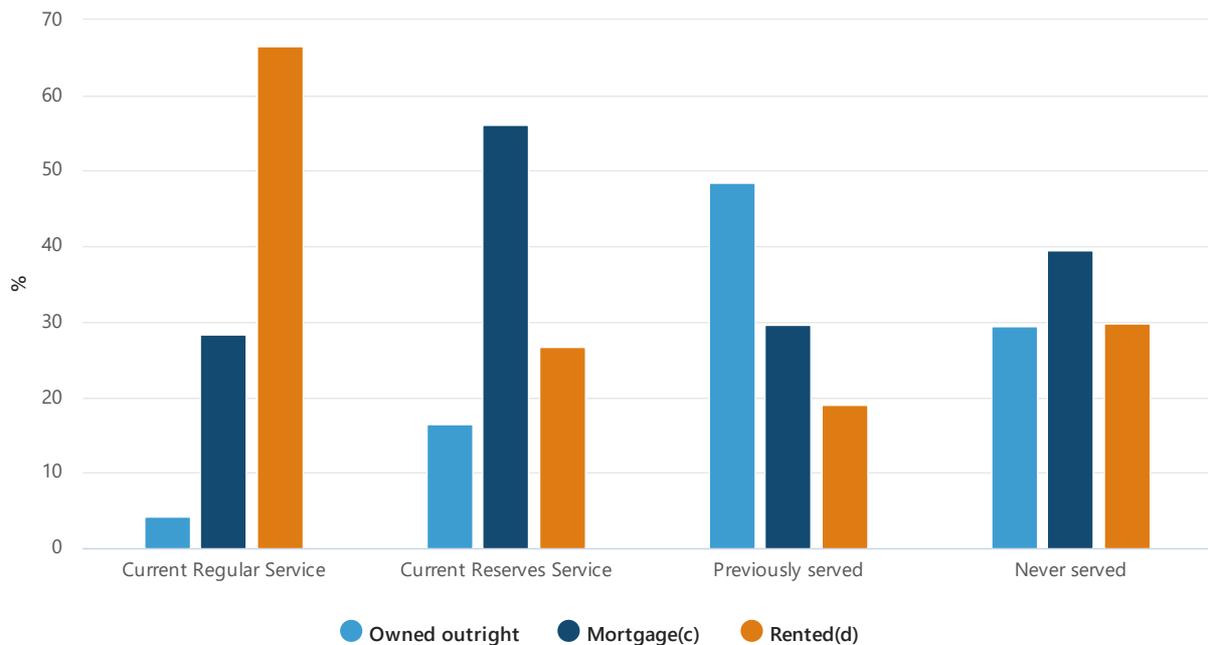
Service with the ADF can affect where a person lives. While Reservists may live at any location across Australia, those in the Regular service generally reside on or near an ADF base in a private dwelling such as their own home or an ADF Service Residence (4), or in a non-private dwelling such as a barracks.

Of the 547,900 people who had ever served in the ADF and were at home (at their usual residence) on Census Night, most (97% or 529,300 people) lived in a private household (dwelling).

Private households – tenure type

Among current service members who lived in a private household, over half (53%) were renting. This reflects in part their younger age profile, as well as the mobility of their role, particularly those in the Regular service. In contrast, previous service members were more likely to live in their own home, either owned outright (48%) or with a mortgage (30%).

Graph 3. Tenure type(a) by whether served in the ADF(b), 2021



(a) Total includes dwellings occupied rent free, under a life tenure scheme and other tenure types.

(b) Living in private households. Excludes those living in visitor only households and non-classifiable households.

(c) Includes dwellings purchased under a shared equity scheme.

(d) Excludes dwellings occupied rent free.

Landlord type

Among current service members living in private households who were renting, the most common landlord type was a real estate agent (50%) followed by a government employer (including Defence Housing Australia) (38%). Landlord type varied by type of service:

- 44% of those in the Regular service were renting from a government employer (including Defence Housing Australia), compared with 5.8% of those in the Reserves service.

Non-private dwellings

Non-private dwellings provide communal or transitory accommodation. For current ADF service members this is more likely to include defence establishments like barracks, while for non-service members this can include hotels, hospitals and aged care facilities. According to the 2021 Census, of the 547,900 people who had ever served in the ADF and were at home (at their usual residence) on Census Night 18,600 people lived in a non-private dwelling. See Census Dictionary to find out more about [non-private dwellings. \(/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/housing/type-non-private-dwelling-npdd\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/housing/type-non-private-dwelling-npdd).

