

June 2021



Mobilising veterans in the facilities management industry

Making FM work for our exceptional
former servicepeople

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Foreword

Veterans at Mitie are making a positive difference every day. This was evident in Mitie’s COVID response where a core of ex-military individuals helped to plan, build and deliver complex and challenging operations at scale. Clear thinking, the practical application of big ideas combined with teamwork, hard work and humour to ensure a highly successful service. Though not unique to veterans these characteristics are common amongst them.

Beyond responding to national emergencies, facilities management (FM) prizes the technical, logistical, leadership skills, and ethos developed in the armed forces. The industry, with its many entry points and a broad range of roles and specialities, is a great fit for men and women looking for a rewarding post-military career.

We commissioned this research because we wanted to have a deeper understanding of how we can support a greater number of veterans moving into FM.

To our knowledge, we are the first and only FM company to survey the views of those working in the industry on both the recruitment of and support for veterans. The results have provided us with positive feedback and have also highlighted opportunities to improve our approach.

80% of veterans responding to the survey told us they are likely to make FM their long-term career and a similar proportion would recommend a career in the sector to others leaving the armed forces.

Over two-thirds (70%) of our veterans were satisfied with the level to which their current roles matched their skills. Their leadership were even more positive with over three-quarters (84%) of their managers believing that **veterans are likely to possess the skills needed ‘most urgently’ in the sector.**

Beyond the work itself, the research also revealed that three quarters (75%) of our veterans had at least some ideas about their postmilitary career. Yet when asked how prepared for civilian life they felt, fewer than one in five (17%) were ‘very prepared’ – the reverse position leaving room for improvement.

Overall, the view is that a career in FM works well for veterans, with the majority stating that the industry was supportive and valued their skills. I am in no doubt that we should be a sector of choice for people leaving the armed forces and both our veterans and their managers agree. Yet many find the move from the military challenging. **We must act on their words and help make the path for veterans into FM careers a straightforward one.**

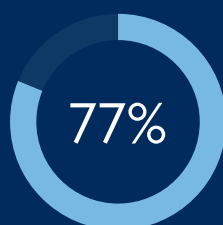
By creating systems that allow armed forces leavers to start long-term, rewarding careers more quickly, the industry stands to benefit from veterans’ experience and skills sooner. If we can achieve that, we will boost the pool of talent with the skills we need, deliver more effectively for our clients, and provide more military veterans with rewarding, meaningful careers.

With our Mitie Military network, Gold Standard Defence Employee Recognition Scheme award, highly supportive leadership and a business that is a significant supplier to the MOD, Mitie is a great place to be a veteran. We are working together to make it even better.

Charles Antelme DSO
Managing Director,
Commercial and
Government, Mitie



Key findings

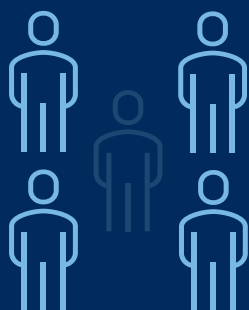


of veterans working in FM would recommend the sector to armed forces leavers



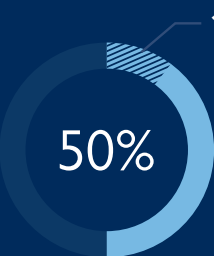
2 in 3

veterans report roles in FM match their skills



4 in 5

managers say veterans are likely to possess the skills “most urgently” needed in the sector



13%

of veterans say it was a “challenge” to find work after leaving the military, including 13% who said it was a “significant challenge”



of veterans say it is important that people leaving the military identify training opportunities to prepare for the transition into civilian work



3 or more

promotions achieved since joining FM reported by 28% of military veterans

Professionalism

Reliability

Ability to perform well under pressure

Being a team player

4 skill matches that FM managers recognise and value, and veterans say their military roles have ensured they are well prepared for



of veterans say other ex-forces personnel with existing experience were the most useful supporters in transitioning to civilian life

Introduction

Each year around 20,000 veterans leave the armed services, many of whom will seek a new position in the civilian workplace. As a signatory of the **Armed Forces Covenant**¹, we recognise our role in advancing and supporting ex-forces personnel in civilian work. We do this to demonstrate our respect and debt for the selfless service our veterans have given the nation, but we also recognise that their experience and skills add value to our industry.

