

VETERANS IN THE RESERVE

Analysing Guarantees and Needs.
Recommendations for Public Policy

2026

This material was made possible with the support of the UK Government, provided through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, within the Concept of Ukraine's State Policy on Veterans and Their Families project. It is implemented by the following civil society organisations: Veteran Hub, Pryncyp, Legal Hundred and the Human Capital Recovery Platform. Restart (formerly the team of the Space of Opportunities). The information presented in this material does not necessarily reflect the views of the UK Government.

Abstract

This document is devoted to an analysis of the military reserve system in Ukraine and its impact on veteran well-being. It examines international approaches to organising reserve forces, the current Ukrainian model, the key challenges faced by reservists, and devised recommendations for improving state policy.

Within the scope of the study, the authors conducted a desk-based analysis of international experience and national legislation, as well as a series of expert interviews and focus group discussions with veterans to map their needs while serving in the military operational reserve.

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The document is the sole responsibility of its authors and may not represent the opinions or positions of the donors or partner organisations.



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The **Human Rights Centre for Military Personnel and Veterans “Pryncyp”** is a civil society organisation dedicated to human rights protection, advocacy, and analytics within the military and veteran sectors. Its priority goals include a human-centric approach to personnel policy within the army, strengthening the military justice system, establishing a framework for transitioning from military to civilian life, and ensuring protection of human rights. The organisation has a developed network of pro bono lawyers who advise service members with injuries and runs training programmes for both service providers and service members/veterans themselves.

Website: pryncyp.org

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Veteran Hub is a sustainable support network for veterans and families of warriors. Established in 2018, the organisation provides legal advice, psychological support, career and vocational counselling, and personalised case management. The network comprises physical spaces in Kyiv and Vinnytsia, as well as mobile offices that provide home service delivery in Kyiv and Vinnytsia Oblasts, along with a national Support Line available by phone at 067 348 28 68.

Drawing on its daily experience of working with veterans and their families, the organisation conducts in-depth research, advocates for improving their well-being, develops information and media projects, and helps various stakeholders in the field better support warriors and their loved ones.

Website: veteranhub.com.ua

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Legal Hundred is a nationwide human rights organisation that has been supporting service members, veterans, and their families, including families of the fallen, prisoners of war, and those missing in action, since 2014. Its mission is to ensure systemic legal protection in the context of military service and to establish sustainable mechanisms for veterans to adapt to civilian life.

The organisation has initiated and contributed to the development of more than 20 adopted laws and state programmes in the fields of veteran policy, social protection and security. It co-founded the Project Office for the establishment of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, developed the Handbook for Participants of the Russo-Ukrainian War, which provided comprehensive legal information for defenders, and implemented the Instruction on Countering Harassment in the Security and Defence Forces. Legal Hundred also operates a nationwide hotline that processes over 3,000 inquiries every month.

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Human Capital Recovery Platform. ReStart is an organisation involved in the development and localisation of veteran policy. Its expert team partnered in launching and supervising the Veteran Support Specialist project by developing professional standards, primary and backup documentation, and a training course and preparing both trainers and support specialists. ReStart's Training Centre focuses on training specialists from various fields who work with or provide services to veterans.

Another area of the organisation's work is engagement with communities: from strategy development to the implementation of high-quality veteran policy, including the formulation of a community development strategy and a support programme for veterans and their families, taking into account their needs, the establishment of a management hierarchy, specialist training and mentoring in the opening of veteran spaces. The organisation coordinates the Coalition of Veteran Spaces, an association of 29 service organisations and veteran spaces across different regions of Ukraine.

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We thank the respondents of this study for the opportunity to learn about their experience. We are also grateful to all experts who contributed to the review and feedback on this document.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
About the Authors.....	3
Target audience.....	7
List of abbreviations.....	8
Glossary.....	9
Methodology.....	12
Section 1 Analysis of international experience in the operation of military reserve systems.....	19
France.....	21
USA.....	31
Canada.....	47
The United Kingdom.....	58
Norway.....	70
Finland.....	76
Lithuania.....	84
South Korea.....	93
India.....	98
Israel.....	105
Russia.....	112
Section 2 Military reserve and guarantees for reservists in Ukraine.....	120
Military reserve: structure and development history.....	122
Format of enrolment in the reserve.....	135
Reservists' requirements and duties.....	141
Discharge from the reserve.....	151
Guarantees for reservists.....	154
Public reservist policy.....	160
Section 3 Mapping the needs of veterans in the reserve.....	164
Military career management.....	169
Personal life planning.....	179
Financial stability.....	184
Employment guarantees.....	188
Housing conditions.....	194
Conclusions.....	196
Recommendations.....	214
List of references.....	221

Target audience

This document will be useful for stakeholders involved in the shaping, implementation, or improvement of military reserve policy, as well as related areas, such as veteran policy, the labour market, and social protection:

- representatives of state institutions and local authorities at the national level;
- representatives of senior military leadership, military units, training centres, and reservist councils;
- employers of various forms of ownership, technology and defence companies, and recruitment specialists;
- warriors and veterans;
- families of warriors, veterans and their close relatives;
- scientists, analysts, and researchers;
- the international community and donors;
- the general public, the media, and anyone else interested in the military operational reserve

List of abbreviations

AAF	Air Assault Forces
AD	air defence
AF	Air Force
AFU	Armed Forces of Ukraine
ATO	Anti-Terrorist Operation
BGMT	basic general military training
BMS	basic military service
DIU	Defence Intelligence of Ukraine
GDP	gross domestic product
GS AFU	General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine
HEI	higher education institution
HMEI	higher military education institution
JFO	Joint Forces Operation
MoD	Ministry of Defence of Ukraine
MOS	military occupational speciality
MOR	military operational reserve
Navy	The Navy
OR	oil refinery
PCE	person with combatant status
SSTS	State Special Transport Service
TD	Territorial Defence
TRSSC	Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Centre
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UN	United Nations

Glossary

Conscription A legally established form of calling up citizens for military service during peacetime or a special period in accordance with defined procedures and specific groups of people.

Demobilisation The process of transitioning the Armed Forces and other military formations from wartime to peacetime status, as well as the discharge of service members.

Discharge from service The completion of military service and return to civilian life.

Drills A form of reservist training aimed at restoring, acquiring, or improving individual competencies required to perform duties in military positions.

Employment guarantees Guarantees related to job retention and the ability to combine reserve service with civilian employment. In the document, they are defined as a key area of well-being.

Financial provision of reservists A system of payments, compensations, and benefits provided during reserve service.

Financial stability The ability to maintain income and economic predictability while performing duties in the reserve. In the study, it is defined as one of the key needs of veterans in the MOR.

General conscription pool Citizens liable for military service who are fit for service based on their health condition, have not reached the age limit for being in the reserve, are registered for military service, and may be called up to reinforce the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations.

Inspection assemblies A type of reservist assembly held to verify personnel records, test the notification system, bring and deliver mobilisation resources to the Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Centres (TRSSC), and assess the readiness of military units to receive personnel. During these assemblies, participants perform functional duties within units in accordance with assigned positions.

Martial law	A special legal regime introduced in Ukraine or its particular areas in the event of armed aggression, a threat of attack, or danger to the state independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Under this regime, state authorities, local governments, and military command are authorised to avert threats and ensure national security. It also entails temporary and threat-related restrictions on the constitutional rights and freedoms of individuals and citizens, as well as the rights and legitimate interests of legal entities for a specified period.
Military career management	The opportunity for a reservist to plan and develop their role in the military area, including choose a unit and speciality, undergo training, improve professional skills, and advance within the military reserve system.
Military human reserve	Citizens of Ukraine who serve in the general conscription pool and the military operational reserve and are considered available human resources for reinforcing the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations during peacetime or a special period.
Military operational reserve (MOR)	The best-trained part of the military reserve, comprising persons liable for military service and veterans designated for reinforcement of military units and priority call-up for service when needed.
Military reserve	Citizens liable for military service who may be called up to serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. It consists of military operational reserve , which includes the combat reserve , the build-up reserve , and the territorial reserve (those who have already completed military service or training and are ready to quickly return to the army in the event of mobilisation or if units need to be replenished), and mobilisation reserve (all persons liable for military service who may be called up and are not part of the operational reserve).
Military service	A special type of public service where people who are suitable in terms of age and health professionally defend the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine.
Mobilisation	A range of state activities performed during a special period to transition the economy, state authorities, and defence forces to a wartime footing, in particular through the large-scale call-up of persons liable for military service and reservists.

Needs mapping	An analytical approach used to identify and structure the needs of a target group (veterans in the reserve herein) in various areas of life.
Peacetime	A period of state functioning outside the conditions of mobilisation, martial law, or a state of emergency, when the activities of state authorities, the economy, and society are carried out under a standard legal regime.
Personal life planning	The ability to make long-term decisions on work, family, housing, business, or relocation without the constant uncertainty associated with being in the reserve.
Reservist	A person enrolled in the military operational reserve who has specific obligations regarding attendance at combat training and is subject to priority call-up for active duty when needed.
Reservist contract	A form of voluntary enlistment into the military operational reserve that assigns a person to a specific military unit and position and defines their duties and calling-up conditions.
Special period	A period following the announcement of a mobilisation decision (except for targeted mobilisation) or its communication to executors regarding covert mobilisation, or the introduction of martial law in the country. It covers the time of mobilisation, wartime, and partially the recovery period after the end of hostilities. It is introduced throughout Ukraine or in certain areas.
Veteran	A person who directly participated in combat operations to defend the Homeland or took part in combat operations on the territory of other states if such participation was part of Ukraine's international commitments. They may remain in the reserve after their discharge.
Well-being	Categorisation of various needs, necessary for a comprehensive analysis of a person's condition, functionality, and level of satisfaction with various aspects of their life. We distinguish between military well-being (during service) and civilian well-being (in civilian life).

Methodology

Relevance

Following the end of the Russo-Ukrainian war, hundreds of thousands of warriors, particularly those who served under martial law, will be enrolled in the military operational reserve upon discharge. This is not a complete severance from the military, but rather a change in the format of their participation in the national security and defence system.

The military operational reserve is of strategic importance to the state, as reservists, primarily those with combat experience, will form the basis of rapid response to emerging security threats. The level of their training, motivation, social guarantees, and integration into civilian life will directly affect the state's ability to maintain a robust level of defence capability.

Challenges

Service in the military operational reserve imposes many constraints on civilian life and requires readiness to defend the country in the event of a new threat. Future reservists, especially those with combat experience, will require a clear, fair, and transparent reserve service system, along with tools to support their well-being.

Goal

To develop recommendations that address the needs and interests of veterans during their service in the military operational reserve (MOR).

Subject

Policy instruments to meet beneficiaries' needs in the MOR.

Objectives

1. To define the scope and nature of the impact that service in the MOR has on veterans' well-being.
2. To examine international approaches to military reserve formation and their mechanisms to address the needs of reservists, including those with combat experience, and to describe their systems of guarantees and restrictions.
3. To analyse the evolution of Ukraine's military reserve system prior to the full-scale invasion, its subsequent changes at both the legislative (de jure) and practical (de facto) levels, and its impact on veteran well-being.
4. To examine existing guarantees and restrictions for MOR reservists in Ukraine.
5. To conduct a needs mapping for veterans during their MOR service.
6. To develop recommendations for stakeholders on incorporating the needs of veterans when changing, introducing, and implementing military operational reserve policy.

Theoretical framework

The concept of **well-being** – a categorisation of various human needs used for a comprehensive analysis of a person's condition, functionality, and level of satisfaction with different aspects of their life – is the theoretical framework of this study¹. It is based on the concept of veteran well-being used in the United States and Canada, and on the work of international researchers David Pedlar and James Thompson, adapted to the Ukrainian context by the Veteran Hub team.

In this document, we operate with the concepts of **well-being in the military environment** (during military service) and **well-being in the civilian environment**.

Well-being in the civilian environment often deteriorates for active service members, whereas for veterans in the reserve, these changes are mostly fragmented. The reservist's well-being is shaped primarily in the civilian environment and, to a lesser extent, in the military one, as individuals are not part of it on a continuous or systematic basis. Serving in the reserve still affects veterans' well-being in civilian life, as they face more restrictions and obligations than civilians.

For this study, we have chosen a hybrid model that integrates well-being domains across military and civilian environments. This decision is driven by the intention to focus the study on the needs specific to veterans in the MOR and to exclude those arising from other roles or statuses.

¹ Veteran Hub (2023). Well-being of veterans.
veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/dobrobut_-opys-skorocheno.pdf.

This approach allowed us to narrow the focus of the study to the following dimensions of well-being for veteran reservists:

1. Military career management. Hypotheses:

- Veterans in the MOR may seek self-fulfilment and support for their military well-being.
- Uncertainty about the prospects and potential benefits of being in the MOR may further strengthen the perceived injustice of the mandatory enrolment of service members and veterans in the reserve.
- The possibility to choose a unit, change speciality, receive high-quality training, and have clear promotion procedures and a defined maximum length of service in the MOR are key aspects in this context.

2. Personal life planning. Hypotheses:

The lack of a clear schedule for drills and a definitive end date for reserve service, compounded by uncertainty regarding labour guarantees, deprives individuals of the ability to make long-term decisions. Starting a business, parenthood, mortgages, relocation, or travelling requires predictability. Uncertainty may keep a person in a constant state of “life on hold.”

3. Financial stability. Hypotheses:

While attending drills, a reservist is unable to work. Accordingly, their income depends entirely on whether the employer compensates the shortfall in their salary. Veterans in the reserve who own businesses face the risk of complete loss of income.

4. Employment guarantees. Hypotheses:

A person in the MOR obliged to attend drills or inspection assemblies lasting up to three months per year may be an unattractive prospect for an employer. Therefore, in matters of employment, promotion, and bonuses, a reservist will be disadvantaged compared to a civilian who can pursue a career without interruption.

5. Housing conditions. Hypotheses:

The opportunity to live in a flat or house rather than in a barrack or a hostel is one of the basic requirements for an individual's safety and comfort during drills. This may create an additional financial burden.

Methodological framework

The methodological framework of the study comprises a **desk review combined with interviews** to analyse international experience and the evolution of the Ukrainian reserve system. **Focus group discussions** were employed to map the needs of veterans in the reserve. Field data collection took place from December 2025 to January 2026.

In total, we conducted **three expert interviews** with active reservists from France (contract service), Norway, and Israel (post-conscript service) to supplement the desk research findings on international experience.

To supplement the legislative analysis of the Ukrainian military reserve system, we conducted **eleven in-depth interviews** with the following specialists involved in record-keeping, logistics, research, or implementation of the reserve concept:

- two representatives from the MoD;
- two representatives from the General Staff of the AFU;
- the Head of Corps Personnel Department of the Ground Forces of the AFU;
- AFU's Air Assault Forces Command Officer;
- TRSSC representative;
- a representative of the Ground Forces Reservists' Council, a veteran reservist;
- a former representative of the Reservists' Council under the GS AFU, a veteran reservist;
- two veteran reservists, discharged during the ATO/JFO.

To map needs, we conducted **three focus group discussions**: two with male veterans and one with female veterans currently serving in the military. In total, **eleven informants** participated in these discussions, including those with and without prior experience of reserve service. The data obtained during the discussions were supplemented with relevant information gathered during the in-depth interviews.

Sample

During the analysis of international experience, we applied a preliminary screening process based on comparisons of three indicators: the ratio of service members to the population, the proportion of the reserve, and defence expenditure. Availability and transparency of information are additional selection criteria for countries analysed.

Limitations

1. Uneven access to information about recruitment systems and reserve operations in other countries. Some data is restricted for security reasons.
2. Informants provided data between December 2025 and January 2026. Therefore, the described needs and challenges are primarily relevant as of that time.
3. The study does not include a quantitative component for analysing experiences and needs, so the results cannot be extrapolated to all veterans who will serve in the MOR.

Report structure

This report comprises an introduction and three sections: an analysis of international experience in developing reserve systems, an analysis of Ukraine's military reserve system, and a mapping of veterans' needs in the reserve. It concludes with recommendations based on the findings of this study.

SECTION 1

**Analysis
of international
experience
in the operation
of military reserve
systems**

Introduction

This section examines approaches to the formation and operation of military reserve systems in different countries. The purpose of this analysis is to identify key models and tools for recruiting and retaining reservists, as well as mechanisms to ensure their well-being and to balance service with civilian life.

International experience demonstrates a diversity of approaches to forming reserve systems from models based on compulsory service to fully voluntary contract systems. Despite these differences, common challenges in reservist motivation, employer interactions, training quality, and the provision of social and employment guarantees can be identified.

The analysis of these practices makes it possible not only to outline effective tools but also to identify approaches that may be relevant to improving Ukraine's military reserve system, taking into account its security context and the role of veterans within it.

France

Population	69,000,000
Regular army	263,631
Operational reserve	about 104,000 (44,344 contract reservists and 60,000 automatically enrolled reservists)
Reserve recruitment	The reserve is formed on a dual-tier basis: the first level involves civilian and veteran volunteers serving under contract, and the second level involves the automatic enrolment of veterans for five years of passive reserve status after discharge.

Historical background

The history of the military reserve in France dates back to active participation in hostilities and the need to mobilise the population. In 1872, following the defeat in the war with Prussia², the **Army Recruitment Act**³ replaced the National Guard with a military reserve that remained in place until 1999. According to this law, all citizens of France were required to serve in the army or the reserve for up to six years and remain ready to defend the state. This enabled the country to mobilise its population relatively easily during the world wars.

² Prussia was a historical state in Central and Eastern Europe (1525–1947) that shaped the history of modern Germany.

³ Loi du 27 juillet 1872 sur le recrutement de l'armée. (1872). Bulletin des lois de la République française, T. 5, N° 101, 97–130. gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k210062f/f115

In 1999, compulsory military service was abolished as part of the transition to a professional army. **Since 2006, France has operated two types of reserve:**

Civilian reserve	Operational reserve
An educational role to strengthen the bonds between the army and civil society	Volunteers serving directly under contract

Following the terrorist attacks in 2015–2016⁴, the national leadership decided to restore active citizen engagement in maintaining security. In 2016, the operational reserve was officially restructured into the National Guard, which also includes the civilian reserve of the National Police.

In 2023, France adopted the **Military Programming Law for 2024–2030**, which aims to strengthen the role of the operational reserve, developed the Plan Famille II, and updated the Armed Forces Medical Service. The Law defines **reaching a reserve force of 120,000 personnel by 2035 as the country's strategic goal to ensure the resilience of the defence system amidst long-term threats**. Another goal of this increase is to offset the reduction in regular personnel and achieve a target ratio of one reservist for every two regular service members, who must be capable of performing the same tasks as regular^{5, 6} personnel.

⁴ In 2015–2016, France suffered several terrorist attacks organised by Islamist groups, which led to the introduction of a prolonged state of emergency.

⁵ Objectifs LPM 2024–2030: accroître les forces morales. (n.d.). Ministère des Armées. defense.gouv.fr/actualites/objectifs-lpm-2024-2030-accroitre-forces-morales

⁶ La réserve des armées, pivot des forces morales de la nation. (n.d.). IHEDN. ihedn.fr/en/lundis-de-lihedn/la-reserve-des-armees-pivot-des-forces-morales-de-la-nation

Current structure

The French military reserve is currently integrated into four branches of the armed forces:

The Army	The Navy
The Air and Space Force	The Gendarmerie (Military Police)

According to an operational reserve service contract, reservists shall:

- perform tasks related to the temporary reinforcement of the armed forces to protect national territory or within international operations;
- teach defence-related disciplines;
- serve at strategic enterprises responsible for military logistics or supporting defence exports⁷.

Military Reserve in France

Civil Defence and Security Reserve

Approved volunteers referred to in **Article L. 4241-2 of the Defence Code**⁸

Such reservists receive no remuneration, are not authorised to use weapons, and do not sign contracts. They are primarily involved in educational and awareness-raising activities

⁷ Engagement à servir dans la réserve (ESR) opérationnelle. (n.d.). Service-Public.fr : Le site officiel de l'administration française. service-public.gouv.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F1188

⁸ Article L. 4211-1-1 of the Defence Code refers to some provisions specifying particular situations when service members may enlist in the operational reserve, in particular during parental leave (congé parental), leave for personal reasons (congé pour convenances personnelles), or while on standby (en disponibilité) (Articles L4138-14, L4138-16, and L4139-9).

Operational Reserve	
Volunteers who have signed an operational reserve service contract with the military command	Active-duty service members in cases provided for in Article L. 4211-1-1 of the Defence Code, in particular during parental leave, leave for personal reasons, or while on standby ⁹
Former service members subject to availability obligation	

This analysis focuses on the operational reserve, which is divided into two levels. The first level is open to all volunteers on a contractual basis, while the second level entails the automatic enrolment of all veterans.

First-Level Operational Reserve (R01)

Composition: Joining this reserve is voluntary and based on a contract¹⁰. It is open to both civilians and veterans.

Personnel analysis shows that the number of civilians exceeds the number of veterans in this reserve. A notable example is the Gendarmerie, whose reserve accounts for 45% of the French total military reserve: about 70% of its personnel are civilians and only 30% are former regular service members. The proportion of women in this reserve is 21%, which is higher than the proportion of women among active-duty service members. This structure enables ambitious plans to increase the Gendarmerie reserve from the current 31,000 to 50,000 personnel by 2027¹¹.

⁹ The Civil Defence and Security Reserve comprises volunteers selected by the military command based on their competencies and experience, as well as specialised intelligence services responsible for collecting and analysing information on threats and risks to the state (Article L4241-2 of the Defence Code and Article L811-2 of the Internal Security Code).

¹⁰ ESR — Engagement à servir dans la réserve (Obligation to serve in the reserve).

¹¹ La réserve. (n.d.). Gendarmerie nationale.
gendarmerie.interieur.gouv.fr/notre-institution/notre-organisation/la-reserve

Calling-up period: A contract may be signed for a term of one to five years, with the possibility of extension. Reservists are required to serve 5 to 30 days per year. In exceptional cases, this may be 60, 150, or 210 days, depending on the needs of the armed forces¹².

The contract includes:

- individual's identification details and address;
- location and unit of conscript registration;
- commitment period;
- availability obligation;
- Rights and obligations in relations with the employer and conditions for termination;
- it may include a "reactivity clause" (clause de réactivité) – an emergency call-up mechanism agreed with the employer for unforeseen circumstances, with a specified notification period.

Requirements

To be enrolled, a candidate must:

- be a national of France;
- be aged from 17 to 72 years (the upper age limit depends on service branch and rank; for example, no more than 45 years of age on the first day of joining the Gendarmerie¹³);
- be declared fit for service following a medical commission's conclusion;
- have no criminal record incompatible with the performance of military duties.

¹² Engagement à servir dans la réserve (ESR) opérationnelle. (n.d.). Service-Public.fr. service-public.gouv.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F1188

¹³ Engagement à servir dans la réserve (ESR) opérationnelle. (n.d.). Service-Public.fr. service-public.gouv.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F1188

Relations with employers

A reservist is entitled to be called up for up to ten working days of reserve service per year, or five days if the company employs fewer than 50 employees, without the employer's consent, provided that the employer is notified at least one month in advance. If the contract includes a reactivity clause (clause de réactivité), the notification period is reduced to 15 days.

If a reservist wishes to serve for more than ten days a year, they must obtain the employer's consent. In case of refusal, the employer is obliged to send a reasoned decision by registered mail. If no response is received within one month, consent is considered to have been granted. If the employer imposes a veto, the reservist may use their own time (weekends or leave) for reserve service.

Dismissing an employee due to their absence for reserve service is classified as discriminatory and is unlawful. Employees continue to accrue seniority and are guaranteed the retention of their positions during reserve service¹⁴.

Training and career development

- For civilians without prior experience in the first-level operational reserve (R01), a 13-day **basic training** is provided. Upon completion, they receive a first-level reserve qualification along with the rank of Private First Class.
- Prospective group commanders must complete a **second level** of 12-day training. They are then awarded a second-level reserve qualification, which is a prerequisite for promotion to the rank of Corporal and, subsequently, Chief Corporal (after two years as a Corporal and 20 days of service as a Group Commander).
- Commanders of rank-and-file reserve groups must complete a four-day **adaptation training**. This leads to a third-level reserve military qualification and the rank of Chief Corporal First Class.

¹⁴ Engagement à servir dans la réserve (ESR) opérationnelle. (n.d.). Service-Public.fr.
service-public.gouv.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F1188

Thereafter, a soldier may apply for transfer to the non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps¹⁵.

The professional development system for reserve NCOs is based on a unified, hybrid modular model that balances civilian and military employment. Theoretical distance learning and intensive in-person practical training at the National Active Non-Commissioned Officers School, designed to minimise time away from the workplace, are key features of all stages. As with rank-and-file training, NCO training is structured into three levels: squad leaders, platoon executives, and platoon leaders. Subject to specific rank and length-of-service requirements, the final certificate provides access to recruitment for officer positions¹⁶.

Legislation also allows for the recruitment of **civilian experts** (IT, cybersecurity, logistics, or law) in the first-level operational reserve without undergoing basic military training¹⁷. The rank assigned to them does not grant the right of command outside their specific function. Such reservists may be promoted in rank if their activities enhance their level of expertise or responsibility.

Financial provision

Basic payment	Loyalty bonus	Additional payments
From EUR 40 to 200 per day, depending on rank. The remuneration is tax-free under the same conditions as for regular personnel	Granted upon signing a second service contract. Provided that the person has concluded both contracts for at least three years and has served for at least 37 days under the second contract	Available to student reservists under 25 who have signed a contract: ■ EUR 100 per month ■ Financial assistance for obtaining a Category B driving licence.

¹⁵ Formation des réservistes. (n.d.). Armée de Terre.
terre.defense.gouv.fr/drhat/actualites/formation-reservistes

¹⁶ Formation des réservistes. (n.d.). Armée de Terre.
terre.defense.gouv.fr/drhat/actualites/formation-reservistes

¹⁷ Article L. 4221-3 du Code de la défense. (n.d.). Code de la défense.
legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/texte_lc/LEGITEXT000006071307

The Defence Code also guarantees financial incentives for employers. They may continue to pay reservists full or partial remuneration during their reserve training. In such cases, the state credits these payments and the associated social contributions as a contribution towards employees' vocational training. For the employer, these amounts qualify as a tax deduction.

Challenges

- There is a significant difference in service across the branches of the first-level operational reserve. In the Gendarmerie, reservists are integrated into real law-enforcement activities, which increases their motivation. In contrast, reservists in the Army are often assigned to routine guard duties, which may lead to **frustration due to unmet expectations**.
- The first-level operational reserve also faces a **shortage of resources for high-quality firearms training**. In some cases, the annual ammunition limit for reservists may be as low as 60 rounds. Therefore, more motivated reservists are forced to train additionally at private shooting ranges at their own expense.
- Service is also affected by **strained relations with regular personnel**, who sometimes delegate the least desirable tasks to reservists. This complicates the development of mutual trust and effective interaction within the unit.

Second-Level Operational Reserve

Composition: former service members who, upon discharge, have not signed a contract for service in the first-level operational reserve and are automatically enrolled in this reserve for five years.

Calling-up purpose: to assess or maintain competencies¹⁸.

Calling-up period: cannot exceed a total of five days per year over a five-year period.

Calling-up conditions: reservists must notify military command of any change of residence or stay and professional status during the period of their availability obligations. In the event of a call-up, the military command must provide the individual with at least one month's notice, after which the individual must inform their employer of the duration of their absence. However, in cases of production necessity or call-up for public service, reservists may be deferred and exempted from availability¹⁹ obligations.

Challenges

Although these obligations are enshrined in law, the practical implementation of the second level's potential faces certain challenges. While the nominal size of this reserve is estimated at 60,000 former service members²⁰, the actual mobilisation capacity is lower due to the **lack of sustained connection with military units**. Limited resources for regular data verification and the organisation of training assemblies complicate the rapid call-up of such reservists in critical situations.

¹⁸ Article L. 4221-3 du Code de la défense. Code de la défense.
legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/texte_lc/LEGITEXT000006071307

¹⁹ Article L. 4231-6 du Code de la défense. Code de la défense.
legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/texte_lc/LEGITEXT000006071307/

²⁰ La réserve des armées, pivot des forces morales de la nation. IHEDN.
ihedn.fr/en/lundis-de-lihedn/la-reserve-des-armees-pivot-des-forces-morales-de-la-nation

Conclusions

The French reserve model offers a **two-level system that allows for flexible human resource management**. It is based on the following clear division:

- **first level (R01)** involves active volunteers (civilians and veterans) who sign a contract and receive payments and social guarantees to balance their service with civilian employment;
- **second level (R02)** constitutes a passive reserve that automatically enrolls all discharged service members for five years, requiring them to remain available to the state.

This structure ensures an active reserve portion while maintaining a strategic pool of trained personnel without requiring their constant engagement.

The professionalisation of the French army in 1999, followed by a sharp reduction in regular personnel, has resulted in fewer individuals leaving military service. So, France focuses on rapidly recruiting a large number of personnel through the first-level reserve.

USA

Population	348,000,000
Regular army:	2,700,000
Statutory limit for the Ready Reserve	2,900,000
Actual Army Reserve strength	174,800
Reserve recruitment	The reserve is recruited on a voluntary, contractual basis and consists of seven components: ■ The National Guard and reserves of various branches of the Armed Forces; ■ An additional group of former service members who retain availability obligations.

Historical background

The history of the US Reserve began on 23 April 1908 with the establishment of the Medical Reserve Corps. The systematic formation of its structure took place after World War I, when the **National Defence Act of 1920** authorised the establishment of the Organised Reserve. This structure **provided a pool of trained officers and rank and file for wartime deployment**. During the interwar period, reserve divisions were primarily staffed with officers, with a minimal number of rank-and-file personnel due to limited funding and low motivation for service. The situation fundamentally changed with the outbreak of World War II: the mass mobilisation of 1940–1942 transformed

“paper” units into combat-ready ones, and more than 140,000 reserve officers formed the backbone of the regular army’s officer corps.

The Cold War era²¹ became a period of institutional consolidation and functional transformation of the reserve. On 9 July 1952, the Organised Reserve was transformed into the United States Army Reserve, which was legislatively divided into three categories: **Ready Reserve, Standby Reserve, and Retired Reserve.**

During the 1960s–1990s, a strategic transition occurred, moving away from maintaining combat infantry divisions towards specialising in combat support. Most combat units were disbanded or transferred to the National Guard, while the Reserve focused on **support and logistical functions**. Introduced in 1980, the CAPSTONE²² programme for the first time linked reserve units with specific regular units for joint deployment. This was subsequently tested during Operation Desert Storm²³.

Following the end of the Cold War and the disbandment of the remaining combat brigades, the Reserve firmly established its role as a **provider of critical capabilities**: engineering, medical, logistics, and civil and military affairs. As of the 2024–2025 financial year (which begins on 1 October), the US Army Reserve had about 174,800 service members. Despite accounting for only 5% of the Army’s total budget, the Reserve provides about half of the combat support and a quarter of the mobilisation base expansion capability²⁴.

²¹ The Cold War was a global geopolitical rivalry between the Soviet Union and its allies on one side, and the United States and Western European countries on the other, lasting from the mid-1940s until the early 1990s.

²² The CAPSTONE programme is a compulsory training course for newly appointed generals and admirals of the US Armed Forces.

²³ Operation Desert Storm was a military operation by the US-led multinational coalition forces and a part of the 1990–1991 Gulf War.

²⁴ United States Army Reserve. Wikipedia. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army_Reserve

Current structure

United States legislation defines the reserve **as a critical element of national defence, designed to provide the Armed Forces with trained units during wartime and emergencies.** Subtitle E “Reserve Components” of Title 10 “Armed Forces” of the United States Code is the primary legal framework governing the reserve²⁵.

Reserve components

Army National Guard	Army Reserve	Navy Reserve
Marine Corps Reserve	Air National Guard	Air Force Reserve
Coast Guard Reserve		

To manage these components, specialised chains of command have been established, including the United States Army Reserve Command²⁶, Navy Reserve Force²⁷, and Air Force Reserve Command²⁸, which operate as separate commands within their service branches. The National Guard Bureau plays a key role in coordinating between the federal government and the states, and is mandated to oversee resource allocation, training, and the integration of Guard units.

Since 1952, all personnel, regardless of their reserve component, have been divided into three categories: **Ready Reserve, Standby Reserve, and Retired Reserve.**

²⁵ United States Code, 2011 Edition, Title 10 — Armed Forces, Subtitle E — Reserve Components. (2011). GovInfo. [govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title10/html/USCODE-2011-title10-subtitleE.htm](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title10/html/USCODE-2011-title10-subtitleE.htm)

²⁶ 10 U.S.C. § 10171.

²⁷ 10 U.S.C. § 10172.

²⁸ 10 U.S.C. § 10174.

Ready Reserve

This reserve constitutes the primary resource for immediate deployment, with a total strength of 2,900,000 personnel. **It is divided into:**

■ Selected Reserve

Composition: highly trained units and individuals who have priority in mobilisation. Its special group comprises dual-status military technicians²⁹ — federal civilian employees required to maintain membership in the Selected Reserve and responsible for organising, administering, and providing technical support to units.

Calling-up conditions: to maintain readiness, members shall participate in at least 48 scheduled drills and serve on active duty for training of not less than 14 days annually³⁰. In addition, each member of the Selected Reserve who is not on active duty shall undergo a comprehensive medical and dental readiness assessment annually³¹.

■ Individual Ready Reserve

Composition: individuals who have been trained but are not assigned to any unit. This includes a mobilisation category of members who may be involuntarily ordered to active duty. However, this status is limited to 24 months (two years) following the discharge from active service³².

Calling-up conditions: a muster duty of two hours every year, which is equivalent to one day of active training³³. Failure to perform training duty satisfactorily may result in sanctions, including compulsory assignment to additional active duty for training of up to 45 days³⁴.

²⁹ 10 U.S.C. § 10216.

³⁰ 10 U.S.C. § 10147.

³¹ 10 U.S.C. § 10206.

³² 10 U.S.C. § 10144.

³³ 10 U.S.C. § 12319.

³⁴ 10 U.S.C. § 10148.

The mobilisation of reservists in the United States may be governed by various legal mechanisms depending on the scale of the threat:

In time of war or national emergency declared by Congress, reservists may be called up for the duration of the war and six months thereafter ³⁵	In time of the national emergency declared by the President³⁶, up to 1,000,000 members of the Ready Reserve may be called up for a period of up to 24 months
For any operational mission or in response to the use of a weapon of mass destruction or a terrorist attack, the President may mobilise up to 200,000 personnel for a period of up to 365 days ³⁷	In response to major disasters at the request of a State Governor³⁸, reservists may be called up for 120 days

Standby Reserve

Composition: individuals unable to serve in the Ready Reserve due to temporary circumstances or the specific nature of their skills, including service members assigned to active and inactive status lists³⁹.