Current service members were more likely to live in a non-private dwelling (11% or 8,570 people) than previous service members (2.1%) or those who had never served in the ADF (1.4%). Most (97%) of the current service members living in non-private dwellings were engaged in the Regular service.

Among the 8,570 current service members living in non-private dwellings:

- Most (83%) were living in staff quarters
- 13% were living in a residential college (hall of residence).

In contrast and reflecting their older age profile, among the 10,000 previous service members living in non-private dwellings:

- over half (56%) were living in a nursing home
- almost one-quarter (23%) were living in accommodation for the retired or aged (not self-contained).

Households

According to the 2021 Census, there were 9.8 million households (occupied private dwellings) in Australia on Census night. Of these, one in twenty (5.3% or 521,600 households) had at least one person who had served in the ADF (that is, at least one person who was either currently serving or had previously served in the ADF). This proportion was greater in regions with higher numbers of service people. In Townsville, QLD, one in six (16%) households had at least one person who had served in the ADF, followed by:

- Gungahlin, ACT (12%)
- Rockingham, WA (11%)

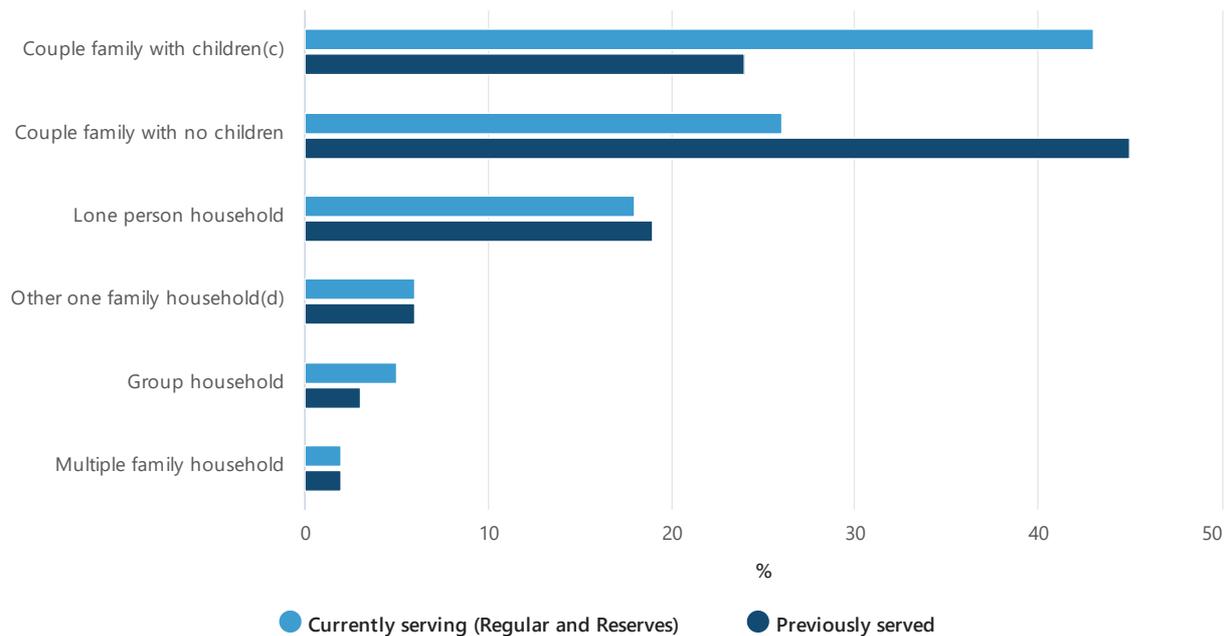
- North Canberra, ACT (10%).

Family composition

Of the 529,300 people who had ever served who live in private dwellings who were at home on Census night, those currently serving were most likely to be living in a couple family with children (43%). (Includes children under 15 years and dependent students). This was followed by couple family with no children (26%), reflecting the younger age profile of this group. See Census Dictionary for more information on [household relationships. \(/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/household-and-families/relationship-household-rlhp\)](https://census.gov.au/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/household-and-families/relationship-household-rlhp)

In contrast, of those who had previously served, 45% were in a couple family with no dependent children, reflecting the older age profile of this population.

Graph 4. Family composition of people who had currently or previously served in the ADF(a)(b), 2021



(a) Proportions for each family composition type are calculated based on the national total of people who had currently or previously served in the ADF. Please see Australian Defence Force service ([ADFP \(/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/service-australian-defence-force/australian-defence-force-service-adfp\)](https://census.gov.au/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/service-australian-defence-force/australian-defence-force-service-adfp)) variable. Count of persons at home on Census Night.