We support the Government's 2018 'Strategy for our Veterans'² and want our ex-military colleagues to feel valued, supported and know their contribution counts. To understand how we can deliver this, we carried out this research with ex-service men and women who work in facilities management (FM) and managers who have worked with veterans. We examined the routes into FM, their skills, career paths, views of the industry, and where their experiences could improve. The results produced some clear themes that will drive our future relationship with the military, veterans, and veterans' organisations.

- » Facilities management successfully provides rewarding, long-term careers for military veterans. The majority of our veteran colleagues would recommend the FM industry to other ex-service men and women.
- » Both veterans and managers believe that the skills developed in an armed forces career closely match those that are required for a role in the FM industry. Reliability, performing under pressure and professionalism are some of the top transferable skills.

- » The overwhelming majority of our veterans found roles in the FM industry through personal contacts, job adverts and referrals, but few joined straight from the military. For many ex-forces colleagues that struggled to secure a civilian role after leaving the military, not knowing which roles would suit their experience was a barrier. By actively engaging with this community, the FM sector can help more veterans find a career that suits their skillset.
- » While many veterans were concerned a lack of technical knowledge might hold them back, line managers see this as an easy barrier to overcome. Support with specialist training, including in skills like budgeting or communications when leaving the forces would help kick-start their civilian careers.

We support the **Government's 2018 'Strategy for our Veterans'**, and its three principles²:

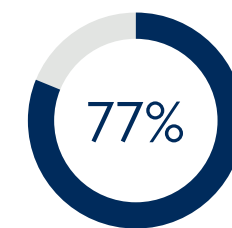
1. Veterans are first and foremost civilians and continue to be of benefit to wider society.
2. Veterans are encouraged and enabled to maximise their potential as civilians.
3. Veterans are able to access support that meets their needs when necessary, through public and voluntary sectors.

“Never underestimate
the **value** of a **veteran**.”

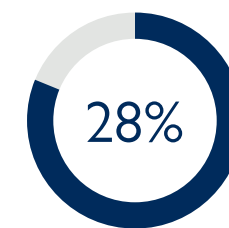
Careers in FM are highly commended

There is little doubt that when veterans enter the FM industry, they find satisfying work that can lead to **successful long-term careers**. Over two-thirds (68%) said their role and the degree to which it challenges them is satisfying, half (50%) rate the work as ‘engaging’, and the clear majority (80%) will make FM their career.

Those who have joined us recognise the positives. Our veteran colleagues would welcome others on the same path with three quarters (77%) suggesting they would recommend the industry to others.



of veterans working in facilities management would recommend the sector to those leaving the military



of veterans have been promoted three or more times in their facilities management careers

The top five areas the facilities management industry is rated for working with veterans

1 – Offering engaging work

73%

2 – Offering employment opportunities

69%

2 – Providing competitive pay and benefits

69%

3 – Having a supportive culture and values

68%

4 – Providing transferable skills

67%

In step – veterans’ skills and facilities management roles

Over two-thirds (70%) of veterans working in facilities management expressed satisfaction that their role and skills match well. This is a positive result as estimates suggest that half of all veterans were in low skilled or low pay work which did not match their skills³. Our industry is outperforming others in providing meaningful careers.

There is a marked overlap in specific skills that veterans believe the military prepared them well for and those they say they need the most in their work in facilities management.

FM managers also recognise the valuable skills veterans bring to the workplace

Managers told us that of the skills they value in the workplace, reliability is the one most see veterans display. Professionalism and loyalty were the next most commonly witnessed of the valued skills. There were differences, albeit small, between the skills displayed by veterans and those that managers felt were most important for their business area.

The top five skills developed in the military compared with the top five skills that are a match for facilities management



- Skills developed in the military
- Skills that are a match for FM

Most managers we spoke to (84%) told us they believed veterans are likely to have the skills most urgently needed in facilities management.

Our veterans expressed their concerns about specific technical skills being the area they felt least prepared for. With up to 60% of organisations refusing to recruit those without industry experience, according to Deloitte³, it is a valid concern. However, while FM managers noted the importance of relevant skills, they also recognised the need to provide more support for veterans joining the industry.

Half of managers (53%) identified “training for their specific role” as the area they would like to see more support given. This and the prioritisation of softer skills show managers do not see the lack of specific FM skills as a barrier to recruitment for ex-military personnel.



