

The King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR), King's College London

Participant Information Sheet

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**COVID-19: Impact on the health and well-being of ex-serving personnel
(Veterans CHECK)**

Principal Investigators: Professor Sir Simon Wessely and Professor Nicola Fear

Ethical approval: The study protocol has been reviewed and approved by the King's College London Research Ethics Committee (Ref: HR-19/20-18626).

Thank you for taking part previously in our Health and Well-being Cohort Study. We would like to invite you to take part in another research study which is looking at the impact of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic on the health and experiences of ex-serving members of the UK Armed Forces. Before you decide whether to take part, we would like to give you more information about the study and how you can take part if you wish to do so.

1. Who is carrying out the study?

The King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR), King's College London.

2. Why is KCMHR carrying out this study?

The COVID-19 pandemic is a unique and challenging situation. It has created a great deal of uncertainty for many and people have been required to make enormous changes to how they live their lives. However, individuals may experience, and respond to, the situation differently. We would like to check in with you to see how you are doing.

It is important to understand the impact of the pandemic on the health and well-being of veterans. We would like you to tell us about your experiences during the pandemic. We would like to see if your health and well-being have changed since you last took part in our Health and Well-being Cohort Study and to compare the experiences of ex-serving personnel during the pandemic with people from other groups in the population. This will help to inform policy and may help to ensure that people get the support they need. It is also possible that there are some positive effects and we would like you to tell us if that is the case.

3. Who is funding the study?

The study is funded by the Office for Veterans' Affairs. However, we are a **fully independent** academic research group.

4. Who can take part?

Those who have left the Armed Forces, are living in the UK and have previously taken part in the last phase of our Health and Well-being Cohort Study can take part in this study. As the study involves completing a questionnaire online, those who take part will also need an email address and access to the internet.

5. Why have I been invited to take part?

You are being invited to take part in the study because you have previously taken part in our Health and Well-being Cohort Study and our records show that you have left service. You also told us that you were happy to be contacted again by the research team.

6. Do I have to take part?

No, participation is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to take part. However, to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on UK veterans, it is important for us to hear from as many people as possible, and so your participation really counts. If you do not wish to take part in the study you can let us know by emailing us at veterans@kcl.ac.uk and we will not contact you again about this study.

7. What are the benefits of taking part in this study?

The main benefit is that you will help us to gain an understanding of problems experienced by ex-serving personnel during the pandemic. This will inform policy and may help to ensure veterans get the help they need in the longer term.

8. How do I take part in the research?

Taking part in the study involves completing an online questionnaire, so you will need access to the internet. It will take about 15-20 minutes to complete but may take less time than this as not all sections will be relevant to you. Your personal login details can be found in the invitation email.

9. What is being asked on the questionnaire?

The questionnaire asks about your health and well-being, lifestyle behaviours, help-seeking, accommodation/living arrangements, family, loneliness, social support, finances, employment, and volunteering activities. It asks about any positive changes you may have experienced as a result of the pandemic, and also whether you or your friends/family have experienced any COVID-19 symptoms.

10. I feel fine and don't have any problems. Would you still like me to take part?

Yes, we want to hear from people who feel well, in addition to those who may feel unwell or are experiencing difficulties during the pandemic. We are interested in finding out about your experiences and to understand more about the impact of the pandemic on your life.

11. I am still serving in the military. Can I take part?

Thank you for your interest in the study. However, the study is for ex-serving personnel and therefore serving members of the UK Armed Forces are not able to take part. If you are still serving, you can let us know by emailing us at veterans@kcl.ac.uk and we will not contact you again about this study.

12. I live outside the UK. Can I take part?

To take part, you will need to be living in the UK. This is because the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic will vary between countries due to differences in the spread of the virus and the nature of the restrictions imposed. If you live outside of the UK you can let us know by emailing us at veterans@kcl.ac.uk and we will not contact you again about this study.

13. Who will get to see the information that I give in the questionnaire and how will my information be stored?

Your data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. All data will be regarded as confidential and stored securely. The answers you give in the questionnaire will be stored separately to your personal details. Only the immediate research team will have access to your information and be able to see your questionnaire responses linked with your identifiable information. We may share deidentified datasets with other research institutions, however, we will never share your questionnaire answers linked with information that would identify you (i.e. your name or date of birth). We will NOT pass any of your contact details (address, email address or phone number) to third parties including the Office for Veterans' Affairs and the UK Ministry of Defence.

The overall findings and results of the study will be published, but your identity and individual responses will be **entirely confidential**. Records will be held for 20 years and you have the right of access to your records at any time.

If you would like more information about how your data will be processed in accordance with GDPR, please visit the link below: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/support/research-ethics/kings-college-london-statementon-use-of-personal-data-in-research>

14. Will I get to see the results of this study?

Yes. We will send you a newsletter letting you know about our findings. Providing us with an up to date email address will help us to ensure you receive them. In addition, the research team will publish the overall results in academic journals.

15. How do I withdraw from the research?

It's up to you to decide if you want to take part in the study. If you do not wish to take part you can let us know by emailing us and we will not contact you again about this study. You can also withdraw your questionnaire responses after you have taken part up until the end of data collection (30th September 2020).

You can withdraw from the study at any time before this date, even if you begin the questionnaire and then decide you do not want to take part. If you do change your mind during the questionnaire, you can close the browser, but please note that your questionnaire responses will be retained unless you contact us to let us know that you would like to withdraw your questionnaire data. If you wish to withdraw, please contact us by email at veterans@kcl.ac.uk **stating your full name and the reference number given in our email.**

16. What are the possible risks of taking part?

We don't anticipate any risks by you taking part in this research however some survey topics may cause you distress as they cover personally sensitive issues i.e. mental health and alcohol consumption. Although we think it is unlikely, in the event of you suffering any adverse consequences as a result of taking part in this study, participants will be eligible to apply for compensation under the King's College London No Fault Compensation Scheme. You can contact the research team at the email address given below for further advice and information.

The research team will not act upon the information about your health that you provide in the survey. However, links to further information, advice and support will be provided during and at the end of the survey should you feel distressed in any way or be experiencing any difficulties. This information is also available on our website (details below).

17. What if something goes wrong

If this project has harmed you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the project you can contact King's College London using the details below for further advice and information:
The Chair, PNM Research Ethics Subcommittee, rec@kcl.ac.uk.

Contact details:

If you would like to contact the study team please get in touch by email at the following address: veterans@kcl.ac.uk. You can also call us on 07547 203316.

Twitter
[@kcmhr](https://twitter.com/kcmhr)

KCMHR website
www.kcl.ac.uk/kcmhr

Please click on 'Research', 'KCMHR Research' and then 'Veteran's CHECK' to see information about the study and signposting to organisations that can provide support and advice.

You can also find information on the Veterans CHECK website:

www.kcmhr.org/Veterans-CHECK