

# Increase in proportion of non-religious in armed forces

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Members of the UK's armed forces are still more inclined to claim a religious affiliation and to say they are Christian than the population as a whole, but the situation is changing fairly rapidly.

On 1 April 2012 the proportion of armed forces personnel declaring no religion was 14.7%, up from 9.5% in 2007. It was lowest in the Army (11.9%) and highest in the Naval Service (20.1%), with 17.5% in the Royal Air Force. Across all three services the number of Christians declined from 89.7% in 2007 to 83.5% in 2012 (85.7% in the Army, 81.5% in the Royal Air Force, 78.9% in the Naval Service). That leaves a mere 1.9% in 2012 professing a non-Christian faith, an improvement on the 0.8% of five years earlier but still a significant under-representation in terms of society as a whole.

The religious affiliations of civilian personnel working for the armed forces have only been collected since 2008, and the declaration rate had still only climbed to 67.6% in 2012. Of those stating their religion in 2012, 24.1% said that they had none, very close to the English and Welsh average at the 2011 census (25.1%). The number of Christians was 70.8%, much higher than the 59.3% in the census, while non-Christians amounted to 5.1% (against 8.4% in the census). It should be remembered that the comparison with the census is not on a strict like-for-like basis since there was a non-response rate of 7.2% at the census.

*Source: Ministry of Defence, United Kingdom Defence Statistics, 2012, tables 2.12 (armed forces) and 2.32 (civilian personnel, including a breakdown by pay band). Prepared by Defence Analytical Services and Advice, and published on 12 December 2012.*

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