Source: Deloitte UK, Veterans Work

Top five skills FM managers rate most highly in the workplace





“As a veteran myself, I can relate to other veterans and the issues they might be going through as they transition into civilian life.”

Commanding respect

Managers in the industry respect and value veterans. They have positive experiences and would encourage others to hire ex-forces personnel too.

Facilities management companies are ardent supporters of the military, and managers of former armed services personnel at Mitie are no exception. Almost 9 out of 10 (86%) have positive experience managing veterans, with over half (57%) rating it “very positive”. Two-thirds (64%) of managers say they are “very likely” to recommend hiring ex-military personnel to other organisations.

Half (54%) of the managers questioned had served in the forces themselves, which showed through in their advocacy of veterans. Almost none (2%) had concerns about hiring men and women who had served in the military before working with them, and over two thirds (69%) were “positive” about it. Having now worked with veterans, half (48%) are now even more likely to recruit veterans than before.

With managers within Mitie that have also served, veterans can take comfort that they are likely to encounter managers who are understanding of the challenges in transitioning out of military into civilian life.

The two most common concerns veterans thought prospective employers might have about employing them were their lack of understanding as to what a military career entails (35%) and ability to adjust to working in a civilian environment (23%).

The data shows managers recognise these as manageable issues rather than as barriers. The two most useful initiatives help veterans transition into their new roles, according to managers, are:

1. Additional support for veterans.
2. Additional training for managers to deliver that.

The understanding between managers and veterans is more than an affinity or shared experience. Eight out of ten managers (84%) believe veterans are likely to possess skills needed “most urgently” in facilities management.

The good news for veterans is that in contrast to their concerns, managers rated “expertise in skills needed for facilities management” as the least important skill for workers to have in their business area. Managers are more focused on skills strongly correlated with experience in the armed forces – professionalism, reliability, and loyalty (see page 8).

Stepping up to support the nation through COVID-19

In March 2020 the UK entered its first national lockdown in a bid to minimise the spread of COVID-19. And while many people stayed at home, thousands of people, including Mitie colleagues, up and down the country still went to work.

Mitie has been heavily involved in the UK's pandemic response, with its frontline heroes helping to keep the UK running and Britain safe. A huge part of this effort was the creation of what would eventually be hundreds of coronavirus test centres covering every corner of the UK, and the transformation of stadia and exhibition centres into field hospitals in a matter of days.

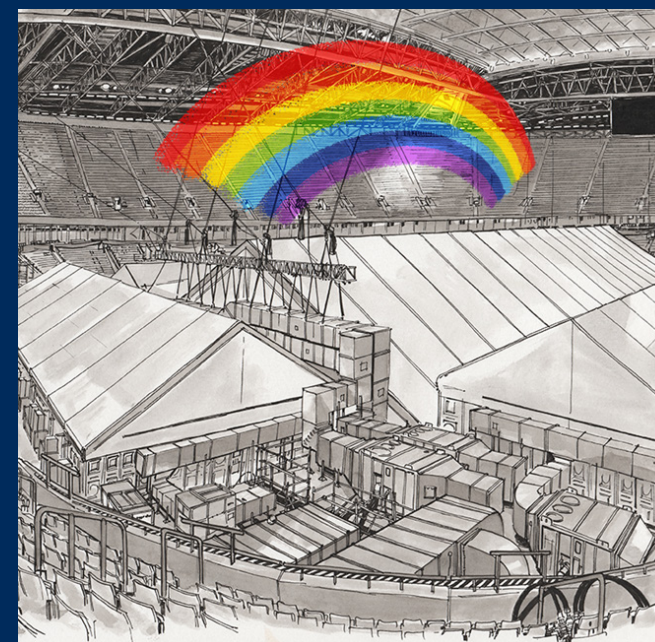
Our community of armed forces veterans, both those already with the business and others who stepped up to help the nation at this difficult time, played a central role in helping us mobilise these sites at pace and scale. Their ability to improvise, adapt and overcome challenges in true military fashion has allowed us to continue providing the Exceptional, Every Day, supporting the public during this pandemic.

While thankfully only a small number of beds at the UK's field hospitals were ever needed, our teams, which included many forces veterans, were central to ensuring we could support the opening and running of sites in London, Cardiff and Manchester. As incredibly complex projects requiring the management of hundreds of staff, our former forces colleagues brought essential skills to ensure everything went smoothly. In fact, Mitie's Head of Defence, Charlie Antelme, was on hand overseeing the mobilisation of Dragon's Heart Hospital in Cardiff.