(b) Living in private dwellings. Excludes visitor only and other non-classifiable households.

(c) Children includes people aged 0-14 years, and people aged 15-24 years who were dependent students.

(d) Includes one parent family and other one family households.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

According to the 2021 Census, there were 3,160 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were currently serving in the ADF, approximately 3.7% of all currently serving ADF members. In comparison, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples made up 2.7% of those aged 15 years and over who had never served in the ADF.

Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples currently serving in the ADF:

- 76% were male, similar to the overall population of currently serving ADF members (79.4%)
- 24% were female
- 75% were in the Regular service
- 25% were in the Reserves service

In 2021, there were 11,600 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who had previously served in the ADF, approximately 2.3% of all previous ADF members. Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who previously served in the ADF:

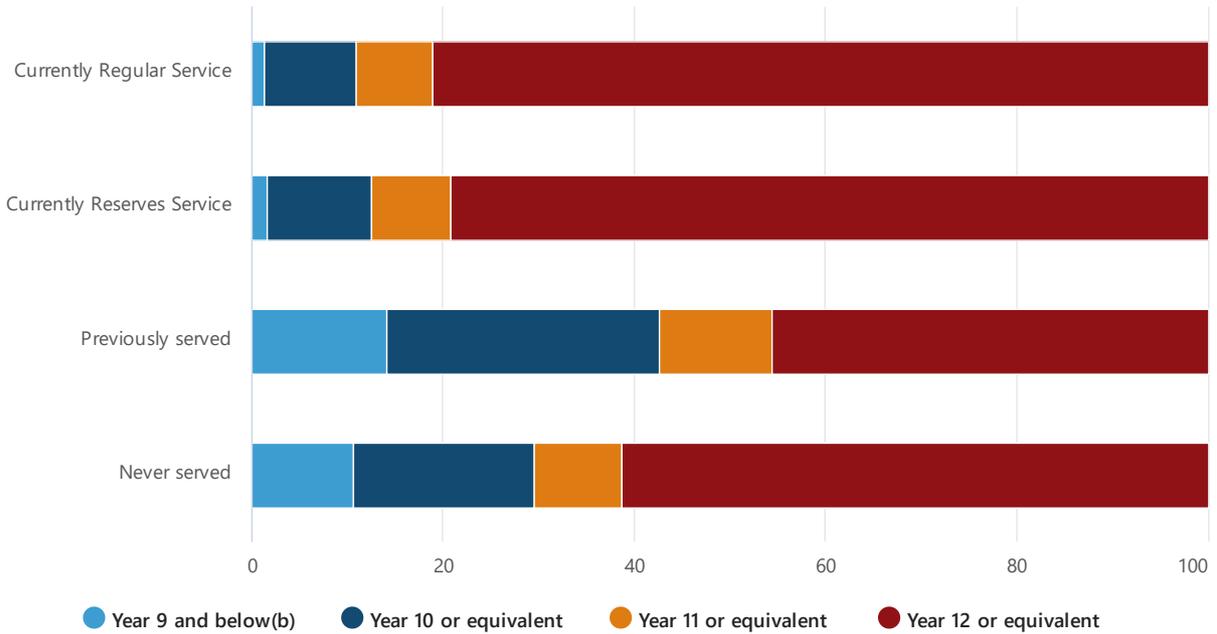
- 82% were male
- 18% were female
- 57% were in the Regular service
- 33% were in the Reserves service
- 10% served in both Regular and Reserves service.

Characteristics of ADF members

Education

According to the 2021 Census, current Regular and Reserve service members were more likely to have completed year 12 (81% and 79%, respectively) than those who had previously served (45%) or never served (60%) in the ADF. This in part reflects the younger age profile of those currently serving and the entry requirements for some positions in the ADF.

Graph 5. Highest year of school completed(a), by whether served in the ADF, 2021



(a) For people currently at school, highest year of schooling they have completed.

(b) Includes those who did not go to school.