The inactive status list imposes restrictions: reservists do not receive pay, are ineligible for promotion, and do not accrue pensionable service.

Calling-up conditions: mobilisation of the Standby Reserve is a complex procedure. It is only possible in time of war or national emergency if the Secretary of Defence approves that there are not enough of the required resources in the Ready Reserve⁴⁰.

³⁵ 10 U.S.C. § 12301.

³⁶ 10 U.S.C. § 12302.

³⁷ 10 U.S.C. § 12304.

³⁸ 10 U.S.C. § 12304a.

³⁹ 10 U.S.C. § 10152.

⁴⁰ 10 U.S.C. § 12306.

Retired Reserve

Composition: individuals who retired due to age, length of service, or health conditions, but retain their status as service members.

Calling-up conditions: retired reservists may be ordered to active service by order of the Secretary of Defence or during wartime⁴¹.

Enlistment and service requirements

To enlist in the reserve, individuals must meet the following criteria:

- be a US citizen or a permanent resident;
- be at least 18 years old;
- be physically and morally qualified.

To be appointed to a rank above the rank of first lieutenant in the reserve, a baccalaureate degree from a qualifying educational institution is required⁴².

The person concludes a standard reserve service contract for a term of six to eight years⁴³. Individuals without prior military experience shall perform an initial period of active duty for training of not less than 12 weeks.

⁴¹ 10 U.S.C. § 12307.

⁴² 10 U.S.C. § 12205.

⁴³ 10 U.S.C. § 12103.

Promotion and separation

The career management system in the reserve is based on the principle of mandatory promotion or separation (“up or out”). **To maintain an active status, an officer must attain at least 50 points per year. Points are accumulated as follows:**

- one point for each day of service or training;
- 15 points for reserve membership;
- points for participation in funeral honours⁴⁴.

Upon reaching a specific length of service, officers are removed from the reserve active-status list if they have not been promoted⁴⁵ (20–24 years of service for captains (lieutenants in the Navy), 33 years of service for lieutenant colonels, and 35 years of service for colonels (captains in the Navy)).

An important social protection guarantee applies to reservists, known as the sanctuary rule⁴⁶. Officers with 18 to 20 years of service cannot be discharged without their consent until they reach 20 years of service (except in cases of physical unfitness or disciplinary violations). This ensures their right to a pension.

The standard retirement age is 60⁴⁷. However, this age is reduced by three months for every 90 days of active service performed after 28 January 2008 in support of contingency operations or emergencies, but it cannot be reduced below 50 years of age.

⁴⁴ 10 U.S.C. § 12732.

⁴⁵ 10 U.S.C. § 14701.

⁴⁶ 10 U.S.C. § 12646.

⁴⁷ 10 U.S.C. § 12731.

Financial provision

Under the financial support system, reservists receive:

direct payments	educational grants	insurance mechanisms
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The salary is based on the number of days actually served. Reservists are also entitled to special payments, for example, for participation in funeral honour guards for veterans, provided the service lasts at least two hours⁴⁸.

Direct payments

Payments for monthly drills and annual training directly depend on rank and length of service:⁴⁹

Rank	Rank code	Annual base pay	Note (length of service)
Private	E1	USD 4,027	Base pay, unchanged for the first eight years
Sergeant	E5	USD 5,733–7,682	USD 5,733 <2 years of service; USD 7,682 after eight years of service
Staff Sergeant	E6	USD 8,488	Usually, after seven years of service
Second Lieutenant	O1	USD 7,683–9,611	From enlistment to about four years of service
Captain	O3	USD 10,184–14,953	Company command
Major	O4	USD 16,225	Approximately eight years after reserve service

⁴⁸ 10 U.S.C. § 12503.

⁴⁹ Army Reserve Pay: How Much Does a Reservist Make? Indeed. [indeed.com/career-advice/pay-salary/army-reserve-pay](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/pay-salary/army-reserve-pay)

Educational benefits

Programme/ Benefit	Conditions	Pay/Compensation	Note
Montgomery GI Bill (Selected Reserve)	Six-year contract in the Selected Reserve	USD 251 per month for full-time study, USD 188 for $\frac{3}{4}$ load, and USD 125 for $\frac{1}{2}$ load	Basic educational assistance
Apprenticeship/ On-the-job training	Available to Montgomery GI Bill participants	75% of the base rate for the first six months, 55% for the next six months, and 35% thereafter	Payments decrease progressively
REAP (Reserve Educational Assistance Program)	Mobilisation for active duty supporting contingency operations	40% of active-duty rate after 90 days, 60% after one year, and 80% after two years or more	Enhanced educational assistance
Supplementary contribution to the education fund	Reservist's voluntary contribution of up to USD 600	An increase of USD 5 for every USD 20 contributed	Mechanism to increase the monthly allowance
Student Loan Repayment Programme	Reserve service	15% of the outstanding loan balance or USD 500 (whichever is greater) per year of service	Compensation of student loans
Health Professions Scholarship Programme	Students of physician, dental, and psychological specialities	Monthly scholarship during study	Service obligation: one year of service in the Selected Reserve for every six months of scholarship received

Insurance mechanisms

Reservists are covered by a specific **mobilisation income insurance programme**⁵⁰. The basic insurance benefit is USD 1,000 per month. A reservist may elect an enhanced benefit of up to USD 5,000 per month (in USD 500 increments), subject to the payment of relevant contributions.

Pension benefits are calculated using the following formula:
base amount multiplied by 2.5% for each year of credited service,
with the possibility of an additional 10% increase for extraordinary heroism⁵¹.

Family support

A dedicated support area for reservists focuses on their families. The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Programme⁵² operates within the country and provides support to reservists' families at such stages as pre-deployment, deployment, demobilisation, and post-mobilisation reconstitution.

Holding mandatory activities 30, 60, and 90 days after the service member's demobilisation is the programme's key feature. Legislation guarantees reservists pay for attending these activities together with their families. Within the scope of the programme, they may access the following services:

- marriage counselling;
- financial planning;
- substance abuse prevention;
- children's support.

⁵⁰ 10 U.S.C. §§ 12521–12525.

⁵¹ 10 U.S.C. § 12739.

⁵² 10 U.S.C. § 10101.

In addition, reservists can transfer unused educational benefits to family members⁵³. To transfer entitlement to educational assistance to a spouse, a reservist shall have at least 6 years of service and an agreement to serve an additional 4 years; for children, the requirement is 10 years of service. The total number of months of benefits transferred may not exceed 36 months. Children may use them until the age of 26.

Relations with employers

The USERRA⁵⁴ is the cornerstone of protecting the reservists' rights in the workplace. This federal act establishes rights and obligations applicable to all employer categories in the United States, including the public sector, private companies of any size, and foreign employers operating within the country. Its provisions cover all types of military service on a voluntary and involuntary basis in time of peace and war, including service in the National Guard, the Reserve, and specialised corps.

The Act is based on three key principles of protection:

- the prohibition of discrimination based on past, present, or future service;
- the guarantee of prompt re-employment upon completion of service;
- protection against disadvantages to a civilian career arising from the performance of military duties.

The Act prohibits discrimination against reservists as early as the recruitment stage. Employers are prohibited from denying an individual's employment because of their reserve service or future obligation for service. It is also forbidden to create a hostile working environment where an employee is subjected to ongoing harassment because of their military status.

⁵³ 10 U.S.C. § 16132a, § 16163a.

⁵⁴ The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994.
[congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/house-bill/995](https://www.congress.gov/bills/103/congress-house/995)

The “escalator position” concept is a key element of the Act. According to it, **reservists are entitled not merely to re-employment in the job position but also to the position they would have attained with reasonable certainty if not for the absence due to military service.** This means that employers are obliged to reinstate employees, taking into account seniority, pay rises, changes in status, and any benefits the individual may have accrued during their absence.

However, the escalator principle works both ways: if economic conditions or staff reductions would have led to the dismissal or demotion of employees during the period of absence, these adverse consequences also apply upon their reinstatement.

Conditions for re-employment

To be re-employed, the employee must meet the following criteria:

- the employer had advance verbal or written notice of the employee’s military service;
- the cumulative length of absence by reason of service does not exceed five years (excluding specific exceptions such as war, national emergencies, or the requirement to complete vocational training);
- the employee has not been separated from military service with a dishonourable or bad conduct discharge;
- the employee applied for re-employment in a timely manner.

The deadlines for submitting such applications depend on the duration of service:

1–30 days of service

returning to work on the first work day after safe arrival home and eight hours of rest

31–180 days of service

applying within 14 days after completion of service

180+ days of service

applying within 90 days

Protection upon return

Legislation also provides reservists with specific protection from dismissal upon their return to work. **If the period of service exceeded 30 days, the employee must not be discharged, except for cause, for the following period:**

- **180 days of protection** — if service was between 31 and 180 days;
- **one year of protection** — if service exceeded 180 days. The employer bears the burden of proving that discharge was reasonable (e.g., due to the employee's conduct or job position elimination for economic reasons) and was not related to their military service.

Anti-discrimination guarantees

- During the period of service, the employee is treated as having a break in service and maintains their **entitlement to benefits**. The period of military service is not considered a break in service for pension purposes.
- Upon return, the employee is entitled to **the same pension accrual rights** as if they had been continuously employed. In contributory benefit plans, the employee may make up contributions for the missed period.
- The reservist is also entitled to **maintain corporate health insurance during their service**. If the employee performs service for fewer than 31 days, they pay only their regular share of the premium. If the employee performs service for 31 days or more, they may continue coverage for up to 24 months by paying up to 102% of the full premium.

- A specific aspect of labour relations is the protection of reservists with disabilities incurred in, or aggravated during, the period of service. The employer must **make reasonable efforts to accommodate or retrain employees** to enable them to assume their escalator position or another position equivalent in status and pay⁵⁵.
- The Ready Reserve undergoes continuous screening to identify individuals with critical civilian skills⁵⁶. If the mobilisation of such an individual would cause extreme community hardship or threaten national health or security, they must be transferred to the Standby Reserve or discharged. In the event of an involuntary call-up⁵⁷, relevant authorities are required to consider the nature of the reservist's employment and its importance to national interests, thereby balancing military needs with the stability of the civilian labour market.

To resolve disputes regarding these guarantees in the US, the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) operates as a neutral organisation and provides free mediation through a network of volunteer ombudspersons. While it lacks enforcement powers, it helps the parties to reach an amicable agreement. If a conflict cannot be resolved through mediation, a reservist may apply to the Department of Labour for a formal investigation or file a lawsuit with the assistance of a private attorney.

⁵⁵ USERRA Frequently Asked Questions. Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). esgr.mil/USERRA/Frequently-Asked-Questions

⁵⁶ 10 U.S.C. § 10149.

⁵⁷ 10 U.S.C. § 12303.

Conclusions

The US reserve system is built on a **three-tier structure encompassing all reservists, regardless of their assignment**: the Ready Reserve, the Standby Reserve, and the Retired Reserve. This classification enables flexible resource management, ranging from the deployment of individual specialists for local missions to full-scale mobilisation in the event of a global war.

Reservists sign contracts for a term of six to eight years. Moving away from duplicating all functions of the regular army in favour of specialisation is a key feature of the modern US model. The reserve maintains a critical mass of combat and service support forces (about 50%). This allows the state to save resources by keeping highly specialised professionals (medical personnel, engineers, logisticians, and cybersecurity specialists) in the civilian sector and activating them only when necessary. Operating on about 5% of the total Army budget, the reserve provides a quarter of the mobilisation base and half of logistical capabilities.

Legally enshrined guarantees help employees balance civilian careers with reserve service, particularly through the escalator principle, which allows service time to count toward civilian seniority, including potential promotions and pay rises, rather than merely retaining their positions. This is reinforced by the “up or out” personnel policy, which requires continuous professional development and the accumulation of points to maintain active reserve status.

Financial motivation for US reservists is comprehensive and combines direct pay for days of service, educational grants, and eligibility for a military pension from the age of 60, making reserve service an economically attractive option.

Family support is an important element of the system. The state recognises that reservists' readiness to serve directly depends on the well-being of their families. Therefore, legislation provides specific support. The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Programme funds family participation in pre- and post-mobilisation activities (with these days compensated as service time) and provides psychological support and counselling. It allows families to use the reservists' unused educational benefits, subject to a length of service.

Canada

Population	40,000,000
Regular Army	71,500
Primary Reserve	about 28,500
Reserve recruitment	The Reserve is recruited voluntarily and comprises: ■ civilians ■ former service members integrated across all branches of the armed forces ■ former service members and special officers entitled to voluntary training, whose compulsory participation is activated only in the event of a national emergency

Historical background

The Canadian Army Reserve continues the tradition of the militia established in 1673 to defend scattered settlements without the support of a regular European army. After 1760, the country maintained a requirement for monthly training for all able-bodied men. In 1855, the **Militia Act** established the Permanent and Non-Permanent Active Militia – the predecessors of today’s regular and reserve forces. These formations had significant shortcomings, which became evident during World War I and led to further reforms. In 1940, the structures were renamed Regular and Reserve Forces, and the importance of the reserve increased again following the unification of the Canadian Armed Forces in 1968.

The reserve currently performs three key functions:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| ■ provides a mobilisation framework in the event of a major national crisis | ■ maintains a link between the military and society through an extensive network of regiments | ■ reinforces combat units during operations (with reservists accounting for 20–30% of personnel during the war in Afghanistan) |
|---|---|--|

Reservists are also actively involved in domestic operations, including firefighting, flood relief, and providing security for major events such as the 2010 Vancouver Olympics⁵⁸.

The Directive of the Ministry of Defence dated 30 May 2025 initiated a large-scale Defence Mobilisation Plan, under which the reserve strength is expected to increase to 400,000 personnel (up to 100,000 in the regular reserve and up to 300,000 in supplementary reserves). To this end, a special tiger team was established to study allied experience and apply a whole-of-society approach to defence. This strategic need is attributed to rising global risks and the potential major conflict between Western nations and China or Russia in 2028–2030⁵⁹.

Current structure

According to the National Defence Act, the **Canadian Armed Forces consist of one service divided into the following components:**

- **Regular Force** includes officers and non-commissioned members who are enrolled for continuing, full-time military service.

⁵⁸ The Canadian Armed Forces: A New Vision for the Reserve Force. NATO Association of Canada. natoassociation.ca/10371

⁵⁹ Canadian military wants mobilisation plan in place to boost reserves to 400,000 personnel. Ottawa Citizen. ottawacitizen.com/public-service/defence-watch/canadian-military-wants-mobilization-plan-in-place-to-boost-reserves-to-400000-personnel

- **Reserve Force** includes officers and non-commissioned members who are enrolled for other than continuing, full-time service when not on active service. It is an integral part of the Canadian Armed Forces and includes service members who are enrolled for non-permanent, part-time service (except when on active service)⁶⁰. These members are referred to as citizen soldiers, as the majority have full-time civilian employment or attend school, and dedicate their evenings and weekends to the military⁶¹.

The maximum strength of the Regular and Reserve Forces is determined by the Governor in Council⁶².

- **Special Force** may be established by the Governor in Council in the event of an emergency or as part of international obligations (UN or NATO). This may include both regular force and reservists who are on active service or volunteered for full-time service.

The Vice Chief of the Defence Staff carries out strategic and resource management and organisation of the reserve. Direct command is assigned to the commanders of relevant service branches (e.g., Army, Navy, and Air Force)⁶³.

The Reserve Force is divided into four subcomponents:

Primary Reserve (P Res)	Supplementary Reserve (Supp Res)
Cadet Organisations Administration and Training Service (COATS)	Canadian Rangers (CR)

⁶⁰ DAOD 2020-0, Reserve Force. Government of Canada.
canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/2000-series/2020/2020-0-reserve-force.html

⁶¹ Reserve components. Government of Canada.
canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/canada-reserve-force/about-reserve-force/reserve-components.html

⁶² National Defence Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. N-5). Justice Laws Website.
laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/ACTS/N-5/page-2.html#h-374679

⁶³ DAOD 2020-0, Reserve Force. Government of Canada.
canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/2000-series/2020/2020-0-reserve-force.html

Primary Reserve

Purpose: to provide armed forces with professional personnel at directed levels of readiness to achieve their military roles and missions⁶⁴.

Strength: about 28,500 personnel.

The Primary Reserve is integrated into all military branches and consists of the following elements:

- **Canadian Army Reserve** — the largest component (about 19,000 personnel), consisting of part-time and full-time reservists in 185 units located in 86 cities. It reports to the Commander of the Canadian Army.
- **Naval Reserve** — about 4,000 reservists in 24 divisions. It reports to the Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy.
- **Royal Canadian Air Force Reserve** — about 2,000 personnel employed in total force establishments throughout Canada.
- **Health Services Reserve** — includes 16 field ambulances and the 1st Canadian Field Hospital. It reports to the Military Personnel Commander.
- **Judge Advocate General (JAG) Reserve** — about 60 legal officers.
- **The Canadian Special Operations Forces Command Reserve (CANSOFCOM Reserve)**^{65, 66}.

A separate organisational unit comprises the **Primary Reserve Lists** — administrative structures that provide for the career actions and pay services of reservists who are serving in headquarters or other

⁶⁴ DAOD 2020-1, Primary Reserve. Government of Canada.
canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-order-s-directives/2000-series/2020/2020-1-primary-reserve.html

⁶⁵ Reserve components. Government of Canada.
canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/canada-reserve-force/about-reserve-force/reserve-components.html

⁶⁶ DAOD 2020-0, Reserve Force. Government of Canada.
canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-order-s-directives/2000-series/2020/2020-0-reserve-force.html

formations rather than in traditional reserve units⁶⁷. The National Defence Headquarters maintains its lists, comprising about 1,500 members⁶⁸.

Calling-up conditions: P Res members are required to meet the same minimum operational standards as Regular Force members. Command determines the minimum number of training days per year. If a reservist fails to meet this minimum without an approved exemption⁶⁹, they are considered “non-effective” and may be released from service⁷⁰.

Supplementary Reserve

Purpose: to augment the Regular Force and other Reserve components.

Strength: about 6,700 personnel

Composition: individuals who have previously served in the Regular Force or another Reserve component, as well as those who do not have previous military experience but have special skills or expertise for which there is a military requirement.

In contrast to the Primary Reserve, members of the Supplementary Reserve have a distinct status:

- they are not required to perform military training or any other form of duty without their consent;
- they are not subject to being called out on service in an emergency.
- they are not liable for being called out for service in aid of the civil power without their consent unless they are on active service.

⁶⁷ DAOD 2020-1, Primary Reserve. Government of Canada.
canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-order-s-directives/2000-series/2020/2020-1-primary-reserve.html

⁶⁸ Reserve components. Government of Canada.
canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/canada-reserve-force/about-reserve-force/reserve-components.html

⁶⁹ Exemption from Duty and Training.

⁷⁰ DAOD 2020-1, Primary Reserve. Government of Canada.
canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-order-s-directives/2000-series/2020/2020-1-primary-reserve.html

The only instance of a call-out is being placed on active service in the event of a national emergency^{71, 72}.

Conditions of service

A Reserve member is liable to serve and perform lawful duty⁷³:

- when placed on active service⁷⁴;
- in aid of the civil power⁷⁵;
- for periods of training⁷⁶;
- when called out on service to perform any lawful duty other than training⁷⁷.

To ensure an adequate level of combat readiness, Canada introduced the Soldier Readiness Policy (SRP-R) in 2023. It sets performance standards instead of previous attendance-only requirements.

Army Reserve members are required to:

- attend training for a minimum of ten full days per year and at least one training activity every 60 days (excluding holiday season);
- meet the Individual Battle Task Standards (IBTS), including annual firing of a personal weapon and completion of the Force Test;

⁷¹ National Defence Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. N-5), section 31. Justice Laws Website. laws-lois.justice.gc.ca

⁷² DAOD 2020-4, Supplementary Reserve. Government of Canada. canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/2000-series/2020/2020-4-supplementary-reserve.html

⁷³ Certain duties for the Supplementary Reserve require only the reservist's consent.

⁷⁴ National Defence Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. N-5), section 31. Justice Laws Website. laws-lois.justice.gc.ca

⁷⁵ National Defence Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. N-5), sections 275 & 276. Justice Laws Website. laws-lois.justice.gc.ca

⁷⁶ National Defence Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. N-5), section 33(2)(a). Justice Laws Website. laws-lois.justice.gc.ca

⁷⁷ National Defence Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. N-5), section 33(2)(b). Justice Laws Website. laws-lois.justice.gc.ca

- complete first aid and CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear) defence every three years;
- update medical records, security clearance, will, and next-of-kin contact information annually.

Failure to meet these requirements without good reason may result in the chain of command initiating a release process⁷⁸.

Relations with employers

In 2006, the **Canadian Forces Reservists Protection Act** was developed to protect reservists' civilian employment. However, it currently regulates only matters related to students. A reservist has a right to return to their studies at the beginning of the next semester (or sooner if practicable) if they provide the educational institution with reasonable notice of their intention to take a leave and to return upon completion of the service. Every educational institution shall allow a student to return to their studies without any financial penalty and may not charge any tuition in addition to what the student would have been required to pay if they had not taken the leave of absence⁷⁹.

Labour legislation governs leaves of absence and employment guarantees for reservists, which vary depending on the individual's employment sector.

Federally regulated industries

An employee in a federally regulated industry is entitled to:

- unpaid leave, provided they have been continuously employed with the same employer for at least three months;

⁷⁸ Soldier Readiness Policy – Reserve. Government of Canada.
canada.ca/en/army/corporate/reserve/soldier-readiness-policy.html

⁷⁹ Canadian Forces Reservists Protection Act. Nova Scotia Legislature.
nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/canforrp.htm

- 24 months of leave in a 60-month period (except in the event of a national emergency) to take part in an operation (in Canada or abroad), military skills training, or treatment or rehabilitation in respect of injuries that result from service. To take this leave, the employee must provide a 4-week written notice to the employer before the commencement, indicating the length of the leave.

The employer must reinstate the employee in their former position or give them an equivalent one with the same wages and benefits. If the position becomes redundant during a period of military leave, the employee is entitled to the same conditions as other employees affected by the redundancy. While the employee is on leave, the employer is not required to contribute to pension plans, health insurance, or other benefits⁸⁰.

Public servants

Special rules apply to public servants (Reserve Forces Training Leave Regulations). They may be granted leave of absence to take annual training or perform other duties, including during emergencies.

As a general rule, a public servant granted military leave shall be paid at only one rate of pay, either their civil pay or their Armed Forces pay and allowances (appropriate to their military rank and status). This restriction does not apply if the employee serves while they are on their annual paid leave. In that case, they are entitled to receive military pay in addition to their civil leave pay.

If a reservist takes leave to attend advanced training or is called out for service, the leave must be approved by the department management. In such cases, the individual takes leave without civil pay and receives only military pay.

⁸⁰ Federal labour standards: Leaves. Government of Canada.
canada.ca/en/services/jobs/workplace/federal-labour-standards/leaves.html#h2.13

If a public servant is injured or incapacitated because of illness while on leave of absence, they shall not be paid full civil pay in addition to the military pay provided for the period of hospitalisation or incapacitation. However, if the individual is granted sick leave under Public Service Terms and Conditions, they may be paid a part of their civil pay. This part is calculated so that, when added to military pay, the total amount equals their regular civil pay (topping up to the level of their civil income)⁸¹.

Provincial regulation (Example of Ontario)

Employees in Canada have a right to an unpaid leave of absence for training or service, provided they have been employed by their employer for at least two consecutive months. However, if the leave is related to handling an emergency inside Canada, there is no minimum employment requirement. An employer is entitled to postpone the employee's reinstatement for two weeks after the day on which the leave ends.

Similar to the federal level, the employer is not required to continue participating in the benefit plans during the employee's absence. Length-of-service and seniority credits continue to accrue during such leave.

As a general rule, the employer is not required to continue to make contributions to pension or insurance plans during the reservists' absence. However, if the employer exercises their right to postpone the employee's reinstatement, they are required to resume paying their share of premiums to these funds during the period of postponement⁸².

⁸¹ Reserve Force Jurisdiction Regulations (C.R.C., c. 1050). Justice Laws Website. laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C._c._1050/page-1.html

⁸² Reservist leave. Ontario.ca. ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/reservist-leave

Financial provision

Reservists receive daily pay, the amount of which depends on rank and speciality.

Rank and file	Officers	Special officers
The basic daily rate for a Private ranges from about USD 144 to USD 185. Sergeants and Warrant Officers – more than USD 250–300 per day, depending on specialisation (e.g., Special Forces)	Officer Cadets – from about USD 150 per day. Senior Officers (Colonels or Generals) – between USD 500 and USD 900+ per day	Rates for highly qualified occupations (Legal, Medical, and Dental Officers) are higher, reaching up to USD 1,200⁸³

Conclusions

The Canadian Army Reserve is a historically established component of the Armed Forces that **combines the tradition of a citizen militia with the professional requirements of modern operations**. The large-scale 2025 Defence Mobilisation Plan demonstrates a strategic revision of Canada's defence policy, as the reserve is set to grow from about 28,000 to 400,000 personnel in response to increasing international instability and the potential for a major conflict.

The modern structure of Reserve Forces consists of four components:

- the Primary Reserve is the core of the reserve, integrated into all military branches and capable of providing operational reinforcement both within Canada and abroad;

⁸³ Reserve Pay. Government of Canada. canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/pay-pension-benefits/pay/reserves.html#ofcrs

- the Supplementary Reserve (veterans) serves as a personnel resource and does not entail involuntary call-up without the reservist's consent;
- the Cadet Organisation Administration and Training Service (COATS);
- Canadian Rangers (CR).

All reservists are required to maintain a directed level of training and readiness, including regular training, inspections, and updating of clearances.

The legal protection of reservists in civilian life is ensured by a system of federal and provincial regulations that grant the right to unpaid leave for service, guarantee reinstatement to work, and preserve access to education. While leave conditions vary by jurisdiction, they generally aim to ensure that military service does not jeopardise a career or education.

Financial provision for reservists is based on daily pay, which depends directly on rank and speciality: from about USD 144–185 for the rank and file to USD 500–900 for senior officers, with even higher rates for special officers.

The United Kingdom

Population	69,500,000
Total military personnel	180,780, including 140,000 personnel serving in the regular army
Reserve	about 68,000 personnel (31,940 volunteers and 35,729 ex-regular service members)
Reserve recruitment	The Reserve is recruited on a mixed basis: ■ voluntary component – civilians under contract ■ ex-regular component – ex-regulars who retain obligations

Historical background

Historically, the reserve has been a vital component of the British Army, providing the mass and capabilities required to meet the Army's commitments. Throughout the country's history, almost every major military operation has seen reservists operate alongside their regular counterparts.

War fighting and reinforcement of the Army are the key purposes of the UK **Reserve Forces**. **In peacetime, this involves training for potential war, as well as contributing to operations at home and overseas**⁸⁴. The Reserve Forces play a crucial role in national

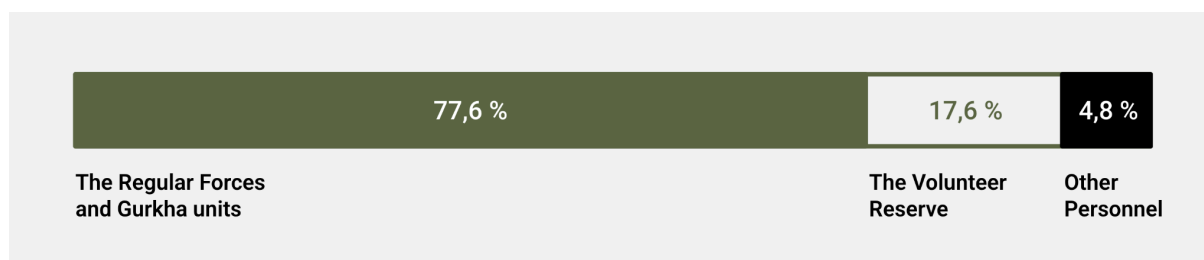
⁸⁴ The Army Reserve. British Army. army.mod.uk/army-careers/the-army-reserve

security, from countering security threats, and peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts abroad to supporting communities at home⁸⁵.

According to the UK Ministry of Defence, as of 1 July 2025, the total strength of UK Service Personnel is 180,780.

The structure of the Armed Forces is distributed as follows:

- the **Regular Forces and Gurkha units**⁸⁶ are the core and account for 77.6% of personnel;
- the **Volunteer Reserve** includes 17.6% of the total strength, indicating the significant integration of reservists into the overall defence model;
- the remaining 4.8% comprises **Other Personnel**, including the Serving Regular Reserve (service members who have returned to service under the reserve contract, about 400,000⁸⁷), the Military Provost Guard Service, Locally Employed Personnel, and elements of Full-Time Reserve Service (FTRS)⁸⁸.



⁸⁵ Armed Forces Reserves: a quick guide. GOV.UK. [gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-reserves-a-quick-guide/armed-forces-reserves-a-quick-guide](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-reserves-a-quick-guide/armed-forces-reserves-a-quick-guide)

⁸⁶ Gurkha units are elite infantry formations recruited from Nepalese volunteers who have served in the British and Indian armies since 1815.

⁸⁷ Quarterly service personnel statistics 2025. Ministry of Defence. [gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2025](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2025)

⁸⁸ Quarterly service personnel statistics: 1 July 2025. Ministry of Defence. [gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2025/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-1-july-2025/](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2025/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-1-july-2025/)

Current structure

According to Section 2 of the Reserve Forces Act 1996 (hereinafter referred to as the Act)⁸⁹, **Reserve Forces are divided based on the recruitment principle:**

Volunteer Reserve	Ex-Regular Reserve Forces
civilians who have voluntarily enlisted 31,940 personnel As of 1 October 2025	Ex-regulators following the completion of their contracts 35,729 personnel As of 1 October 2025
■ Royal Naval Reserve ■ Royal Marines Reserve ■ Army Reserve ■ Royal Auxiliary Air Force	■ Royal Fleet Reserve ■ Regular Reserve for the Army ■ Air Force Reserve⁹⁰

Parliament shall authorise a maximum number of officers and a maximum number of rank-and-file personnel for each of the reserve forces, and the actual number shall not exceed these numbers⁹¹.

Individuals may join the **Royal Naval Reserve** between the ages of 16 and 42 (or 17 to 42 for an officer role), while the age limit for ex-regulars extends to 56. Age requirements for the **Royal Air Force** Reserve vary depending on the role: from 15 years and nine months up to 55 years (for Medical Officers).

⁸⁹ Reserve Forces Act 1996. Legislation.gov.uk. [legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/14/data.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/14/data.pdf)

⁹⁰ Reserve Forces Act 1996, section 2(2). Legislation.gov.uk. [legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/14/data.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/14/data.pdf)

⁹¹ Reserve Forces Act 1996, section 3(1). Legislation.gov.uk. [legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/14/data.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/14/data.pdf)

Enlistment and service requirements

Army Reserve

This is the largest reserve force in the country and is organised into national and regional units.

Composition: Regional units recruit personnel from their local area, and most people join a regional Army Reserve unit based on their place of residence.

There are 29 national reserve units in the UK that recruit personnel from all over the country. These units are more specialised than regional ones; they recruit people with specific skills but can also train them from scratch.

If a candidate wants to use the skills from their day job in the Army Reserve (for example, a police officer, doctor, engineer, chef, media relations expert, or cybersecurity specialist), a national unit is the most suitable option⁹². Legislation provides that each reserve force may be served by a permanent staff consisting of persons who are members of that force or members of the regular services⁹³.

Eligibility

Category	Age requirements
Applying to the Army Reserve	From 17 years and nine months old, enlistment on the 18th birthday
Soldier (initial enlistment)	Until 49 years and eleven months; start of Phase 1 training by the 51st birthday and Phase 2 by the 52nd birthday

⁹² The Army Reserve. British Army. army.mod.uk/army-careers/the-army-reserve

⁹³ Reserve Forces Act 1996, Part VI. Legislation.gov.uk. legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/14/data.pdf

Category	Age requirements
Officer (initial enlistment)	Applying by 48 years and nine months; start of training by 50th birthday
Re-enlistment (soldiers)	Until 52nd birthday
Re-enlistment (officers)	Until 57th birthday

To join the Reserve, candidates shall:

- be British, Irish, part of the Commonwealth, or hold a dual citizenship;
- be medically fit for reserve service;
- have relevant qualifications⁹⁴ for an officer role (no qualifications are required for enlisted roles).

Army reservists volunteer to serve alongside regular soldiers with an annual training commitment of 19–27 days, depending on the unit⁹⁵. Most reserve roles require about 27 days a year, including weekly training sessions. If a candidate joins a specialist unit, the training days required to qualify for the bounty could total 19 per year.

Training is flexible and can be adapted to a reservist's schedule.

The 27-day commitment can be broken down over the year, comprising 32 weekly drill nights (equivalent to eight days), one 15-day annual camp (per Section 22 of the Act, training cannot exceed 16 days in aggregate), and two training weekends.

Reservists may complete additional training if they wish, and many people spend at least 40 days a year in the Army Reserve, thereby increasing their total remuneration. Training can be balanced with a day job as sessions are held in the evenings and at weekends,

⁹⁴ Armed Forces Reserves: a quick guide. GOV.UK. [gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-reserves-a-quick-guide/armed-forces-reserves-a-quick-guide](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-reserves-a-quick-guide/armed-forces-reserves-a-quick-guide)

⁹⁵ The Army Reserve. British Army. army.mod.uk/army-careers/the-army-reserve

except for a two-week training camp⁹⁶. Reserve service provides an opportunity to train in Kenya or California, earn military and civilian qualifications, and improve physical fitness⁹⁷.

Financial provision and benefits

The reservists get **paid** for the time they spend training and performing their reserve duties. The pay scale is based on the remuneration of regular soldiers with the same job and rank. The amount increases as they get promoted and gain experience⁹⁸.