Meanwhile, we have many colleagues with a military background based at the hundreds of test centres and mobile testing units up and down the country that Mitie provides services for. Their hard work and dedication has been central to the success of these sites.

My heartfelt thanks to the Mitie Military for your continued support with our vital work helping the nation through the COVID pandemic.

Gary Culloden
National Operations Director





“Don’t sell yourself short, you have the **mindset** and **determination** to succeed. Get stuck in, you have a lot to offer.”

Smoothing the transition

Serving your country in the armed forces is a job like no other. Leaving it behind and finding your way on ‘Civvy Street’ can be challenging. The right preparation and support can make it much easier.

The transition to civilian life can be both well planned and abrupt. There has been much done to improve the journey since Lord Ashcroft’s report⁴, and there are now many types of support from different agencies for our service people. However, the transition to meaningful careers is still not always smooth.

While we recognise that most service personnel leaving the armed forces find work¹, many only do so following unemployment, feeling unprepared, and after overcoming significant challenges. The transition from the armed forces to civilian work is an important period for our veterans and one that many feel unprepared for.

While three-fifths (61%) of our veterans at Mitie having more than ten years of military service, three quarters of them (77%) were under 40 years old when they left the forces, and so still had a significant proportion of working life ahead of them. The majority did not immediately turn to FM, with less than a third (30%) securing a role in FM straight from service.

Whilst half (53%) of our veterans said they did feel prepared for civilian life, a quarter (27%) admitted feeling unprepared. Only a fifth (21%) left the forces having a clear idea of what they wanted their post-military career to be.

According to our veterans, the highest-ranking areas to help preparation for transition to civilian careers are identifying potential training opportunities (94%) and starting the search early (92%), with one respondent going so far as to suggest that exit planning should start on day one of a military career.

Our veteran respondents also gave us feedback on where they felt the FM industry could support them better in the transition process. The combination of support that they felt would be most helpful includes creating employee networks (21%), offering work placements (19%) and providing mentors (18%).

Strengthening support

Many ex-forces personnel (50%) found it challenging to secure a civilian role after leaving the military. The most commonly cited issue affecting the ability to find a new job was not having job-seeking skills, for example CV writing. Where support was available, that given by other veterans ranked as most useful, closely followed by skills training and, unsurprisingly, CV writing (41%). This was closely followed by a lack of jobs matching their skills (39%) and not understanding which jobs would best suit their military experience (38%).

People play a significant role in supporting transition, be that colleagues, other veterans and also family. The most useful support during transition from military to civilian life was deemed to be former forces colleagues (39%), skills training courses (38%) and advice from other forces leavers who were not former colleagues. Two other significant factors were help with CV writing (37%) and having strong family support (34%).

Support that veterans would have found helpful

1 – Greater priority given to transition before leaving the armed forces



2 – Support into employment training or further education



3 – Guaranteed interviews for veterans in relevant roles



4 – Employer mentoring before leaving the Armed Forces



5 – Job application skills training (e.g. CV writing)