Income

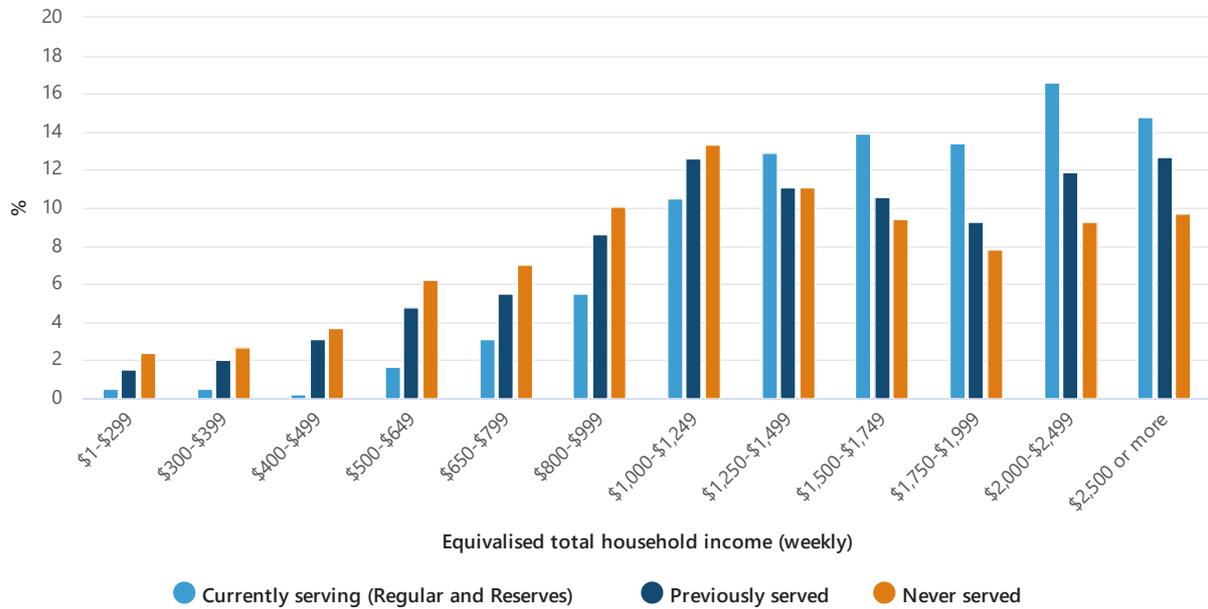
Equivalised total household income (weekly) is an indicator of the income resources available to a household and does not take into account the assets that might be held by members of a household (such as the family home).

Household income levels were generally higher among current service members than those who had never served. According to the 2021 Census, of those aged 15-64 years living in private households:

- Current Regular service members had a median household income of \$1,699 per week
- Current Reserves service members had a median household income of \$1,718 per week

In contrast, those who had never served (aged 15-64 years living in private households) had a median household income of \$1,261 per week.

Graph 6. Household weekly income(a) of people aged 15-64 years(b), by whether served in the ADF(c), 2021



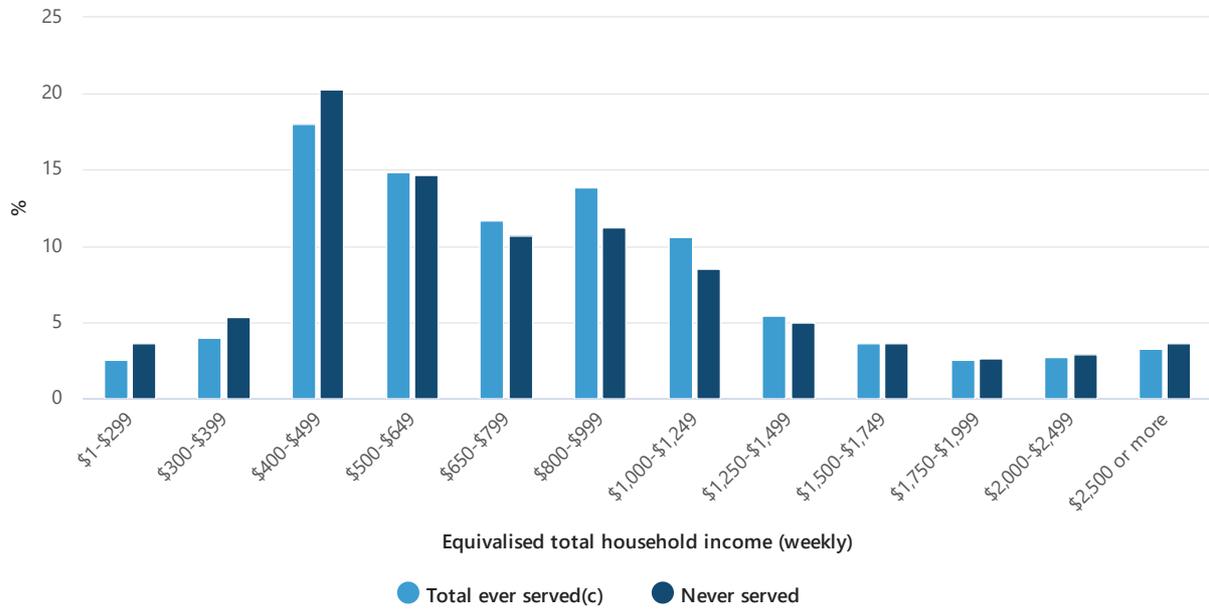
(a) Equivalised total household income. Includes those who reported nil income and those with all/partial income not stated. For more information see: Equivalised total household income ([HIED](https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/income-and-work/equivalised-total-household-income-weekly-hied) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/income-and-work/equivalised-total-household-income-weekly-hied>)).