Rank	Daily rate
Private	GBP 63.27
Lance Corporal	GBP 81.89
Corporal	GBP 95.06
Sergeant	GBP 106.73
Second Lieutenant	GBP 99.60
Lieutenant	GBP 103.00
Captain	GBP 126.89
Major	GBP 159.15

⁹⁶ Commitment. Army Jobs. jobs.army.mod.uk/army-reserve/life-in-the-army-reserve/commitment

⁹⁷ The Army Reserve. British Army. army.mod.uk/army-careers/the-army-reserve

⁹⁸ The Army Reserve. British Army. army.mod.uk/army-careers/the-army-reserve

If a reservist meets the minimum training commitment (19 or 27 days) and passes the annual Military Training Tests, they get a **tax-free bounty**. This is based on length of service and increases annually over the first five years: from GBP 558 in year 1 to GBP 2,209 in year 5⁹⁹.

Most roles in the Army Reserve currently offer **additional payments** to recruits upon reaching certain milestones, such as completing training.

As well as the bounty, there are also **subsidies** that will pay for food while reservists are on duty and travel to the unit. All volunteer reservists, their partners, and children are eligible for the HM Forces Railcard. This costs GBP 15 and offers a 34% discount on rail travel throughout the UK for a whole year¹⁰⁰. Reservists are also entitled to **pension benefits** based on length of service (at least two years)¹⁰¹.

Relations with employers

Employers benefit significantly from hiring reservists, as reservists develop planning, decision-making, flexibility, communication, and leadership skills that enhance teamwork and resilience under pressure. Some skills gained during reserve service are nationally recognised and accredited, which employees can exploit at zero cost to employers¹⁰².

The Army, as part of the Ministry of Defence, works with employers to help make sure that reservists will be treated fairly¹⁰³. The Defence Relationship Management offers support to employers and helps develop a mutually beneficial relationship with the Ministry of Defence by encouraging them to sign the **Armed Forces Covenant**. This is a public, voluntary pledge by companies to treat service members and their families fairly and provide a range of well-being guarantees.

⁹⁹ Pay and benefits. Army Jobs. jobs.army.mod.uk/army-reserve/life-in-the-army-reserve/pay-benefits

¹⁰⁰ The Army Reserve. British Army. army.mod.uk/army-careers/the-army-reserve

¹⁰¹ Reserves Focus: Pension Benefits. Forces Pension Society. forcespensionsociety.org/2024/09/reserves-focus-pension-benefits

¹⁰² Reserve Forces: A Guide for Employers. British Army. army.mod.uk/media/d2ld2iug/reserve_employers_guide_2023.pdf

¹⁰³ Your day job. Army Jobs. jobs.army.mod.uk/army-reserve/life-in-the-army-reserve/day-job

The Employer Recognition Scheme encompasses organisations with bronze, silver, and gold awards for supporting the defence community. To facilitate better planning for employees' long-term absence, employers receive early notifications of training and potential deployments through annual letters¹⁰⁴. Over 600 companies provide up to ten days of paid leave to attend military training¹⁰⁵. The Civil Service grants a minimum of 15 days of paid special leave per year for training. Managers should respond positively to requests for leave to undertake reserve activities and to discuss the skills employees acquire upon their return, so they can make the best use of those skills in the workplace¹⁰⁶.

Mobilisation

In this context, mobilisation refers to the process of calling out a reservist for operational commitments. Generally, this will only be compulsory in times of national emergency or a direct threat to the UK and its allies. The Army plans to give up to 90 days' notice where possible; however, this could be reduced when there is an urgent need for mobilisation. Most reservists are given at least 28 days' notice. A mobilisation pack containing the date the employee is to report for training, the length of mobilisation, statutory rights and obligations, financial assistance, and contacts is provided to the employer.

Legislation also provides mechanisms for individual exemptions from call-up. According to **sections 78 and 79 of the Act**, the regulations allow a reservist or the person's employer to apply for any deferral or exemption if there would be a significant impact on a business or for personal reasons.

¹⁰⁴ Reserve Forces: A Guide for Employers. British Army. army.mod.uk/media/d2ld2iug/reserve_employers_guide_2023.pdf

¹⁰⁵ Your day job. Army Jobs. jobs.army.mod.uk/army-reserve/life-in-the-army-reserve/day-job

¹⁰⁶ Armed Forces Reserves: a quick guide. GOV.UK. gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-reserves-a-quick-guide/armed-forces-reserves-a-quick-guide

Although a reservist is entitled to be discharged upon completion of their term of service under the law¹⁰⁷ while they are in permanent service (mobilised), they shall not be entitled to be discharged until they are released from that service, even if their contract has expired.

The legislation provides for financial support to employers, reservists, and self-employed reservists to minimise operational disruption and compensate the employer for mobilisation. These measures include:

- salary costs paid for by the Army;
- pension contribution scheme paid for by the Army if withdrawn by the employer, and the reservist wishes to remain in the scheme;
- additional salary costs to cover a temporary replacement, should the costs exceed the reservist's salary (up to a maximum of GBP 110 per day);
- agency and advertising costs for finding a replacement;
- up to GBP 2,000 of training costs for a replacement during the period of mobilisation;
- five days of takeover and handover costs when the employee leaves and returns to work;
- essential re-training costs for the reservist upon return to work;
- 75% of the cost for replacing specialist clothing for a deployed reservist up to the value of GBP 300;
- up to GBP 2,000 for expenses incurred by self-employed reservists before, during, and post-mobilisation;
- for small and medium enterprises: an incentive payment of GBP 500 each month that the employee is in military service,

¹⁰⁷ Reserve Forces Act 1996, section 17(1). [Legislation.gov.uk.
legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/14/data.pdf](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/14/data.pdf)

per employee. **This payment can be claimed for, unless both of the following apply:**

annual turnover was more than GBP 25.9 million in the 12 months before the reservist was called up

the enterprise had more than 250 employees or partners on the date of mobilisation¹⁰⁸

Challenges

The UK reserve system faces certain difficulties. According to an independent review led by Major General (REtd) Simon Lalor (December 2024), the state of the Army Reserve is described as unsatisfactory and continuing to deteriorate. It is effectively depleted compared to the regular forces. The report notes a steady decline in strength: as of April 2024, the total strength of reservists stood at 32,490, nearly 5,000 fewer than in 2021. The trained strength fell to 24,070, significantly below the target set by the Future Soldier programme (30,000 personnel).

The researcher identifies “sustained failures in the recruitment system” managed by the private contractor Capita and regarded as unfit for purpose, as the principal cause of the crisis. Owing to bureaucratic obstacles and delays, only seven out of every 100 applicants ultimately enlist. The report’s author emphasises that the reserve lacks a clear purpose, sufficient resources to augment regular units in combat operations, and a coherent plan for how to deliver mass for a longer-term conflict. These deficiencies are critical in the context of current threats, as evidenced by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine^{109, 110}.

¹⁰⁸ Reserve Forces: A Guide for Employers. British Army. army.mod.uk/media/d2ld2iug/reserve_employers_guide_2023.pdf

¹⁰⁹ Quarterly service personnel statistics 2025. Ministry of Defence. gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2025

¹¹⁰ Council of Reserve Forces’ and Cadets’ Associations. (2024). External Scrutiny Team Annual Statutory Report 2024. gov.uk/government/publications/council-of-reserve-forces-and-cadets-associations-scrutiny-team-annual-statutory-report-2024

Conclusions

As of July 2025, the UK's military reserve accounts for 17.6% of the total strength of the Armed Forces. Its operation is regulated by the Reserve Forces Act 1996, which divides reservists into Volunteer Reserve (civilians under contract) and Ex-Regular Reserve Forces (ex-regulars) based on the recruitment principle.

The Army Reserve, organised into regional and specialised national units, is the core of the volunteer component. Reservists are required to undertake annual training commitments of 19 to 27 days (including evening sessions, weekends, and camps), allowing them to balance service with their day jobs. Reservists receive pay equivalent to regular forces, tax-free bounties that increase with length of service, and social benefits.

In peacetime, emphasis is placed on the benefits employers derive from employees acquiring skills (such as leadership and decision-making) without incurring training costs. This cooperation is often formalised through the Armed Forces Covenant, under which many companies voluntarily provide additional paid leave for training.

Mobilisation of reservists is compulsory in times of national danger or a direct threat. In such cases, reservists are entitled to full compensation for salary costs, costs for finding a replacement, re-training upon return to work, and monthly incentive payments for small and medium enterprises.

The UK's Army Reserve is **currently in crisis**. According to the independent review (December 2024), the state is unsatisfactory: total strength is declining, and trained strength falls significantly below the target set by the Future Soldier programme. The failure of Capita-managed recruitment, where only 7% of applicants ultimately enlist, is the main reason. The reserve lacks a clear purpose, sufficient resources to augment regular forces, and a coherent plan for a longer-term conflict. These deficiencies are critical in the context of current threats.

Norway

Population	5,600,000
Regular army	27,000 personnel (18,000 professionals and 9,000–10,000 conscripts)
Home Guard	40,000 personnel
Reserve recruitment	The reserve is recruited based on universal conscription (for both women and men). Following the completion of conscription, citizens transfer to the regular forces reserve for five years and then to the Home Guard in their place of residence until reaching the age limit

Historical background

Norway's security framework is based on **the concept of Total Defence (Totalforsvaret) – the constitutional duty of all citizens, regardless of gender, to defend the state**¹¹¹.

Norway relied on mass conscription during the Cold War. Since the 1990s, defence budgets and personnel strength have been reduced, as has been the case in most European countries. For example, many brigades, particularly in the northern regions, were disbanded. Over several decades, both the regular army and the military reserve declined.

Following the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Norwegian government revised its civic engagement policy and reinstated some disbanded brigades, particularly in the strategic

¹¹¹ Kongeriket Norges Grunnlov av 17. mai 1814. Lovdata. lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/1814-05-17

Finnmark region. The number of conscripts is also gradually increasing, forming the backbone of the national reserve¹¹².

Current structure

Norway retains a system of compulsory conscription applicable to both men and women (born after 1997) aged 19 to 44¹¹³. If an individual has served in the army for at least one year after conscription, they remain in the reserve until age 55. By law, the basic total period of service for every citizen is 19 months. This is usually divided into 12 months of conscript service and seven months in the reserve, which are broken into short-term drills throughout the service in the general conscription pool. In some cases, individuals may choose to extend their conscript service to 18 months, resulting in a total service of 21 months, including three months in the reserve.

If an individual has not completed conscript service before commencing studies within the Armed Forces, the first year of study counts as the year of conscript service. However, subsequent education, overseas deployment, recruitment, service in Rapid Reaction Forces, or employment within the Armed Forces are excluded from reserve service obligations¹¹⁴.

Upon completion of the 12-month conscript service, an individual remains assigned to their regular army unit (Hæren) for five years to ensure immediate reinforcement as part of the Force Reserve (Styrkereserven). However, in practice, an issue arises where individuals may remain in this status for years without being called out for training while awaiting reassignment¹¹⁵.

¹¹² Expert interview with a reservist.

¹¹³ Act on Defence Personnel (Lov om personell i Forsvaret), Section 6. Lovdata. lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2016-08-12-77/KAPITTEL_2#%C2%A716

¹¹⁴ Verneplikt. Forsvaret. forsvaret.no/forstegangstjeneste/verneplikt

¹¹⁵ Expert interview with a reservist.

Home Guard

Following the completion of this term of conscript service, individuals are administratively transferred to the Home Guard (Heimevernet). The Home Guard has a parallel system and constitutes a distinct branch of the Armed Forces. Norway is divided into 17 counties, to which individuals are assigned based on their tax residence. Home Guard reservists are called out for annual drills and training, which are limited to six days per year for the rank and file and nine days per year for NCOs and officers¹¹⁶. Refresher training is a specific type of training and may last up to 21 days, though it does not occur every year¹¹⁷. Reservists are issued personal weapons to keep at home (with the bolt or firing pin removed and kept in a military depot).

A rapid reaction unit (Innsatsstyrke) is a distinct component of the Home Guard. Enlistment into these units is voluntary and contract-based following a selection process. Members of these units shall undergo additional training of up to 30 days per year. Service in the Rapid Reaction Forces does not count toward the seven-month reserve service obligation. They are employed for rapid deployment in situations where the state requires reinforcement of regular forces¹¹⁸.

According to legislation, the government has the authority to call up those liable for military service for extraordinary duty in a crisis¹¹⁹. The Conscription Act allows the government to mobilise reservists for up to six months at a time. However, it includes a requirement for the fair distribution of the burden: **service must be organised in a manner that “avoids, as far as possible, repeated call-up of the same individuals.”** This constitutes a legally established rotation mechanism that obliges military leadership to prepare replacements even during a special period¹²⁰.

¹¹⁶ Verneplikt. Forsvaret. forsvaret.no/forstegangstjeneste/verneplikt

¹¹⁷ Repetisjonstjeneste. Forsvaret. forsvaret.no/forstegangstjeneste/verneplikt/repetisjonstjeneste

¹¹⁸ Innsatsstyrker. Heimevernet. forsvaret.no/heimevernet/innsatsstyrker

¹¹⁹ § 18 i lov om verneplikt. forsvaret.no/forstegangstjeneste/verneplikt

¹²⁰ Act on conscription and service in the Armed Forces (Lov om verneplikt og tjeneste i Forsvaret m.m.). Lovdata. lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2016-08-12-77/KAPITTEL_2#%C2%A716

Financial provision

The remuneration system in Norway depends on the type of service (peacetime or emergency) and the individual's marital status^{121, 122}:

Base drill pay Paid to all participants regardless of their day job: Rank and file: ~ EUR 20 per day (plus ~ EUR 3 for senior rank) Officers and NCOs: ■ Sergeant: ~ EUR 130 per day ■ Lieutenant: ~ EUR 136 per day ■ Major: ~ EUR 169 per day ■ Lieutenant Colonel: ~ EUR 180 per day	Compensation for lost income Up to ~ EUR 55 per day in addition to base pay, subject to providing documentary evidence of lost income (salary, bonuses, or business income) during service. This also applies to the unemployed (retention of benefits)	Family allowances (Tax-free) Payments to the reservist's partner for childcare during training: ~ EUR 17.50 per day Child allowances: ■ one child: ~ EUR 20 per day ■ every following child: ~ EUR 8 per day
Pay during war or crisis (Extraordinary service) In the event of extraordinary service, a flat increased rate applies to all service members: ~ EUR 147 per day¹²³	Incentives for the Rapid Reaction Forces ■ Enlistment bonus: ~ EUR 427 (lump-sum); ■ Completion bonus (three years): ~ EUR 2,650; ■ Operational allowance: ~ EUR 106 for each day of active service (beyond the mandatory requirement)	

¹²¹ Calculated at the exchange rate: EUR 1 ≈ NOK 11.7.

¹²² Økonomi. Forsvaret. forsvaret.no/okonomi

¹²³ Act on Defence Personnel (Lov om personell i Forsvaret), Section 17. Lovdata. lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2016-08-12-77/KAPITTEL_2#%C2%A716

Challenges

Although conscript service and reserve status are legally compulsory for all, in practice, only a small proportion of citizens (up to 20%) actually serve. The Armed Forces select the most motivated and fit individuals, fostering competition for the right to serve. Those who do not complete conscript service formally remain in the mobilisation reserve, but in practice, they are not called up for training during peacetime.

Conclusions

The Norwegian reserve model embodies the **concept of total defence**, taking into account the country's population of about 5,500,000 and its vast territory. With a relatively small number of professional personnel (about 17,000) and an annual conscription of roughly 9,000–10,000 conscripts, the Home Guard comprises 40,000 personnel¹²⁴. Although Norway significantly reduced its defence forces after the Cold War, it is currently reassessing the extent of citizen involvement in the military and establishing new units, particularly in northern regions near the Russian border.

A distinctive feature of the Norwegian system is that the extensive financial support granted to reservists (including substantial pay during crises, family allowances, and compensation for lost income) is primarily compensatory rather than incentive. These payments aim to ensure that the fulfilment of civic duty does not adversely affect a reservist's quality of life or place a financial burden on their family. Military service is regarded as a collective responsibility rather than a source of income.

¹²⁴ Personell. Forsvaret. forsvaret.no/om-forsvaret/forsvaret-i-tall/personell

Compulsory service is divided into conscript service followed by service in the Home Guard, with the option to join elite units of the Rapid Reaction Forces. Norway has structured its Home Guard to ensure that active service of highly motivated reservists in the Rapid Reaction Forces does not lead to their premature exclusion from the general reserve due to reaching service-day limits. Therefore, the compulsory service remains uniform and cannot be substituted with additional service days.

Furthermore, extraordinary service for reservists is capped at six months, even during a crisis. This facilitates the rotation of motivated and trained personnel while mitigating the risk of exhaustion.

Finland

Population	5,600,000
Peacetime Regular Army	13,000 personnel
Wartime strength	280,000 personnel, including 95% of reservists
Total trained reserve	about 900,000 personnel
Reserve recruitment	The reserve is based on universal male conscription: after completing compulsory service, citizens are automatically enrolled into the unified reserve of the Defence Forces

Historical background

Finland is one of the few countries that did not abolish conscription after the Cold War, largely due to its long border with Russia. Joining NATO in 2023 marked the most significant shift in its defence policy since World War II.

As a member of the Alliance, Finland's defence concept¹²⁵ is built upon a **strong conscription-based homeland defence reinforced by the principle of total defence**. Earlier, the reform of 2012–2015 cut the number of personnel employed by the Defence Forces by around 2,300 persons to 12,000 persons. However, due to changes in the security environment (primarily Russia's military aggression

¹²⁵ The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is a military and political alliance between 32 countries in North America and Europe, aimed at ensuring the freedom and security of its member states through military and political means.

against Ukraine) and accession to NATO, these trends are being revised. Finland plans to increase both personnel and defence spending, although it already aligns with NATO’s guideline of spending 2% of GDP for its defence budget¹²⁶.

Current structure

There are three cornerstones of Finland’s defence:

- a conscription system
- a trained large reserve
- a strong will to defend the country

Military service and the reserve have been integrated into NATO’s common structures¹²⁷.

Finnish Defence Forces

Peacetime	
Regular Army (13,000 personnel) Conscripts About 20,000 conscripts are trained annually. About 1,000 voluntary women complete service each year	Refresher training for reservists (annual rotation): ■ Compulsory training: 28,000 persons per year ■ Voluntary training: 8,000 persons per year ■ Training events of the National Defence Training Association of Finland: about 21,000 persons per year

¹²⁶ Defence Policy Reports 2024. Ministry of Defence of Finland. defmin.fi/en/publications/defence-policy-reports

¹²⁷ Defence Policy Reports 2024. Ministry of Defence of Finland. defmin.fi/en/publications/defence-policy-reports

Wartime strength

80,000 personnel

5% regular personnel
and 95% reservists

Total trained reserves:
about 900,000 persons

Allocation of wartime forces by branch:

- Army: 185,000 personnel;
- Navy: 24,000 personnel;
- Air Force: 29,000 personnel;
- Border Guard: 12,000 personnel;
- Defence Command and subordinate agencies (including the National Defence University): 30,000 personnel¹²⁸

Conditions of service

According to the Conscription Act¹²⁹, every male citizen of Finland is liable for military service from the start of the year in which he turns 18 until the end of the year in which he turns 60. Women between the ages of 18 and 29 may do voluntary military service.

The term of conscript service:

180 days
for the training
of the rank
and file

270 days
for training
for duties that
require special skills

362 days
for officers, non-commissioned
officers, and conscripts trained
for particularly demanding duties¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Defence Policy Reports 2024. Ministry of Defence of Finland.
defmin.fi/en/publications/defence-policy-reports

¹²⁹ Conscription Act (1438/2007), Section 37. Finlex. finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2007/en20071438.pdf

¹³⁰ Conscription Act (1438/2007), Section 37. Finlex. finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2007/en20071438.pdf

After completing conscript service, the individuals are assigned to the reserve as follows:

- rank and file serve in the reserve until the end of the year in which they turn 50
- officers, non-commissioned officers, and special officers serve in the reserve until the end of the year in which they turn 60

Officers of the rank of Colonel (Captain) or senior serve in the reserve for as long as they are fit for service. Individuals who have not completed service or have exceeded the reserve age limits are assigned to the auxiliary reserve¹³¹.

The Act addresses a significant Finnish diaspora and regulates the obligations of dual citizens or individuals who are permanently residing outside Finland.

Exemption from service

- If a citizen of another country has resided abroad for the previous seven years, they are automatically exempt from conscription and military service¹³².
- A Finnish citizen who is also a citizen of another country and resides abroad may be exempted from service during peacetime upon application. To do so, they must prove close factual ties outside Finland, such as family, studies, a source of income, or other personal circumstances¹³³.
- A conscript who is a permanent resident abroad is entitled to at least one state-funded return trip home per month, while in active service, unlike conscripts in Finland, who are entitled to at least two trips per month. They are reimbursed for the cheapest means of transport¹³⁴.

¹³¹ Conscription Act (1438/2007). Finlex.
finlex.fi/api/media/statute-foreign-language-translation/688241/mainPdf/main.pdf

¹³² Ibid, Section 75.

¹³³ Ibid, Section 76.

¹³⁴ Ibid, Section 104.

- If a person moves to Finland for permanent residence before the end of the year in which they turn 30, the exemption may be revoked¹³⁵.

Finnish diplomatic missions (embassies and consulates) are responsible for official communication (delivery of call-up notices and decisions). Those liable for military service may also submit their applications and documents to the military authorities through these institutions¹³⁶.

The maximum total duration of compulsory reserve training in the reserve service:

40 days for the rank and file	75 days for special officers	100 days for NCOs and officers
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In addition, a reservist may undergo additional training for up to 20 days per year with their consent (and the employer's consent if it takes place during working hours). The call-up notice for reserve training must be sent at least three months before the start of the training. This period may be shortened only with the reservist's consent¹³⁷.

Relations with employers

Employers are prohibited from dismissing an employee for participating in reserve training or conscription service. An employment contract cannot be terminated during service or because of conscription. The contract is not formally terminated; instead, the performance of work duties is suspended.

Upon completion of service, the employee has a guaranteed right to return to their previous position or, if this is not possible, to an equivalent role.

¹³⁵ Conscription Act (1438/2007), Section 75. Finlex.
finlex.fi/api/media/statute-foreign-language-translation/688241/mainPdf/main.pdf

¹³⁶ Ibid, Section 126.

¹³⁷ Ibid, Section 50.

The employee is required to notify the employer of the call-up for training (by presenting the call-up order) no later than two months before the start of service. If the employee receives the order later or on short notice, they must report it immediately. Under the law, employers are not obliged to pay wages during an employee's absence for reserve training. However, in practice, this issue is governed by sectoral Collective Agreements (TES). Most such agreements, particularly in the technology sector or public service, stipulate that the employer either compensates the employee for the difference between the employee's regular salary and reservist pay, or continues to pay the employee's full salary, with military allowances reimbursed to the company.

According to the Annual Holidays Act (Vuosilomalaki)¹³⁸, time spent in drills (reserve training) is counted as working time. This allows the employee to accrue annual paid leave. In other words, reserve service does not reduce the number of leave days to which the employee is entitled in civilian life.

Financial provision

The financial support system for reservists in Finland consists of three levels.

Direct payments from the Defence Forces	Reservist pay	Daily allowance
During reserve training, a reservist receives two types of allowances deposited into their bank account after the training ends (at least once a month).	Payments provided to participants for each day of compulsory training constitute taxable income and are not subject to separate reporting to the tax authority. Rates depend on rank: ■ rank and file: EUR 68.42 per day	Paid to all participants (both compulsory and voluntary training). The allowance is tax-free. ■ Base rate: EUR 6.10 per day ■ Women get an additional allowance of EUR 1.50 per day.

¹³⁸Vuosilomalaki 162/2005 (Annual Holidays Act). Finlex. finlex.fi/fi/lainsaadanto/2005/162

	■ NCOs: EUR 71.85 per day ■ officers and special officers: EUR 75.27 per day	Additional bonuses are provided for high-risk tasks (e.g., for combat divers or paratroopers)
Logistical support during training ■ meals; ■ accommodation; ■ equipment and gear; ■ access to healthcare and medication, and additional compensation in case of injury	Travel expenses for arrival and departure ■ special codes for free ticket booking on trains (via the VR Matkalla application) and buses (Matkahuolto); ■ fuel compensation on a graduated scale: from EUR 6.00 (for 3–25 km) to EUR 0.18 per km (for distances exceeding 100 km)¹³⁹	Additional social assistance from the social insurance institution Subject to low income¹⁴⁰ for reservists and their families, to cover basic maintenance expenses, housing costs, and interest payments on student loans

Challenges

Due to the declining youth population and an increase in those deemed unfit for service due to health condition, recruitment challenges have emerged. The defence administration and the Defence Forces have insufficient staff in relation to their duties associated with accession to NATO and the use of new capabilities. In 2021, a parliamentary committee outlined the need to reform the conscription system to better distribute the responsibility for defence, including by increasing women's involvement across this age group¹⁴¹.

¹³⁹ Reservist benefits in exercises. Intti.fi. intti.fi/en/reservist-benefits-in-exercises

¹⁴⁰ Conscript's allowance. Kela. kela.fi/conscripts-allowance

¹⁴¹ Defence Policy Reports 2024. Ministry of Defence of Finland. defmin.fi/en/publications/defence-policy-reports

Conclusions

The Finnish reserve model serves as an example of **maintaining a universal conscription system within a modern NATO member state**. The defence strategy is based on the concept of total defence, which enables a minimal peacetime strength (13,000 regular personnel) to ensure the rapid deployment of a wartime strength of 280,000 personnel, including 95% of reservists.

The state's total mobilisation resource reaches 900,000 trained personnel. The system is based on the obligation of all men aged 18 to 60 to defend the country (women serve voluntarily). The service cycle consists of compulsory training (from 165 to 362 days) followed by assignment to the reserve. Combat readiness is maintained through a system of compulsory reserve training (from 40 to 100 days during the reserve service, depending on rank).

The reservist's financial support includes:

- pay and tax-free daily allowances from the Defence Forces;
- state social assistance covering family maintenance and housing costs;
- compensation for the salary difference provided by the employer.

This system of service does not isolate the military from society. Instead, it makes defence a collective endeavour that is both effective for national security and socially equitable.

Lithuania

Population:	2,880,000
Regular army:	12,000 professional service members and 3,800–4,000 conscripts annually
Reserve strength:	about 29,000 personnel in the Active Reserve, 5,400 in the National Defence Volunteer Forces (KASP), and over 4,800 in the Commandant's Offices
Reserve recruitment:	The reserve is recruited on a mixed basis: ■ the Active Reserve is formed compulsorily from former conscripts and professional service members; ■ KASP and the Commandant's Offices are staffed on a voluntary basis.

Historical background

The development of Lithuania's modern reserve began in 1990 during the struggle to restore independence. In 1991, following the Soviet Union's attempt to overthrow Lithuania's legitimate government by force, the Parliament established the Voluntary National Defence Service (SKAT). The law establishing SKAT legalised already existing volunteer formations, providing the framework for appointing commands and forming units. In 1998, SKAT was reorganised into **KASP (National Defence Volunteer Forces)**, which has been integrated into the Lithuanian Land Forces since 2003¹⁴².

¹⁴² Istorija. Lietuvos kariuomenė.

kariuomene.lt/krasto-apsaugos-savanoriu-pajegos/daugiau-apie-kasp/istorija/24479

Following its accession to NATO in 2004, Lithuania pursued a policy of military professionalisation and abolished conscription in 2008 in favour of developing professional service members and volunteers. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, the Lithuanian government revised this approach and reinstated conscription¹⁴³.

Amid growing threats from the Russian Federation, Lithuania launched a large-scale reform in 2024 to establish Commandant's Offices (Komendantūros), which integrate reservists into the defence system of specific municipalities. The initiative aims to deploy 27 territorial units nationwide to organise resilient rear-area defence. The system also allows the integration of citizens who are not part of the active mobilisation reserve into the military structure based on the territorial principle.

Current structure

Military service in Lithuania is currently divided into compulsory and voluntary service.

Compulsory	Voluntary
■ Compulsory basic military service (conscription) lasts nine months ■ Active Reserve	■ Volunteer discontinuous military service ■ Professional military service ■ Studies at the Military Academy of Lithuania ■ Service in the Commandant's Offices¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Lithuania to reintroduce conscription over Russia fears. BBC News. [bbc.com/news/world-europe-31607930](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31607930)

¹⁴⁴ Tarnybos būdai. Karys.lt. karys.lt/tarnybos-budai/16

Active Reserve

Composition: according to the Law on Military Conscription, this reserve consists of service members discharged from active duty into the reserve.

Purpose: to provide military units with sufficient trained personnel to attain full operational capability.

Voluntary recruitment is also available, allowing individuals who wish to undertake priority training to apply to a military unit or a regional recruitment office¹⁴⁵.

Calling-up conditions: the term of service in the Active Reserve is up to 15 years from the date of assignment. During this period, reservists are assigned to specific military units where they hold designated positions. The total duration of training and drills ranges from 20 to 60 days throughout the entire period of Active Reserve service. Unit commanders determine the training schedule in accordance with training plans.

Reservists are required to provide up-to-date contact information (address, telephone, and email) and immediately report any changes, undergo medical examinations on time, and report to assembly points when called out. They may be called up not only during mobilisation or martial law but also to perform duties in peacetime.

Financial provision

Reservists receive remuneration for days of service in the reserve. The remuneration system is flexible and chosen in the reservist's favour.

**The payment equals 100% of the salary
of a professional service member of the relevant rank
(for example, 0.77 of the base pay for a junior private)**

¹⁴⁵ Active Reserve. Karys.It. karys.it/en/military-service/conscript-service/active-reserve/403

If the reservist's average salary at their civilian place of employment is higher than the military pay, they are paid an amount equal to that average. Compensation for a civilian salary cannot exceed two times the average monthly salary in the country. In addition, reservists are provided with clothing, food, accommodation, and social guarantees during their service¹⁴⁶.

Relations with employers

The period of service in the Active Reserve (training and drills) is legally considered the performance of state duties rather than leave. The employee's position is legally retained, and dismissal due to reserve service constitutes a violation of the law.

To balance the interests of business and the military, Lithuania employs a special deferral mechanism on the grounds of disproportionate harm. If the absence of a particular specialist at a particular time may cause significant losses to a business or personal interests, the individual is entitled to apply for postponement of service.

The state defines the following categories of citizens who are fully exempt from the obligation to serve in the reserve:

- individuals recognised as legally incapacitated;
- individuals with a work capacity level of 55% or lower, or those recognised unfit by a military medical commission;
- citizens over the age of 60 without basic military training;
- members of the Seimas, the Government, the European Parliament, judges, prosecutors, and employees of law enforcement agencies (police, intelligence, or penitentiary system), as they already perform national security functions;
- women, except those who volunteer or have medical education (doctors, nurses, and midwives);

¹⁴⁶ Aktyvūs rezervas. Karys.lt. karys.lt/tarnybos-budai/aktyvusis-rezervas/44

- members of the clergy;
- individuals with a criminal record or those under investigation.

In addition to full exemption, there is a flexible system of deferrals that allows citizens to balance service with education and family responsibilities:

- students of higher education institutions receive a deferral once per study cycle (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees), allowing them to complete their education without interruption;
- socially vulnerable groups, such as single parents, guardians of people with disabilities, parents of two or more children under the age of 3, receive a full deferral;
- if the reservist's wife is on maternity leave, conscription is deferred;
- service is deferred until full recovery¹⁴⁷ in cases of temporary health issues.

National Defence Volunteer Forces (KASP)

These forces constitute Lithuania's territorial defence. Historically established in 1991 as the first military formation of the restored state, they currently train for combat operations in small groups in familiar terrain (ambushes, sabotage, and rapid-fire fights).

This service is an official alternative mechanism to fulfil the constitutional duty. Citizens who have served in the volunteer forces for at least three years and have completed basic military training are credited as having completed permanent compulsory initial (conscript) military service.

The state also encourages youth participation through educational benefits. Volunteers enrolled in a bachelor's degree on a paid basis

¹⁴⁷ Tarnybos atidėjimas. Karys.lt. karys.lt/bendraukime/d.u.k./tarnybos-atidejimas/225

for the first time may be eligible for financial assistance to cover their tuition costs. They are also entitled to free part-time bachelor's and master's studies at the General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy.

Calling-up conditions: unlike conscription, voluntary service is contract-based and open to a wide range of citizens aged 18 to 65. Contracts are signed for four years and may be extended upon expiration.

Volunteer reservists are mainly called up for training on weekends. They serve an average of 20–50 days per year, allowing them to balance their military duties with their day job or studies.

Financial provision

For days of service (training), service members can choose their remuneration method: either an amount equivalent to their average civilian salary or basic pay based on their military rank.

In addition, the state covers service-related food and travel expenses (or provides compensation). Volunteer soldiers are entitled to the full range of social guarantees equivalent to those afforded to service members¹⁴⁸ during service.

Service in the Commandant's Offices

Service in the commandant's offices is a new mechanism for involving citizens in the national defence system, allowing them to balance military duties with civilian life at their place of residence.

Purpose: to ensure rear resilience and coordinate actions between the armed forces and local governments. **Their tasks include:**

- staffing the army;
- defending critical infrastructure;

¹⁴⁸ Savanoriška nenuolatinė karo tarnyba. Karys.lt.
karys.lt/tarnybos-budai/savanoriska-nenuolatine-karo-tarnyba/40

- enforcing curfews;
- organising evacuations of the civilians;
- substituting critical municipal functions during crises and coordinating mutual support between the military and civilians.

By delegating these tasks, the Commandant's Offices allow regular units to focus on combat missions¹⁴⁹.

Composition: the personnel of the Commandant's Offices are recruited on a mixed basis **and consist of:**

- professional service members;
- trained reservists;
- members of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union;
- civilians enrolled directly into the Commandant's Offices (integrated through a structured training process: after completing a 10-day basic course, individuals join the personnel reserve of a specific office).

Calling-up conditions: to maintain the proficiency of reservists, training is conducted annually. In the event of mobilisation, reservists are called up directly to their local unit to perform territorial defence duties¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁹ Komendantūros: dažniausiai užduodami klausimai. Lietuvos Respublikos krašto apsaugos ministerija. kam.lt/komendanturos-dazniausiai-uzduodami-klausimai

¹⁵⁰ Anketa susidomėjusiems tarnyba komendantūrose. Karys.lt. karys.lt/tarnybos-budai/anketa-susidomejusiems-tarnyba-komendanturose/641

Conclusions

The Lithuanian reserve model represents a **hybrid system adapted to the concept of total defence within the constraints of limited demographic resources**. Lithuania integrates a professional core with reinstated conscription to ensure mass and an extensive system of volunteer formations comprising highly motivated personnel. Since the professional army strength is relatively small (about 12,000 personnel), the defence architecture relies **on three levels of reserve**:

- Active Reserve (former conscripts and service members);
- National Defence Volunteer Forces (KASP);
- newly established Commandant's Offices.