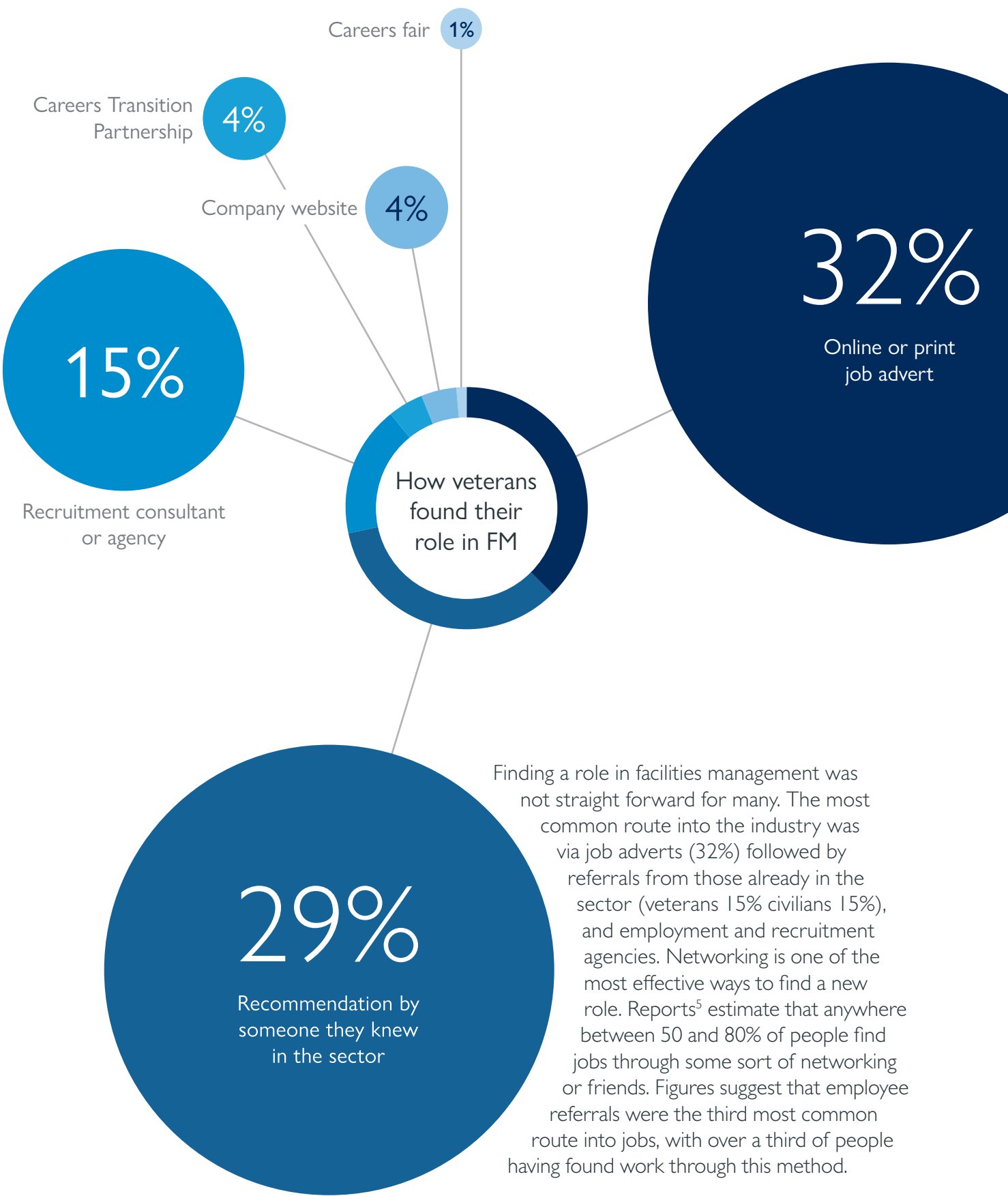


5 – Opportunities for work experience / to try out different sectors



Whilst a wider range of available support from application skills to mental health would have been welcomed by the veterans we surveyed, they felt more focus should have been given to prioritising transition before leaving the Armed Forces (64%) and supporting employment training or further education (63%).

Routes to roles in facilities management



Role-specific training

According to our findings, there is alignment between the qualities we need in our industry and those ex-forces personnel bring. To aid their success in FM careers, managers noted areas they would like to see more support given to veteran recruits.



53%
Training for their specific role



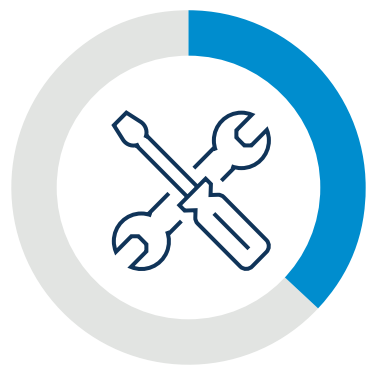
51%
Commercial skills such as budgeting



46%
Specialist healthcare



39%
Soft skills training such as communications



37%
Technical skills training

Progression, reward and retention

Recruiting veterans into our industry is all for nothing if we cannot keep them. How they feel about their role, conditions, and their chances of progression all have a bearing on satisfaction and the longevity of their career.

Providing 'good work' should be the goal of any employer. According to our findings, facilities management businesses, like Mitie, do that for our veterans.

Those that we spoke to were positive about their experience and roles. On their own careers, 80% are likely to make facilities management their long-term career, while the same proportion would recommend it to others looking to move on from the armed forces.