(b) Living in private dwellings. Excludes non-classifiable households (visitor only households and other non-classifiable).

(c) Proportions are calculated based on the national total of people who had currently, previously or never served in the ADF. Please see Australian Defence Force service ([ADFP](https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/service-australian-defence-force/australian-defence-force-service-adfp) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/service-australian-defence-force/australian-defence-force-service-adfp>)) variable.

Among people aged 65 years and over (living in private households), the median household income was higher for those who had served in the ADF (\$730 per week) than those who had never served (\$660 per week).

Graph 7. Household weekly income(a) of people aged 65 years and over(b), by whether served in the ADF, 2021



(a) Equivalised total household income. Includes those who reported nil income and those with all/partial income not stated. For more information see: Equivalised total household income (weekly) ([HIED](https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/income-and-work/equivalised-total-household-income-weekly-hied) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/income-and-work/equivalised-total-household-income-weekly-hied>))

(b) Living in private dwellings. Excludes non-classifiable households (visitor only households and other non-classifiable).

(c) Includes those currently serving and those with previous service in the ADF.

Need for assistance

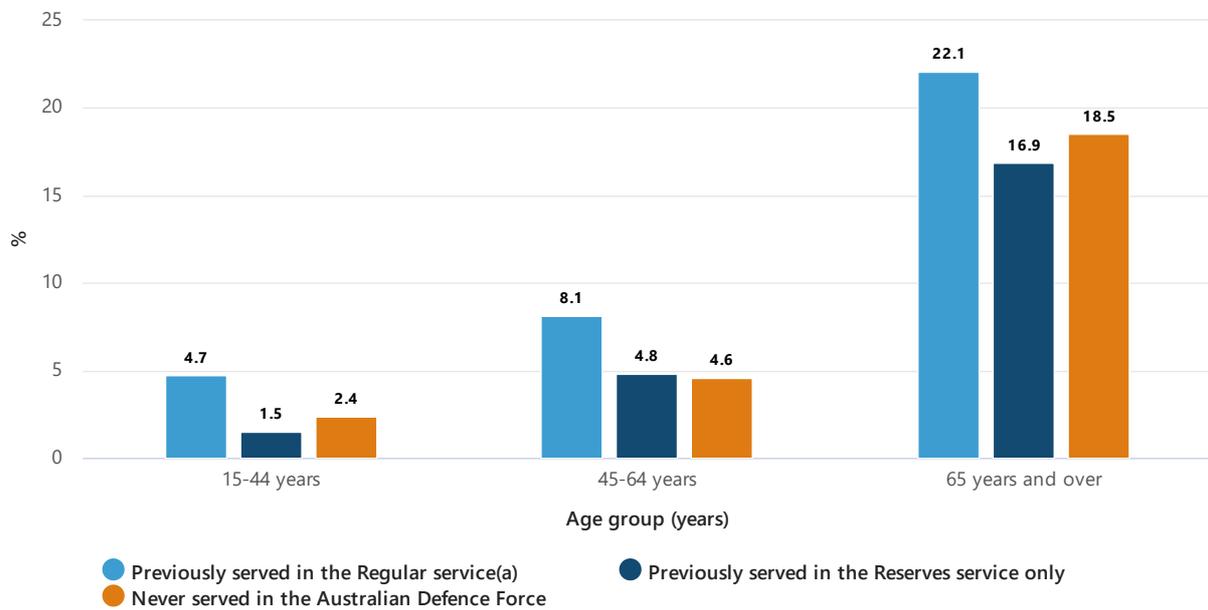
The 2021 Census measured the number of people who needed assistance with the core activities of self-care, mobility or communication in their day to day lives because of disability, long-term health conditions or old age. See Census Dictionary for more information on [core activity need for assistance. \(/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/disability-and-carers/core-activity-need-assistance-assnp\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/disability-and-carers/core-activity-need-assistance-assnp)

The likelihood of having a need for assistance increases with age (see the [Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2018 \(/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release\)](#)). Given the younger age profile of current service members, and the fitness and aptitude requirements to enter a role (5), among the 84,900 people currently serving just 1.2% needed assistance, with those aged 45-64 years more likely to need assistance (2.2%) than those aged 15-44 years (<1%).