The Lithuanian Armed Forces remain relatively limited, with about 12,000 professional service members, constraining their capacity to control the entire national territory. Within this framework, the National Defence Volunteer Forces (KASP), with about 5,400 personnel, serve as a highly mobile reinforcement for regular forces. However, their resources are also insufficient to fully cover all rear-area needs. About 3,800–4,000 citizens complete basic military service annually.

Consequently, a critical role in ensuring mass is assigned to the Active Reserve, which, thanks to the conscription reinstated in 2014, already numbers about 29,000 personnel. This allows for the scaling of the Armed Forces in the event of aggression¹⁵¹. A system of Commandant's Offices was established in 2024 to fill the local security vacuum (communication security, defence of critical infrastructure,

¹⁵¹ Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania. (2023). Facts and Figures 2023. kam.lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Facts-and-Figures-2023.pdf

and counter-sabotage in rear areas). In the first months after registration, more than 4,800 citizens enlisted, ready to defend their municipalities¹⁵².

The Lithuanian experience is valuable to Ukraine in human resource management and veterans' integration. The Active Reserve model offers a mechanism for maintaining demobilised service members ready through short-term training (20–60 days over the entire period) without significant disruption to civilian life. The structure of KASP and the commandant's offices demonstrates how to systematise territorial defence and resistance movements by assigning reservists to specific municipalities for the defence of critical infrastructure and counter-sabotage operations. In addition, Lithuania has introduced a mechanism for full financial remuneration (either the average civilian salary or full military pay) and the protection of employee rights, including the option of deferral in cases of disproportionate harm to business.

¹⁵² L. Kasčiūnas: į karo komendantūras užsiregistravo apie 4,8 tūkst. gyventojų. Lrytas.lt. lrytas.lt/lietuvosdiena/aktualijos/2024/08/06/news/l-kasciunas-i-karo-komendanturas-uzsiregistravo-apie-4-8-tukst-gyventoju-33466436

South Korea

Population	51,700,000
Regular army	450,000
Total reserve	about 3,000,000
Reserve recruitment	The reserve is recruited exclusively through universal conscription: after completing conscript service, men are automatically enrolled in the reserve, with subsequent transfers between its levels

Historical background

The formation of South Korea's military reserve is linked to the constant threat of invasion from the North. In the first decades after the Korean War¹⁵³ (1950–1953), the state relied primarily on the regular army. However, it established the Homeland Reserve Forces following the 1968 Blue House raid (the presidential residence). Although the North Korean commando failed in its attempt to infiltrate Seoul and assassinate the president, the incident exposed the vulnerability of the rear. In response, the president declared, "About 2.5 million reservists across the country will be fully armed so that the whole nation can be prepared for possible attacks." This led to mass sign-ups of volunteers in April 1968, including 10,000 women who formed the backbone of the Homeland Reserve Forces.

¹⁵³ The Korean War was an armed conflict between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea and lasted from 25 June 1950 to 27 July 1953.

However, when another incident involving a North Korean submarine¹⁵⁴ occurred in 1996, the reserve proved unprepared to perform real tasks. According to the 1997 report by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, only 34% of reservists responded on the first day of their call-up. Some units did not even distribute ammunition to soldiers. There were reports of friendly fire, going AWOL, and consumption of alcohol while on duty¹⁵⁵.

There is currently a decline in the number of active-duty service members and conscripts due to an extremely low birth rate (0.75 babies per woman as of 2025)¹⁵⁶. The government primarily focuses on high-tech military solutions rather than intensive personnel training¹⁵⁷.

Current structure

South Korea has compulsory conscription for men aged 18 to 28. Women may enlist voluntarily as officers, warrant officers, or non-commissioned officers. Conscript service lasts from 18 to 21 months, depending on the military branch.

Eligibility

Upon completion of conscript service, soldiers are automatically enrolled in the reserve lists. However, there is a legal mechanism for deferral or exemption from training for those who live overseas for over 11.5 months in a single year (or stay in South Korea

¹⁵⁴ The 1996 Gangneung submarine infiltration incident was a 49-day crisis in South Korea when a North Korean submarine ran aground during a spy mission. 24 of the 26 North Koreans on board died.

¹⁵⁵ South Korea Needs a Wake-up Call on Its Reservist Crisis. War on the Rocks. warontherocks.com/2022/07/south-korea-needs-a-wake-up-call-on-its-reservist-crisis

¹⁵⁶ South Korea's military: Why the 'BTS effect' isn't enough to solve a manpower crisis. BBC News. [bbc.com/news/articles/c79llljy4qeo](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c79llljy4qeo)

¹⁵⁷ South Korea Needs a Wake-up Call on Its Reservist Crisis. War on the Rocks. warontherocks.com/2022/07/south-korea-needs-a-wake-up-call-on-its-reservist-crisis

for 14 days or less in total). Students of foreign higher education institutions and employees of overseas missions¹⁵⁸ often use this mechanism.

There are two main branches of the Reserve Forces based on the time elapsed since demobilisation:

Mobilisation Reserve Forces

Reservists serve there for the first four years after completing active service. About five divisions are formed under this reserve and deployed to combat zones to support regular forces and ensure regional stabilisation. Reservists report to military units, reside on-site during drills, and undergo full-scale training (firing and tactics)

Homeland Reserve Forces

Personnel serve in this reserve for the subsequent four years. The Homeland Reserve operates as territorial defence, with tasks related to protecting specific regions against potential enemy attacks.

The first two years of training are less physically demanding than before and may be limited to patrolling facilities or to viewing training videos. In the final two years of peacetime service, no training is conducted to minimise the burden on the economy and citizens' private lives. However, these reservists remain registered as a resource for replenishing combat losses in the event of war

Military obligation does not end after the eighth year in the reserve. Afterwards, reservists immediately transit to the **Civil Defence**, where they remain until the age of 40. This is not military service but a nationwide training system for emergency response (evacuation and disaster management).

¹⁵⁸ Why BTS may not be done with military service just yet: Why all men must complete reserve forces training. Korea JoongAng Daily. koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/2025-10-04/why/WHY-BTS-may-not-be-done-with-military-service-just-yet-Why-all-men-must-complete-reserve-forces-training/2412644

Financial provision

Although South Korea is increasing its overall defence spending in response to geopolitical challenges (including the Russo-Ukrainian war and the partnership between the Russian Federation and North Korea), funding for the reserve remains disproportionate.

The total defence budget of South Korea for 2025 exceeded KRW 60 trillion (about EUR 41 billion), exceeding North Korea's GDP. Direct spending on reserve forces accounts for less than 0.5% of this amount, i.e., less than EUR 205,000,000 for the 3-million reserve structure¹⁵⁹. As of 2025, reservists receive about EUR 50 for a three-day mobilisation training and EUR 5 for a one-day basic exercise¹⁶⁰. There are no additional reimbursements for income losses.

The Ministry of Defence officially acknowledges that these amounts are below the minimum hourly wage and do not cover citizens' economic losses. Moreover, participation in drills forces reservists to work overtime at their day jobs to make up for their absence, as there is no statutory paid leave or compensation for employers. The Ministry of Defence admits that these payments are insufficient and is currently developing a plan to increase them.

Challenges

Since North Korean forces would likely employ hybrid warfare methods in the event of an invasion and disrupt the arrival of allied support to South Korea, the reservists of the Homeland Reserve Forces shall bear the main brunt. However, the current level of training raises doubts about their ability to counter sabotage effectively.

¹⁵⁹ South Korea Needs a Wake-up Call on Its Reservist Crisis. War on the Rocks. warontherocks.com/2022/07/south-korea-needs-a-wake-up-call-on-its-reservist-crisis

¹⁶⁰ Why BTS may not be done with military service just yet: Why all men must complete reserve forces training. Korea JoongAng Daily. koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/2025-10-04/why/WHY-BTS-may-not-be-done-with-military-service-just-yet-Why-all-men-must-complete-reserve-forces-training/2412644

Many reservists are registered in rural regions but actually reside in Seoul. If North Korea launches large-scale cyberattacks on communication systems, this will disrupt reservist notification and **prevent them from reporting to their units**. In general, this geographic imbalance and the lack of up-to-date information about reservists' actual locations hinder the effective distribution of forces.

The **low motivation** among the population to remain in military service and the reserve constitutes another issue. According to surveys, 82% of men in their 20s believe military service should be avoided, while 57% of those who have served "take not much pride" in it¹⁶¹.

Conclusions

Being in a state of suspended war, South Korea **requires the constant combat readiness of many citizens and therefore maintains its conscription system**. Every citizen must complete military service and remain available until age 40 to fulfil their duty, if necessary.

This structure allows for maintaining one of the world's largest nominal human reserves (about 3,000,000 people), designed to compensate for the reduction in the active-duty army (down to 450,000 personnel) amid a demographic crisis.

The state does not invest sufficient resources in developing the reserve (only 0.5% of the total defence budget). Symbolic financial compensation that does not even cover citizens' minimal expenses, along with outdated training methods, has led to a decline in motivation and the service's prestige. So, society perceives the reserve as a burden rather than an honourable duty.

¹⁶¹ South Korea Needs a Wake-up Call on Its Reservist Crisis. War on the Rocks. warontherocks.com/2022/07/south-korea-needs-a-wake-up-call-on-its-reservist-crisis

India

Population	1.47 billion
Regular army	1,450,000
Reserve strength	about 1,000,000 in the Regular Reserve and 50,000 in the Territorial Army
Reserve recruitment	The Reserve is recruited on a mixed basis: ■ Regular Reserve — former service members who retain availability obligations; ■ Territorial Army — civilian volunteers

Historical background

The 1888 **Indian Reserve Forces Act**¹⁶² is the basis of the professional military reserve. Adopted during the British rule, it remains the primary regulatory act regulating the status of former service members.

The Act established the division of the reserve into **Regular** and **Supplementary** Reserves, governed their subordination to military law, and established a disciplinary system. It was the first to establish social guarantees for reservists, including protection from dismissal and the right to reinstatement in civil employment after demobilisation.

In parallel, a **civilian component of the reserve** emerged. It originated from the establishment of the Volunteer Forces in 1857 and the adoption of the Indian Defence Force Act of 1917, which actively recruited university youth. A major milestone occurred in 1920 with the adoption of the Act establishing the Indian Territorial Forces as the second line of defence to the Regular Army.

¹⁶² The Indian Reserve Forces Act, 1888. India Code.
indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/2314/1/A1888-4.pdf

The modern civilian reserve model was finally shaped after independence with the enactment of the 1948 Territorial Army Act¹⁶³. The Act abolished the racial segregation of previous formations and established a new “**Citizens’ Army**,” officially inaugurated in 1949 by India’s first Governor General, C. Rajagopalachari. The new structure aimed to enable employed citizens to undergo military training without interrupting their civilian careers, ensure reserve strength, and relieve regular forces of static duties and support to civil authorities during crises¹⁶⁴.

Current structure

India’s reserve forces currently consist of the **Regular Reserve of former service members** governed by the 1888 Act, and the **Territorial Army of civilian volunteers** governed by the 1948 Act.

Regular Reserve

This element of the reserve includes about 1,000,000 personnel who have completed active military service but remain under a mobilisation obligation.

Purpose: to manage trained human resources.

Calling-up conditions: individuals belonging to the reserve hold a dual responsibility to the state¹⁶⁵:

- they may be called out for periodic training or drills;
- they are liable for call-out for active service in the event of defence needs or emergencies.

¹⁶³ The Territorial Army Act, 1948. India Code.
indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1497/1/A1948-56.pdf

¹⁶⁴ Official Website of the Territorial Army. territorialarmy.in

¹⁶⁵ The Territorial Army Act, 1948, section 4. India Code.
indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1497/1/A1948-56.pdf

Any person belonging to the Indian Reserve Forces is obliged to serve both within India and abroad¹⁶⁶.

Since the reserve enlists former service members upon their discharge from service, they never become entirely civilian. Reservists (both officers and soldiers) are subject to military law to the same extent as members of the Regular Army¹⁶⁷. Legislation also provides for a penalty system for failure to perform duties¹⁶⁸. If a reservist fails to appear at the designated place upon call or ignores a call-out order without sufficient cause, it is considered an offence. The court recognises a certificate of a reservist's non-attendance signed by a prescribed officer as sufficient evidence of guilt, without requiring further proof.

Relations with employers

Since reservists primarily lead civilian lives, the legislation includes comprehensive measures to protect their labour rights¹⁶⁹. This includes the employer's unconditional **duty to reinstate the reservist to their position following the completion of their training or service**. Working conditions upon return must not be worse than before the interruption in employment.

If the employer refuses to comply with this requirement, the case may be referred to a special authorised body. The law empowers this body not only to require reinstatement but also to impose compensation of up to six months' salary. Moreover, if an employer dismisses an employee before their call-out to avoid obligations during or after service, such a dismissal is considered unlawful. The intention to evade these duties is presumed unless proven otherwise.

¹⁶⁶ The Territorial Army Act, 1948, section 3. India Code.
indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1497/1/A1948-56.pdf

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, Section 5.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, Section 6.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, Section 7.

Reservists are guaranteed the preservation of pension accrual rights and other existing social security benefits for the entire period of absence due to service.

Financial provision

The financial support provided to Indian reservists is structured according to distinct entitlements based on their pension status and length of service.

Reservists who already receive a service pension¹⁷⁰ retain the right to such pension while in the reserve. In addition, they receive **a retaining allowance for being in the reserve or full pay during periodic training**. However, this reserve service does not accrue additional years of pensionable service, nor does it entitle them to a service gratuity.

According to legislation¹⁷¹, reservists who are not in receipt of a service pension may be granted a **pension** after not less than 15 years of combined service (colour and reserve qualifying service), equal to two-thirds of the lowest pension admissible to the rank and file.

If the total combined service is less than 15 years, the individual is not eligible for such a pension. Instead, they receive a lump-sum service gratuity calculated under the same principles as discharge benefits after active service¹⁷².

Territorial Army (under the 1948 Act)

Strength: established under the 1948 Territorial Army Act, this force embodies the concept of a “Citizens’ Army” and comprises about 50,000 personnel. Unlike the Regular Reserve, these units are active and undergo regular training.

¹⁷⁰ Article 138 of the Pension Regulations for the Army (1961).

¹⁷¹ Article 155 of the Pension Regulations for the Army (1961).

¹⁷² Pension Regulations for the Army, Part I. [indianemployees.com/uploads/documents/022015/1423917978-Pension%20Regulation-Army%20Pt-I%20\(1\).pdf](http://indianemployees.com/uploads/documents/022015/1423917978-Pension%20Regulation-Army%20Pt-I%20(1).pdf)

Composition: joining the Territorial Army is voluntary for Indian citizens aged between 18 and 42. A steady civilian job or running a business is a critical prerequisite for enrolment. This requirement (“gainfully employed”) ensures that reserve service is not deemed as a primary source of income for the unemployed, but rather attracts a motivated middle class.

The Territorial Army is structurally divided into the following categories:

- **non-departmental units** (primarily infantry battalions affiliated with regular regiments);
- **departmental units** (railway, oil and gas, and medical), staffed by employees of the relevant public sector enterprises.

A unique element is the **ecological task forces**, composed exclusively of former service members, to carry out ecosystem restoration tasks.

Calling-up conditions: the training system is governed by **Articles 19–20 of the Territorial Army Act¹⁷³**. Recruits undergo an intensive 30-day initial training course in the first year of service. Subsequently, reservists in non-departmental units shall attend annual military camps for at least two months to maintain combat readiness. For departmental units, the schedule is more flexible, allowing training without prolonged absence from the workplace.

Relations with employers

The protection of labour rights of Territorial Army volunteers is enshrined in **Section 7A of the 1948 Act** and affords guarantees equivalent to those provided to the Regular Reserve.

Employers are obliged to reinstate a reservist to their employment following the completion of mobilisation or drills, on conditions no less favourable than before. The Act explicitly prohibits the dismissal of an employee for fulfilling their Territorial Army duties and provides for fines and compensation. In the public sector, these guarantees

¹⁷³ Territorial Army Act Rules, 1948. India Code.
indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1497/1/A1948-56.pdf

are strictly observed, and the period of service is counted as official duty with a civilian salary preserved. However, in the private sector, despite the legal prohibition, the need to obtain employer consent for prolonged absence often remains a bureaucratic barrier to military enlistment.

Financial provision

Parity with regular forces during periods of active service, officially referred to as **embodiment**, constitutes the key principle of financing the Territorial Army. When a reservist is embodied for drills, training, or active service, they receive pay, allowances, rations, and medical support equivalent to those of a regular service member of the same rank and seniority. In addition, a lump-sum bounty is paid upon the successful completion of a full annual training cycle.

Entitlement to a pension is based only on 20 years of accumulated physical service for officers and 15 years for other ranks (only days spent in uniform during training or operations are counted). At the time of discharge, personnel are entitled to terminal gratuity, the amount of which depends on the length of service.

In addition to financial remuneration, reservists and their family members are granted access to military healthcare and duty-free store networks¹⁷⁴.

¹⁷⁴ Territorial Army: Frequently Asked Questions. territorialarmy.in/page/10

Conclusions

India's military reserve system is based on a **dual model that distinguishes between a large mobilisation resource of former regular service members and a limited contingent of volunteers.**

The maintenance of a large-scale regular army constitutes a priority of the defence strategy, with reserve components assigned an auxiliary role.

The Regular Reserve (Act of 1888) serves as a passive reserve to replenish losses in the event of a full-scale conflict. India does not focus on its training, as it relies on the extensive prior experience of former service members, who do not require intensive training. Former service members may receive additional payments while in the reserve, thereby maintaining their link to the army. Reserve service offers a unique opportunity to accumulate the required length of service to qualify for a reservist pension (after 15 years of combined service). This provides social protection even for those who did not complete a full career in the regular forces for certain reasons. Military pensioners can earn additional income while serving in the reserve.

Former service members who continue serving in the reserve remain integrated into the military environment, including retain access to duty-free stores, military healthcare, and other benefits. In contrast, the Territorial Army (Act of 1948) is a relatively small but active structure integrated into critical infrastructure and logistic support.

Israel

Population	9,600,000
Regular army	169,000
Total reserve strength	is classified. About 300,000 personnel have been mobilised since October 2023.
Reserve recruitment	The reserve is based on universal conscription for men and women: after completing compulsory service, citizens are automatically enrolled in the reserve.

Historical background

Given its hostile environment and relatively small population, Israel relies on a **massive reserve force** that can be rapidly mobilised in emergencies.

Since the state's formation in 1948, military service in the IDF¹⁷⁵ has been compulsory for a significant portion of the population, both men and women. However, maintaining a large standing professional army is unsustainable, and conscripts alone cannot mitigate all risks.

The general **Security Service Law** regulated service for many years, but since 1 August 2008, it has been governed by the specific **Reserve Service Law** (hereinafter referred to as the Law)¹⁷⁶. This Law defined the **active reserve** concept and established specific conditions for reserve service. It formally defined the purpose of the reserve system as **"an integral part of the Israel Defence Forces, serving as a key pillar of national security,"** and recognised the "unique contribution" made by reservists.

¹⁷⁵ IDF means the Israel Defence Forces.

¹⁷⁶ Reserve Service Law, 5768–2008. Nevo. nevo.co.il/law_html/law00/71925.htm

The actual percentage of citizens serving in the reserve has significantly dwindled over the years and now consists mainly of those who served in combat units during their compulsory service¹⁷⁷. The war that began on 7 October 2023 forced Israel to activate nearly 300,000 reservists¹⁷⁸.

Current structure

The reserve system is founded on **compulsory conscript service**.

Composition: men aged 18 to 29 and women aged 18 to 26 (as well as older physicians) are obliged to complete conscript service, which serves as the basic stage of reservist training.

Calling-up conditions: the Security Service Law established the basic term of service: 32 months for men and 24 months for women¹⁷⁹.

However, due to a shortage of 12,000 soldiers, the country announced a plan in December 2025 to extend service for men to 36 months¹⁸⁰. Women and men have equal rights to perform any role within the armed forces. The Government determines the overall reserve strength upon the proposal of the Minister of Defence¹⁸¹, and this figure is classified.

Upon completion of conscript service, citizens are enrolled in the reserve forces¹⁸². A specific feature of the Israeli model is that reservists assigned to combat units remain within their “organic” teams.

¹⁷⁷ Reserve duty (Israel). Wikipedia. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reserve_duty_\(Israel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reserve_duty_(Israel))

¹⁷⁸ IDF says cutting back ‘superfluous’ reservists will reduce reserve duty time to 55 days in 2026. The Times of Israel. [imesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-says-cutting-back-superfluous-reservists-will-reduce-reserve-duty-time-to-55-days-in-2026](https://www.imesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-says-cutting-back-superfluous-reservists-will-reduce-reserve-duty-time-to-55-days-in-2026)

¹⁷⁹ Reserve Service Law, 5768–2008 (2008–ה'תשס"ח, חוק שירות המילואים, התשס"ח–2008). Nevo. nevo.co.il/law_html/law00/71925.htm

¹⁸⁰ 60,000 reservists set to receive call-up orders in the coming days ahead of Gaza City takeover. The Times of Israel. [imesofisrael.com/60k-reservists-set-to-receive-call-up-orders-in-coming-days-ahead-of-gaza-city-takeover](https://www.imesofisrael.com/60k-reservists-set-to-receive-call-up-orders-in-coming-days-ahead-of-gaza-city-takeover)

¹⁸¹ Reserve Service Law, 5768–2008 (2008–ה'תשס"ח, חוק שירות המילואים, התשס"ח–2008), section 3. Nevo. nevo.co.il/law_html/law00/71925.htm

¹⁸² Reserve Service Law, 5768–2008 (2008–ה'תשס"ח, חוק שירות המילואים, התשס"ח–2008), section 4. Nevo. nevo.co.il/law_html/law00/71925.htm

This means they serve alongside the same personnel with whom they completed their conscript service. In rear and non-combat specialities, formations are more flexible, and service is often voluntary (particularly for women in non-combat units).

The system is divided into active and general reserves.

General Reserve

Composition: all individuals who have completed conscript service and remain within the age limits for duty (up to age of 40 for rank and file or 45–49 for officers and special officers).

This is a passive reserve that is not regularly called up. However, it serves as the basis for large-scale reinforcement during major threats, as occurred in 2023. Section 21 of the Law governs such mobilisation through the “Decree 8” (Tzav 8) mechanism¹⁸³. It allows the Minister of Defence to call up reservists immediately, without prior notice, and beyond standard annual service limits. Individuals previously deemed unfit may also be recalled for medical re-examination and returned to service if their condition has improved.

Active Reserve

Composition: those who actually undergo training or service and accrue reserve service days. Active reservist status is granted upon accruing 80 days of service over six years, or 45 consecutive days during wartime.

Not all Israeli citizens are active reservists. In 2015, only 26% of the eligible population held this status. In peacetime, reservists receive call-up orders for training or ongoing security duties in advance¹⁸⁴.

¹⁸³ Reserve Service Law, 5768–2008 (תשס"ח–2008), התשס"ח–ח. Nevo. nevo.co.il/law_html/law00/71925.htm

¹⁸⁴ Reserve Service Law, 5768–2008 (תשס"ח–2008), התשס"ח–ח, section 6. Nevo. nevo.co.il/law_html/law00/71925.htm

Calling-up conditions: reserve service is clearly divided into the following categories¹⁸⁵:

- training service (drills and training exercises);
- operational duty (border protection and security operations);
- emergency call-up service ("Tzav 8").

The basic limit for training service is up to 20 days per year¹⁸⁶. However, these limits may be extended for operational duty by General Staff orders. Before the 2023 war, combat reservists were called up for training for 36 days a year, and the Minister of Defence could extend this by a further seven days¹⁸⁷. Plans for 2026 stipulate that reservists will serve up to 70 days per year over a five-year period¹⁸⁸. It is also planned to keep 60,000 reservists on duty to support security¹⁸⁹.

Female involvement in the reserve was previously limited. Following the opening of combat roles to women, they were required to agree to serve in the reserve after completing their conscript service. Women are discharged at the age of 40, regardless of marital status. Pregnant women and women with children are discharged immediately, provided they did not serve in combat roles¹⁹⁰.

Financial provision

The remuneration system for reservists is based on **compensation for lost income**¹⁹¹. The National Insurance Institute (Bituach Leumi) or the Israel Defence Forces pays compensation based on the

¹⁸⁵ Reserve Service Law, 5768–2008 (חוק שירות המילואים, התשס"ח–2008), section 5. Nevo. nevo.co.il/law/html/law00/71925.htm

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, Section 8.

¹⁸⁷ A Guide to the IDF Reserves. Judaica Webstore Blog. blog.judaicawebstore.com/idf-reserves

¹⁸⁸ 60,000 reservists set to receive call-up orders in the coming days ahead of Gaza City takeover. The Times of Israel. timesofisrael.com/60k-reservists-set-to-receive-call-up-orders-in-coming-days-ahead-of-gaza-city-takeover

¹⁸⁹ Israel's reservist crisis: The invisible toll of a year at war. Ynetnews. ynetnews.com/article/byqueptlw

¹⁹⁰ Reserve Service Law, 5768–2008 (חוק שירות המילואים, התשס"ח–2008), section 11. Nevo. nevo.co.il/law/html/law00/71925.htm

¹⁹¹ Reserve Service Law, 5768–2008 (חוק שירות המילואים, התשס"ח–2008), section 15. Nevo. nevo.co.il/law/html/law00/71925.htm

individual's average daily income. During service, a reservist is entitled to **pay equivalent to the salary received in their workplace**. Legislation sets a minimum and a maximum daily rate, ranging from about EUR 85 to EUR 423 per day.

In addition to base pay, there is a system of **additional payments and benefits** for service in combat roles or extended service¹⁹². In peacetime, reservists are entitled to an annual bonus (loyalty bonus), the amount of which depends on the number of days served in the preceding year. Service days also count toward pension and employment seniority, and the reservist remains insured¹⁹³.

Due to the ongoing war, the social benefits package has been significantly expanded. Reservists are provided with **holiday vouchers, family counselling, and psychotherapy services**. The state provides **financial tuition assistance** to those who have served more than 60 days under emergency call-up¹⁹⁴.

Relations with employers

During service, employment relations are suspended but not terminated¹⁹⁵. Employers are prohibited from obstructing an employee's participation in military training. The law forbids the dismissal due to an employee's reserve service, as well as for a certain period afterwards (in practice, 30–60 days). Discrimination against reservists during the recruitment process¹⁹⁶ is also prohibited.

Despite these guarantees and the threat of criminal liability (Article 13 of the Law), there is a "grey zone" in practice. Employers who are unable to dismiss the employee directly due to their service seek other formal

¹⁹² Reserve Service Law, 5768–2008 (תשס"ח–2008), section 16. Nevo. nevo.co.il/law/html/law00/71925.htm

¹⁹³ Ibid, Section 17.

¹⁹⁴ Expert interview with a reservist.

¹⁹⁵ Reserve Service Law, 5768–2008 (תשס"ח–2008), section 13. Nevo. nevo.co.il/law/html/law00/71925.htm

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, Section 14.

grounds to terminate employment relations. This is especially relevant in the context of prolonged hostilities, when the employee's extended absences significantly affect the business. Job security remains a sensitive issue of reserve service, as some employers are negative about frequent and extended absences¹⁹⁷.

Challenges

The **uneven distribution of workload** is the main challenge of Israel's modern reserve system. There is a significant imbalance between combat units, where service is compulsory, and there is no statutory limit on call-ups in wartime (as restrictions under **Article 8 of the Law** are lifted under the emergency order), and rear units. This leads to situations where some reservists have served over 500 days since October 2023, placing excessive strain on their personal lives, mental health, and careers. Personnel shortages force the state to extend service term and raise age limits, which exacerbates tensions between reservists and their civilian employers despite existing legal safeguards¹⁹⁸.

Due to accumulated tensions, the Reservists Party was established in 2025 by Yoaz Hendel, Reserve Battalion Commander and former Minister of Communications.

Key demands include:

- universal compulsory conscription introduced for all citizens;
- strengthened guarantees for those who serve;
- strict sanctions for draft evasion (loss of voting rights, tax benefits, and travel bans)¹⁹⁹.

¹⁹⁷ Expert interview with a reservist.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ The Reservists (political party). Wikipedia. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Reservists_\(political_party\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Reservists_(political_party))

Conclusions

The Israeli reserve system **is built on universal compulsory conscription due to the need for constant defence**. According to the 2008 Law, its structure consists of two elements: the general reserve and the active reserve. The former serves as a strategic demographic resource, activated only in emergencies through the “Decree 8” (Tzav 8) mechanism. The latter constitutes a professional core of highly motivated and trained personnel. These individuals, while remaining civilians, are integrated into combat units, undergo regular intensive training, and receive special status and relevant benefits.

The state assumes full financial responsibility for the reservist by compensating for lost income through the National Insurance Institute (Bituach Leumi), regardless of whether they are employees or self-employed. Legislation criminalises employer pressure. This system is designed to minimise the conflict between military duty and career and frame reserve service as a prestigious contribution to national defence.

However, the prolonged war has exposed a vulnerability in this structure – the highly uneven distribution of burden. Despite having a mass reserve comprising virtually the entire population, the actual weight of war falls on the same combat units. Situations where a limited group of reservists serves for over 500 days lead to exhaustion.

Legal job protection mechanisms also become ineffective in such cases, as businesses cannot retain positions for absent employees indefinitely. This creates hidden discrimination and social tension between those who are fighting and those continuing their civilian life.

Russia

Population	143,500,000
Regular army	1,100,000 personnel (1,500,000 after changes in December 2025)
Mobilisation human reserve	is estimated at around 2,000,000 people
Reserve recruitment	The Reserve is recruited on a mixed basis: ■ inactive reserve includes all persons liable for military service, registered with the administrative authorities; ■ contract mobilisation reserve is voluntary

Historical background

The 1998 Federal Law of the Russian Federation No. 53-FZ “On Military Duty and Military Service” defines **reserve service and call-ups for military training as part of a citizen’s military duty**²⁰⁰. However, the active phase of establishing a mobilisation human reserve as a distinct component began after 2012. At that time, Federal Law No. 288-FZ amended Article 4 of Federal Law No. 61-FZ “On Defence” and granted the President of the Russian Federation the authority to establish mobilisation human reserves and to determine their strength²⁰¹.

In 2015, the President of the Russian Federation signed a decree establishing the mobilisation reserve. At that time, the legislation

²⁰⁰ On Military Duty and Military Service: Federal Law No. 53-FZ of 28 March 1998. President of Russia. kremlin.ru/acts/bank/12128

²⁰¹ On Mobilisation Training and Mobilisation in the Russian Federation: Federal Law No. 31-FZ of 26 February 1997. President of Russia. kremlin.ru/acts/bank/9446

referred to volunteers willing to undergo military training, receive a small salary, and then return to their regular civilian jobs. Most of them were likely former service members who already had the necessary service skills and could earn additional income instead of simply serving in the reserve. There is limited information about drills and their regularity. Therefore, it is likely that individuals were enrolled primarily for the sake of payments²⁰².

An extensive advertising campaign for the Russian reserve began in 2021, on the eve of the full-scale war against Ukraine. At that time, the strength of reservists reached up to 100,000 personnel²⁰³. Most of them were among the first to be mobilised in 2022, mainly into BARS (Combat Army Reserve) units²⁰⁴.

Due to increasing drone attacks on critical infrastructure and oil refineries (ORs), in October 2025, the State Duma adopted a draft law expanding the potential use of the reserve²⁰⁵. On 4 November 2025, Federal Law No. 411-FZ was signed, amending the Laws “On Defence” and “On Military Duty and Military Service.” This allowed the President to deploy reservists in protecting strategically important facilities in peacetime under “special training.” This effectively legalised **the involvement of the reserve for combat operations in peacetime without declaring full mobilisation**²⁰⁶. Previously, reservists could only be mobilised during martial law or a formally declared mobilisation.

As of 2023, the strength of the mobilisation human reserve (those who have signed contracts) was estimated at 2,000,000²⁰⁷.

²⁰² A ‘soft’ way to be called up for mobilisation. Novaya Gazeta Europe. novayagazeta.eu/articles/2025/10/25/miagko-sekhat-na-mobilizatsiiu

²⁰³ Why are the Russian authorities recruiting reservists for service? Deutsche Welle. dw.com/ru/zacem-vlasti-rf-privlekaut-na-sluzbu-rezervistov/a-74614858

²⁰⁴ A ‘soft’ way to be called up for mobilisation. Novaya Gazeta Europe. novayagazeta.eu/articles/2025/10/25/miagko-sekhat-na-mobilizatsiiu

²⁰⁵ Why are the Russian authorities recruiting reservists for service? Deutsche Welle. dw.com/ru/zacem-vlasti-rf-privlekaut-na-sluzbu-rezervistov/a-74614858

²⁰⁶ On the Establishment of the Mobilisation Human Reserve for the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation: Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 370 of 17 July 2015. President of Russia. kremlin.ru/acts/bank/52547

²⁰⁷ On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation: Federal Law No. 411-FZ of 4 November 2025. Voennik.ru. voennik.ru/prizyv-rezervistov

Current structure

Military registration in the Russian Federation divides citizens into two main groups:

- those in the inactive reserve;
- those in the mobilisation human reserve.

The key distinction between reservists and contract service members is that reservists combine employment at their workplace with military duties.

General conscription pool

Composition: all citizens registered for military service who are not currently serving:

- those discharged from military service;
- graduates of military departments;
- those exempted from conscription or who received a deferment;
- women with military occupational specialities.

Calling-up conditions: they do not sign a contract or receive monthly payments. Their readiness is considered theoretical because they do not interact with military units²⁰⁸.

According to the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 8 December 2025, in 2026, citizens in the inactive reserve will be called up for training not only to the Armed Forces, but also to the National Guard, rescue units of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, state protective bodies, and the Federal Security Service (FSB)²⁰⁹.

²⁰⁸ What is the mobilisation reserve, and who can be called up for special military training? Kadrovoye delo. kdelo.ru/art/386980-chto-takoe-mobilizatsionnyy-rezerv-i-kogo-mogut-prizvat-na-spetsialnye-voennye-sbory

²⁰⁹ Meeting with reservists. President of Russia. kremlin.ru/acts/news/78685

Mobilisation human reserve

Composition: citizens in the inactive reserve who have voluntarily signed a contract with the Ministry of Defence, the FSB, or the Foreign Intelligence Service. They maintain a higher level of readiness and participate in regular training and drills. Their purpose is to rapidly staff military and security formations if necessary²¹⁰.