One element of 'good work' according to the CIPD⁶, is 'job design and nature of work', and it is here that we see the industry shine. 68% of our respondents report overall job satisfaction, and specifically a similar proportion are happy with the degree to which their role matches their skills (70%), and how much it challenges them (68%).

Not understanding civilian work culture, and civilians not understanding military culture was a concern that came through in the survey. The regimented hierarchy and command-and-control structures of our armed forces can produce friction if applied in civilian roles. Fewer than half (45%) of our veterans felt FM managers were educated about the benefits of hiring from the military.

When asked what they thought what might concern FM managers about hiring veterans, the most common responses were "their lack of understanding of a military career and what it entails" (35%) and "problems adapting/adjusting attitude to working in a civilian environment" (23%). Encouragingly, managers recognised these issues and saw constructive ways to bridge the gaps.



“We want our veteran colleagues to be valued, contributing, and supported.”

Our Mitie Military commitment

As Co-Chairs of the Mitie Military Employee Network we are proud of Mitie’s commitment to support its community of veterans and encourage more former servicemen and women to join the facilities management (FM) industry.

This report builds on that support and provides great insights into how we can help encourage more armed forces veterans to join our ranks so that the FM sector can benefit from their experience, skills, and ‘can do’ attitude. At Mitie, this means committing to hiring more people with a forces background and putting initiatives in place that make it easier for them to find, and be successful in, a facilities management role.

Mitie has made a commitment that 2.34% of its employees will be from an Armed Forces background by 2025. To help achieve this goal, the business is working with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) to establish a tailored employment pathway for Service Leavers into FM. This includes our dedicated Armed Forces Career Portal, establishing a digital link between Mitie’s career opportunities and the CTP.

Through the Mitie Foundation’s specialist Ready2Work – Military programme, veterans are given the opportunity to have a placement within a facilities management team and get first-hand experience to see if the role is a good fit for them.

And, of course, the Mitie Military offers a safe space for any former-forces colleagues to seek advice and mentorship, ask questions and share ideas for how we can make the transition to civilian life easier for our new colleagues.

Thank you to every Mitie colleague who took time to respond to the survey and helped contribute to this report. We look forward to working with you to deliver its recommendations and make Mitie an even better place to work for forces veterans.

Matt Corner
Cluster Manager

Alan Ardron
Account Director

Amanda Brettell
Head of HR, Central Government & Defence

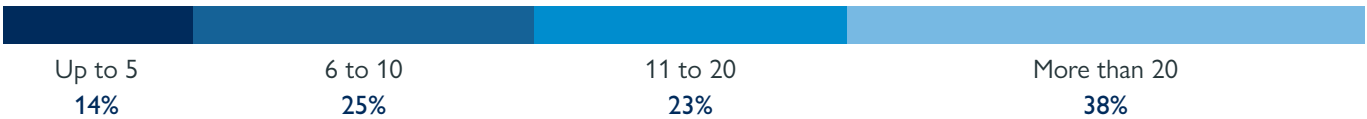
Mitie Military Network Co-Chairs



Who we spoke to

We conducted an online anonymous survey of 191 former servicemen and women currently working in facilities management to understand their experience of transitioning from the armed forces to civilian employment in the sector. We also conducted an online anonymous survey of 122 managers in the sector to understand their views on employees who had previously served in the military. We conducted the research between 1st and 26th April 2021.