Among the 496,300 people who had previously served in the ADF aged 15 years and over, 13% needed assistance. Whether a person needed assistance varied according to whether previous service members served in the Regular or Reserve service, and by age. According to the 2021 Census:

- 4.7% of people aged 15-44 years who had previously served in the Regular service needed assistance, compared with 1.5% of those who had served in the Reserves service only and 2.4% of those who had never served
- 8.1% of people aged 45-64 years who had previously served in the Regular service needed assistance, almost twice the rate of those who had previously served in the Reserves service only (4.8%) and those who had never served (4.6%)
- 22.1% of people aged 65 years and over who had previously served in the Regular service needed assistance, higher than those who had served in the Reserves service only (16.9%) and those who had never served in the ADF (19%).

Graph 8. Previous service members, whether needed assistance by type of previous service(a), by age group, 2021



(a) Includes all people who had served in the Regular service only and those who served in both the Regular and Reserve service.

Long-term health conditions

The 2021 Census measured the number of people who reported that they had at least one selected long-term health condition, including arthritis, asthma and mental health conditions. See Census Dictionary for more information on [long-term health conditions. \(/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/health/type-long-term-health-condition-lthp\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/health/type-long-term-health-condition-lthp).

It is important to note that the short question used to collect this information provides useful information about the prevalence of long-term health conditions among small population groups or for smaller geographic regions, however for national and state prevalence estimates of long-term health conditions, see the [ABS National Health Survey \(/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/health-conditions-prevalence/2020-21\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/health-conditions-prevalence/2020-21). For national and state prevalence estimates of mental disorders, see the [ABS National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing \(/statistics/health/mental-health/national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing/latest-release\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/mental-health/national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing/latest-release).

According to the 2021 Census, current service members were less likely to report a long-term health condition than those with previous service and those who had never served, reflecting the general physical and mental fitness, and younger age profile of this population. Of the 84,900 people who were currently serving in the ADF (aged 15-64 years):

- around one in five (22%) reported they had one or more long-term health conditions, with rates similar between males and females (21% and 23% respectively)
- younger current service members (15-44 years) were less likely to report a long-term health condition (16%) than those aged 45-64 years (38%)

The most common long-term health conditions reported by current service members were:

- mental health conditions (including depression and anxiety) (7% of all currently serving members)
- arthritis (6%)
- asthma (5%)

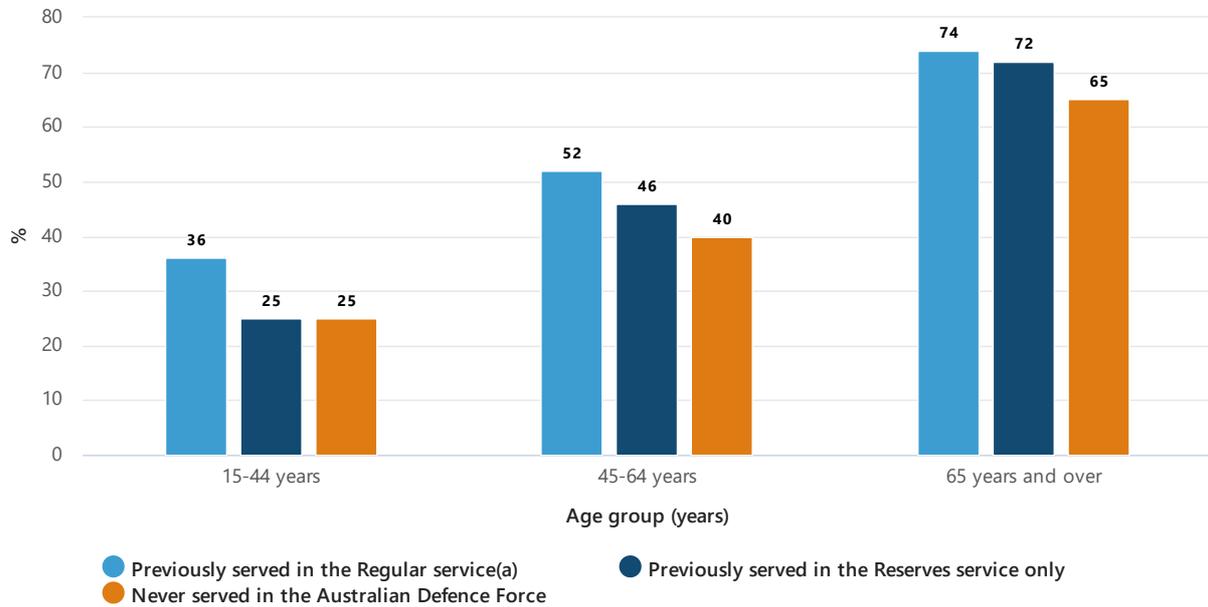
It is likely that the short question used in the Census to collect long-term health condition information underestimates the number and proportion of people with mental health conditions. For more information, see [Comparing ABS long-term health conditions data sources \(/statistics/detailed-methodology-information/information-papers/comparing-abs-long-term-health-conditions-data-sources\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/detailed-methodology-information/information-papers/comparing-abs-long-term-health-conditions-data-sources).