In December 2025, the President of the Russian Federation signed a decree increasing the army strength by 180,000 personnel, bringing it to about 1,500,000. However, the exact number of active reservists is currently unknown²¹¹.

Given the changes related to the call-up of reservists for the defence of ORs, it is likely that reservists constitute a significant share of this increase. There is an intention to free up active-duty service members and air defence systems for the frontline by shifting the security of rear facilities to reservists armed with small arms and organised into mobile groups.

Enlistment and contract terms

Enlistment into the reserve is voluntary and formalised by signing a contract. The initial contract may be concluded for three years, with subsequent contracts lasting either three or five years (or for a shorter period until reaching the age limit). The candidate shall submit a package of documents, including a military ID, application form, autobiography, and a copy of their employment record book, and undergo a medical examination.

The maximum age for serving in the reserve depends on rank:

- 55 years (potentially rising to 60) for soldiers, sergeants, and praporshchik (warrant officers);

²¹⁰ What is the mobilisation reserve, and who can be called up for special military training? Kdrovoye delo. kdelo.ru/art/386980-chto-takoe-mobilizatsionnyy-rezerv-i-kogo-mogut-prizvat-na-spetsialnye-voennye-sbory

²¹¹ Russian MoD: Reservists to be deployed to defend ORs and other facilities against drones. Deutsche Welle. [dw.com/en/mo-rf-rezervistov-budut-napravlat-na-zasitu-npzh-i-drugih-obektov-ot-dronov/a-74461622](https://www.dw.com/en/mo-rf-rezervistov-budut-napravlat-na-zasitu-npzh-i-drugih-obektov-ot-dronov/a-74461622)

- 55–60 years for junior officers;
- 60–65 years for senior officers;
- 70 years for general officers²¹².

In terms of health, the fitness category must be no lower than “C.” Categories “D” and “E” preclude service in the reserve²¹³.

Reservists are required to report to a military unit within the timeframe specified in their mobilisation order or notice. In peacetime, they undergo training sessions (usually once a quarter for three to six days) and military drills (up to 30 days, not exceeding two months per year). The total duration of training throughout the entire reserve service cannot exceed 24 months²¹⁴.

The introduction of the “special training” concept²¹⁵ was a 2025 innovation. These are organised to ensure the protection of critical facilities (for example, power stations, ORs, and transport hubs). The duration of such training shall not exceed six months per year. They plan to involve reservists directly in mobile fire groups to counter drones²¹⁶.

Relations with employers

While attending training exercises, a reservist retains their position and average salary. The state reimburses the employer for the costs

²¹² What is the mobilisation reserve, and who can be called up for special military training? Kadrovoye delo. kdelo.ru/art/386980-cto-takoe-mobilizatsionnyy-rezerv-i-kogo-mogut-prizvat-na-spetsialnye-voennye-sbory

²¹³ On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation: Federal Law No. 411-FZ of 4 November 2025. Voennik.ru. voennik.ru/prizyv-rezervistov
 A – Fit for military service
 B – Fit for military service with minor restrictions
 C – Physically limited (enlisted in the reserve and not subject to conscription)
 D – Temporarily unfit (deferment for 6–12 months)
 E – Unfit for military service

²¹⁴ What is the mobilisation reserve, and who can be called up for special military training? Kadrovoye delo. kdelo.ru/art/386980-cto-takoe-mobilizatsionnyy-rezerv-i-kogo-mogut-prizvat-na-spetsialnye-voennye-sbory

²¹⁵ On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation: Federal Law No. 411-FZ of 4 November 2025. Voennik.ru. voennik.ru/prizyv-rezervistov

²¹⁶ On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation: Federal Law No. 411-FZ of 4 November 2025. Voennik.ru. voennik.ru/prizyv-rezervistov

of paying the reservist's average salary. Employers may not obstruct the employee's call-up for training, and are obliged to release them from work for this period by issuing the relevant order and marking the absence in the timesheet as the performance of state duties.

Dismissal of an employee due to their absence for the purpose of military service is unlawful. Time spent on training exercises is counted toward the length of service required for annual leave entitlement²¹⁷.

Financial provision

Reserve service is effectively a paid form of being in the inactive reserve. Reservists receive monthly payments simply for being in the reserve: up to RUB 6,000 (EUR 64 as of March 2026) for rank and file and non-commissioned officers, and up to RUB 10,000 (EUR 110 as of March 2026) for officers (as of 2023)²¹⁸.

During training exercises, they are entitled to receive their average salary from their workplace in addition to military pay in accordance with their rank and position. In addition, the state budget covers travel expenses to and from the training site, medical support, and compulsory life and health insurance²¹⁹.

Challenges

Experts view the new laws on reservists as a form of “hidden mobilisation.” This allows the state to secure additional human resources without declaring a general mobilisation, which could cause

²¹⁷ What is the mobilisation reserve, and who can be called up for special military training? Kadrovoye delo. kdelo.ru/art/386980-cto-takoe-mobilizatsionnyy-rezerv-i-kogo-mogut-prizvat-na-spetsialnye-voennye-sbory

²¹⁸ Why are the Russian authorities recruiting reservists for service? Deutsche Welle. [dw.com/ru/zacem-vlasti-rf-privlekaut-na-sluzbu-rezervistov/a-74614858](https://www.dw.com/ru/zacem-vlasti-rf-privlekaut-na-sluzbu-rezervistov/a-74614858)

²¹⁹ What is the mobilisation reserve, and who can be called up for special military training? Kadrovoye delo. kdelo.ru/art/386980-cto-takoe-mobilizatsionnyy-rezerv-i-kogo-mogut-prizvat-na-spetsialnye-voennye-sbory

public panic. Law No. 411-FZ employs broad terminology, enabling the deployment of reservists under various circumstances without adopting additional legislative acts²²⁰.

Official representatives of the Russian General Staff state that reservists will not be involved in the war against Ukraine or assigned to missions outside the Russian Federation, and service will take place within their home regions²²¹. However, the presidential decree on the call-up for training exercises contains no such restrictions. Moreover, the concept of the “territory of the Russian Federation” in Russian legislation includes the occupied territories of Ukraine. Thus, a reservist may end up in a combat zone (for example, in Donetsk or Kherson Oblasts) under the pretext of protecting facilities.

There are also doubts about the financial and economic justification for the new training, as documents state that implementing the law requires no additional budget allocations. It remains unclear how the accommodation and meals costs for reservists stationed around critical infrastructure facilities, rather than within military units, will be covered. The system faces the issue of “dead souls,” where commanders enrolled acquaintances into the reserve for payments, raising doubts about the actual combat readiness of this contingent²²².

Conclusions

The Russian Federation’s mobilisation human reserve currently represents **a form of formally voluntary contractual service that enables the state to maintain the combat readiness of civilians without their total detachment from their primary employment**. Unlike the general reserve, where citizens’ participation is effectively passive, reservists

²²⁰ Why are the Russian authorities recruiting reservists for service? Deutsche Welle. [dw.com/ru/zacem-vlasti-rf-privlekaut-na-sluzbu-rezervistov/a-74614858](https://www.dw.com/ru/zacem-vlasti-rf-privlekaut-na-sluzbu-rezervistov/a-74614858)

²²¹ Russian MoD: Reservists to be deployed to defend ORs and other facilities against drones. Deutsche Welle. [dw.com/ru/mo-rf-rezervistov-budut-napravlat-na-zasitu-npzh-i-drugih-obektov-ot-dronov/a-74461622](https://www.dw.com/ru/mo-rf-rezervistov-budut-napravlat-na-zasitu-npzh-i-drugih-obektov-ot-dronov/a-74461622)

²²² A ‘soft’ way to be called up for mobilisation. Novaya Gazeta Europe. novayagazeta.eu/articles/2025/10/25/miagko-sekhat-na-mobilizatsiiu

sign official contracts for three to five years and commit to undergoing regular training and drills.

The financial model of the system involves monthly payments for remaining in the reserve (from RUB 6,000 to 10,000, depending on rank) and full military pay during training. A citizen retains their position and average salary, which the state reimburses to the employer. Such drills are not particularly widespread, and reserve service is generally viewed more as a source of additional income for certain individuals²²³.

Significant changes occurred at the end of 2025 with the adoption of Law No. 411-FZ, which introduced the “special training” concept, lasting up to six months per year. This innovation effectively legalised the deployment of reservists for combat operations in peacetime, including the protection of ORs and other strategic facilities from UAV attacks as part of mobile fire groups. This allows the Russian command to conduct a “hidden mobilisation” and free regular units and scarce air defence systems from rear areas for re-deployment to the frontline, shifting infrastructure security to reservists armed with small arms.

Current legislation contains no strict geographical limitations, despite the authorities’ declarative promises regarding service within home regions. Given that the occupied Ukrainian territories are officially included in the Russian Federation, this enables the deployment of reservists to perform operations in combat zones.

The key challenges to the effectiveness of this structure in 2026 include questionable actual combat readiness due to the issue of “dead souls” in commanders’ reports and financial uncertainty, as the expanded scope of reservist involvement is officially not accompanied by increased budget allocations for their accommodation and meals outside military units.

²²³ A ‘soft’ way to be called up for mobilisation. Novaya Gazeta Europe. novayagazeta.eu/articles/2025/10/25/miagko-sekhat-na-mobilizatsiiu

SECTION 2

Military reserve and guarantees for reservists in Ukraine

Introduction

This section examines the operational specifics of the military reserve system in Ukraine, its regulatory framework, and its implementation practices. Particular attention is paid to the mechanisms for enrolment in the reserve, reserve service, and the guarantees provided to reservists.

An analysis of the Ukrainian reserve model allows us to trace its evolution, including changes since the start of the full-scale war. It is important to consider the gap between formal legal provisions and the actual practice of their application, which directly affects the experience of reservists.

In this section, special attention is given to how the current system considers the needs of veterans who enter the military operational reserve upon discharge from active service. This helps assess the extent to which the existing tools and guarantees facilitate the integration of reserve service with civilian life and ensure their well-being.

Military reserve: structure and development history

The military reserve is a key element of the state's defence system. **Its purpose is to reinforce the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations during peacetime and a special period, including martial law**²²⁴.

It is necessary to distinguish the reserve and the general conscription pool. **The general conscription pool** is the status for those liable for military service who are not on active duty, whereas reservists are obliged to undergo relevant training and are the first to be called up for service in the event of a threat. A person discharged into the general conscription pool may either remain outside the reserve or serve as a reservist.

Discharge from service		
TO THE GENERAL CONSCRIPTION POOL		TO RETIREMENT
People included in the MOR (registration of reservists)	Other individuals who are not registered in the MOR (registration of those liable for military service)	Individuals unfit for service based on their health condition, and those who have reached the maximum age limit, are excluded from military records

The military reserve is essentially a “second army” that lives a civilian life during peacetime while remaining within the military system. The key economic advantage of this approach is that maintaining a reservist is significantly more cost-effective for the state than continuously financing a fully deployed troop²²⁵.

²²⁴ Article 26-1 of the Law of Ukraine “On General Military Duty and Military Service.” zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#Text

²²⁵ Expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 22 December 2025.

"Being a reservist means attending reserve training. It is about 'waiting for war and being ready for war,' as well as taking one's place in the ranks wherever the state tells you to", – an expert interview with a representative of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (GS AFU) conducted on 23 December 2025

First steps towards establishing a reserve (2006)

The first attempt to introduce a military reserve system in Ukraine took place in 2006. The main idea was to establish systematic training for citizens to replenish the army with personnel during a special period. They were expected to acquire or enhance a military occupational speciality (MOS) and gain practical skills. Initially, reserve service was entirely voluntary – an individual signed a contract to become a reservist²²⁶.

The initial reserve structure was approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1426 "On the Structure of the Military Human Reserve", dated 18 October 2006²²⁷. At this stage, it was relatively simple: the reserve was divided into **active and inactive reserves**.

The Active Reserve included:

- reservists;
- citizens already selected as potential candidates for enrolment in the military reserve;
- individuals liable for military service and designated for reinforcing the Armed Forces in accordance with the mobilisation plan.

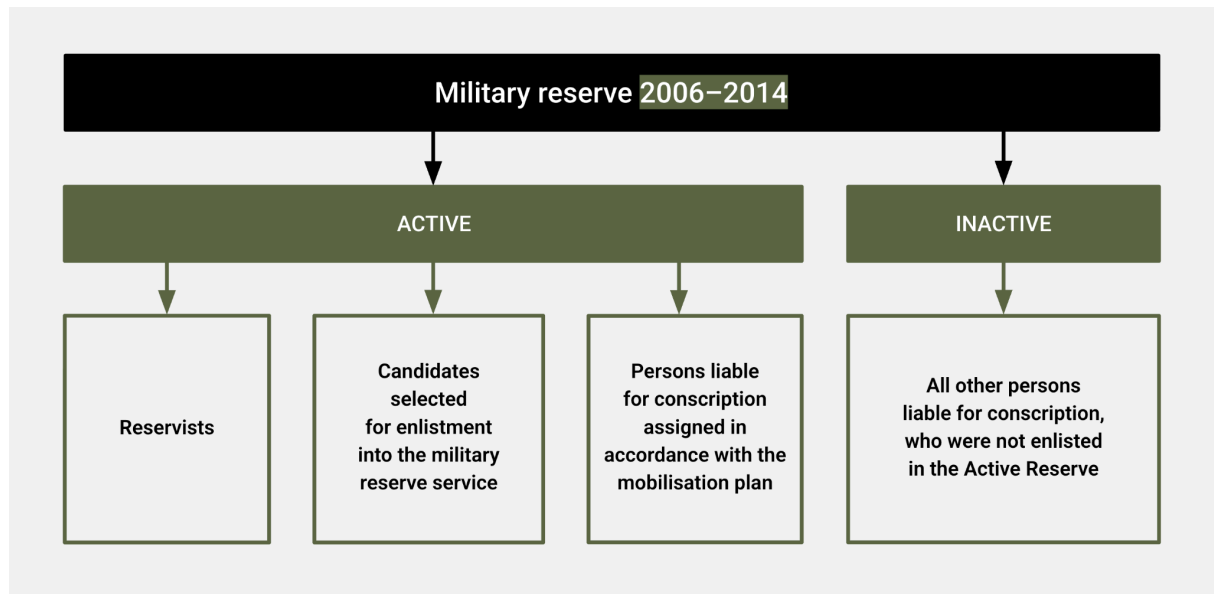
²²⁶ Clause 9 of Article 1, and Parts 2 and 4 of Article 27 of the Law of Ukraine "On General Military Duty and Military Service" (as amended on 10 May 2006).

zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12/ed20060510#Text

²²⁷ CMU Resolution No. 1426 "On the Structure of Military Human Reserve", dated 18 October 2006.

zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1426-2006-%D0%BF#Text

The **Inactive Reserve** included all other individuals liable for military service who were not part of the Active Reserve. Their function was to meet mobilisation needs if necessary. This system operated for eight years and became more structured over time, evolving into a multi-level system with different roles and tasks.



The situation at the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war (2014)

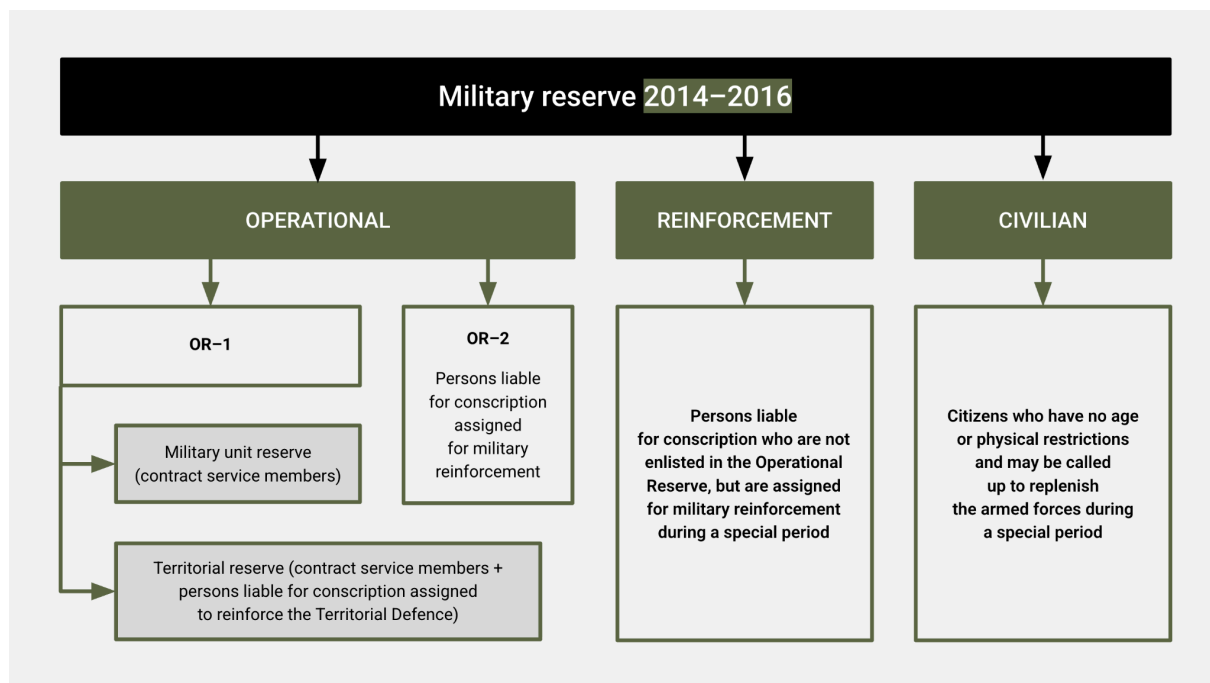
Until 2014, Ukraine's reserve system was largely formal and declarative. It was mostly limited to paper records held at Territorial Recruitment Centres, without an adequate, systematic and specialised training system for reservists.

"Before 2014, reservists were just persons liable for military service, registered with the Territorial Recruitment Centres, then called military commissariats. Some units attempted to conduct reserve training. These were the same drills for people liable for military service, although they had already started calling them reservist drills", – an expert interview with the AAF officer conducted on 15 December 2025

The beginning of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) revealed serious shortcomings in this system. Reservists were called up for drills,

but once the established two-week period expired, they were discharged because the legislation limited the duration of such drills. As a result, the first cohorts of trained personnel were effectively disbanded, and the staffing of military units had to be re-established through mobilisation²²⁸ measures. Consequently, the Armed Forces were expanded mostly through volunteer formations and, subsequently, by mobilisation²²⁹. These issues highlighted the inefficiency of the reserve system in place at the time.

A systemic transformation of the military reserve structure began after the start of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine in 2014 and the introduction of the special period. The Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 607 of 12 November 2014²³⁰ introduced a more detailed and hierarchical reserve model, allocating reserves by purpose into three main categories: **Operational, Civilian, and Reinforcement Reserves.**



²²⁸ Expert interview with the AAF officer conducted on 15 December 2025.

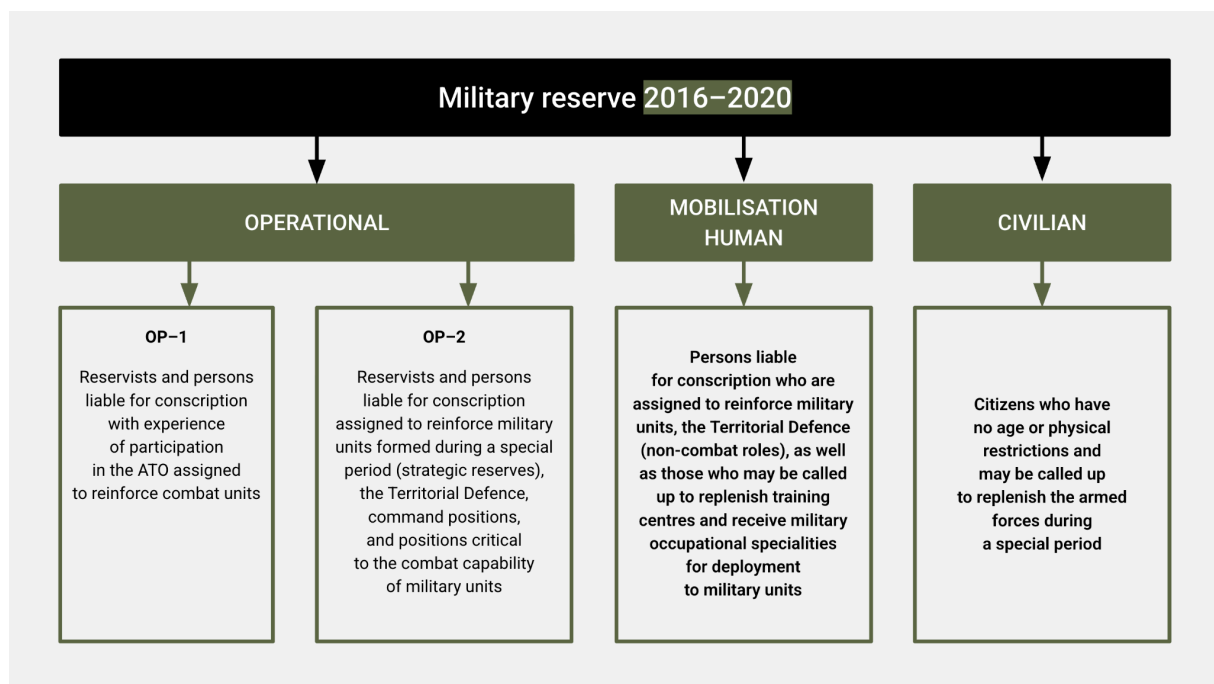
²²⁹ Expert interview with the TRSSC representative conducted on 28 November 2025.

²³⁰ CMU Resolution No. 607 "On Approving the Structure of the Military Human Reserve," dated 12 November 2014. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/607-2014-%D0%BF/ed20141112#Text

Changes in 2015–2020

In March 2015, following the first wave of discharge of mobilised citizens, compulsory enrolment in the OR-1 during a special period was introduced alongside the contract reserve service. This applied to people discharged from conscript service and compulsory service during mobilisation²³¹. All personnel discharged from military service, including contract service members, began being enrolled in OR-1 in December 2016²³².

In July 2016²³³, the reserve structure changed. OR-1 and OR changed their composition. A **mobilisation human reserve** was introduced instead of the Reinforcement Reserve, while the Civilian Reserve remained unchanged.



In the same year, the **Reserve Corps** was established as an organisational structure for the management, training, and staffing

²³¹ Article 26-2 of the Law of Ukraine "On General Military Duty and Military Service" (as amended on 12 April 2015). zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12/ed20150412

²³² Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on the Improvement of the Military Service Procedure." zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1769-19/ed20170107#Text

²³³ CMU Resolution No. 607 "On Approving the Structure of the Military Human Reserve," dated 12 November 2014. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/607-2014-%D0%BF/ed20141112#Text

of military units as required. It centrally managed the key personnel of the brigades, enabling their rapid deployment and reinforcement in the event of large-scale reservist mobilisation in response to a threat or the imposition of martial law.

The main purpose of the Reserve Corps was to maintain units on standby by preserving vehicles, property, and equipment, and by maintaining a limited number of regular personnel responsible for resource management and control. This enabled the rapid staffing and equipping of units when necessary, as well as the organisation of reservist training.

It was believed that this approach helped to maintain the command and mobility of military units and avoid issues of unit overload and management during peacetime. In 2022, this also helped rapidly deploy and staff brigades within the Reserve Corps and involve them in combat missions^{234, 235}.

In 2016, an initiative to establish **the first Reservists' Council under the General Staff emerged**. Later, this system was expanded to the level of the Ground Forces and, in 2020, directly to combat brigades. Reservists' councils are advisory and consultative bodies operating under the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the branch commands, and separate military units during peacetime and a special period.

Their tasks include:

- protecting the interests of reservists;
- monitoring practical aspects of their training and support;
- participating in the development of state policy and legislation on the military operational reserve²³⁶.

The state took the first systemic step toward involving reservists in November 2018 by declaring martial law following the Kerch Strait

²³⁴ Expert interview with the AAF officer conducted on 15 December 2025.

²³⁵ Expert interview with a representative of the Ground Forces Reservists' Council conducted on 26 November 2025.

²³⁶ Expert interview with a former representative of the GS AFU Reservists' Council conducted on 1 December 2025.

incident²³⁷. At that time, some reservists were called up to military units that expanded their staffing to wartime levels. Since martial law was declared only in part of Ukraine and largely in a formal manner, reservists' involvement consisted of participating in drills without engaging in hostilities or combat missions²³⁸.

Reserve functioning in 2020–2024

In June 2020, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine revised the structure of the military reserve. The main change involved the detailed classification of the second-line operational reserve into the build-up reserve and the territorial reserve, as well as the clarification of definitions of mobilisation and civilian reserves²³⁹.

Military reserve 2020–2024		
OPERATIONAL	OR-1	Reservists and those liable for military service with experience of participation in the ATO/JFO assigned for reinforcing combat units
	OR-2	Build-up reserve: reservists and persons liable for military service assigned to reinforcing non-combat units, including those formed during a special period
		Territorial reserve: reservists and persons liable for military service assigned to reinforce the Territorial Defence
MOBILISATION HUMAN		Persons liable for military service assigned for reinforcing training centres to obtain a MOS for subsequent deployment to military units
CIVILIAN		Reservists and persons liable for military service who voluntarily participate in ensuring the state's national security and defence

²³⁷ The Kerch Strait incident was an act of open armed aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine on 25 November 2018. The Russian military rammed and fired upon three Ukrainian vessels heading for the Sea of Azov, capturing 24 sailors.

²³⁸ Expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 13 November 2025.

²³⁹ CMU Resolution No. 495 "On Amendments to the Annex to Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 607 of 12 November 2014," dated 17 June 2020.
zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/495-2020-%D0%BF#Text

In March 2021, legislative amendments were introduced allowing the call-up of reservists into the armed forces without declaring mobilisation if necessary. The law established a new type of service — **military service by call-up of individuals from among reservists during a special period** (call-up of reservists for military service during a special period)²⁴⁰.

This enabled the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to call up reservists for service by order without parliamentary approval, which often requires additional time. These changes reinforced the logic of the military operational reserve by enabling the prioritised call-up of reservists as experienced personnel in an emergency, thereby avoiding the involvement of persons liable for military service in the absence of an urgent need.

The principle of the operational reserve was that every reservist had to know their role within a specific military unit, which would help the state rapidly build up its forces in the event of an escalation²⁴¹.

In February 2022, the military operational reserve system faced some practical limitations caused by the conditions of the full-scale invasion:

- On 22 February, less than two days before the full-scale invasion, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine issued **Order No. 2**²⁴², mandating the call-up of citizens in the MOR for a year. Notifications were to be delivered to all reservists within the following two days, starting on 23 February. Thereafter, they had to report to their designated military units within the next seven days.

Despite this, many OR-1 reservists were physically unable to reach their units or assume their designated positions. The **massive logistical and transport collapse** during the first weeks of the full-scale invasion was the key issue. As a result, service members

²⁴⁰ Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on the Improvement of Specific Aspects of the Military Duty and the Maintenance of Military Records." zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1357-20#n191

²⁴¹ Expert interview with the GS AFU representative conducted on 18 December 2025.

²⁴² Order of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine No. 2 of 22 February 2022 "On the Call-Up of Reservists for Military Service during a Special Period."

could not reach units located at great distances, in areas of active hostilities, or under encirclement^{243, 244, 245}.

- There were **systemic failures in reserve management**: the mobilisation signal was issued late; military units often failed to establish contact with their assigned reservists, lost their personal files, or were unprepared to receive individuals during the first days of general chaos²⁴⁶.

In the absence of clear instructions from their military units and TRSSC, many reservists were forced to act independently. They turned to recruitment centres or joined Territorial Defence units or neighbouring military units that were logistically more accessible and better organised locally^{247, 248}.

- The intended system of reservists' personal assignment failed to withstand the full-scale invasion. Individuals with combat and military service experience, who were supposed to be the first to reinforce designated units, were not assembled and deployed to their military units in a timely manner. Following the declaration of general mobilisation on 24 February, reservists were generally **processed as mobilised personnel rather than reservists called up during a special period**. As a result, the military operational reserve effectively dissolved into the general mobilisation flow and lost its intended role as a rapid reinforcement tool for combat-ready units^{249, 250, 251}.

²⁴³ Expert interview with the GS AFU representative conducted on 18 December 2025.

²⁴⁴ Expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 22 December 2025.

²⁴⁵ Expert interview with the AAF officer conducted on 15 December 2025.

²⁴⁶ Expert interview with a former representative of the GS AFU Reservists' Council conducted on 1 December 2025.

²⁴⁷ Expert interview with the GS AFU representative conducted on 18 December 2025.

²⁴⁸ Expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 22 December 2025.

²⁴⁹ Expert interview with the Head of Corps Personnel Department and a veteran reservist, conducted on 28 November 2025.

²⁵⁰ Expert interview with a representative of the Ground Forces Reservists' Council conducted on 26 November 2025.

²⁵¹ Expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 22 December 2025.

Reserve since 2024

The military reserve system was further upgraded in 2024 through Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 741 of 18 June 2024²⁵², which remains in effect.

The current structure of the military reserve was developed to fulfil Step 58 of the Government's Priority Action Plan for 2024, approved by Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 137-r of 16 February 2024. The Plan aims to prevent the loss of records of trained military special officers who directly participated in combat operations²⁵³.

According to its current structure, the military reserve is divided into the **Military Operational Reserve** and the **Mobilisation Human Reserve**²⁵⁴. This new classification is designed to ensure the phased and differentiated deployment of the Armed Forces in the event of a threat or the imposition of martial law, based on reservists' training, experience, and health.

Military reserve since 2024		
MOR	Combat	Reservists and persons liable to conscription with combat or military service experience assigned for reinforcing combat units. It succeeds OR-1 and is designed for units to be the first to engage in combat
	Reinforcement	Reservists and persons liable for military service with combat or military service experience, those who have completed Basic General Military Training (BGMT) or drills, assigned for reinforcing non-combat units, including those formed during a special period

²⁵² Clause 3 of CMU Resolution No. 741 "Certain Issues Regarding the Military Reserve Structure," dated 18 June 2024. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/741-2024-%D0%BF#n26

²⁵³ Response to an inquiry by the Department of Mobilisation of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine dated 8 December 2025.

²⁵⁴ CMU Resolution No. 741 "Certain Issues Regarding the Military Reserve Structure," dated 18 June 2024. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/741-2024-%D0%BF#n26

MOR	Territorial	Reservists and persons liable for military service aged 45 and above assigned to reinforce the Territorial Defence
MOBILISATION HUMAN	All other persons liable for military service without military experience or relevant specialisation are mobilised last and undergo training in the relevant MOS to reinforce military units	

However, the Resolution does not establish clear criteria for distinguishing between the combat, territorial, and build-up reserves. It is difficult to determine which reserve an individual will join based on their experience and military training. The allocation will likely depend on additional criteria, such as age, health condition, or MOS²⁵⁵.

Much of the understanding of this system's practical implementation is based on expert assumptions and informal discussions rather than on clearly defined procedures²⁵⁶. **Based on expert interviews conducted within this study, the following reserve structure and operational principles can be outlined as follows:**

Combat reserve

Most persons with combatant status and active service members without combatant status who are fit for service based on their health condition and meet the eligibility requirements for the reserve will potentially join the combat reserve upon discharge. It will be formed within existing military units that operate in peacetime but with limited staffing. In the event of a threat or the introduction of martial law, these units can be rapidly reinforced to full strength with combat reserve reservists. Therefore, the combat reserve represents the most prepared and high-priority category, focused on rapid deployment for combat missions^{257, 258}.

²⁵⁵ Expert interview with the GS AFU representative conducted on 18 December 2025.

²⁵⁶ Expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 22 December 2025.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Expert interview with the GS AFU representative conducted on 23 December 2025.

Build-up reserve

This reserve consists of individuals with military experience, including those who have completed basic military service or BGMT²⁵⁹. Previously, the OR-2 included those discharged from non-combat military units, such as training centres and repair and restoration battalions²⁶⁰.

The purpose of the build-up reserve is to staff military units that operate with even more limited personnel during peacetime. It is deployed during the second stage after the mobilisation of the combat reserve. Thus, both the combat reserve and the build-up reserve consist of individuals with military service experience, but the difference lies in the priority and speed of their deployment^{261, 262}.

Territorial reserve

This reserve is a distinct category of the MOR and is not identical to the Territorial Defence Forces. It includes individuals aged between 45 and 60. The territorial reserve represents the final stage of deployment and will likely perform auxiliary or support functions²⁶³.

The MOR has effectively not been staffed since February 2022. However, its post-war formation remains a key strategic challenge amid the ongoing threat from the Russian Federation. At the institutional level, no single stakeholder in Ukraine is fully responsible for shaping policy on the military human reserve, including the military operational reserve. The General Staff plans and organises the reserve, while the Ministry of Defence is primarily responsible for the social guarantees of reservists. However, this division does not provide for comprehensive strategic management of reserve²⁶⁴ development.

²⁵⁹ Expert interview with the GS AFU representative conducted on 18 December 2025.

²⁶⁰ Expert interview with the AAF officer conducted on 15 December 2025.

²⁶¹ Expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 22 December 2025.

²⁶² Expert interview with the GS AFU representative conducted on 23 December 2025.

²⁶³ Expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 22 December 2025.

²⁶⁴ Expert interview with the GS AFU representative conducted on 18 December 2025.

The military reserve system in Ukraine is gradually becoming more complex, driven by the need to respond to changes in the security environment. In particular, many changes were caused by the outbreak of war in 2014 and the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation in 2022.

Structural changes to the reserve are driven by the need to establish a so-called prioritisation system for citizens liable for military service based on their level of training, combat experience, age, and other criteria, to ensure their phased deployment in the event of a threat.

The growing share of veterans in the population has created the conditions to distinguish them from all persons liable for military service as a high-quality human resource for national defence. For this reason, veterans have been assigned to the combat reserve – a category of the military operational reserve that is deployed first when necessary.

Format of enrolment in the reserve

According to the procedure for enrolling a service member being discharged into the reserve, the unit commander shall conduct an individual explanatory briefing with them, typically one to two months before their discharge. Its purpose is to determine whether the individual meets the requirements for service in the military reserve and to offer them contract service in the reserve. If the service member voluntarily wishes to sign such a contract, they apply for it. If not, the individual is automatically enrolled in the military operational reserve.