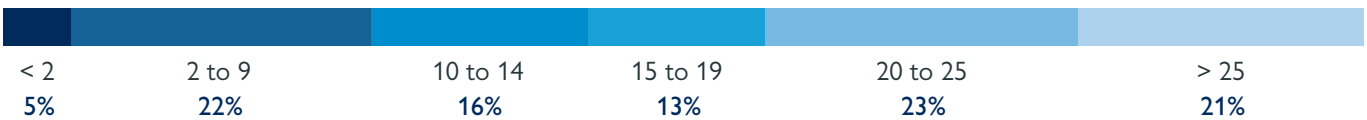
Years of service with the military



Age when left armed forces



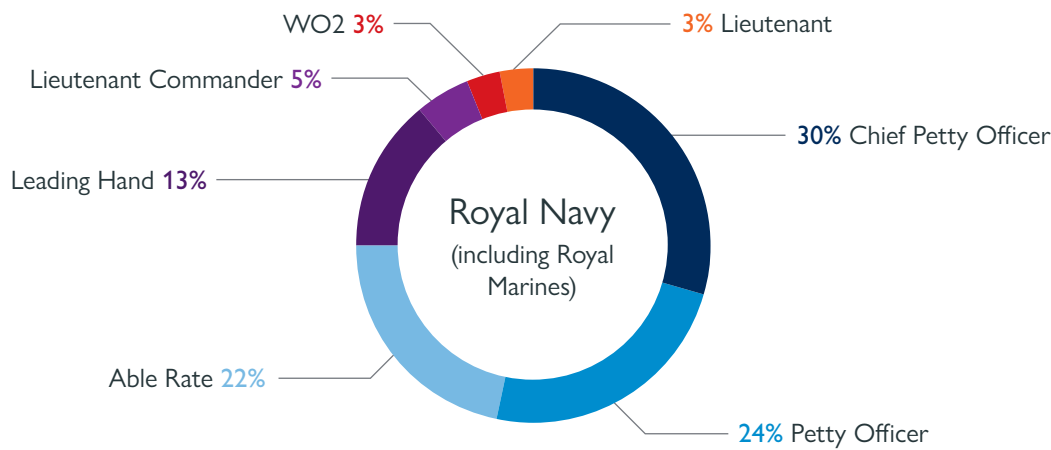
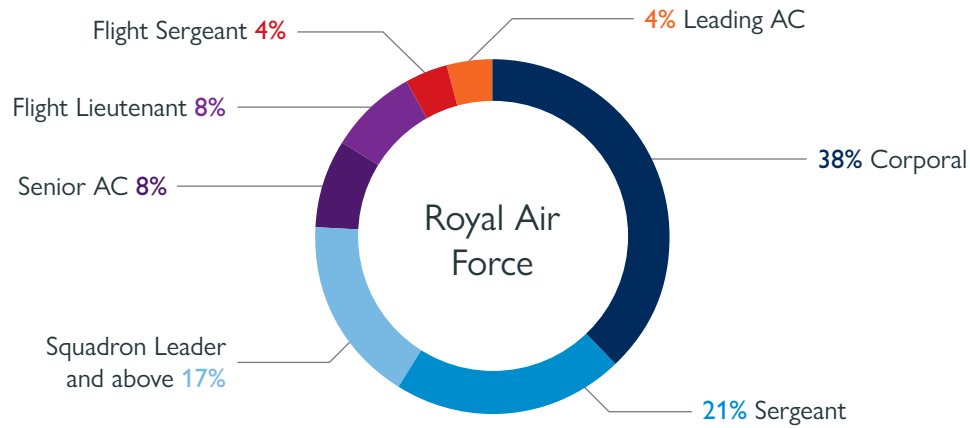
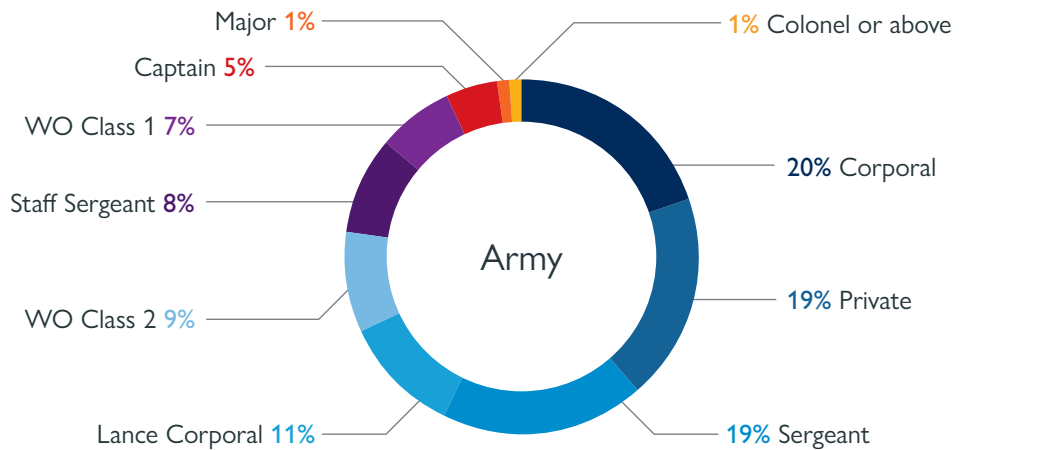
Years since leaving the military



Distribution of veterans in FM by service branch



Veterans' rank on leaving the military



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