Service in the ADF can increase a person's exposure to stressful and sometimes dangerous situations, which can increase the likelihood of developing a range of physical and mental health conditions, which may not emerge until after the completion of service (6). This, together with the older age profile of previous service members, is a likely contributor to the higher incidence of long-term health conditions among those who had previously served in the ADF compared with the population who had never served.

Of the 496,300 people aged 15 years and over who had previously served in the ADF:

- three in five (60%) had a long-term health condition
- those who had previously served in the Regular service were more likely to report a long-term health condition than those whose previous service was in the Reserves only, regardless of age.

Graph 9. Whether had a long-term health condition by type of previous ADF service(a), by age group, 2021



(a) Includes all people who had served in the Regular service only and those who served in both the Regular and Reserve service.

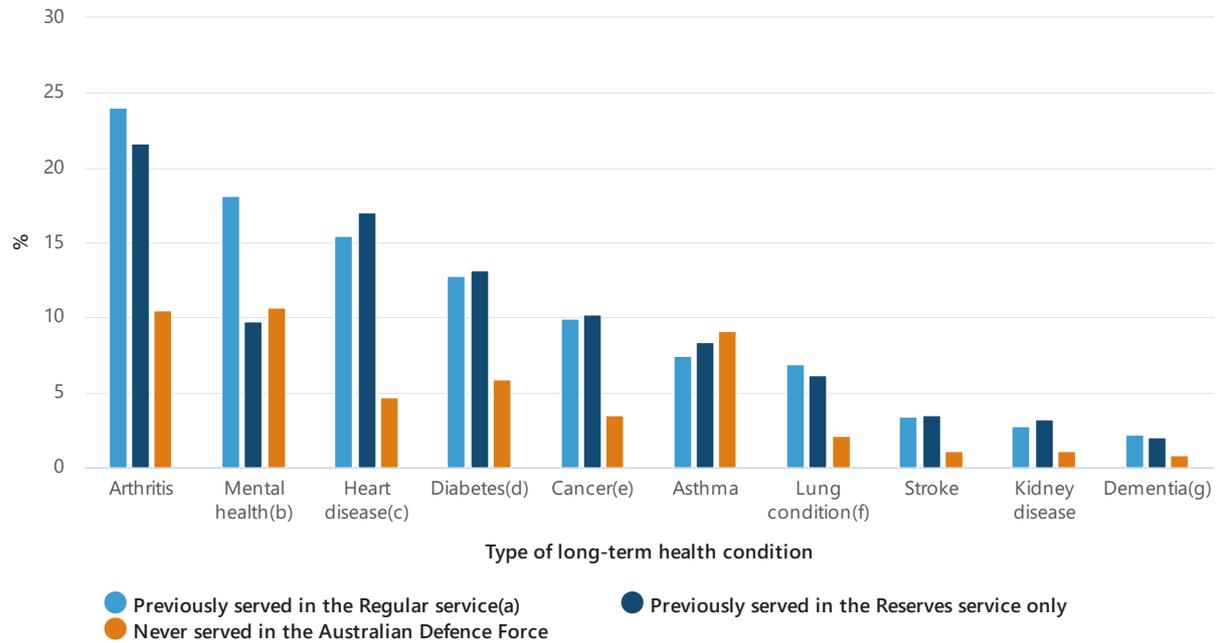
The two most common long-term health conditions reported by previous service members were:

- arthritis (23%)
- heart disease (16%)

The incidence of selected long-term health conditions varied somewhat between those who served in the Regular and Reserve service, particularly for mental health conditions. Among those who had previously served in the ADF, those who had served in the Regular service were more likely to report a mental health condition (18%) than those who had served in the Reserves service only (10%).