Voluntary contract for military reserve service

The specific feature of such enrolment in the reserve is that the contract assigns a person to a specific military unit and position. This means that, in the event of mobilisation, the individual is assigned to a designated military unit and position and undergoes training exclusively within that unit and only upon its call-up. The individual is informed in advance of the military unit they will serve in, the position they will occupy, and the weapons or military equipment they will operate during mobilisation. The military unit commander authorised to issue personnel orders²⁶⁵ decides to appoint a reservist to a position.

Reservists who already have military service experience but are enrolled in the reserve under a new speciality undergo re-training in military units or training centres, while officers attend higher military education institutions (HMEIs). Reservists who have served for at least one year may improve their qualifications either at the initiative of the command or at their own request. Military unit commanders select candidates

²⁶⁵ Clause 63 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine."
zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#Text

for such training, allowing for the alignment of the unit's real needs and the career development prospects of specific reservists²⁶⁶.

In other words, the key principle of personnel policy in the reserve is maintaining consistency between a reservist's speciality and their assigned position. Appointments are possible only within the main or related speciality; changing the field of activity requires prior training or retraining²⁶⁷. A reservist may sign a contract not only upon discharge but at any other time, except during mobilisation conducted to ensure troop staffing²⁶⁸.

However, in practice, assigning a contract reservist to a position involves certain challenges. Although a contract formally secures a reservist for a specific position, in reality, an actual appointment to that position may become impossible due to personnel turnover and staffing changes. During drills or call-up for military service in the event of a threat, reservists are often assigned to positions based on available vacancies, military occupational speciality, and rank, even where such assignments differ from the positions specified in their contracts. This may occur if the position is already occupied by another person or has been removed from the staffing structure of the unit^{269, 270}.

The updated reserve structure is aimed at streamlining and increasing the efficiency of human resource involvement. Therefore, it is important to ensure that, in the future, reservists are assigned to positions aligned with the specialities for which they were trained. This approach would enhance personnel discipline and ensure consistency between reservists' existing experience and the functions they perform²⁷¹.

²⁶⁶ Clauses 101–103 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine."
zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#Text

²⁶⁷ Clause 66 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine."
zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#Text

²⁶⁸ Response to an inquiry by the Department of Mobilisation of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine dated 8 December 2025.

²⁶⁹ Expert interview with a former representative of the GS AFU Reservists' Council conducted on 1 December 2025.

²⁷⁰ Expert interview with the GS AFU representative conducted on 18 December 2025.

²⁷¹ Expert interview with the GS AFU representative conducted on 18 December 2025.

Automatic enrolment in the military operational reserve

If an individual does not sign a contract, they are automatically enrolled into the MOR and become part of the “general reserve pool”²⁷². Such a reservist is then assigned to a specific military unit by decision of the TRSSC in accordance with mobilisation orders for staffing military units or for the purpose of training or inspection assemblies^{273, 274, 275, 276, 277}.

An individual may be called up to any military unit, since the TRSSC head holds the sole authority to mobilise human resources, including MOR reservists, in accordance with current orders to reinforce military units²⁷⁸.

Until December 2024, a discharged service member could join the MOR **during peacetime** only by signing a contract²⁷⁹. However, according to amendments adopted in late 2024, individuals discharged from military service who did not sign a reserve service contract and who are fit for service based on their health condition may be enrolled in the MOR without their consent²⁸⁰. In such cases, the commander of the military

²⁷² Clause 1 of CMU Resolution No. 741 “Certain Issues Regarding the Military Reserve Structure,” dated 18 June 2024. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/741-2024-%D0%BF#n26

²⁷³ Expert interview with the GS AFU representative conducted on 18 December 2025.

²⁷⁴ Expert interview with the GS AFU representative conducted on 23 December 2025.

²⁷⁵ Expert interview with the Head of Corps Personnel Department and a veteran reservist, conducted on 28 November 2025.

²⁷⁶ Expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 13 November 2025.

²⁷⁷ Expert interview with the TRSSC representative conducted on 28 November 2025.

²⁷⁸ Response to an inquiry by the Department of Mobilisation of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine dated 8 December 2025.

²⁷⁹ Clause 12 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine “On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.” zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#Text

²⁸⁰ Clause 12 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine “On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.” zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#Text

unit from which the person is discharged decides whether enrolment in the MOR is expedient, while the head of the TRSSC enrolls the person²⁸¹.

The current legislation does not regulate the duration of MOR service, nor the grounds for discharge of reservists enrolled in the MOR during peacetime. This means that, in the absence of specifically defined grounds for discharge, such individuals will remain in the MOR until they reach the age limit or become unfit due to a health condition.

During a special period, everyone discharged from military service who does not sign a contract is subject to mandatory enrolment in the MOR upon discharge from service (provided they are fit based on their health condition and meet the requirements for reserve service)²⁸². In other words, all individuals discharged from military service into the reserve (rather than discharged due to age or health reasons) shall be enrolled in the MOR by order of the military unit commander^{283, 284}.

The military unit commander determines the expediency of enrolling a person in the MOR and indicates this in the general order, thereby removing the individual from the military unit's lists. The order also includes the reservist's position and the TRSSC where they will be registered. The reservist must read and sign this order on the day of their discharge from military service.

The heads of the TRSSC are also obliged to enrol them in the MOR upon their registration for military service, to reinforce the relevant military units (as an exception, provided that their command has not already completed this)²⁸⁵.

²⁸¹ Clause 2 of Order of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine No. 43 "Procedure for Enrolment in the Military Operational Reserve," dated 14 March 2025

²⁸² Ibid, Clause 3.

²⁸³ Article 26(1) of the Law of Ukraine "On General Military Duty and Military Service." zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#Text

²⁸⁴ Clause 12 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine." zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#Text

²⁸⁵ Ibid, Clause 3.

Individuals whom the military unit commander deems inexpedient to enrol in the MOR are registered as persons liable for military service. Subsequently, they may be assigned to reinforce other military units on a general basis.

Information on the service member's admission (enrolment) into the MOR is recorded on the Special Notes page of their military registration document. This includes the number of the military unit commander's order under which the individual was admitted (enrolled) into the MOR, as well as the type of military operational reserve²⁸⁶.

An individual may also learn about their enrolment in the reserve from the registration assignment issued for registration at the TRSSC and the extract from the order removing the individual from the military unit's personnel lists, which specifies enrolment in the MOR²⁸⁷.

Upon the arrival of a discharged service member for military registration, the TRSSC shall:

- collect the registration assignment and extract from the order;
- check military registration documents;
- establish whether the person is a reservist or a conscript;
- determine the type of individual's registration²⁸⁸.

The beginning of a reservist's service in the military reserve is considered to occur on the date the military unit commander or the head of the TRSSC issues the order concerning the citizen's admission (enrolment) into the military reserve and their appointment to a reservist position.

²⁸⁶ Expert interview with the TRSSC representative conducted on 28 November 2025.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

Information on an individual's status in the Military Operational Reserve is recorded in the "Oberih" register, where reservists are classified into specific subcategories, such as combat reserve, build-up reserve, or territorial reserve.

The system must record the grounds for enrolment (such as the order number or contract details) to prevent individuals from being concealed in other registration categories. In addition, records include information concerning the military unit with which the reservist has concluded a contract (if applicable) and the TRSSC where the reservist is registered²⁸⁹.

²⁸⁹ Expert interview with a representative of the MoD department conducted on 28 November 2025.

Reservists' requirements and duties

Individuals are enrolled in the MOR or accepted under contract in the following cases:

- they have prior military service experience;
- they have not reached the age limit for reserve service;
- they are fit for service based on their health condition (those declared unfit due to injuries sustained during the ATO/JFO may only be accepted under contract);
- they have relevant professional and psychological characteristics;
- they are subject to military service call-up during mobilisation or reservist call-up in a special period (the individual's preference and any waiver of deferment are taken into account)²⁹⁰.

Those discharged due to inefficiency, systematic breach of contract terms, or following a criminal conviction²⁹¹ shall not be enrolled in the reserve.

The status of a reservist imposes the following duties²⁹² on an individual:

1. To read and sign the order of the commander (head) of the military unit (institution) on their enrolment in the Military Operational Reserve.
2. To report to the Raion TRSSC at their place of residence for military registration within five days after discharge into the reserve.

²⁹⁰ Clause 14 of Order of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine No. 43 "Procedure for Enrolment in the Military Operational Reserve," dated 14 March 2025.

²⁹¹ Ibid, Clause 1.4.

²⁹² Clause 120-5 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine."
zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#Text

3. Upon departure from the military unit and during registration at the Raion TRSSC, to clarify the actions taken in case of call-up for military service.
4. To retain the military uniform provided by the MoD after discharge and until the end of the special period. In the event of a call-up, to bring it when reporting to the military unit.
5. In the event of a change in place of residence, notification procedure, marital status, health condition, education, position, or phone number, to notify the commander of the military unit and the head of the TRSSC within seven days.
6. To appear at the military unit or the TRSSC assembly point within the time limits specified in the notice in the event of notification of a call-up by the military unit commander or the TRSSC head.

Calling up reservists for the performance of service duties

The reservists' duties also include training or re-training in their military occupational speciality during drills in accordance with the tasks assigned to the military units where they serve in the reserve in the relevant positions.

Peacetime and special period without declaration of mobilisation

During this period, reservists may be called out to perform duties in the military reserve for up to three months per year²⁹³. The reservists are called out by military unit commanders in accordance with decisions of the President of Ukraine and reservist training plans approved by the GS AFU²⁹⁴.

²⁹³ Article 29 of the Law of Ukraine "On General Military Duty and Military Service."
zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#Text

²⁹⁴ Clause 32 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine."
zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#Text

Military unit commanders shall notify citizens who have signed a contract about the call-up, while TRSSC heads shall notify those automatically enrolled in the MOR. They must also inform employers, local governments, and raion administrations about the call-up, its duration, and its purpose²⁹⁵.

Military unit commanders shall send lists of reservists, indicating their MOS and assigned positions, to the Raion TRSSC where they are registered for military service within three days after the call-up²⁹⁶.

Reservists may be exempted from performing these duties on the following grounds:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ■ illness | ■ taking examinations at HEIs |
| ■ family circumstances | ■ emergencies or other good reasons |
| ■ being under investigation | |

For this purpose, the individual shall submit the relevant documents, and the military unit commander shall make the decision on their discharge.

Special period

During this period, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine may order the mobilisation of reservists from the MOR for military service. Upon being called up, reservists are obliged to act within strictly defined time limits. Those serving in the MOR without a signed contract receive assignments to reinforce relevant military units through the TRSSC. This information is recorded in their military registration documents, and they are issued mobilisation orders. Such reservists are considered assigned to military units and shall report to TRSSC assembly points to perform duties in positions provided for by wartime staffing schedules, as specified in notices or mobilisation orders.

²⁹⁵ Article 39-1(3) of the Law of Ukraine "On General Military Duty and Military Service."
zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#Text.

²⁹⁶ Clause 34 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine."
zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#Text

Reservists who have entered into a contract for military reserve service shall report to their military units within the time limits determined by military unit commanders²⁹⁷.

Similar to persons liable for military service, reservists are entitled to a deferment from call-up during a special period (martial law) due to family circumstances, health condition, or studies at HEIs. However, they are not subject to, nor can they obtain, occupational deferment on these grounds. This distinguishes veterans from persons liable for military service without service experience, who do have this option.

According to legislation, occupational deferment granted by state authorities, local governments, and enterprises is available only to persons liable for military service during mobilisation and wartime. These provisions do not apply to reservists^{298, 299}. If a person is listed in the registry as a “reservist,” this status will prevent their processing for occupational deferment through the Diia portal³⁰⁰. However, in practice, due to registration errors, human factors, and other reasons, there have been cases during the special period when veterans were not recognised as reservists after their discharge and remained registered as persons liable for military service, which effectively allowed them to use the occupational deferment mechanism³⁰¹.

As part of interviews conducted for this study, we established that veterans may perceive such a situation as unfair and discriminatory.

²⁹⁷ Clause 32-1 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine “On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.”

zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#Text

²⁹⁸ Article 24 of the Law of Ukraine “On Mobilisation Preparation and Mobilisation.”

zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3543-12#Text

²⁹⁹ Clauses 1.4 and 1.7 of Order of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine No. 43 “Procedure for Enrolment in the Military Operational Reserve,” dated 14 March 2025.

³⁰⁰ Expert interview with the TRSSC representative conducted on 28 November 2025.

³⁰¹ Expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 13 November 2025.

"Can these persons receive occupational deferment in some sector? For example, they may not only be good... veterans, but also highly qualified professionals at some critical enterprise. In such cases, someone has to decide where they are more important. Someone has to decide and establish some rules of the game... I do not agree that a person serving in the OR-1 or OR-2 has no right to occupational deferment. They might be more important in some other field", — an expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 22 December 2025

A controversial fact is that an individual ceases to be a reservist and avoids the obligation of priority call-up for ignoring a notice, inability to establish their whereabouts during mobilisation, or travelling abroad for more than three months. This practice was implemented after the start of the full-scale invasion. All reservists who failed to respond to a call-up notice were deregistered from the reserve and continue to be registered as persons liable for military service, thereby enabling them to use the occupational deferment mechanism.

Reserve training

The performance of military reserve duties primarily includes undergoing inspection assemblies and drills. MoD Order No. 2 of 5 January 2022 governs their organisation and conduct³⁰². The total duration of service in the military reserve may not exceed three months per year³⁰³.

There are several types of drills:

Inspection assemblies

Such assemblies are planned by the GS AFU during command-and-staff mobilisation training. Their purpose is to verify the assigned personnel

³⁰² Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 2 "On Approving the Instruction on the Organisation and Conduct of Training for Reservists and Persons Liable for Military Service in Military Command Bodies, Formations, Military Units, Institutions, and Organisations of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and the State Special Transport Service," dated 5 January 2022. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0296-22#top

³⁰³ Article 29(7) of the Law of Ukraine "On General Military Duty and Military Service." zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#n613

records, test the notification system, bring and deliver mobilisation resources to the TRSSC, and receive personnel by military units. During these assemblies, reservists and persons liable for military service perform functional duties within military unit subdivisions in accordance with assigned positions³⁰⁴.

Drills

They are aimed at restoring, acquiring, or improving individual competencies required to perform duties in military positions³⁰⁵.

Drills and training programmes are approved by the commanders of the branches and arms (forces) of the AFU. Training sessions are conducted on a six-day working week basis, with one day off, while a training day consists of eight academic hours³⁰⁶. Following the completion of drills and successful passing examinations, a reservist may be awarded a subsequent military rank in accordance with the **Regulation on Military Reserve Service**.

General planning of drills within the AFU is assigned to the General Staff based on proposals submitted by military command bodies³⁰⁷.

³⁰⁴ Clauses 2–3 of the General Provisions of Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 2 “On Approving the Instruction on the Organisation and Conduct of Training for Reservists and Persons Liable for Military Service in Military Command Bodies, Formations, Military Units, Institutions, and Organisations of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and the State Special Transport Service,” dated 5 January 2022. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0296-22#top

³⁰⁵ Clause 2 of the General Provisions of Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 2 “On Approving the Instruction on the Organisation and Conduct of Training for Reservists and Persons Liable for Military Service in Military Command Bodies, Formations, Military Units, Institutions, and Organisations of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and the State Special Transport Service,” dated 5 January 2022. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0296-22#top

³⁰⁶ Clause 2 of Section IV of Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 2 “On Approving the Instruction on the Organisation and Conduct of Training for Reservists and Persons Liable for Military Service in Military Command Bodies, Formations, Military Units, Institutions, and Organisations of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and the State Special Transport Service,” dated 5 January 2022. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0296-22#top

³⁰⁷ Clause 1 of Section II of Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 2 “On Approving the Instruction on the Organisation and Conduct of Training for Reservists and Persons Liable for Military Service in Military Command Bodies, Formations, Military Units, Institutions, and Organisations of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and the State Special Transport Service,” dated 5 January 2022. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0296-22#top

Each year, the GS AFU determines the types of drills, their duration, the number of personnel involved, as well as the location and timing³⁰⁸.

Legislation stipulates that the number of reservists called up for drills each year is determined with consideration of budget appropriations allocated to the relevant departments, including the MoD, the DIU, and the SSTS³⁰⁹. This is a key factor in planning drills, as the level of funding determines their frequency, scale, the MOR category involved, and the quality of such training. Under conditions of limited funding, priority during drills will consistently be given to the combat reserve.

“As for how the reservists’ experience will differ depending on the type of reserve they belong to, everything will depend on funding. If we have the funds, drills will be held every year. Of course, the combat reserve is the most important and interesting issue”, – an expert interview with the GS AFU representative conducted on 18 December 2025

According to legislation, reservists shall be called out for drills and notified by the TRSSC or the military unit with which an individual has concluded a contract. Before this, the reservist must undergo a military medical commission and update their military registration data regarding their health condition.

The assembly of reservists and persons liable for military service for transport usually takes place at the TRSSC’s permanent station, although a reservist may also travel to the drill location independently. Reservists who completed conscript service during a special period during the established term, were discharged and enrolled in the MOR, are exempt from being called up for drills³¹⁰ within one year of their discharge. However, this provision does not apply to mobilised service members.

³⁰⁸ Clause 5 of the General Provisions of Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 2 “On Approving the Instruction on the Organisation and Conduct of Training for Reservists and Persons Liable for Military Service in Military Command Bodies, Formations, Military Units, Institutions, and Organisations of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and the State Special Transport Service,” dated 5 January 2022. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0296-22#top

³⁰⁹ Clause 4 of the General Provisions of Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 2 “On Approving the Instruction on the Organisation and Conduct of Training for Reservists and Persons Liable for Military Service in Military Command Bodies, Formations, Military Units, Institutions, and Organisations of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and the State Special Transport Service,” dated 5 January 2022. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0296-22#top

³¹⁰ Article 39-1(9) of the Law of Ukraine “On General Military Duty and Military Service.” zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#n613

An individual who has signed a reservist contract undergoes drills only at their military unit and exclusively upon its call. In contrast, a reservist without such a contract, from the “general reserve pool,” may, in practice, be called out for drills several times by the territorial recruitment centre to different military units³¹¹.

There have been recorded cases where the same reservists participated in training with different units. They could attend training twice a year.

Meanwhile, other reservists did not undergo any training for five to seven years³¹². **There are several reasons:**

1. As contract reservists are assigned to a specific military unit, their training depends on that unit. There have been cases where military units did not hold any drills for long periods or did not involve all their contract reservists.
2. Both the TRSSC and military units often involved only those reservists who volunteered for such drills. The call-outs for drills were generally made by phone without formal written notices, which reinforced the impression that participation was optional.
3. Many reservists ignored notices and failed to appear despite being called to drills. De jure, the reservist’s evasion of drills (special training) is punishable by a fine ranging from UAH 8,500 to 11,900 or corrective labour for up to two years³¹³. However, in practice, reservists are not held liable for failure to appear, which effectively reduces participation in drills to a matter of personal responsibility and conscientiousness^{314, 315, 316, 317}.

³¹¹ Expert interview with a representative of the Ground Forces Reservists’ Council conducted on 26 November 2025.

³¹² Expert interview with the AAF officer conducted on 15 December 2025.

³¹³ Article 337 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14

³¹⁴ Expert interview with the Head of Corps Personnel Department and a veteran reservist, conducted on 28 November 2025.

³¹⁵ Expert interview with the AAF officer conducted on 15 December 2025.

³¹⁶ Expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 13 November 2025.

³¹⁷ Expert interview with the TRSSC representative conducted on 28 November 2025.

"I believe that every Raion TRSSC had its own regular reservists, who were ready to go to any drill. Because so many of those assigned personnel were on duty. It was very difficult to call them to those drills. First, why? First, there was absolutely no desire to attend those drills, and there was no effective liability for failure to report. The compensation provided for time spent at the drills failed to cover either the expenses they incurred in holding those drills or the income lost due to... forced downtime at the workplace. Many employers also obstructed the dispatch of these citizens to drills", — an expert interview with the TRSSC representative conducted on 28 November 2025

Such cases point to systemic gaps in the organisation of reservist training. As a result, training covers only a narrow group of people, while others remain outside the system. There is no comprehensive, systematic programme to maintain the required level of readiness for every reservist, even though these individuals have to be deployed first in the event of a threat.

There is a distinct systemic issue with reservists who lack contracts and are not assigned to specific units. As a rule, they undergo training with different units across different branches and arms, without a permanent assignment to a specific unit. This creates uncertainty about exactly where they would serve in the event of a call-up.

The ideal scenario is when a reservist undergoes drills within the unit where they previously served under a commander they know personally, and is subsequently mobilised into that unit when required. This helps them adapt more quickly during drills and enhances training effectiveness and unit cohesion. The military unit can interact consistently with the reservist and build long-term bonds within the unit.

"The fact that one person has attended four drills in two years is not a positive aspect. This merely reflects the insufficient number of personnel recruited and trained through such drills to maintain their skills and... to understand them. So that they remain permanently assigned to their relevant units. Instead, they moved from an airborne brigade to the marines and then to the ground forces, and in the end, when the whistle blows, nobody knows where they will be called up. Will they go there themselves, or how will they get there? The problem here is the lack of personal bond", — an expert interview with the AAF officer conducted on 15 December 2025

Some reservists understand the importance of training and maintaining practical skills. They are interested in making such drills as effective as possible and viewing them as a valuable element of preparation rather than a formality or a waste of time.

"It really often made no sense. I mean, it was a formality; a lot depended on whoever was in command on the ground... There were loads of reports that the men were just lying around in the woods all day, smoking cigarettes... Or drinking, so... or both smoking and drinking...", — an expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 13 November 2025

"I spend my money on shooting practice and doing physical training related to military service... So, I am currently investing my resources into keeping myself, so to speak, in a state of readiness", — an expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 13 November 2025

Alongside the sometimes low effectiveness of the training itself, the lack of predictability and being called up within a few days' notice is another reason why reservists are occasionally unwilling to undergo drills." This makes it difficult for individuals to agree with employers, urgently postpone work, or hand over tasks to a colleague, forcing them to decline participation.

"I understand now why this is being done. It would help me to have even a rough idea of when it will happen... Some predictability, so that... If we know, for example, that the OR-1 is being called up in the third quarter of 2026, then during our 2026 planning, we simply assume that 17 people in our military department might be unavailable and do not plan for the third quarter. In short, we need predictability", — an expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 22 December 2025

Discharge from the reserve

An individual may be discharged from military reserve service on the following grounds³¹⁸:

- upon enlistment into military service;
- on health condition (unfitness for service);
- upon reaching the age limit;
- for family circumstances;
- due to incompetency;
- in the event of sentencing to imprisonment or restraint of liberty, or deprivation of military rank, or the right to hold certain positions;
- in the event of prosecution for a corruption offence;
- if there are grounds for deferment from conscription (based on the reservist's application);
- if a reservist voluntarily fails to report to the TRSSC or a military unit during mobilisation within ten calendar days of the notice being served;
- if the reservist's whereabouts cannot be established within 60 days of the announcement of mobilisation;
- in the event of termination of Ukrainian citizenship;
- due to departure outside Ukraine for more than three months;
- due to failure to fulfil the duties of military reserve service.

³¹⁸ Clause 107-1 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine."
zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012/ed20250101#Text

In such cases, the individual is excluded from the MOR, discharged from service in the military reserve, excluded from the military register of reservists, and registered instead as a person liable for military service³¹⁹.

If an individual was discharged from the armed forces during a special period and enrolled or accepted into reserve service, they must continue their service therein until the end of the special period, even if their contract term has expired³²⁰. Current legislation does not specify how this provision will operate in peacetime. This means that a full transition to civilian life for most veterans remains conditional and is complicated by the constant possibility of being recalled to military service. They may be discharged from reserve service during a special period only on an exclusive list of grounds: health condition, reaching the age limit, family circumstances, or a deferment from mobilisation³²¹.

Following the beginning of the full-scale invasion, only former service members, including veterans, are compulsorily enrolled in the MOR. Civilians without military service experience cannot be enrolled in the MOR. They may only join it voluntarily by signing a reservist contract. If they do not have grounds for a deferment from military conscription or have failed to formalise it³²², they are subject to conscription during mobilisation. If they hold such a deferment, they are excluded from the MOR and registered instead as conscripts³²³.

³¹⁹ Article 37(1)(2)(10) of the Law of Ukraine "On General Military Duty and Military Service." zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#top

³²⁰ Clause 3.1 of Order of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine No. 43 "Procedure for Enrolment in the Military Operational Reserve," dated 14 March 2025.

³²¹ Clause 107-1 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine." zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012/ed20250101#Text

³²² Response to an inquiry by the Department of Mobilisation of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine dated 8 December 2025.

³²³ Sub-clause 8 of clause 107-1 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine." zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012/ed20250101#Text

The functional MOR mechanism is essentially cyclical: an individual serves in the military, is discharged, enrolled in the MOR, and, if necessary, is prioritised for recall to the military to repel a threat. In contrast, civilians without military service experience are only mobilised after priority categories of reservists have already been engaged. This practice creates unequal conditions, as the primary burden of combat participation falls on individuals who have already devoted a significant part of their lives to the army.

To ensure a fair distribution of duties between civilians and those with military and combat experience, it is vital for the state to systematically involve persons liable for military service in drills, basic general military training (BGMT), and basic military service (BMS), and subsequently enrol them in the MOR. It is also important to encourage civilians without service experience to sign reserve contracts. Such an approach should be based on the principle of preventing the constant repeated deployment of the same individuals. This aligns with the practices of countries with advanced reserve systems, such as Norway, where the law mandates a fair distribution of the burden to *“avoid, as far as possible, the repeated deployment of the same individuals.”*

Such deployment shall be accompanied by training that meets the actual military needs in relevant specialities and competencies, since civilians cannot fully replace experienced service members and veterans at the initial stage. The state must prepare replacements in advance. This allows for the simultaneous maintenance of combat readiness, the expansion of a trained reserve, and a reduction in the imbalance of burden between persons liable for military service and reservists who have already been called up repeatedly to defend the country.

Guarantees for reservists

Reservists are not classified as part of the employed population in Ukraine and, according to employment legislation, are entitled to be recognised as unemployed and to register with the State Employment Service as jobseekers³²⁴. They may also combine civilian employment with reserve service and are entitled to relevant labour guarantees during drills or military service.

Reservists called up to perform duties in the military reserve shall retain their position and average salary, including for the duration of travel to and from the training location³²⁵. Reservists also receive pay and incentives from their military unit during this period.

Payments

In general, while performing duties in the military reserve, reservists are entitled to the following types of payments:

Average wage at the workplace or subsistence minimum	This amount shall be no less than UAH 8,647 for employed reservists. The employer makes payment, and the TRSSC reimburses it through departmental funds. Self-employed individuals are not eligible for this payment
	Unemployed reservists receive payments equal to one subsistence minimum from the military unit. As of March 2026, this amounts to UAH 3,328
Payments from the military unit	Ranging from 1.5 to 2 subsistence minimums per month (from UAH 4,992 to 6,656 in 2026).

³²⁴ Clause 5 of Article 26-1 of the Law of Ukraine "On General Military Duty and Military Service." zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#Text

³²⁵ Clause 11 of Article 29 of the Law of Ukraine "On General Military Duty and Military Service." zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#Text

Daily allowance for each day of drills	Including travel time from the TRSSC to the training location and back, as well as periods of temporary disability (from UAH 60 per day for rank and file to UAH 150 for senior officers) , paid by the military unit
Travel expenses to and from the training location	Reimbursed by the TRSSC
Lump-sum financial incentive	Reservists who complete their training programme without committing any offences receive a lump-sum financial incentive of UAH 1,600 to 3,100 per year – about UAH 133 to 258 per month . This is paid in January of the current year based on the results of the previous year

Financial settlements with reservists are carried out in accordance with CMU Resolution No. 1644 of 23 November 2006³²⁶, as well as specific departmental instructions regarding the conditions of such payments^{327, 328, 329, 330}.

In Ukraine, all these payments are subject to taxation, although in some other countries, such as France, they are tax-exempt.

³²⁶ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1644 "On the Procedure and Amounts of Financial Provision and Incentives for Persons Liable for Military Service and Reservists, and Payments to Reservists," dated 23 November 2006.

zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1644-2006-%D0%BF#top

³²⁷ Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 80 "On Approving the Instructions on the Conditions for Financial Provision and Incentives for Persons Liable for Military Service and Reservists, and Payments to Reservists," dated 12 March 2007.

zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0269-07#top

³²⁸ Order of the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine No. 33 "On Approving the Instructions on the Conditions for Financial Provision and Incentives for Persons Liable for Military Service and Reservists, and Payments to Reservists of the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine," dated 5 February 2025.

zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0219-25#Text

³²⁹ Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine No. 856 "On Approving the Instructions on the Conditions for Financial Provision and Incentives to Persons Liable for Military Service and Reservists, and Payments to Reservists of the National Guard of Ukraine," dated 14 July 2015.

zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0916-15#Text

³³⁰ Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine No. 367 "On Approving the Instructions on the Conditions for Financial Provision and Incentives to Persons Liable for Military Service and Reservists, and Payments to Reservists of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine," dated 13 May 2019.

zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0574-19#Text

During a 30-day drill, an enlisted reservist who is employed receives at least **UAH 14,067** in 2026 after tax, while an unemployed reservist receives **UAH 9,786**.

Guarantees during military service

As reservists are called up for a specific type of service (military service by recruitment of reservists during a special period), the legal guarantees provided for mobilised personnel do not formally apply to them.

For each guarantee to apply effectively, it shall always specify distinct categories of service members: mobilised personnel, conscripted reservists, and contract service members. However, conscripted reservists are not mentioned in some tax benefits, so they cannot benefit from them.

The Tax Code provides tax benefits for service members that currently do not extend to conscripted reservists:

- the calculation of total monthly (annual) taxable income excludes the amount of financial allowance (including in-kind allowance) provided to mobilised service members, as well as compensation payments from the budget within the limits of the average salary of mobilised employees³³¹;
- the calculation of the total number of persons employed by a single-tax payer who is an individual entrepreneur does not consider employees called up for military service during mobilisation in a special period³³²;

³³¹ Sub-clause 165.1.1, clause 165.1 of Article 165 of the Tax Code of Ukraine. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2755-17#top

³³² Sub-clause 291.4.1 of the Tax Code of Ukraine. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2755-17#top

- self-employed individuals who are mobilised or serving under contract are exempt from the accrual, payment, and reporting of personal income tax, the single tax, and the military fee³³³.

In May 2020, Draft Law No. 3554 was registered in Ukraine, proposing amendments to the Tax Code to extend the list of benefits for reservists³³⁴. However, the document remained under committee consideration.

Relations with employers

According to current legislation, employers shall consider that their employees who are reservists may be called up for training or conscripted into military service at any time, sometimes without a clearly defined duration. Call-ups for training often occur without prior notice and come as a surprise to the employer, complicating operational planning and creating an additional burden³³⁵. As a result, employers may be reluctant to hire former service members and veterans, most of whom are reservists³³⁶. In addition to organisational challenges, the employer is obliged to pay the employee their average salary during the training, which is formally supposed to be reimbursed by the state. However, such reimbursements are often delayed or not made at all in practice.

"In practice, reimbursements were provided with great obstacles and delays. Because of this, many employers simply did not want to deal with it and were reluctant to release their employees for training. The reservist might think. 'Should I risk losing a decent, relatively well-paid job, or should I go to training for a week when it is unclear what I will do? So many chose the first option to keep their job and not attend the training', – an expert interview with the TRSSC representative conducted on 28 November 2025

³³³ Clause 25, subsection 10 of Section XX of the Tax Code of Ukraine.
zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2755-17#top

³³⁴ Draft Law of Ukraine No. 3554 "On Amendments to the Tax Code of Ukraine on Certain Issues of Ensuring the Fulfilment of Military Duty During a Special Period," dated 28 May 2020.
itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/2551

³³⁵ Expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 22 December 2025.

³³⁶ Expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 13 November 2025.

The current Labour Code does not formally provide specific protections for reservists, including veterans. The list of protected grounds in relation to workplace discrimination also excludes their status³³⁷.

Other guarantees

1. In the event of disability or partial loss of working capacity resulting from injury or illness sustained during drills, or the death of a reservist, the state provides a lump-sum financial allowance³³⁸.
2. Reservists are accommodated at permanent stations, training areas, or designated premises during drills. By the unit commander's decision, they may be allowed to reside at home if they live in the settlement where the drill³³⁹ takes place.
3. When called up for duty, they are entitled to full support, including financial support, clothing (provided with a unified combat kit³⁴⁰), food, and medical provision (medical examinations and treatment). Reservists called up for training are also entitled to leave for family or other circumstances³⁴¹.

³³⁷ Article 2-1 of the Labour Code of Ukraine. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/322-08#Text.

³³⁸ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 975 "On Approving the Procedure for the Assignment and Payment of Lump-Sum Allowance in the Event of Death, Disability, or Partial Loss of Working Capacity without Disability Status of Service Members, Persons Liable to Conscription, and Reservists Called Up for Drills (or Inspection Assemblies), Special Training, or Service in the Military Reserve," dated 25 December 2013. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/975-2013-%D0%BF#Text

³³⁹ Clause 11 of Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 2 "On Approving the Instruction on the Organisation and Conduct of Training for Reservists and Persons Liable for Military Service in Military Command Bodies, Formations, Military Units, Institutions, and Organisations of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and the State Special Transport Service," dated 5 January 2022. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0296-22#Text

³⁴⁰ Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 232 "On Clothing Allowance for Service Members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the State Special Transport Service," dated 29 April 2016. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0767-16#Text

³⁴¹ Clause 35(9) of the Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine." zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012/ed20250101#Text

4. The service in the military reserve is not counted toward the length of service required for a military pension. Only the reservists' service in combat operations³⁴² of the ATO/JFO is counted toward such service.
5. Time spent in reserve service is counted toward seniority in military rank (for officers), which affects eligibility for promotion³⁴³.

³⁴²Article 17(1) of the Law of Ukraine "On Pension Provision for Persons Discharged from Military Service and Some Other Persons." zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2262-12#top

³⁴³ Clause 45 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine." zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#Text

Public reservist policy

Current public policy regarding reservists is formed at the intersection of military personnel policy and veteran policy. This reflects the state's strategic course toward aligning national security objectives with guarantees of social protection and the restoration of civilian well-being of those who participated in the national defence.