Reflecting their older age profile, previous service members were more likely to report each of the selected long-term health conditions than those who had never served, with the exception of asthma. This reflects in part the change in eligibility criteria for the ADF, which prior to 2007 prevented anyone with a history of asthma (within the previous 5 years) from entering the ADF (7).

Graph 10. Long-term health condition by type of previous ADF service(a), 2021



(a) Includes all people who had served in the Regular service only and those who served in both the Regular and Reserve service.

(b) Includes depression or anxiety

(c) Includes heart attack or angina

(d) Excludes gestational diabetes

(e) Includes remission

(f) Includes COPD or emphysema

(g) Includes Alzheimer's

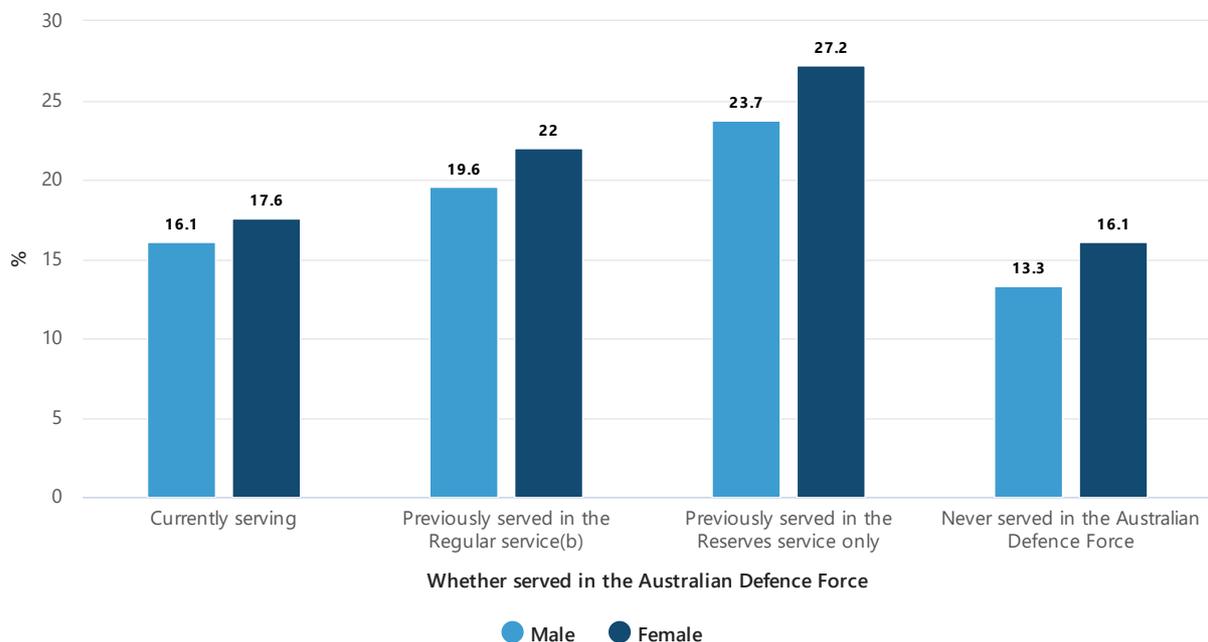
Volunteering

People who had served in the ADF were more likely to have volunteered in the previous 12 months than those who had never served in the ADF. According to the 2021 Census, of the 581,100 people

who had ever served in the ADF, around one in five (21%) had volunteered in the past year, compared with 15% of those who had never served.

Women were more likely to have volunteered in the previous 12 months regardless of their type of service. Among those who had ever served, women who had previously served in the Reserves service only were most likely to report that they had volunteered in the previous 12 months (27%).

Graph 11: Proportion who had volunteered(a), by whether served in the ADF, by sex, 2021



(a) Consists of people who spent time doing unpaid voluntary work for an organisation or group in the twelve months prior to Census Night. See Voluntary work for an organisation or group ([VOLWP \(/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/unpaid-work-and-care/voluntary-work-organisation-or-group-volwp\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/census-guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/unpaid-work-and-care/voluntary-work-organisation-or-group-volwp)).

(b) Includes all people who had served in the Regular service only and those who served in both the Regular and Reserve service.

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