Strategy for Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Human Resources in the Defence Forces of Ukraine Until 2027³⁴⁴

The main objective of the Strategy is to create a system that ensures the effective deployment and retention of a motivated reserve under martial law and in the post-war period.

The Strategy defines some priorities in state reservist policy:

- To attract citizens to military service, the Strategy provides for further **development of military reserve service and stronger incentives** to enter into reserve service contracts.
- Another important aspect of the policy is **the digitalisation and improvement of the registration system**. This is intended to facilitate the proper registration of reservists and integrate data from the Register of Conscripts, Persons Liable for Military Service, and Reservists with other state databases and information and communication systems.

³⁴⁴ Strategy for Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Human Resources in the Defence Forces of Ukraine Until 2027, approved by Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 862-nm of 29 December 2024. mod.gov.ua/diyalnist/normativno-pravova-baza/nakaz-ministerstva-oboroni-ukrayini-vid-vid-29-12-2024-862-nm-pro-zatverdzhennya-strategiyi-zaluchennya-rozvitku-ta-utrimannya-lyudskogo-kapitalu-v-silakh-oboroni-ukrayini-na-period-do-2027-roku

- A specific operational objective of the Strategy concerns **improving the system for processing documents**, military registration, and enrolling discharged service members into the Military Operational Reserve. **It involves the following tasks:**

1	To establish a digital platform and digitalise document processing for war veterans, including status verification
2	To improve and revise the procedure for enrolling service members discharged from military service into the Military Operational Reserve and their registration
3	To automate military registration after discharge from military service

Concept of Military Personnel Policy in the System of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine Until 2028³⁴⁵

The Concept regulates the replacement of conscript military service in peacetime with intensive military training for citizens of conscription age. The purpose of such training is to build up a trained reserve and train the population for national resistance³⁴⁶.

The priority of the Concept is to increase the number of trained reservists during peacetime, enhance citizens' motivation, and develop the contract reserve service. The purpose of these measures is to increase the strength of the Military Operational Reserve to 250,000 personnel and maintain it after the end of martial law. The share of reservists who have signed contracts is expected to increase to 30% of the total strength.

³⁴⁵ Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 637 "On Approving the Concept of Military Personnel Policy in the System of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine Until 2028," dated 27 October 2023. zakon.rada.gov.ua/rada/show/v0637322-23#Text

³⁴⁶ Objective 2, sub-clause 3.4.1 of clause 3.4 of Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 637 "On Approving the Concept of Military Personnel Policy in the System of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine Until 2028," dated 27 October 2023. zakon.rada.gov.ua/rada/show/v0637322-23#Text

In perspective, according to this model, **the reserve is viewed as the key source for reinforcing the Armed Forces in the event of a threat of armed aggression.** This involves operational, mobilisation, and civilian reserves, as well as reservists who have signed contracts and undergo systematic training. However, the Concept does not explain how this differs from the current system, even though reinforcement of the Armed Forces is already carried out using these components of the military reserve.

Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030³⁴⁷

This Strategy supplements the personnel dimension with a social component for veterans, who will constitute the majority of the Military Operational Reserve.

Some veterans will serve in the military reserve after discharge from service, or may be re-enlisted in the event of new threats. Therefore, the conditions of reserve service will directly affect their ability to restore and maintain civilian well-being.

The Strategy identifies at least two groups of reservists whose experiences will differ significantly over the coming decade:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ■ veterans who took part in the ATO/JFO, for whom conscript service during mobilisation constitutes a repeat mobilisation experience | ■ veterans for whom military service during the full-scale invasion constitutes their first experience of service |
|--|---|

The state recognises that the level of civilian well-being between these two groups of veterans may differ substantially, which requires further analysis.

³⁴⁷ Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1209-r“On Approving the Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030 and the Operational Action Plan for Its Implementation in 2024–2027,” dated 29 November 2024. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-%D1%80#Text.

Strategic Objective 3 identified the need to protect veterans' rights during service, including reserve service, regarding their participation in ensuring national security. **To achieve this, it is necessary to:**

- **implement digital identification mechanisms for** veterans among active-duty service members
- **improve the collection and analysis of data** concerning their needs
- **study the experience of** returning to service and the capacity to restore well-being after its completion

Updating the social and legal protection system shall also help unify state support mechanisms, strengthen interagency cooperation, and create a transparent system for accessing resources for veterans and their family members.

SECTION 3

Mapping the needs of veterans in the reserve

Introduction

This section of the study identifies and maps the needs of veterans within the military reserve. Some active service members already have experience serving in the reserve, while it will be the first time for others after the end of martial law. Therefore, we first examined the challenges and unmet needs of reservists in the past and summarised current views of veterans regarding their future service.

In preparing this section, we relied on the following sources:

1	Results of the study “Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life,” ³⁴⁸ conducted by the Pryncyp team in April 2025
2	Data collected during in-depth interviews with specialists involved in record-keeping, logistics, research, or implementation of the reserve concept
3	Results of three focus group discussions conducted in December 2025 and January 2026 with veterans with and without prior experience of reserve service ³⁴⁹

³⁴⁸ Pryncyp (2025). Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life: Contexts, Experiences, Solutions. pryncyp.org/analytics/perehid-vid-vijskovoyi-sluzhby-do-czyvilnogo-zhyttva-konteksty-dosvidy-rishennya

³⁴⁹ A detailed research methodology is provided in the introduction to the study.

It is crucial that veterans understand the importance of maintaining skills and operational readiness following combat experience. However, fatigue significantly affects perceptions of the reserve, through which informants describe the present and the future. Thus, the first need identified among veterans is rest after completing service. During discussions, participants emphasised that before being enrolled in the reserve, it is important that individuals undergo psychological and medical rehabilitation, especially after injuries. They also expect a sufficient time interval between the completion of service and enrolment or entering into a reserve contract, allowing individuals to rest and take care of their health.

"...What I see now is that there is a major lack of psychological rehabilitation and family time. The very first thing I would implement is rehabilitation. Then decide whether a person stays in the reserve, whether they can help, or, considering their post-war condition, it is better to let them go home and finally allow them to live freely...", – a focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

"...We think that the war will finally end, we will return to civilian life, while someone will continue serving, but at the same time, we will spend a quarter of every year undergoing military training. This is frightening. We really want to take a break...", – a focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

It is important to note that this usually refers to a period of rest rather than to permanent severance of ties with the army.

"...I am more than sure that people who leave the army one way or another will want, if necessary, to be part of this movement. They will rest and recover their health a bit. Of course, some will never want to have anything to do with the army again. I doubt that absolutely everyone will feel that way. I find it difficult to believe. I think that if there is normal, honest, and fair cooperation between a person and the army, it could be completely okay...", – an expert interview with a veteran reservist conducted on 13 November 2025

The interviewed informants also questioned the need to enrol all discharged service members in the reserve. In general, focus group participants understand the reserve as follows: the military operational

reserve is perceived as a primary system for reinforcing the armed forces in the event of an escalating military situation, consisting of individuals with combat experience.

Participants distinguish between two main types of reserve:

Active	Inactive
Signing a contract, regular training	Enrolment in the Territorial Recruitment Centre after service in a relevant speciality

They identify the main duties of reservists as attending drills (up to three months per year) and immediate mobilisation if necessary.

However, it is important to understand that the level of knowledge about reserve service varies significantly among different veterans. Their main source of information about the reserve system is usually brothers- and sisters-in-arms who have had such experience. Throughout the study, we did not record a single case of systematic and comprehensive briefing of service members about their prospects for reserve service. There is one case when a person received an explanation regarding enrolment options or signing a contract while registering at the Territorial Recruitment Centre.

"...I was simply informed during demobilisation that I had been enrolled in the first-line operational reserve. Legally, back in 2015, I did not know or realise what it meant for me. Later, I started looking into it and realised that in the event of a new war, I would be mobilised first...", – a focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

The second need emerging from the discussions, though not explicitly articulated by participants, is the opportunity to become familiar with the reserve system before discharge, and to receive explanations regarding the specifics of enrolment, service, and the reservist contract.

Among respondents in active service, knowledge of the contract is often fragmented or absent. Participants do not understand the specific advantages of a contract compared to automatic enrolment

in the reserve. In-depth interviews showed that when it comes to the contract, not all service members consider a motivational component necessary.

"...What is the point of this motivation in a contract? A contract is what binds a person to a unit and a position. All other motivation lies in a different legal framework, related to social obligation,... everything that concerns drills...", – an expert interview with a former representative of the GS AFU Reservists' Council, 1 December 2025

In other words, some service members view the guaranteed assignment to a specific unit as the key advantage of a contract, which may not require additional motivational elements. We also analysed the evidence collected within five domains of well-being that form the basis of this study. In addition, we structured it into two areas and separately examined the reservists' experience, including the challenges, as well as expectations of the reserve system.

Military career management

At the beginning of the study, we proposed the following hypotheses regarding this aspect of well-being:

- Veterans in the military operational reserve may also seek self-fulfilment and support for their military well-being
- Uncertainty about the prospects and potential benefits of being in the reserve may further strengthen the perceived injustice of the mandatory enrolment in the reserve
- To manage a military career effectively, it is important for veterans to have the opportunity to choose a unit, change their speciality, undergo high-quality training, and have access to clear promotion algorithms and a defined maximum term of service in the operational reserve

All these points were partially confirmed. Some surveyed veterans consider service in the military operational reserve as an opportunity to continue their military career in a less intensive format. This involves not only maintaining skills but also developing them, including acquiring new specialities, upskilling, and undergoing high-quality training. Such a format may be attractive provided that the reserve is not merely formal but has clear logic and content.

In this context, participants' experiences and expectations centred on two issues: the desire to maintain physical and professional readiness, and to preserve and sustain ties with their brothers- and sisters-in-arms. Following the same logic, military training was also considered one of the key elements of reserve service.

Experience

For veterans surveyed who served in the reserve before 2022, such service is associated with patriotism, self-organisation, and even a certain level of chaos within the state system. They reported that the reserve often relied on the initiative of commanders and the personal funds of reservists. Some informants noted that although there were attempts to improve legislation and reserve service practices between the first waves of demobilisation in 2015 and the start of the full-scale invasion, these did not become systemic solutions.

Their training experience varied: some underwent intensive field exercises, while for others it remained “on paper.” However, veterans who trained actively in the reserve emphasised that this experience helped them in their subsequent service during the full-scale invasion and even saved their lives.

Contract

Participants described their experience of contract service in the reserve as a formality, sometimes necessary only for the functioning of Territorial Defence units. They signed contracts not for the sake of benefits, but so that “the battalion could actually exist” de jure and have grounds to conduct training. Respondents also noted that, following the start of the full-scale war, their contracts were effectively “voided,” and the Territorial Recruitment Centres had no clear algorithm for dealing with this group of individuals, resulting in their joining service on a general basis.

“...the full-scale war started, and it caught me at 5 a.m. I called the military commissariat, and they told me, ‘No, all your contracts have been voided.’ The commissariat isn’t working. So, since the military commissariats weren’t working, we just went to the Territorial Defence brigade ourselves...”, – a focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

Drills and training

In this study and in the research “Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life: Contexts, Experiences, Solutions,” we primarily documented negative experiences associated with reservists’ participation in drills. Drills are considered a waste of time for both military training and civilian life.

“...As I said, in our brigade, operational reserve drills were held every year or every six months. These reservists spent three weeks at our permanent station. Yes, they had some kind of training. Something like that. They were paid a salary for those three weeks. Of course, yes. I mean... many of them came there just for fun – to take a break from their wives and children, have a drink, shoot some rifles, like a kind of holiday. That kind of extreme holiday, if we’re talking about the time before the full-scale invasion. That’s it....”³⁵⁰ – veteran reservist, serviceman

“...In 2019, it became a bit more organised, and they started taking service members out to shooting ranges and the training areas. So they had experience with firearms. After the presidential elections, this programme was cancelled, and it existed only on paper. Those who had a wish continued to train at their expense and gained experience accordingly...”, – a focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

We also recorded different experiences during data collection. Some informants noted that military units approached the organisation of drills quite seriously, and that participants acquired specific knowledge and skills in practice.

“...I’ll tell you, I managed not only to gain subsequent ranks, but also to accomplish things I couldn’t even dream of. Namely, mastering several additional specialities and types of weapons, and performing jumps from an Il-76 within the brigade. I mean, it was incredible. Because it would have been impossible at any other time, it just wasn’t done...”, – an interview with a former representative of the GS AFU Reservists’ Council, 1 December 2025

Summarising the informants’ experiences regarding drills and training, we found that the main complaints concern their quality.

³⁵⁰ Pryncyp (2025). Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life: Contexts, Experiences, Solutions. pryncyp.org/analytics/perehid-vid-vijskovoyi-sluzhby-do-czyvilnogo-zhyttva-konteksty-dosvidy-rishennya

Based on their interactions with training centres during the full-scale invasion, they highlighted the following challenges:

- **outdated methods (“Soviet-style”)** – participants noted that training follows outdated programmes that do not account for the context of a full-scale war. For example, people are taught to build classic trenches (“zigzags”), which are ineffective in conditions where UAVs are actively used;
- **lack of practicality** – interviewees reported that instead of practising real-life scenarios, such as mortar shelling, they used airsoft grenades during training, which does not give recruits an understanding of actual danger or the algorithm of actions;
- **instructors’ incompetence** – informants noted that sometimes instructors lacked real combat experience, having only studied at military departments. They did not understand the warfare specifics and strictly followed theoretical programmes that may not correspond to reality.

Logistics

We did not formulate specific hypotheses regarding logistics during drills, but discussions showed that outfit, technical means, and weapon maintenance are also important for service members. The informants’ experiences vary: some were fully equipped by their military units, while others had to purchase all necessary items at their expense.

“...In addition, we had these drills once a year. To make everything work properly, including uniforms and some equipment for training, we purchased it at our expense...”, – focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

“...We managed to push through a system so that soldiers keep all ammunition, except for weapons and body armour, at home. Following the drills, all reservists received a new uniform set, including underwear, socks, and a backpack. In the event of war, if necessary, they would need 24 hours to arrive at their units after the signal...”, – an interview with a former representative of the GS AFU Reservists’ Council, 1 December 2025

During the discussions, participants also raised the issue of weapons, sharing situations where they were provided with weapons with drilled barrels during training, which, in their opinion, made the training ineffective.

Despite many negative reviews of the organisation and conduct of previous drills, focus group and in-depth interview participants actively discussed possible ways to optimise them and articulated their expectations.

Expectations

Choice of unit

The ability of service members to independently choose the unit in which they will serve in the reserve is their key expectation. Although reservist contracts formally included this option, in practice, it worked for only a few people in 2022, undermining trust in the reserve system.

According to a study on the transition from military service to civilian life, about 70% of 631 respondents believe that all service members in the MOR, regardless of whether they have signed a contract, should be entitled to choose their military unit and reserve position³⁵¹.

"...In civilian life, there is a certain ranking of military units based on how attractive they are for people to join, even under reserve contracts, to serve there in the future if required or to avoid a particular brigade at all costs and rather join another one. So that if you served somewhere, and it was bad, you do not end up back there...", – an expert interview with the AAF officer, 15 December 2025

"...I would definitely sign a contract with a unit where I felt I could serve with dignity... I certainly wouldn't consider leaving this situation to the state's discretion...", – a focus group discussion with female veterans with no reserve service experience, 31 January 2026

³⁵¹ Pryncyp (2025). Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life: Contexts, Experiences, Solutions. pryncyp.org/analytics/perehid-vid-vijskovoyi-sluzhby-do-czyvilnogo-zhyttva-konteksty-dosvidy-rishennya

Drills and training

The unit's approach to training and the quality of skills that can be mastered during drills are closely related to the issue of choosing a unit.

"...One of the reasons I was interested was that if you're going to attend drills, it's better to go somewhere where you can actually prepare properly, where things will be relatively reasonable...", — an interview with the Head of Corps Personnel Department and a veteran reservist, 28 November 2025

*"...I would make it more intensive, but focused only on what is needed in war, without any fluff. If we're talking about soldiers, first, I would divide them into categories. There are categories based on specialities. First, this is your speciality. There's no need to keep artillerymen and tank crews in the same subunit. It is necessary to categorise everything and maintain the basic skill level in your specific field. If you're an anti-aircraft gunner, you need to learn the rules and the basics of firing and practice shooting. Individual and collective training. I would just organise it twice a year for two weeks each time. It would just be a kind of 'sports day' to keep things interesting"*³⁵² — a veteran reservist and service member

In this context, study participants proposed tools to increase motivation to sign reserve contracts, including opportunities to participate in joint NATO exercises, particularly through exchange programmes. We also noted a demand for supporting skills outside of formal drills and training. Participants mentioned the expediency of incentive mechanisms, such as discounts for sports activities or shooting practice.

We recorded a range of expectations and suggestions regarding the organisation and format of drills. The views of interviewed veterans varied regarding duration, location, and format. The most common position was that intensive training should last several weeks and not necessarily take place every year.

"...Drills should be voluntary, but mandatory for everyone every five years or every three years. That is, all reservists in the country or former conscripts should undergo drills once every five years, not all at once, of course, but everyone has their five-year cycle. Undergo it again if they have not done it before. Those reservists who have signed contracts would

³⁵² Pryncyp (2025). Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life: Contexts, Experiences, Solutions. pryncyp.org/analytics/perehid-vid-vijskovoyi-sluzhby-do-czyvilnogo-zhyttva-konteksty-dosvidy-rishennya

have the right to choose the unit where they undergo these drills. Otherwise, you just end up wherever...”, — an interview with a former representative of the GS AFU Reservists’ Council, 1 December 2025

Veterans also consider other configurations for drills, ranging from short sessions over several days (for example, on weekends or once every few months) to longer training cycles lasting up to a month.

“...Actually, this kind of extended weekend once a month or once every couple of months would be very useful. Many people would want to share their experience...”³⁵³ — a veteran reservist

“...I disagreed with shortening it from a month to two weeks. I still wanted it to be a month...”, — an interview with a former representative of the GS AFU Reservists’ Council, 1 December 2025

“...There definitely has to be an element of combat training, some kind of unit cohesion. It must be more regular than once a year. It should not just be about the combat training element. What else? It’s hard to say. It is about communities. It is some kind of social get-together...”, — an interview with a veteran reservist, 22 December 2025

According to discussions regarding the appropriate format of training and the overall reserve service system, we distinguish two main approaches mentioned by the informants:

1. Reserve service and training are inextricably linked and tied to a specific military unit. The unit itself should be primarily interested in recruiting personnel, ensuring the quality of training, and organising exercises. Given such high expectations of units, effective communication with reservists is also essential.

³⁵³ Pryncyp (2025). Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life: Contexts, Experiences, Solutions. pryncyp.org/analytics/perehid-vid-vijskovoyi-sluzhby-do-czyvilnogo-zhyttva-konteksty-dosvidy-rishennya

"...If a military unit is interested in involving me in case of a potential emergency, then it needs to interact with me and invite me somewhere. It seems to me that the current format of interaction... has some outdated elements. It should probably be updated into a new format...", – an interview with a veteran reservist, 22 December 2025

"...We hope that this opportunity won't be lost during peacetime and the demobilisation period to elect or re-elect heads of reservists' councils in military units, subunits, and regiments. So that these respected figures from military units continue communicating with their brothers- and sisters-in-arms after demobilisation, ensuring that these councils operate effectively again at full capacity...", – an interview with a representative of the Ground Forces Reservists' Council, 1 December 2025

2. Assignment to a specific military unit is only one aspect of reserve service, while training and drills can be broader in scope.

Flexible planning is key in this approach. Training should be provided by specialised centres based on quotas or requests from military units, and allocation of personnel should be based on an individual's specialisation rather than on their assignment to a specific unit.

"...It seems to me that drills should be organised on a larger scale rather than within small units. You will inevitably have to serve alongside individuals you do not know. You can certainly plan to attend together with former brothers- and sisters-in-arms. ... But if we are talking about a unit, they are too small. What does this mean? There will definitely be understaffing, and consequently, there will be no opportunity to conduct these training drills. Therefore, the quality of these procedures will be inconsistent. In my opinion, this should not be tied to specific units, as there are too many of them. Instead, there should be professional training centres in different locations. There must be a quota. For example, there is a centre in Odesa providing specialist training like parachute jumps, with allocated quotas for marines or Air Assault Forces...", – a focus group discussion with veterans without reserve service experience, 22 December 2025

"...I think it would be good to set it up so that you could choose where to go. Objectively, this would even allow assessing the quality of training across different training centres. If you train in different places, you have something to compare it to...", – a focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

Fairness in reserve formation

Despite different views on the format of reservist training, opinions on replenishing the reserve and expanding the pool of people the state can rely on in the event of a new invasion are largely similar. First, respondents emphasise **the importance of fairness**. In particular, there is a need to change the approach whereby a person who has served once is obliged to return to the army in the event of any new national threat, regardless of their wishes.

"...So, relying solely on those people who have been defending this country for 12 months to four consecutive years, just enrolling everyone who has already served in the first-line or second-line operational reserve, that seems wrong to me from the state's perspective and the standpoint of a public contract that should exist..." — a focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

"...The primary interest, at least my personal one, is that those who bore the main burden in 2014–2015 and again in 2022 should be granted some rest rather than being expected to assume the same responsibility again in 2028, 2030, or whenever it happens. I don't know, we will manage to bear it or not. The state should rely not only on us, but also on others...", — a focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

In most discussions, informants did not raise the issue of the maximum duration of reserve service, although specific terms for serving under a reserve contract were occasionally mentioned. In our view, this is due to several factors and does not mean that this aspect is unimportant for veterans. **The first factor** is fatigue, which makes people primarily seek rest before they are ready to form any expectations or plans. **The second factor** is the perception of military service as a duty. So, they consider the need to return to the army in the same light.

Third, some service members are interested in maintaining their professional skills and contacts with their brothers- and sisters-in-arms. They are not opposed to being part of the reserve (provided it is reimagined). In this context, veterans usually emphasise that within such a reformed system, they are knowledge holders and could

serve as instructors, passing on their experience and skills to upcoming generations of reservists.

"...Those veterans have more experience. They can be instructors and train others, but in my opinion, this should only be done with a certain approach, where there should be a selection of these individuals, and then we should recruit and train other personnel...", – a focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

The call-up for military service in the event of a repeated act of aggression constitutes another issue. The prospect of being prioritised for calling-up only intensifies the sense of injustice already noted by veterans. Interviewees feel that the state relies on an "exhausted 5%" of personnel without offering transparent rules to balance national defence with normal civilian life. They consider that the state should change the model of the public contract, moving away from coercion toward a system in which the reserve is a predictable, financially beneficial, and professionally valuable tool.

As for **promotion in rank** during reserve service, we did not observe significant interest among most informants, except among veterans who plan to continue active military careers.

"We'll promote you to Captain after the drills. I said... We were just in the final phase of the study, already implementing it... I said, I have no time... They just invited me and asked, 'Do you want to go to training?' That was in 2021. I said I didn't want to. She said, 'Okay, then you won't get Captain.' I said that it didn't matter", – an interview with a veteran reservist, 13 November 2026

"...After so many years, I've already gained another military education, become an officer, and have personnel under my command, so even after the war ends, I think I'll continue developing within the military field...", – a focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

Personal life planning

In this part of the study, we hypothesised that the lack of a clear schedule for drills is compounded by uncertainty about labour guarantees, which, in turn, deprives individuals of the ability to make long-term decisions.

This assumption was partially confirmed

This issue is one of the most acute for participants, regardless of their experience in the reserve. Importantly, in all cases, the issue concerns not only the duration and frequency of drills but also their planning. Based on respondents' answers, we can assume that advance notification of drill dates and durations is more important than their duration and frequency.

Experience

Invitations to drills

The approach to organising drills is an important element. Former reservists reported a lack of advance planning and a clear call-up procedure. For example, one participant, who was enrolled in the first-line operational reserve after the demobilisation of citizens in 2015, ignored invitations to drills before 2022 for several reasons. He noted that he did not understand the purpose of these drills. In addition, he had never heard positive feedback or a "success story" about such drills from others.

Invitations usually came in the form of phone calls from unknown individuals introducing themselves as "officers from the Territorial Recruitment Centre." They invited him to attend a drill "literally the next day or within a few days," which he considered a completely disorganised

approach. At the time, he was engaged in project-based work that required his continuous presence. He considered it “unreasonable” to abandon all work plans and go to drill on such short notice, despite having legal grounds for leave of absence during that period.

The participant concluded that he had no positive experience or information regarding the quality of such activities, which led to his systematic refusals. It is worth noting that despite ignoring drills in peacetime, in 2022, he reported to the Territorial Recruitment Centre upon a call-up one day before the full-scale invasion and was mobilised as a first-line reservist.

Sending an invitation just a few days before a drill causes significant frustration among participants, and not having an opportunity to coordinate training dates in advance is more likely to encourage them to ignore such a call-up. Some participants reported not receiving official notices about the drills. Instead, representatives of military units or territorial recruitment centres called them to invite. At the same time, it was not difficult to decline such an option, which people often chose in favour of their work.

Expectations

Invitations to drills

Surveyed veterans noted that they expect **a clear and advanced schedule for drills**, for example, for the upcoming year, to be able to plan their workload, holidays, or time with their families. Based on focus group discussions, we conclude that some participants would favour the option to independently choose the timing and location of training. In the Pryncyp study “Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life: Contexts, Experiences, Solutions,” about 30% of respondents stated

that **having advanced knowledge of the dates of activities related to the operational reserve is the crucial factor for a reservist**³⁵⁴.

"...If there is at least an understanding of the timeframes for each year, in particular where it is, when it is, and for how long, it becomes more predictable for planning your life than this random notice saying, 'Congratulations, you're out of your life for three months.' So if it's predictable, you can at least manage it in your life...", – a focus group discussion with veterans without reserve service experience, 22 December 2025

According to informants, public perception of the reserve needs to change. In this context, the entire population should clearly understand the reserve service.

"...So that people can postpone their holidays because, 'Sorry, dear, I have reserve training around these days this year, let's plan the holiday with the children for another time or another year.' You see?", – an interview with a former representative of the GS AFU Reservists' Council, 1 December 2025

Addressing family needs

For many reservists, their families' attitude toward their service is important. Most focus group participants noted that their loved ones usually understand the motives behind their decisions regarding military service. However, they emphasised that **a significant share of daily routines and the maintenance of civilian well-being falls on the spouse during their absence. Therefore, providing them with support is essential.**

"In short, I would definitely discuss it with her [my wife] in any case. Although if it's mandatory, then clearly I would participate in the training, etc. I would just want it to minimise the burden on her as much as possible.", –a focus group discussion with veterans without reserve service experience, 22 December 2025

³⁵⁴ Pryncyp (2025). Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life: Contexts, Experiences, Solutions. pryncyp.org/analytics/perehid-vid-vijskovoyi-sluzhby-do-czyvilnogo-zhyttva-konteksty-dosvidy-rishennya

"I don't know, maybe... involve families as well. It's like at the Invictus Games, right? Family support is an important part of a veteran's recovery through sport, because it's their entire environment. So why not do it like this, I don't know. For example, shooting in the dark. Why can't we organise great training and arrange for the battalion and their families to relax together afterwards? I don't know, maybe to some base or something...",
— an interview with a veteran reservist, 22 December 2025

Another situation concerns families where both spouses are veterans, and both serve in the operational reserve. Focus group participants of both genders discussed that there are currently no established rules or a clear understanding of who, how, and when would attend training in such families, and what the call-up procedure order would be in the event of a new invasion. This directly affects family planning and readiness to have children, as partners cannot plan their reserve service.

"...It's not clear to me how this works for women. If you've served, completed your service, have children... both partners are service members and one of you stayed in, or both of you have completed your contracts, war starts again, while you have five-year-old children, do you both return to service, or just one of you?", — a focus group discussion with veterans without reserve service experience, 22 December 2025

In the context of childbirth and parenting, some additional issues were raised to discuss, primarily related to child protection, especially in early childhood. Female service members also clearly stated during focus group discussions that service and motherhood should not be mutually exclusive.

"On the one hand, the state should provide opportunities for women to be involved in the army (reserve, contracts or active service), so that women can serve and those who want to join in the future can do so. On the other hand, they must allow a woman to be a mother...", — focus group discussion with female veterans without reserve service experience, 31 January 2026

It is important that women also consider contract-based reserve service, provided the terms allow them to balance both roles of reservist and mother.

"In this context, there should be social guarantees, for example, deferments, and perhaps even a provision stating that if a woman becomes a mother, she could, at her discretion, either continue or terminate the contract...", – focus group discussion with female veterans without reserve service experience, 31 January 2026

"...There should be some kind of deferment regarding both service and participation in drills. It's one thing when I'm pregnant or have just given birth, and I have three months of training scheduled for this year, but where am I supposed to go while pregnant or if my child is only a year old? It's another thing when the child is four or five years old, and I can participate...", – a focus group discussion with female veterans without reserve service experience, 31 January 2026

In addition, informants highlighted related issues that are not direct consequences of reserve service but are indirectly related to it. In particular, they believe that maternity benefits for female reservists who serve while raising children should be higher. Additional social guarantees for children, such as protection in the event of an accident involving their parents during training, are required.

Financial stability

Our study hypothesis regarding this aspect of well-being was that an individual cannot work while attending drills. Accordingly, their income depends entirely on whether the employer compensates the shortfall in their salary. There is a risk of total loss of income when running their own business.

This hypothesis was confirmed

According to current legislation, an employer shall pay an employee their average salary for the period during which the employee is attending drills. There are also some additional financial instruments, such as incentive payments, daily allowances, and travel expenses to the training site.

Experience

Payments

Informants confirmed that employers generally pay the average salary, although the reimbursement of these funds from the state budget is delayed. However, this is insufficient to cover the financial losses incurred by both reservists and employers during drills. All other payments provided for by law are ineffective enough as mechanisms for reservists' incentives or financial support.

Veterans who already have experience in reserve service emphasise that reserve payments are "not about money" but are rather symbolic. In their experience, the reserve largely relied on the commanders' initiative and the reservists' own funds.

"...There is no point at all for people who want to make money... These were people who were patriotically motivated and just wanted to be involved... They purchased it at their expense....", – a focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

"...As for payments, if someone wants to join just to get some extra money, then no. It's based on the position. It currently includes bonuses and allowances, but there are no bonuses in the reserve, just the base rate. Back then, it was about UAH 100 and paid once a month per year. So, they paid UAH 100 just before the New Year...", – a focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

Expectations

Payments

Some participants in the study noted that they understand that maintaining a reserve places a significant burden on the state budget. Therefore, when describing their expectations, many informants outlined a realistic scenario rather than a desirable one.

"...The state is not wealthy enough to just pay money, like our eastern aggressor neighbour does, paying these reservists monthly, right? We might get there someday, when there is the political will and financial capacity. Reservists are currently paid only when they undergo training...", – an interview with the GS AFU representative, 23 December 2025

"...Of course, it would be nice to have additional social guarantees and benefits, but we need to be realistic. They have promised me two hectares of land since 2015, but I still haven't received them. It is obvious that the state won't be able to sustain such a social component with the number of veterans we will have after this military conflict ends...", – a focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

While financial remuneration is not regarded as the principal motivator for serving in the reserve, the 2025 Pryncyp study indicates that 36% of service members considered it a key factor. Money is second only to the opportunity to choose a unit and train regularly. However, all informants emphasised that time spent performing reserve-related duties shall be well compensated. This issue is particularly acute for those with families or the self-employed.

"...You see, even these drills shouldn't be paid at the level of your civilian wages. When you're sent somewhere to a training area for two weeks, and they say, 'Here is UAH 600 for you,' why do I need it? For what? Just to get a note that I completed the courses? It has to be equivalent. If they tell me, 'We'll send you to a course. Your salary is UAH 35,000. You'll get UAH 50,000 there, but you have to run around with a rifle and train for two weeks.' I'd say okay. It makes sense. If they tell me, 'Go to a course for two weeks, but it won't be paid,' why do I need it? Those who are over 30 won't go running around the forest with a rifle for two weeks with this patriotism alone. If it's just for a weekend, it's not an issue, but for two weeks, no..."³⁵⁵ — a veteran

People often find it difficult to determine what the payment should be for drills or training, as it depends on many factors, from the frequency and duration of drills to the country's overall economic situation. However, most comments on financial provision follow similar approaches. **The informants noted that:**

- this remuneration should be fixed to a relatively stable unit of measurement, e.g., the subsistence or the tax-free minimum, or the US dollar, and reviewed accordingly;
- the amount of remuneration for reserve service should not be nominal but common to a person's regular income.

In addition, participants noted that they do not expect to receive any additional payments during their reserve service.

"...reservist drills shall be paid for. Not a lot, but it should be roughly like monthly military pay. This is important because people support their families", — an interview with a former representative of the GS AFU Reservists' Council, 1 December 2025

³⁵⁵ Pryncyp (2025). Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life: Contexts, Experiences, Solutions. pryncyp.org/analytics/perehid-vid-vijskovoyi-sluzhby-do-czyvilnogo-zhyttva-konteksty-dosvidy-rishennya

"...let it not be a nominal amount, but something more or less regular...", — a focus group discussion with veterans without reserve service experience, 22 December 2025

"In general, the benefits should be higher [than they are now] because it is obvious that the economic situation is not expected to improve any time soon. There should be some kind of financial cushion to offset all the downsides associated with the reserve" — a focus group discussion with veterans without reserve service experience, 22 December 2025

"I would somehow peg it to the dollar, so it should roughly be USD 500 a month [during drills]. So it's a significant benefit, and you understand that you still have the opportunity to expand your professional skills even if you lose an interesting job offer, while also enabling you to temporarily suspend your primary professional activity in favour of military service. However, I believe that UAH 20,000 or USD 500 that soldiers currently earn in the army is objectively very little." — a focus group discussion with veterans without reserve service experience, 22 December 2025

"First, there should be a decent financial cushion during the training period so that it fully covers my absence from the family for a certain period. So my family doesn't suffer because not only have I been taken away from raising my child and daily routines, they have taken me away from work and cut my income...", — focus group discussion with female veterans without reserve service experience, 31 January 2026

Employment guarantees

Civilian employment is closely linked to financial stability and personal life planning.

Our hypothesis in this aspect of well-being was that a person in the MOR obliged to attend drills lasting up to three months per year may be an unattractive prospect for an employer. Therefore, in matters of employment, promotion, and bonuses, a reservist may be disadvantaged compared to a civilian who pursues a career without interruption.

This hypothesis was confirmed

Experience

Interaction with employers

Informants reported that they had experienced discrimination from employers because of concerns that a reservist would be constantly absent from work.

"There is a problem with official employment. Once, I was refused because I am a veteran, and they can call me up for drills at any moment. Later, it became trendy, on the contrary, to hire veterans. It got easier, but not for everyone. There is discrimination at work", — an interview with a veteran reservist, 13 November 2026

Participants' experiences mostly came down to choosing work over attending drills for several reasons. The primary one is the inability to adjust work and delegate tasks on short notice. This situation places reservists at a substantial disadvantage, forcing them to choose between keeping their jobs while violating the law and fulfilling their duty while risking dismissal.

"The employer wasn't willing to let these employees go. Many individuals didn't come because they couldn't reach an agreement with their employer... Someone has to let an employee go for almost a month to run around a training area. There is no one to replace them. The employer still has to retain their salary for them. There were cases where people were dismissed under the pretext of 'if you go, we'll just dismiss you.' The person went because they had to, but that [not attending the drill] is actually a breach of the law", — an interview with a veteran reservist, 22 December 2025

Unrealised support

When it comes to job retention and employment guarantees for reservists, the focus is most often on employers' policies. Veterans note that systematic work with employers is essential.

According to the informants, it is not only the employers' willingness that is crucial, but also their capacity. Therefore, they frequently mentioned the support required for companies or organisations with a high share of reservists. In particular, informants referred to an initiative to introduce tax benefits (Draft Law No. 3554), which has remained unconsidered since 2020. In addition, participants drew attention to another regulatory act intended to provide an additional incentive for reservists by recalculating seniority, but it was taken off the table after the start of the full-scale invasion.

"First, it was the calculation of years of service. That is, one year would automatically be added to the length of service for every three years spent in the military reserve. For example, a service member discharged with 15 years of service. That means they are not entitled to a military pension. By serving in the contract reserve for three years, it would be possible to reach an additional five years, making a 50% pension. One could hope that, by serving in the reserve this way, this length of service could be added at a 1:2 or 1:3 ratio. This is a powerful mechanism" — an interview with a representative of the AAF Command, 15 December 2025

Expectations

Time devoted to service

The amount of time reservists must devote to drills during the year is the most acute issue for informants' civilian employment. According to their experience, drills could last for a few weeks or a month, depending on the military unit. Even in this format, it represents a significant burden on the country's budget.

"In general, mostly once a year at best. There were times they weren't held at all", – an interview with the TRSSC representative and a veteran, 22 November 2025

Both former and prospective reservists have a negative attitude toward the legal option of being called up for up to 3 months a year.

"Three months a year. It looks like a waste of time and only irritates people... because you drop out of life, out of work, and in my view, it brings no benefit", – a focus group discussion with veterans without reserve service experience, 22 December 2025

"A total of three months sounds completely mad to me", – focus group discussion with veterans without reserve service experience, 22 December 2025

"...I have plans for this summer, so don't disturb me this summer. I can only come for a month, not three. Or this is a one-week drill held once every two months. That looks more like a real-life situation...", – a focus group discussion with veterans without reserve service experience, 22 December 2025

Participants believe that such a duration of drills threatens the loss of professional skills in civilian life and creates issues with employers.

Female veterans emphasised the importance of the quality and intensity of drills, suggesting that they could last three months if the content meets the real needs of the participants.

Interaction between the employer and the reservist

Another aspect of this issue is adapting the reserve system to the civilian employment sector. Working conditions and circumstances usually dictate whether to attend or skip training. Therefore, when discussing guarantees for individuals, informants also referred to the conditions faced by employers.

"...in addition to encouraging reservists themselves, we need to encourage society to view these reservists in a positive light. First, these employers. They should also have... or set some quota for a convoy of vehicles, just as an example. There is a civilian company; it doesn't matter. There are men on the register, 100 male employees, including 80 of conscription or reserve age. The higher the percentage of reservists, the more incentives the employer should receive. In terms of having some preferences, such as a reduced tax rate or something else...", — an interview with a representative of the AAF Command, 15 December 2025

"It's obvious that it becomes a problem for a small enterprise with about 20 employees if five of them have to undergo general military training. So the state has to incentivise the business somehow and offer them something for that period of time. Maybe, it's some financial compensation or something else...", — an interview with a veteran reservist, 22 December 2025

"Out of 80 persons liable for military service, you've got 50 reservists. That's more than half. Well done, you've incentivised them. Not all of them will be called up for drills at once. Not all of them will be absent for a month in any year. Some will, some won't. You could settle it with the Territorial Recruitment Centre in such a way that not everyone from one enterprise goes at once, but proportionally. It's 10% this year and 10% next year, so that reservists are involved for the entire period of their service. They will be pulled away from the entire production process or their company's work once every three years", — an interview with a representative of the AAF Command, 15 December 2025

There are expectations regarding the formation of a conscious attitude among employers toward the reserve system. In particular, this involves a shift in perception: hiring a reservist is seen as a matter of prestige rather than a reason to fear.

"If two persons apply for a position and have roughly equal competencies, but one of them is a reservist, this gives an advantage to the reservist, and may also provide the employer with certain preferences in terms of tax legislation", — an interview with a former representative of the GS AFU Reservists' Council, 1 December 2025

"It doesn't matter what the enterprise does, whether it's a business or the state, they must understand that they should employ such people who, in the event of any military invasion, will be the first to go and defend everyone else. Respect for such people must be cultivated. There should be all conditions and understanding...", — a focus group discussion with female veterans without reserve service experience, 31 January 2026

These proposals mostly concern hired employees. The issue of self-employed individuals also remains relevant. First, the proposed changes regarding tax benefits for self-employed citizens during training have not been adopted. Second, for potential reservists who are individual entrepreneurs, the mechanism for compensating their average income remains unclear, since they do not have an employer to pay them while they are attending drills.

Catching up on civilian professional skills

In addition to the challenges that may arise during employment for persons serving in the MOR, participants also noted a related barrier — the obsolescence of knowledge and skills used in their civilian work. Therefore, even those who held good positions before joining the army will need support to return to their fields.

The issue of refreshing or acquiring new skills and knowledge that would allow a person to return to civilian employment and remain competitive in the labour market is also considered within the context of the reserve. In particular, a grant for prestigious education could be a motivating factor for signing a reservist contract.

"Not some minimal amount or what already exists like free education at state-funded institutions, but rather high-quality education provided primarily by private institutions such as the Kyiv School of Economics or the Ukrainian Catholic University", — a focus group discussion with veterans with reserve service experience, 13 January 2026

In the context of employment guarantees, veterans express different attitudes towards the possibility of obtaining a one-year deferral from conscription. It cannot be said to be an unequivocal motivating factor for signing a contract.

"This is great because if you tell someone that they are free for a year, that's a trap. Because they will spend two, three, or six months coming around, some take longer, but let it be three, four, or six months for people to rest, have a drink, see all their relatives, visit the graves of their close ones who died, and travel across the oblasts of Ukraine. As soon as they breathe out, all payments stop, and they're like, 'Okay, work.' But you've only got six months left before you're called up, and then you think, 'Who on earth needs me?' Nobody needs me", — an interview with a veteran and reservist, 13 November 2026

Housing conditions

The final hypothesis put forward in the study concerned ensuring comfort during drills. The opportunity to live in a flat or house rather than in a barrack or a hostel is one of the basic requirements for safety and comfort. However, this creates an additional financial burden: a person either pays two rents (if they rent and do not own housing) or incurs expenses they did not previously incur (if they own housing).

This hypothesis was not confirmed

Informants discussed the issue of comfortable accommodation not in relation to additional expenses, but rather in terms of its general accessibility. We do not have sufficient data to draw comprehensive conclusions on this issue, primarily because, against the backdrop of other aspects and potential motivational factors, accommodation during drills receives little attention. **We recorded two opposing views during the study:**

"...This is purely hypothetical. I mean accommodation at the permanent stations or training areas. It might make sense to allow those who signed a contract to choose their accommodation or rent housing nearby during the drills. For example, if a person has such an opportunity, particularly when residing in a city where these drills are taking place nearby, they could easily commute to and from this location and stay at home overnight. Why not?...", — a focus group discussion with veterans without reserve service experience, 22 December 2025

"...I believe that a housing allowance is absolutely unnecessary. First, people are called up for a rather limited period, up to a month. There should be some intensive training during this month. In any case, intensive training takes place at a training area. There is nowhere to rent housing there. Allowing a schedule where, for example, they train from 8.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m., including running, shooting, tactical medicine, engineering training, etc., and they leave the training area afterwards. This immediately raises the issue of their need for transportation. For example, we have called up 1,000 reservists. The entire brigade is located at the training area in a field camp. However, well-presented reservists

finish their working day at 6.00 p.m., necessitating sufficient transport to move 1,000 personnel from the training area to their accommodation. First, it's utopian. Second, it's unnecessary...", – an interview with a representative of the AAF Command, 15 December 2025

Obviously, the answer to the question of housing conditions during drills also depends on the level of involvement in organisational matters and on experience in the reserve. It may be assumed that for veterans returning to civilian life, the option of such a choice might be a pleasant bonus during drills, but nothing more.

Conclusions

International experience

Geopolitical and historical overview of the analysed states and their military reserve models

Within the scope of the study, we analysed the experience of eleven countries representing different security models, from states engaged in ongoing war to countries with secure borders whose armies are primarily deployed abroad. The geographical and historical context is a key factor in defining the defence model and, in particular, the reserve architecture in each case. The general overview shows that countries facing a high level of existential threat tend toward larger-scale, more compulsory reserve models, while states with a more comfortable security environment develop highly specialised professionals and voluntary components.

France has undergone a complex transformation from a model of mass conscription, introduced following the defeat in the war with Prussia in 1872, to the modern professional army that was fully established after the abolition of compulsory military service in 1999. An important stage of this evolution was the establishment of the National Guard in 2016, which administratively unified operational reserves of all branches of the Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force) and the Gendarmerie. This reform enabled the formation of a flexible two-level system divided into a mixed reserve comprising veteran and civilian volunteers, and a compulsory reserve comprising veterans.

First-level reservists are not separated into rear-area units but are fully integrated into regular army units.

They perform a full spectrum of tasks, including patrolling streets within the country and participating in high-intensity combat operations abroad alongside career service members.

The United States and Canada historically rely on their geographical distance from the battlefield. Their reserve forces (the US National Guard and the Canadian Primary Reserve) are designed to operate alongside the regular army on overseas missions and to respond to domestic emergencies and natural disasters. The number of personnel involved is relatively small. Reserve service is rather an additional opportunity for income and professional and personal development for citizens.

The United Kingdom has a model similar to the North American one, shaped by its island geography. Following the end of the Cold War, the British Army Reserve has transformed into an entirely voluntary structure integrated into the regular forces to perform specialised tasks, accounting for about 17% of total personnel.

Norway, Finland, and Lithuania represent the classic Northern European model of total defence, whose architecture is shaped by direct geographical proximity to the Russian Federation and a historical awareness of a constant conventional threat. Given their limited demographic resources, none of these countries can ensure an adequate level of security solely through a professional peacetime army. Therefore, conscription helps build a large-scale mobilisation potential. The continuous flow of trained conscripts forms a substantial human resource base, enabling the army to expand during wartime to several times its peacetime strength.

However, there are some differences in their approaches to reserve structuring and territorial defence organisation:

- In **Norway**, following the completion of basic conscription service and a period within the regular forces reserve, conscripts are administratively transferred to the Home Guard. They keep their personal weapons at home (without the bolt) and are regularly called up for short-term drills.

- **Lithuania** applies a similar deployment principle, adapting its system to hybrid threats. In addition to the Active Reserve formed from former conscripts to reinforce regular units, Lithuania is developing the National Defence Volunteer Forces (KASP), which operate on a territorial basis and train in small groups for combat operations in familiar terrain, as well as the Commandant's Office system established in 2024. The country integrates citizens directly into the municipal defence system to perform rear-area functions: defending critical infrastructure, enforcing curfews, and countering saboteurs. This reduces the burden on combat brigades.
 - In contrast, the **Finnish** model relies on the total integration of reservists across all branches of the Armed Forces. While maintaining a compact regular peacetime army (about 13,000 personnel), Finland is capable of rapidly deploying a force of 280,000 personnel, including 95% of reservists. The reserve is not an auxiliary element or a separate rear-area structure, but the wartime army. The strength of the total trained reserve (about 900,000 personnel) and the system of mandatory retraining enable Finland to meet both frontline and rear-area needs within a unified command structure, without parallel components.
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South Korea also maintains universal conscription, after which men are automatically enrolled in the reserve for up to eight years (the Mobilisation Reserve Forces for reinforcing combat units and the Homeland Reserve Forces, which actually operates as territorial defence). However, the South Korean experience shows that even in a state of unresolved war and under constant threat of invasion, a lack of funding and outdated training approaches undermine service members' motivation and the prestige of service, which is perceived as a burden rather than an honourable mission of national defence.

Facing the requirement to remain combat-ready against two nuclear powers while possessing a vast demographic resource, **India** focuses on sustaining a large regular army. This allows the employment of relatively limited reserve components exclusively in auxiliary rear-area functions, including logistic support and the protection of critical infrastructure. India imposes a duty on former service members to remain available to the armed forces for a certain period, thereby creating a substantial additional manpower resource in the event of large-scale hostilities.

The **Israeli model** stands in contrast to the Indian one. Despite a constant hostile environment and active hostilities, it operates with very limited territory and human resources. Compulsory long-term conscription for both women and men is a prerequisite for reserve service. The principle of organic integration, whereby combat reservists continue to serve in the same units, ensuring a higher level of tactical cohesion, is its specific feature. However, due to the intensive employment of reservists, even existing compensation does not prevent burnout and hidden discrimination in the workplace.

We also analysed the reserve system of the **Russian Federation**, which, acting as a hostile state toward many of the mentioned countries, is also adapting its approaches to reserve formation amidst an expansion of military capability. Whereas the Russian reserve was previously a passive opportunity that allowed some individuals to earn additional income with no real obligations, since 2025, the country has expanded the use of reservists in air defence units and even combat units in response to Ukrainian attacks on oil refineries.

Types of reserve recruitment

The choice of recruitment model depends on historical, demographic, and geopolitical factors, which are undergoing dynamic change. This is prompting a global review of the nature and functions of reserve forces in the countries above.

Based on the analysed international experience, we can distinguish the following methods of reserve recruitment:

- **a general mobilisation reserve** composed of all citizens who have completed conscript service is typical for total defence models, under which every citizen (in some cases, only men) is expected to participate in national defence and possess the required training;
- **a reserve of former service members**, with mandatory participation for a specific period after discharge from service. This typically involves an availability obligation without regular training or payments during peacetime;
- **a voluntary contract reserve** with clearly defined conditions of service, including active training throughout the year, daily allowances, and a contract term. It is open to both civilians and veterans;
- **territorial defence**, which in some cases may constitute either a separate reserve component or a continuation of reserve service. Its primary purpose is to involve residents in protection and defence missions. This is relevant both for large countries seeking better coverage of remote regions and smaller ones with limited human resources.

It is important to note that these recruitment models can be mixed depending on the needs and conditions of each country.

Reserve service burden

The direct consequence of each chosen recruitment model is the level of burden placed on citizens, ranging from passive registration in the reserve to intensive combat training. According to the analysis, democratic countries build their reserve systems on the principle of predictability, whereby reserve service should not disrupt an individual's civilian life or career during peacetime.

Time planning is a key element of the system. The average workload for active reservists undergoing regular training amounts to about 30 days per year, including one weekend per month and a two-week annual drill. To ensure compatibility between reserve service and a day job, there are strict time limits for training call-ups, allowing for the coordination or rescheduling of their dates. This transforms military service from an unpredictable force majeure event into a planned activity that the reservist can arrange in advance with both their family and their employer.

A different approach is generally applied to former service members who are automatically enrolled in the reserve. Their burden is often defined by an availability obligation – the requirement to report their place of residence and remain ready for mobilisation without undergoing regular training. However, balancing interests is crucial even in this apparently compulsory model. For example, in France, former service members are legally entitled to exemption from availability obligations under certain circumstances.

It is important to note that, despite formally established training standards, many countries are unable to conduct exercises at the prescribed intensity, particularly due to budgetary priorities.

Guarantees for reservists

International experience shows that even when reserve service is compulsory, a wide range of guarantees helps ensure motivation and willingness among citizens to invest in military training. Analysing these guarantees through the lens of well-being areas defined in the study concept allows us to systematise diverse approaches and identify which reservist needs are addressed most effectively and remain vulnerable even in advanced systems.

Financial stability is the basis of any model. States apply various mechanisms to minimise income loss during drills, including retention of civilian pay during service (Lithuania, Norway, and Russia), salary at the same level as regular service members in accordance with rank (France, the United Kingdom, and India), fixed daily allowances (Finland and Canada), or compensation through social insurance funds based on civilian pay (Israel).

Some countries also provide social allowances, including allowances for children and spouses (Norway and Finland), loyalty bonuses upon contract extension (France), and educational scholarships (USA). The experience of South Korea demonstrates that inadequate financial compensation, even under existential threat, undermines motivation and turns service into a burden.

Most of the analysed models introduce **employment guarantees** through a mandatory ban on dismissing employees due to reserve service. In some countries, such as Israel, employers may be subject to criminal liability for such actions, while in India, it includes fines and compensation to employees of up to six months' salary. Each country regulates the triangular relationship between the employer, the state, and the reservist differently. In some cases, the state

reimburses employers directly to cover the costs of retaining employees in their positions (the United Kingdom) or assumes full responsibility for paying salaries through social insurance funds (Israel). Another approach involves systems of indirect incentives, such as tax benefits and special partnership agreements (France). However, even with legal safeguards, the Israeli experience shows that prolonged and intensive deployment of reservists creates a “grey zone” where employers seek formal grounds for dismissal.

Personal life planning is ensured primarily through mechanisms of predictability. Countries legally require military authorities to send call-up notices in advance – three months ahead in Finland and one month in France. This provides employers with sufficient time to find a replacement and adapt work processes, transforming an employee’s absence from a force majeure into a planned event.

The maximum length of reserve service and legally established workload limits are also crucial: in Finland, this ranges from 40 to 100 days over a lifetime, depending on rank, while the standard limit in France is up to 30 days per year. Lithuania allows employers to request service deferments for key specialists if their absence threatens to disrupt production processes, while Norway legally requires employers to make efforts to avoid the repeated mobilisation of the same individuals. Such mechanisms ensure a balance between defence interests and an individual’s ability to make long-term decisions regarding their career, family, and financial liabilities.

Military career management in several countries is structured by a clear system of professional development within the reserve. France employs a modular promotion system ranging from rank-and-file roles to officer roles, with the option to recruit civilian experts for relevant positions. In the United States, the Up or Out principle establishes a predictable career trajectory, while the escalator principle ensures that during

reserve service, a civilian employee's career is not merely retained but progresses in line with promotions that would have occurred during their absence. In Lithuania, service in the KASP may count as completion of conscript service, thereby providing access to free higher military education. These tools transform reserve service from an obligation into an opportunity for development.

Housing conditions during drills are the least covered area in the analysed models. However, countries guarantee free accommodation, meals, and medical care during drills. Norway provides family allowances to compensate for the domestic burden placed on the reservist's family.

Ukrainian experience and the current system

The development of the military reserve in Ukraine is a strategic priority for national security and staffing of the Armed Forces. The reserve is mentioned in the Strategy for Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Human Resources in the Defence Forces of Ukraine Until 2027³⁵⁶, the Concept of Military Personnel Policy in the System of the Ministry of Defence Until 2028³⁵⁷, and the Veteran Policy Strategy Until 2030³⁵⁸.

These strategic documents define the reserve as the key source for reinforcing the Armed Forces in the event of a threat. They also outline the need to increase its strength, develop contract-based service, digitalise the registration system, automate the enrolment of personnel into the MOR upon discharge from military service, and guarantee legal and social protections for veterans, who will constitute a significant part of the MOR.

The implementation of this policy **remains fragmented** at the institutional level. Ukraine lacks a unified body responsible for the comprehensive development and coordination of reserve policy. Responsibilities are distributed among various institutions, which complicates coordinated strategic management of reserve development.

According to the analysis of the Ukrainian military reserve system, there is a prolonged process of transformation. The evolution of Ukrainian reserve structure reflects **a transition from the simplified 2006 model** based on formal paper registration at TRSSCs, voluntary contract-based

³⁵⁶ Strategy for Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Human Resources in the Defence Forces of Ukraine Until 2027, approved by Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 862-nm of 29 December 2024. mod.gov.ua/diyalnist/normativno-pravova-baza/nakaz-ministerstva-oboroni-ukrayini-vid-vid-29-12-2024-862-nm-pro-zatverdzhennya-strategiyi-zaluchennya-rozvitku-ta-utrimannya-lyudskogo-kapitalu-v-silakh-oboroni-ukrayini-na-period-do-2027-roku

³⁵⁷ Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 637 "On Approving the Concept of Military Personnel Policy in the System of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine Until 2028," dated 27 October 2023. zakon.rada.gov.ua/rada/show/v0637322-23#Text

³⁵⁸ Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1209-r "On Approving the Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030 and the Operational Action Plan for Its Implementation in 2024–2027," dated 29 November 2024. zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-%D1%80#Text.

service, and a division into active and inactive reserves, **to a modern multi-level system that prioritises the mobilisation of human resources to repel armed aggression.**

The historical development of the reserve has gone through several key stages. The turning point came in 2014, when hostilities revealed the inefficiency of the reserve system then in place. Since 2014, the reserve structure has gradually become more complex and now includes three components: the operational reserve, divided into OR-1 and OR-2; the reinforcement reserve; and the civilian reserve. Since March 2015, reserve service has ceased to be voluntary, so veterans and conscripts discharged from service during a special period have been mandatorily enrolled in OR-1.

In March 2021, Ukraine **introduced a new form of service – military service by calling up reservists during a special period.** This allowed reservists to be called up to the army, if necessary, without declaring mobilisation, by order of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and without approval from the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, which often requires additional time.

The current model, last revised in 2024, is based on the principles of priority and differentiation. It divides the military reserve into the Military Operational Reserve and the Mobilisation Human Reserve.

The MOR consists of:

- the combat reserve (formerly OR-1) for reinforcing combat units;
- the build-up reserve (formerly OR-2) for reinforcing non-combat military units;
- the territorial reserve for reinforcing Territorial Defence units.

The implementation of the new reserve structure currently **remains insufficiently clear.** As there are no clear criteria for distinguishing among the various types of MOR, it is difficult to understand how the system will operate in practice. In particular, this affects an individual's

ability to predict which specific reserve category they will replenish. Currently, most assumptions regarding the operation of the reserve system are based more on expert assumptions than on clearly established procedures.

The state considers the Military Operational Reserve as the “second army” that can be quickly assembled if necessary, and its trained personnel can be deployed for defence. The MOR primarily comprises individuals with military service experience: they are automatically enrolled in the reserve upon discharge from service or may enter into a contract. The contract-based reserve service, which ensures a stable link between the reservist and a specific military unit, is a key specific feature of the system. This allows them to know their commander and unit in advance, significantly improving cohesion. Despite this framework, **the outbreak of the full-scale war revealed substantial gaps in the reserve structure**. Due to logistical collapse and notification failures, the individual assignment system did not function properly. Many reservists, including contract ones, were forced to search for units independently and enter service through mobilisation.

In addition, while a contract assigns a reservist to a specific position within a unit, in practice, individuals are not always appointed to that role due to staffing and organisational changes within military units. Reservists are assigned to positions during drills or mobilisation in accordance with vacancies, their MOS, rank, and the unit’s current needs, which may not align with the position specified in the contract.

The **cyclical burden placed on veterans** is the key challenge within the system. The system usually compels the same individuals to return to service first, whereas those liable for military service (civilians without military experience) are not included in the Military Operational Reserve and are mobilised as a last resort. Persons liable for military service replenish the operational reserve after obtaining service experience, including through BMS or BGMT. Therefore, the MOR is not actively

and extensively replenished. This results in the reserve being reinforced predominantly by the same individuals who served during the ATO, JFO, or the full-scale invasion.

Legislative discriminatory provisions regarding occupational deferment exacerbate this issue. Unlike civilians liable for military service, MOR reservists are deprived of the right to be deferred even if they are critically important specialists at their enterprises.

It is noteworthy that, according to the current legislation, an individual is deprived of their reservist status not only due to health condition, reaching the age limit, or family circumstances, but also for failing to respond to a call-up notice, inability to establish their whereabouts during mobilisation, or staying abroad for more than three months.

This means **an individual can be relieved of the obligation of priority call-up through a failure to fulfil it**. The practice implemented after the start of the full-scale invasion shows that reservists who failed to report were excluded from the reserve and transferred to the general register of conscripts. In turn, this allowed them to benefit from the deferment mechanism.

Mechanisms for re-enrolling such individuals into the reserve are virtually absent. If a person leaves the reserve due to family circumstances or stays abroad for more than three months, they are registered on general terms alongside other persons liable for military service, even if those grounds no longer apply (a change in family status or return to Ukraine). According to such a model, the state loses the ability to effectively track individuals with military or combat experience and prioritise their potential involvement in national defence.

The duties of reservists include participation in drills for up to three months per year. **Call-ups for these drills are often unpredictable** and may occur just a few days before they begin. This complicates personal life and career planning and strains relationships with employers. Combined with the employer's obligation to pay reservists

their average salary, which the state reimburses with delays or fails to reimburse at all, this makes **reservists less desirable employees** in the labour market.

The current Labour Code neither **establishes specific legal protections for reservists, including veterans**, nor recognises their status as a protected category to prevent workplace discrimination.

Reservist drills are primarily formal, and the training is ineffective. So, reservists seeking to maintain an adequate level of proficiency are more likely to train independently at their expense than rely on official drills.

The participation of contract reservists in drills depends on the relevant military unit to which they are assigned under contract. Reservists enrolled in the MOR after service without a contract are not assigned to any specific unit. They may be called up for drills by TRSSC decision based on current needs and assigned to different military units without quantitative limits. This leads to a situation where **the same individuals who are willing to participate are repeatedly deployed**, while **a significant portion of reservists remain outside the training system for years**. For example, someone may attend drills twice a year, while others do not participate for five to seven years. Moreover, such individuals are often involved in training across different branches and arms of the armed forces without assignment to a specific unit, making it difficult to forecast their future role if called up. This situation reflects a formal target-oriented approach rather than the systemic state efforts aimed at enhancing reservists' professional competence and ensuring a uniform level of training for all reservists.

During drills, a reservist is entitled to the following payments:

- average wage at their workplace (no less than UAH 8,647 for the employed and UAH 3,328 for the unemployed). The employer makes payment, and the TRSSC reimburses it through departmental funds.

This payment is not provided for self-employed individuals (individual entrepreneurs);

- payments from UAH 4,992 to UAH 6,656;
- daily allowance for each day of drills (from UAH 60 per day for rank and file to UAH 150 for senior officers);
- travel expenses to and from the training location;
- lump-sum financial incentive from UAH 1,600 to UAH 3,100 per year.

In summary, an employed rank-and-file reservist receives at least UAH 14,067 after tax for 30-day drills in 2026, while an unemployed reservist will receive UAH 9,786, which may be insufficient to meet actual needs.

Another issue is a conflict of law whereby reservists who have been called up for military service **do not have access to some tax benefits provided to mobilised personnel.**

Mapping the needs of veterans in the military reserve in Ukraine

Mapping the needs of veterans in the military reserve shows that their attitude toward the reserve is shaped by the intersection of three key factors:

- fatigue after prolonged service;
- the desire to regain control over their civilian lives;
- readiness to remain involved in national defence under fair and transparent rules.

Time for rest and recovery after the completion of active service is the most universal basic need. Interviewed veterans expect a sufficient time interval between demobilisation and enrolment in the reserve, as well as a differentiated approach to enlistment taking into account health condition, psychological exhaustion, and individual readiness. They consider the automatic enrolment of all personnel discharged to the reserve, without these safeguards, unfair.

The experience of reserve service before 2022 is largely associated with fragmentation, formalism, and inconsistent training quality. Interviewed veterans notice **a demand for a reimagined reserve as a tool for maintaining skills, professional development, and maintaining ties with brothers- and sisters-in-arms**. The key conditions for such a model include high-quality, practice-oriented training, competent instructors with combat experience, proper equipment and logistics, and a clear structure for the organisation of drills.

The absence of systematic information provided to service members about the reserve before their discharge constitutes the cross-cutting issue. A lack of awareness about service options, particularly the contract-based model, as well as the 2022 breakdown of the contract's

main benefit — the assignment of a unit and position — undermines trust in the reserve system. Veterans require clear and timely explanations of contract terms, their content, duration, obligations, potential benefits, and an understanding of the tangible differences between contract and non-contract models of reserve service.

Personal life planning, financial stability, and employment guarantees are critical for potential reservists. The unpredictable training dates, career risks, employer discrimination, and financial losses, especially for the self-employed, convey a sense of systemic injustice.

Veterans do not expect constant payments for serving in the reserve; they do require dignified remuneration for the time spent on drills. They emphasise the need to create support mechanisms for employers. In this context, a contract is seen less as a source of financial motivation and more as a potential tool for predictability, better planning, and access to additional opportunities (high-quality training, education, and specialised training).

There is also a demand for a change in the public contract: veterans react strongly to a model where the state repeatedly relies on a limited group of “exhausted” individuals with combat experience. **In the future, the reserve should comprise not only veterans but systematically involve new personnel in the reserve and, potentially, the defence in the event of a new invasion.** In such a model, a contract could become a voluntary form of more profound engagement for those willing to invest their experience in training others, for example, as instructors.

Recommendations

Policy level

1. Designate a responsible unit within the structure of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine tasked with the development and coordination of state policy on the military human reserve, in particular, the Military Operational Reserve. In particular, amend the Ministry's powers in clause 48 of the Regulation on the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine approved by CMU Resolution No. 67³⁵⁹.
2. Ensure a clear distribution of powers and coordination among all stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of policy on the staffing and management of the Military Operational Reserve.
3. Update the principles of staffing the military human reserve in new versions of strategic documents of the Ministry of Defence, considering the needs and contributions of personnel within the Military Operational Reserve, namely veterans. When developing new social protection measures for contract reservists, ensure these guarantees also apply to veteran reservists, regardless of the type of reserve service they perform.
4. Guarantee the principles of social justice and equal participation of citizens of Ukraine in national defence within strategic documents to gradually reduce the burden on former service members and veterans in the Military Operational Reserve. In particular, consider increasing the number of personnel in the Military Operational Reserve who have completed BMS and BGMT, and involving contract reservists.
5. Continue to develop and improve reservist registration systems, in particular by enhancing the capacity of the Unified State Register of Conscripts, Persons Liable for Military Service, and Reservists.

³⁵⁹ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 67 "On Approving the Regulation on the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine," dated 5 November 2014.
zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/671-2014-%D0%BF#Text

6. Review the grounds for discharging reservists from reserve service to avoid the unjustified withdrawal of individuals with military experience who can be involved in national defence.

Consider the possibility of abolishing or revising the following grounds for automatic discharge from the reserve:

- failure to report to the TRSSC or a military unit during mobilisation within ten calendar days of the notice being served;
 - inability to establish the reservist's whereabouts within 60 days of the announcement of mobilisation;
 - departure outside Ukraine for more than three months;
 - failure to fulfil the duties of military reserve service.
7. Establish a procedure for re-enrolment of individuals excluded from the Military Operational Reserve if those grounds cease to apply (for example, deferment due to family circumstances). Provide for their transfer from the register of conscripts to the register of reservists as individuals with military or combat experience.
 8. Develop a mechanism for reservist deferment during martial law so that they can be employed at critical enterprises without severing their ties with the military reserve, considering defence interests.
 9. Define the term of military service for individuals serving by recruitment of reservists during a special period, except for periods of martial law and mobilisation.

Guarantees for military reserve service

1. Provide military units with the authority to enrol discharged service members into their reservist lists without concluding a contract, subject to the military unit's decision. Retain the right of a person being discharged from service to conclude a contract for service in the military reserve with another military unit. When developing this decision, consider the need to ensure high-quality registration.
2. Review the terms of the contract for military reserve service to enhance its appeal and ensure real guarantees, rather than declarative ones. In particular, guarantee the assignment of a reservist to the position specified in the contract with a fixed minimum tenure of no less than six months. If the specified position is unavailable, offer to serve in an alternative position most relevant to their experience. Envisage a lump-sum allowance upon signing such a contract.
3. Provide individuals discharged from military service with clear briefings regarding the procedure for enrolment into different types of the Military Operational Reserve, their rights, and duties upon discharge into the general conscription pool and during reserve service, as well as the terms and opportunities for concluding contracts with other military units.
4. Ensure systematic, high-quality communication with reservists through various methods, including digital tools, particularly via "Reserve+." Inform them in advance about scheduled drills and updates of registration data, while fostering a culture of continuous communication between reservists and military units.
5. Provide reservists with the opportunity to update their required data via "Reserve+."
6. Improve the mechanism for calling up reservists using digital tools, in particular via "Reserve+."

7. Grant veterans discharged from military service a deferment from attending reservist drills for up to one year following the completion of their service.
8. Establish the age limit for military reserve service at 55. Upon reaching this age, grant individuals the right to be discharged from military reserve service, provided that they have completed a designated minimum term of service in the military reserve or military service overall.
9. Enhance the quality of drills and cease conducting them formally without proper preparation, content, and performance evaluation.
10. Develop a clear, transparent algorithm for promoting reservists in rank.
11. Consider parenthood when planning the call-up for reservist drills if both parents are reservists.

Financial guarantees

1. Provide reservists with a lump-sum allowance upon signing a reserve service contract.
2. Provide tax benefits for reservists called up for military service and exempt mobilised personnel and contract service members from tax reporting during service. Amend the Tax Code of Ukraine accordingly.
3. Increase payments for reservists during drills, including allowances, pay for the unemployed, daily allowances, and lump-sum incentives for the successful completion of drills.
4. Regulate compensation of average income for reservists who are individual entrepreneurs during drills.
5. Increase maternity benefits for female reservists.
6. Calculate the cost per capita of reserve service to justify budget planning and optimise expenditures.

Employment guarantees for reservists and employers

1. Introduce mechanisms for scheduling and prioritising the call-up of reservists for drills within the enterprises and institutions where they are employed.
2. Introduce tax incentives for employers who hire reservists and facilitate their service in the reserve.
3. Enshrine a prohibition against discrimination toward reservists during recruitment and within employment relations in the Labour Code.
4. Regulate the pension provision for reservists within the framework of updated pension legislation, including counting time spent attending drills toward the length of service required for a military pension.

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